

## **“The Perfect Church”**

*Acts 4:23-5:11*

- I. The Activity of the Church (4:23-37)
  - A. The Church at \_\_\_\_\_ (4:23-31)
    1. They \_\_\_\_\_ (4:24)
    2. They \_\_\_\_\_ (4:31)
  - B. The Church at \_\_\_\_\_ (4:32-37)
    1. They were \_\_\_\_\_ (4:32a)
    2. They were \_\_\_\_\_ (4:32-37)
  
- II. The Hypocrisy in the Church (5:1-11)
  - A. The \_\_\_\_\_ (5:1-2, 7-8)
  - B. The \_\_\_\_\_ (5:3, 9)
  - C. The \_\_\_\_\_ (5:4, 9)
  - D. The \_\_\_\_\_ (5:5-6, 10)

In saying the sin is that of testing God’s Spirit, Peter recalls the Old Testament testing tradition and in particular Israel’s experience in the wilderness. Even before coming into the wilderness and during their years there Israel had good evidence of the reality and presence of God. He had divided the sea and defeated Pharaoh. He had provided food and water for them. But he also announced his intention to test them (Ex. 15:25). He let them come into hard places to see if they responded with trust or mistrust. In Exodus 17 they came to a place named “Testing” (Massah). Again there was no water. Again the people responded with mistrust: “Is the LORD among us or not?” (Ex 17:7). This mistrust and the demand that God act or they will not believe that he is among them is termed “testing God.” In fact, God later says that Israel “tested me ten times” (Num. 14:22). It is no wonder that Deuteronomy 6:16 says, “Do not test the LORD your God as you did at Massah.” The same theme is repeated later (Ps. 78:18, 41, 56; 95:9; 106:14). The Jews were quite aware of this tradition, for it was picked up quite often in their literature.

Peter, then, is saying to Sapphira that in spite of the evident presence in the church of the Spirit of the Lord (“the Lord” here refers to Jesus) she and her husband chose to attempt to “pull a fast one” on him. Their lie contained within it the assumption that the Spirit would do nothing; conscious or not, it was a challenge as to whether God was really present in the church. Will he respond, or will he turn a blind eye to their deception? As noted later in the New Testament (Acts 15:10; I Cor. 10:9), that is a dangerous challenge. God responds, and they die. - *Hard Sayings of the Bible.*