

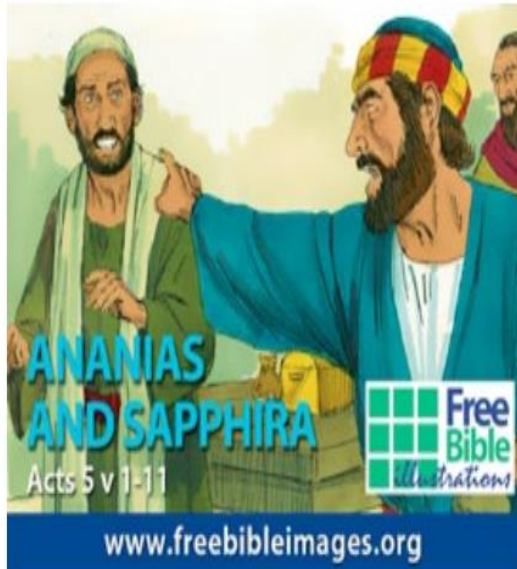
ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA & THE APOSTLES ARE PERSECUTED

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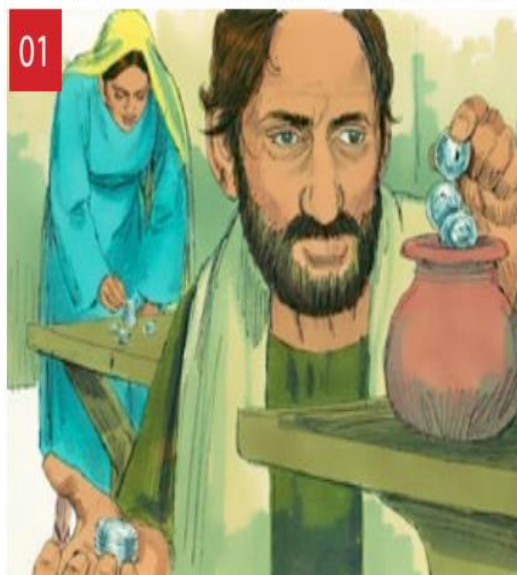
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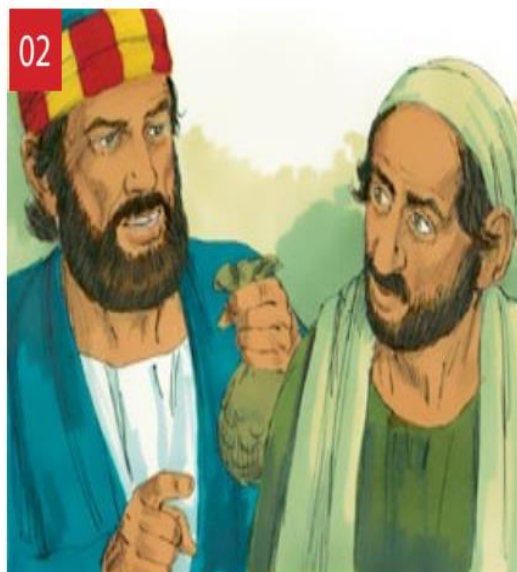
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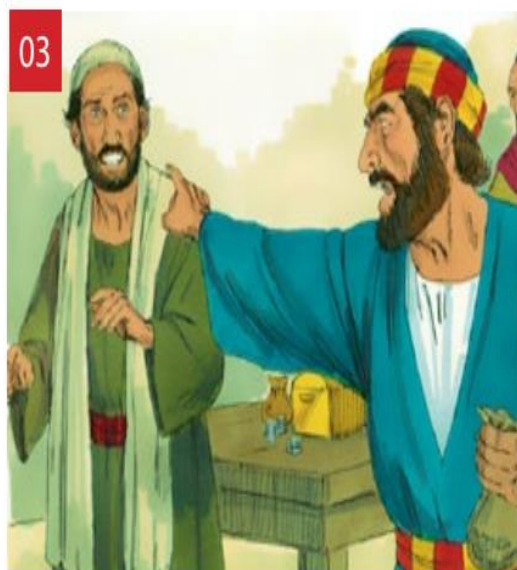
Many of the early Christians sold their possessions and gave all the money raised to help others in need. Ananias and Sapphira sold a piece of property they owned. However when they were paid they decided to keep some of the money but deceive others into thinking they had given it all to God.



Peter saw through their deceit and confronted Ananias. 'How is it that Satan has got you to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep some of the money for yourselves?' he asked.

