

## **Acts 5:1-16 The Holy Spirit**

**Intro:** You'll notice the title of today's message, "The Holy Spirit". This is not a topical message where we will deal with all or even most of the things that the Bible teaches on the Holy Spirit. However, given the nature of the text we just read, I think it is accurate to say that Luke did write these things to inform Theophilus about this Holy Spirit that descended in chapter 2.

You'll remember that this passage was set up last week with the introduction of Barnabas who sold a piece of land and set it at the apostle's feet (4:36-37). Barnabas will be mentioned later in Acts, but for Luke's immediate purpose, he is set up as a standard of integrity. Notice the very first word of verse 1... "but". Luke is showing the contrast between Barnabas and Annanias and Sapphira to introduce us to these three aspects of the Holy Spirit:

### **3 Items of Note: Substance, Character and Work of the Holy Spirit**

#### **I. Substance: Deity and Personality of the HS (v3-4)**

A. Definition of Substance: the stuff of something someone's essence. What they are.

B. Deity (that He is God) end of v4. Q:1

C. Personhood

1. "He" is the proper way to address the HS

2. Not "it".

3. Issue is our English use of the word "the".

D. Not Modalism where God appears as different persons at different points in time.

E. Read the first 28 (of 40) verses of the Athanasian Creed:

[1] Whoever desires to be saved should above all hold to the catholic<sup>1</sup> faith. [2] Anyone who does not keep it whole and unbroken will doubtless perish eternally.[3] Now this is the catholic faith: that we worship one God in Trinity and the Trinity in unity, [4] neither confounding their persons nor dividing the essence. [5] For the person of the Father is a distinct person, the person of the Son is another, and that of the Holy Spirit still another. [6] But the divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one, the glory equal, the majesty coeternal. [7] Such as the Father is, such is the Son and such is the Holy Spirit. [8] The Father is uncreated, the Son is uncreated, the Holy Spirit is uncreated. [9] The Father is immeasurable, the Son is immeasurable, the Holy Spirit is immeasurable.

[10] The Father is eternal, the Son is eternal, the Holy Spirit is eternal. [11] And yet there are not three eternal beings; there is but one eternal being. [12] So too there are not three uncreated or immeasurable beings; there is but one uncreated and immeasurable being. [13] Similarly, the Father is almighty, the Son is almighty, the Holy Spirit is almighty. [14] Yet there are not three almighty beings; there is but one almighty being. [15] Thus, the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God. [16] Yet there are not three gods; there is but one God. [17] Thus, the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, the Holy Spirit is Lord. [18] Yet there are not three lords; there is but one Lord. [19] Just as Christian truth compels us to confess each person individually as

both God and Lord, [20] so catholic religion forbids us to say that there are three gods or lords. [21] The Father was neither made nor created nor begotten from anyone. [22] The Son was neither made nor created; he was begotten from the Father alone. [23] The Holy Spirit was neither made nor created nor begotten; he proceeds from the Father and the Son. [24] Accordingly, there is one Father, not three fathers; there is one Son, not three sons; there is one Holy Spirit, not three holy spirits. [25] None in this Trinity is before or after, none is greater or smaller; [26] in their entirety the three persons are coeternal and coequal with each other. [27] So in everything, as was said earlier, the unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in unity, is to be worshipped. [28] Anyone then who desires to be saved should think thus about the Trinity.

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1 “Catholic” means universal; that is, there is one church across all times, places, and peoples (Belgic Confession, art. 27; Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 54).

2 See Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 44; Canons of Dort, 2.4.

## II. The Character of the Holy Spirit: The Holiness of God and the Death of Annanias and Sapphira **Q2 “Attribute” (v1-11)**

- A. God killed them because they lied. 9<sup>th</sup> Commandment Violation (Ex 20; Dt 5) **Q3**
- B. OT Examples: At least 36 Occasions and anywhere between individuals (many occasions) **Q4**, 42 youths, 102 soldiers, 24 thousand Israelites, to 20 Million people in the flood.
- C. The other NT example is Acts 12:23 God kills Herod.
- D. The example of Uzzah in 2Sam 6. He thought that he was less dirty than the dirt. He was wrong. This goes to a fundamental problem with people today and probably for all time. Namely, that we don’t think we are as bad as we are.
- E. Isaiah 6, 3x Holy. Not loving, just, kind, etc.
  - a. He is still Holy x3
  - b. **Q5** It is heresy to say that the God of the Old Testament is not the same as the God of the New Testament
  - c. Marcionism 144AD
- F. He is “not safe” referring to Aslan in CS Lewis’ Lion Witch and the Wardrobe.
  - a. Cf v 5 & 11 “fear”
- G. He is STILL Holy. Luke is making that point. The Spirit of God is the HOLY Spirit.

## III. The Work of the H.S.: Authentication of the Gospel through Signs and Wonders (v12-16)

- A. What they are saying and doing is so shocking that it must be confirmed by miraculous events that are undeniable.
- B. The giving of new revelation is what is causing these events. Q6
- C. That is why, by and large, such a thing does not happen today. Namely, the canon of Scripture is complete and there is no new revelation.

If your “word from the Lord” is not in alignment with the Bible, you’re a liar.

If it is congruent with the Bible, it was unnecessary.

God commanded the people in the OT to kill false prophets (Dt 13:1-5).

- saying “thus says the Lord” when He has not said is a very serious thing.

- link to loving God and executing false teachers.

- \*flies in the face of the sentimentalism of our day that focuses on feelings and experiences

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- 1&2 Timothy devoted to “sound doctrine” and guarding against false teachers.

- anyone who says that “God told them” or spoke to them is highly suspect.

