

hast thou conceived this thing? The suggestion of the sin came from Satan, but Ananias made the sin his own by his willing consent (compare James 4 : 7). *Not lied unto men, but unto God.* It is not meant, of course, that Ananias had not lied to men, but that the sin of lying to God was so great that lying to men was nothing in comparison. This verse teaches the deity of the Holy Spirit. He is the third person in the Holy Trinity.

Vs. 5, 6. *Ananias hearing . . . gave up the ghost* (literally, "breathed out his life"); a medical expression for death, which fell naturally from the pen of Luke the physician. It is not to be believed that Peter brought the death penalty upon Ananias; it came from the hand of God. So severe a punishment was needful, in order to preserve the young church from the dreadful sins of hypocrisy and greed. *The young men*; literally "the younger men." It is not likely that a special class is meant, who had a definite office; but the reference is to a distinction that was prevalent in the organization of the church, by which responsibility and deference belonged to age, and hard work to youth. *Wrapped him round* (Rev. Ver.); in the robe he was wearing. *Carried . . . out.* Burial follows upon death very quickly in the East, and graves are outside city walls. "It seems as though the episode occurred in some sort of religious assembly" (Century Bible).

II. Peter and Sapphira, 7-11.

Vs. 7, 8. *Three hours after*; sufficient time for the burial of Ananias' body, but not for the news to have reached Sapphira. *Came in*; to the room where Peter and the rest of the congregation were assembled. *Peter answered*, etc.; replying to her salutation. *Tell me*, etc. An opportunity is given to Sapphira, who had been a partner in the crime, to make confession. Peter's question might have made Sapphira suspect that the scheme had been discovered, but she is as firm in her story as her husband had been,—*yea, for so much.*

V. 9. *Agreed together.* The crime was all the worse because it had been deliberately planned and carried out. *To tempt the Spirit of the Lord*; to make trial whether the Holy Spirit would discover their deception,

whether he knew all things. *Behold.* The whole description is full of dramatic intensity. *The feet . . . at the door.* The young men are heard returning from the burial of Ananias. *Shall carry thee out.* It is not said that Peter knew beforehand what would befall Ananias, but from the fact that he knew what was to come upon the wife, it may be concluded that he knew also what the fate of the husband would be.

V. 10. *Fell she down straightway.* The death of Sapphira, like that of Ananias, was clearly a supernatural act. *At his feet*; where the money, for which the pair had sinned, had been laid, and where, perhaps, it was still lying; for Peter would not mix the offering behind which lay such a hypocritical spirit, with the purer offerings of the other brethren. *Yielded up the ghost*; a word rarely used, save by medical writers. Its presence here is one of the proofs that the author of Acts was a physician. Nothing is said of the fate of Ananias and Sapphira in the world beyond the grave.

V. 11. *Great fear . . . upon all the church, and upon as many as heard.* Alike upon those within and those without the church, came an awful sense of the Spirit's presence amongst them, and a trembling dread of incurring his displeasure.

Light from the East

THE RICH AND THE POOR—Our Lord's sayings about the poor (Matt. 6 : 19, 20 ; 10 : 9, 10 ; 19 : 21-24) and the example of his own life (Luke 8 : 3) led some of his followers to interpret literally his blessings on the poor and hungry, Luke 6 : 20, 21, 24, 25. They thought that salvation was to be won by giving away their property, Luke 6 : 34, 35 ; 12 : 21, 33. Most of the Master's followers seem to have been quite poor. It was natural, then, that the spirit of the church should check the pursuit of wealth, especially as nearly every Christian believed that the end of the world was just at hand. The church did not enjoin the abandonment of wealth, but it strongly approved the generosity of such as Barnabas. Acts 4 : 34 to 5 : 11 set an ideal for Christian men of means.

The Jerusalem church seems to have been