

THE SABBATH SCHOOL

INTERNATIONAL LESSON COMMENTS FOR FEBRUARY 9.

Subject: The Sin of Lying, Acts iv., 32, v., 11—Golden Text, Eph. iv., 25—Memory Verses, 2-5—Commentary on the Day's Lesson.

32. "Multitude." The whole 5000 mentioned in verse 4, and probably many others, who had been converted by the ministry of the other apostles since that time. "Of one heart." Though of different ages, dispositions and conditions before they believed, and perfect strangers to one another, yet when they met in Christ they were intimately acquainted. "Neither said any of them." There was not a dissenting member. No such thing as discord existed among them. "All things common." There existed such confidence in each other.

33. "With great power." With no difficulties among themselves to absorb any of their time, the apostles were encouraged by a spiritual, praying church, to preach with great vigor, spirit and courage. "Witness." The apostles were witnesses to what they had seen and heard. This is a most effective way of preaching. "Of the resurrection." All knew of the death and burial of Jesus. But the enemies of Jesus, the Jews, would not believe in the resurrection of Jesus.

34. "That lacked." This was one reason for their favor among men, for all could see the self-sacrificing spirit that actuated them. "Sold them." It seems clear that all the owners of real estate who belonged to the church sold property. Things that were sold." The language here expressly avoids saying that these men sold all they had. They sold some things, and the sum realized from what was sold was offered to the common store.

35. "At the apostles' feet." To be disposed of as they should direct. They would be better able to determine where there was need. Having a relief fund the apostles could draw upon it without making every case public.

36. "Joseph." Or Joseph. He is the well-known Barnabas, who is afterward frequently mentioned as an associate of the apostle Paul. That he was a Levite is a remarkable circumstance; we are soon afterward told that even many priests believed. Chap. 6: 7. The surname of Barnabas, which the apostles gave him, alluded, without doubt, to an extraordinary gift of the Spirit which was manifested in his addresses and exhortations. "Of Cyprus." An island in the Mediterranean Sea, not very far distant from the Jewish coast. The Jews were very numerous in that land.

37. "Having land, sold it." "He comforted by his gifts as well as his words." He certainly proved his sincerity.

1. "But." The little word "but" is the hinge on which great issues turn. "Ananias." The meaning of the word is "Favored of the Lord," or "Jehovah is gracious." "Sapphira." "Beautiful." Their characters were in sharp contrast with their names. Here is a contrast between the honest liberality of Barnabas and the hypocrisy of Ananias and his wife. Professors of the gospel, but certainly not true believers, for all that truly believed were of one heart and of one soul.

2. "Kept back part of the price." While they pretended to make an offering of all. This was hypocrisy, and was called a lie. "His wife." This sin was premeditated by both parties. They had not set their affections on the land, but the money exercised such an influence on them that they could not resolve to resign the whole, and hence they retained a part. They were unwilling to acknowledge this circumstance publicly.

3. "Filled thine heart." Satan, the father of lies, a liar from the beginning. Peter traces the sin back to its source—the heart into which Satan had been admitted; his question recognizes Ananias's power to resist these evil influences. Satan mocked; Ananias opened his heart. "To lie to the Holy Ghost." The apostles disclaim any power in themselves. It is Christ who works the miracles; the God of Abraham who gives the power of healing, and the Holy Spirit who is grieved by sins like that of Ananias.

4. "Thine own." He might have kept it without incurring the displeasure of the apostles or the Lord. "In thine own power." These questions show that the bestowment of goods was perfectly voluntary and not a law, and that the crime was free and deliberate act. Ananias was not censured because he had not surrendered his entire property, but for falsehood in professing to have done so when he had not. "Unto God." The offense was chiefly against God. David takes this same view of his sin in Psa. 51: 6. But this is an important text to prove the personality of the Holy Ghost. Peter uses the terms God and the Holy Ghost (v. 3) interchangeably, which shows that the Holy Ghost is not merely an emanation from God, but He is God Himself.

5. "Gave up the ghost." The immediate fall and death of Ananias, when Peter had addressed him, must be viewed as a direct act of God. "Great fear came." This effect on the Christian community is thought to be the chief design of so startling a judgment.

6. "Young men." The earliest church was not without young men and young women. Acts 12: 13. "Carried him out." Just beyond the walls of the city. That the body was not taken to his home is indicated by his wife's ignorance of what had occurred. "Buried." In a hot climate, like that of Palestine, burial had to take place at once, and the graves (caves with niches) were always open.

7. "After three hours." Probably at the first hour of prayer. Under the shock of the death of Ananias they had not dispersed.

8. "Tell me." The question was Sapphira's place for repentance; the Holy Spirit strove with her in Peter's words, she resisted his strivings. "So much." Perhaps Peter pointed to the money still lying where Ananias had placed it. V. 2. "Yea." It had been in her power to save her husband by a word of warning protest; it was now in her power to clear her own conscience by confession.

9. "Agreed." Sapphira's answer proved Peter that their sin had been premeditated, and not one of haste or ignorance. He was equal in the sin with her husband. Peter's question gave the first knowledge to Sapphira that their guilt was discovered, but her answer was given. "To tempt." To test, or try the Spirit of the Lord by attempting to deceive Him, but God is not mocked, or deluded.

10. "Fell—yielded." It was not through Peter's words, nor his prayers, nor through shame, nor through remorse that this guilty pair died, but an immediate judgment of God.

11. "Great fear." This judgment answered the end for which it was inflicted; deeply religious fear occupied every mind, and hypocrisy and deception were banished from this holy assembly.

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