

# Kingdom Come (Acts 4:32-5:11)

This is the second time that the reader is told summarily that the people **had all things in common** (Acts 2:44, 4:32). But where the first summary is used to *close* a description of the immediate outworking and character of the early church in its new anointing (Acts 2:43-47) this report *opens* a lesson on the purpose of the power of the Spirit in leaders (Acts 4:32-37), the character of the Spirit as seen in the people being led (Acts 4:34-37), and the penalty of lying to anointed leadership (Acts 5:1-11). This passage is a powerful study in the consequences of surrendered and unsundered living in saints. F. F. Bruce, in his classic commentary on Acts, says

The summary contained in these verses is similar to that in 2:43-47, but serves a different purpose in the narrative. The earlier summary concluded the account of the day of Pentecost; this summary introduces the contrasted episodes of Barnabas and Ananias.

Bruce, F. F. (1988). *The Book of the Acts* (p. 100). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

If you will tarry with me for just a moment in the study of Acts 4:32-5:11 we will come away understanding three things: (1) the *why* of our anointing, (2) the *sign* of our anointing, (3) and the seriousness of seeing one another as anointed.

## When the Kingdom Came (Acts 4:32-35; Romans 14:17)

**<sup>32</sup> Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. <sup>33</sup> And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. <sup>34</sup> Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, <sup>35</sup> and laid *them* at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.**

### The Kingdom Came in Attitude (Acts 4:32a)

The great company of people that has placed its faith in Christ is characterized by unity. They were of **one heart**. That is to say that they were unified in their desire to make Him known; the heart may be regarded as the seat of my desire and central to my consciousness and ability to aspire (Acts 4:29-30; Genesis 6:5-6; Genesis 43:30; Deuteronomy 6:6). They are also said to be of **one soul**. Where the heart is regarded as the seat of my desires the soul encompasses all that I am; it is, in many ways, my identity.

- Psalm 103:1-2 - <sup>1</sup> Bless the Lord, O my soul; And all that is within me, *bless* His holy name! <sup>2</sup> Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits:
- Matthew 16:26 - <sup>26</sup> For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?
- Luke 12:20 - <sup>20</sup> But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'

In fact the word soul means self more than the word self means self. To speak of the saving of oneself is really to refer to the soul. While it may be an acronym the distress letters SOS are said to mean *save our souls* not save our selves. Even today it is common to refer the count of passengers on a plane or ship and the number of souls on board.

The church has no division in it. There are no denominations, no designations for people who believe in tongues and those who don't, no associations for congregations that only use particular translations of the Bible. The church is unified under Jesus and in that sense has one identity or soul.

Arguing is absent and the progress of the church is not hindered by warring agendas; the people are unified in their ambition to make Jesus known (Psalm 133:1-2) - to be His witnesses (Acts 1:8; John 15:27). A disposition of meekness, generosity, and sharing with one another is ruling the day (James 3:13-18). The unanimity in their thinking and desires makes it possible for a grand departure from the world's way of working with things. The kingdom of God came in attitude (Romans 14:17).

### The Kingdom Came in Action (Acts 4:32b)

The new community is nothing like the world around them. They are peculiar, when compared to ancient or modern congregations, in their considerations and their conduct with earthly things. Readers are peering into a strange world when told that **neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own** (Acts 4:32). Think on that: *people who own things consider those things as belonging to the community - as common*. If you force this idea on someone it is [communism](#) and an attempt to better society through an ungodly and dehumanizing overreach into personal affairs. But what do you say when people do it on their own? Imagine the conversation today:

Frank - Walking up to Bob as he is sitting counting out change for bus fare Frank speaks, "Bob, we noticed that you do not have a car and that you need one to get to work. Here are the keys to an Escalade."

Bob - With a look of gladness and confusion he says, "Who's Escalade is this?"

Frank - With a smile he says on behalf of the group Frank says, "Ours."

In the midst of all this harmony and helping one another the Spirit of God is using this period of peculiar peace to make surrounding people see **the resurrection of the Lord Jesus** (Acts 4:33). To what end? The unity, the uncommon sharing, and the supernatural powers are all present for one reason - to make Him known.

<sup>8</sup> But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

In the latter part of Acts 4:33 it says that **great grace or favor was upon them all**. They were experiencing the kingdom (Deuteronomy 15:4). Why?

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### *The Why of Our Anointing*

*With only a modest reading of the New Testament it is obvious that much of present-day talk surrounding the gathering of believers and the anointing of the Holy Spirit is not supported by Heaven. The Spirit's presence among surrendered believers promotes unity under Jesus' name, self-initiated humble sharing of possessions for the needs of Jesus' people, and a display of Jesus-promoting power that cannot be ignored. To what end? That is, why do we receive the*

*Spirit of Holiness? Our Anointing, while of great benefit to our fellowship, is aimed at promoting the recognition of Jesus' Lordship. The Holy Spirit is poured out on us for many reasons. Chief among them is the enabling of a life that is effective in making Jesus known.*

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Luke brings the report on early Christian sharing with two specific examples - one to be admired (Barnabas) and one to be avoided (Ananias and Sapphira).

Barnabas Brings the Kingdom (Acts 4:36-37)

**<sup>36</sup> And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, <sup>37</sup> having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.**

The **And** of Acts 4:36 amplifies what has been said in Acts 4:32-35. A Levite named Joses or Joseph made a decision to receive Jesus as his own personal Lord and Savior. Luke will bring back Joseph later. He is introduced now for the purpose of providing a positive and personal example of the sharing seen in the early church.