- what most contemporary, otherwise orthodox people mean when they say this, is that

God illuminated their mind to the Scriptures. And, that’s what they should say. However, there are people who truly believe that they literally or in some strange way, hear the voice of God. For instance, John Eldridge, the very popular author of the book on manhood *Wild at Heart* routinely leads men on this strange practice of “hearing the voice of God.” It’s not all bad but the practice itself is very wrong headed. It tends to breed a superstitious view of discerning the secret will of God and fosters an immaturity lacking sound doctrine and gravitas.

This is what so many in modern, evangelical churches don’t get. We need the historic faith of our fathers, rooted in the Scriptures, explained by the creeds and confessions, and bourn out by centuries. What we don’t need is some kind of baptized hocus pocus spirituality that sometimes has more in common with New Age superstition than it does Biblical Christianity.

This is a really big deal today. We have so many people paralyzed trying to figure out the will of God for themselves and people like John Eldridge are very damaging to the psyche of people. The proliferation of Henry Blackaby’s *Experiencing God* study has exacerbated this unhealthy mysticism.

By the way, the irony is that most of these people are not theologians but psychologists or counselors. We don’t need more psychology. We don’t need more therapy. We need the power of the Spirit of God to open our minds to the Word of God to live out the mission of God. We need men, and women, and boys and girls who, being indwelled by the Spirit of God, obey the clear commands of Scripture and are educated and inculcated with the Word of truth. We need people of substance and gravitas, not these flighty, emotionally out of sort folks that have

this weak anemic faith of modernity. The proliferation of psychology in Christianity has led to a major decline in maturity and has created more victimhood and fragility in the faith, not less.

I'm not questioning the motives of those producing these materials. I'm not condemning the intent of those who utilize these works. I'm saying that they are not wholistically Biblical. They are not rooted in the historic Christian faith. They posit weak New Age positivism, and modern behavioral psychological presuppositions, and neglect the weightier more powerful ancient faith of our fathers.

Quit listening to those authors, teachers, voices, and so-called preachers. Stop trying to figure out if God really loves you, or if you're really saved, or looking for some kind of a sign. That is nothing more than continuing to do laps around Sinai. Get on with it. Learn how to be a man, a woman, a child of God. Understand that the Reformed faith is a comprehensive approach to life that answers all of life's major questions. It has a vision for the family, the church and the state. It has a deep understanding of virtually everything in God's green earth. We don't have to figure it out. That is extraordinarily freeing! We don't have to try to discern the will of God. It's written down and has been teased out for 2000 years! We don't have to labor to understand what God wants. We know what God wants. We just need to do it. We don't have to figure out the plan, we just have to run the plays.

We need to obey the clear commands of the Scriptures and trust God to fill in the details. That doesn't mean that we can't think seriously about life's decisions. That's why we have the whole counsel of God that includes wisdom literature. It also tells us to seek godly counsel from wise, or skilled people. There are tons of great materials on marriage, parenting, finances, relationships, and much more. We don't need an additional word from the Lord, we need to read, hear, understand, and put into practice the word we already have. If I'm a man and I'm not obeying the clear commands of scripture to lead my wife and to raise my children in the fear and admonition of the Lord, there's no point in working on other ideas. If I'm not providing and protecting well, I've missed the boat. If as a married woman, I'm not helping my husband and submitting to his leadership, what am I doing? If as a single person I'm not obeying God's clear vision for singleness in 1Cor 7, I'm just like the world. If as a child, I'm not obeying my parents but being a rebellious and hard headed disrespectful chump, I cannot say that I have fellowship with God.

The problem is that we want God to speak about specific issues that He gives us general principles for. We want him to fix our job situation, or our circumstances, or whatever. But, He gives us information about how to relate to Himself, our families, the church, the government, and the world. He gives us information that we don't want many times but it is the information that we need. It is good and right and food for our souls. It directs our paths and leads us in the way of righteousness. Here today, just as I gave an open invitation last week for those with

financial needs to come, we also give an open invitation to anyone needing counselling on God's wisdom for life. He has given us not only His word, but His Spirit indwelling His people, full of grace and truth. That is one of the benefits of being in one of our men's or women's studies, it's not just the content of the study but the camaraderie and mutual benefit of counsel and wisdom in and through the gathering together in a smaller environment.

What has the Spirit of God encouraged, convicted, or brought to mind to you today? Would you obey Him?

### **Conclusion:**

The work of the Holy Spirit is not a secret. What He is (God and the Third Person), What He is like (Holy) and what He is doing are not secrets to be discovered. They are truths that have been revealed. We just need to rearrange our thinking and obey Him.

### **Prayer:**

Lord God of Truth, would you help us to do just that? Help us, because of what Christ has done, and because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, to walk faithfully with you in a manner worthy of the Gospel. Would you now, impart to us conviction and repentance where we have come up short and restore to us the joy of our salvation. Help us to run away from immature things and to pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace with those who call upon the name of the Lord (2Tim 2:22). In Christ's name we ask it. Amen.

### **Direct Textual Questions:**

1. What two things about the Holy Spirit do we learn from this passage? What is He not? Why does this matter?
2. What attribute(s) of God is/are displayed in this passage?
3. Why did God kill Annanias and Sapphira?
4. How many times in the OT did God directly kill people?
5. What is heresy? What is Marcionism?
6. What is the purpose of signs and wonders? Why don't we see them today?
7. What do you do with a person who claims to hear from God or to say that God spoke to them?
8. What is a more accurate way to describe what most people mean when they say that God spoke to them?
9. How do we respond to people who claim to have real, extrabiblical revelation?