

TESTING THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD,
WHO IS UNIQUELY AT WORK WITHIN GOD'S CHURCH!
ACTS CH5:1-11

RE-CAP!

The Church in Jerusalem was initially:

- 120 people - **Ch1:15**
- then 3120 people - **Ch2:41**
- then 3120+ people - **Ch2:47**
- to 5000 men probably anything from 5000 - 10,000 people - **Ch4:4**

Peter has preached on three occasions up to this point:

1. Ch1:15-26
2. Ch2:14-36
3. Ch3:12-26
4. Ch4:8-12

(There will be 8 by Peter - Ch1:15-22; 2:14-41; 3:6-26; 4:8-22; 5:29-42; 10:34-48; 11:4-18; + 15:7-11)

The apostles are filled and continue to speak boldly! Ch4:31

FIVE VITAL SIGNS OF A SPIRIT FILLED CHURCH FROM BOTH PASSAGES!

1. **GOSPEL** – is central from which everything else flows
2. **GROWTH** – personal ownership, a desire to grow in holiness
3. **GROUPS** – healthy discipleship groups, walking together
4. **GIFTS** – Christians using their gifts to build God's Church
5. **GIVING** – Christians using their time, talents and treasure

ILLUSTRATION

Who can remember the film “Four Weddings and a funeral” and who starred in it? Four Weddings and a Funeral is a **1994 British romantic comedy film directed by Mike Newell**. It is the first of several films by screenwriter Richard Curtis to feature Hugh Grant, and follows the adventures of Charles (Grant) and his circle of friends through a number of social occasions as they each encounter romance. Featuring – Hugh Grant (Charles), Andie MacDowell (Carrie), Kristen Scott Thomas (Fiona), Charlotte Coleman (Scarlett), John Hannah (Matthew) and the Vicar Rowan Atkinson (Father Gerald).

Here we have, two frauds, two funerals and two fears!

TWO FRAUDS! V1-2

For the first time since the defection of Judas, the Gospel community of approximately 9000+ Christians in Jerusalem, experiences a serious internal conflict! Which, consequentially, puts in jeopardy the Church's unity and relationship with the Holy Spirit. Faced with mounting opposition from unbelievers

(Ch4:18+21+29) they asked for boldness (Ch4:29) to continue proclaiming the Word of God and were filled afresh with the Spirit of God (Ch4:31).

Both husband and wife are involved together in scheming in a blatant act of rebellion against God, which in some ways parallels the story of another husband and wife and original sin in Genesis Ch3! The “original sin” of the Church is portrayed in terms of the dishonesty of money (the sale of property for a certain amount) and deceiving the Church (appearing to give all proceeds from the sale) pretending to lay all proceeds at the apostles feet!

Laid it at the apostles feet – Ch4:35 + Ch4:37 and here Ch5:2, implying that there was a particular fund, where Christians sold off excess and presented the funds in their entirety to the apostles to meet need within the Gospel Community Ch4:34-37.

The phrase “kept back” may have been deliberately used by Luke, bringing to memory Achan in Judges Ch7, who kept back certain property that belonged to the Lord, for private use. However, in this case as Peter makes clear, before and after the sale, the property belonged to both Ananias and Sapphira to do as they pleased, there was no need to be dishonest or to deceive.

TWO FUNERALS! V3-10

Satan filled the heart of both Ananias (***meaning Yahweh is gracious***) and Sapphira (***meaning beautiful***) moving them to lie to the Holy Spirit and to deceive the Church! Luke in his Gospel uses the name “Satan” **5 times** – Ch10:18; Ch11:18; Ch13:16; Ch22:3; Ch22:32 and **2 times** in Acts here and in Ch26:18. He uses the name “devil” 5 times in Luke’s Gospel - Ch4:2,3, 6 + 13; Ch8:12 and 3 times in Acts, here, and in Ch10:38 + Ch13:10.

The language of “filling or filled” – Ch2:2, Ch2:4, Ch4:8, Ch4:31, Ch6:3, Ch6:5, Ch6:8, Ch7:55, Ch9:17, 11:24, Ch13:9, is normally associated with the presence of the Holy Spirit, or with the gifts or graces supplied by the Spirit. Here, it is used to show how Satan has moved tactics from using force upon the Church from the outside, to using falsehood from within side the Church.

Although Satan is clearly identified as the one who has filled the hearts, both human beings need to take full responsibility for their complicit parts! Yes, Satan is the “originator of sin (2 Cor Ch11:3) and a murderer and the father of all lies” (John Ch8:44) and has sinned from the beginning (1 John Ch3:8), yet, human beings are held fully accountable for their part in sin!

After Peter’s questions expose the sin, God’s sovereign divine judgement is immediately carried out! Don’t lie to or test out God the Holy Spirit!

TWO FEARS! V5b+11

Great fear – ***PHOBOS MEGAS*** – Involves a healthy sense of awe (a feeling of reverential respect mixed with fear and wonder, inspired by) at the divine power and reverence for God, rather than terror or panic! Such a fear was an appropriate response to such events!

Luke uses, for the first time, the word or term “church” the Greek word “Ecclesia” (“**gathering of those summoned**”), in ancient Greece, assembly of citizens in a city-state. Its roots lay in the Homeric agora, the meeting of the people.

The whole Christian community was seized with great fear, not terror or panic, but awe, wonder and reverence for God!

May that be us at the start of a new year!

APPLICATION

Look at:

Acts Ch5:3 – Lie

Acts Ch7:51 – Resist

Ephesians Ch4:30 – Grieve

1st Thessalonians Ch5:19 – Quench

Hebrews Ch10:29 – Insult/Outraged

What do you think about these texts? Discuss.