It is noteworthy that Joseph is given another name by the apostles; this is usually a sign of respect. [This was done by Jesus Himself for Simon when He was given the name Peter or Cephas (Matthew 16:18; John 1:42). In that case it was a foreshadowing of the fisherman's destiny; he would be a rock in the church.] Barnabas means *Son of Encouragement*. And Barnabas excelled in the encouragement of others (Acts 9:26f; 15:36-39; 11:20-23; 11:24).

- Intercedes to Encourage Acceptance of a Former Pharisee - Paul (Acts 9:26f)
- Encourages a Deserter with a Second Chance - Mark (Acts 15:26-39)
- Encourages the Church in Reaching Rejected Jews - Antiochene Christians (Acts 11:20-23)

The encouraging ministry of Barnabas is explained as a ministry of the Spirit through him (Acts 11:24). Having introduced the positive example Luke briefly shows him in the Spirit-inspired activity of great giving (Acts 4:37). Of his own accord Barnabas sold his land and then laid the total amount at the apostles' feet. In doing this he speaks volumes to us about what it means to be in the church.

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### *The Indicator of Our Anointing*

*His fellowship goes farther than mere membership. It works to meet needs and encourage the family of God. In Barnabas' example is the complete surrender of self to Jesus and a high regard for those He*

*has put in leadership. It sees him giving without trying to control the gift.*

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Ananias Brings the World (Acts 5:1-11; James 3:14-15)

**<sup>1</sup> But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. <sup>2</sup> And he kept back *part* of the proceeds, his wife also being aware *of it*, and brought a certain part and laid *it* at the apostles' feet. <sup>3</sup> But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back *part* of the price of the land for yourself? <sup>4</sup> While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." <sup>5</sup> Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. <sup>6</sup> And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried *him* out, and buried *him*. <sup>7</sup> Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. <sup>8</sup> And Peter answered her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?" She said, "Yes, for so much." <sup>9</sup> Then Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband *are* at the door, and they will carry you out." <sup>10</sup> Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying *her* out, buried *her* by her husband. <sup>11</sup> So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.**

The **But** of Acts 5:1 antagonizes the message of Acts 4:32-35. Where Barnabas sold his land and brought the entire proceed to the church for its use, Ananias merely claimed to do this. His sin, with Sapphira his wife, was not in keeping back part of the price of the land. Peter makes it clear that he could have done that. There would have been no fault in giving only a portion of the sale to the church. In fact, Ananias could have kept the land in his own possession without there being a problem. His contribution was not compulsory (Acts 5:3-4).

Why did he do it? He and his wife wanted to be counted with the highly committed while still keeping a foot in the world. But, with a discernment that was given to him by the Holy Spirit, Peter explains why the plan would not work.

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### *The Seriousness of Not Seeing the Anointing*

*Ananias failed to acknowledge the Anointing as he acted out his trespass. Even in the presence of continuous expressions of Heaven's power he made the mistake of regarding men after the flesh and the fellowship as being no more than what he could see. But the men leading were apostles; they were anointed by God and now able to do and see things above and beyond what is possible for mere men. The fellowship is not only with the seen but also with the unseen Spirit of the Lord. And the fellowship, treated as common,*

*was in fact consecrated. He was tragically unholy in dealing with a people made holy by the Spirit of Holiness.*

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In light of all that Ananias had seen in the way of wonders it is amazing and confounding to Peter that he could have been so dull in thinking that his sin would not be seen. How? The answer is Satan. As in the garden he had been working to deceive someone in paradise. After a while he was able to convince this man to lie to the Spirit. And what could have been worse than giving Satan his first entry into the new fellowship? Peter does not punish the man but explains the foolishness that is judged by God Himself. Upon hearing these words Ananias dies.

Sapphira colludes with her husband to mislead the church. But the plan will fail with tragic results. Asked if what she brought was the entire sales price of the land Sapphira says that it was (Acts 5:8). Another lie. As in so many Old Testament cases the opportunity to confess was given. Instead she took the opportunity to confirm her decision **to test the Spirit of the Lord**. She also dies and was carried away to be buried with her husband.

Although this is bad, consider with me the consequences. Luke says that the result of this rebuke was that **great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things** (Acts 5:11). The loss of earthly life has produced in the church a profound reverence for the presence of Christ and the position of the apostles. Christ in our midst at communion is serious; by treating it lightly we bring upon ourselves judgement. Christ at work through the leadership of the apostles is serious; by treating them as mere men the meaning of the miracles is missed and the power at work in them is disrespected.

### Questions for Community Discussion

1. In the verses of Acts 4:32-37 we are given a general description of the character of the new community. How does Luke give us an example of that character?
2. Would you be willing to part ways with your stuff to ensure that the needs of other believers in our fellowship are met? What encouragement did they have (Acts 4:33)?
3. What explains their ability to show this level of generosity (Ephesians 4:17-21; Romans 5:5; 1 John 5:1)?
4. What was the difference between the gift of Barnabas and the gift of Ananias (Acts 4:36-37; 5:1-4)?
5. Is your giving about gratitude toward God and worship or is it about garnering praise, creating a perception of piety, and generating an image of generosity.
6. Does it matter if your presentation of an offering does not line up with the truth (John 4:24)?
7. Do you think that Ananias was saved? Consider the words of 1 Corinthians 5:5 as you formulate an answer.