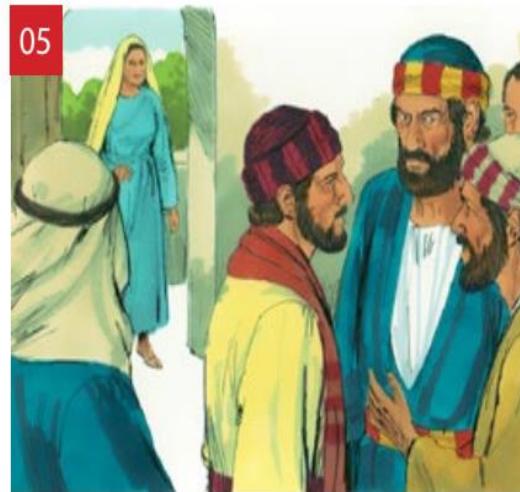


'It was your money to do with as you wanted but why did you lie and say you had given it all? You have not only lied to us but also to God!'





When Ananias heard this he fell to the ground and died. Some young men wrapped up his body, carried him out and buried him. When others heard what had happened they were very afraid.



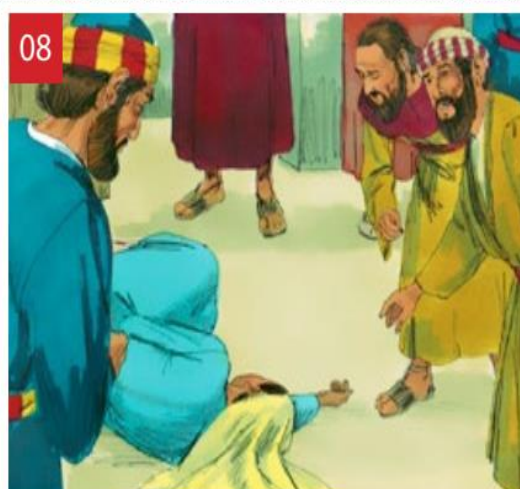
Three hours later Ananias's wife Sapphira returned home, unaware what had happened to her husband.



Peter asked, 'Is the money you gave the full amount you got for the land you sold?' 'Yes,' she lied. 'That is the price.'



'How could you both agree to deceive the Lord?' Peter demanded. 'The men who have just buried Ananias are at the door and they will carry you out as well.'



Immediately she fell to the floor and died. Her body was taken out and buried by the same men who had buried her husband. The whole church was shocked and afraid when they heard how severely God had deal with Ananias and Sapphira.

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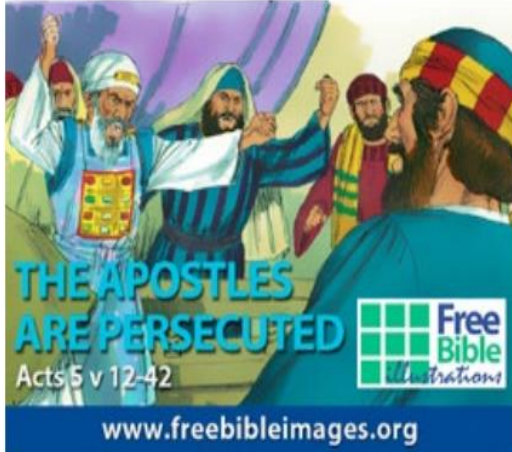
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DESCRIPTION

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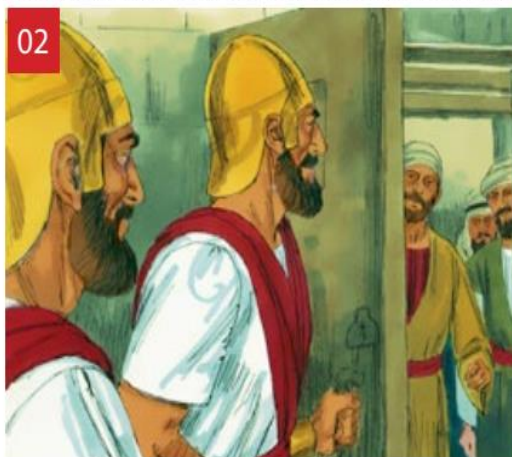
Acts 5:12-42



God's power was seen in many miracles the Apostles did among the people. More and more believed in Jesus. People brought the sick out into the streets and crowds gathered from the surrounding towns. All of them were healed.



The High Priest and his associates became very jealous of the popularity of the Apostles. So they had them arrested and put in prison.



During the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the prison and let them out. 'Go into the Temple courts,' the angel instructed, 'and tell the people all about this new life.'



At day break the apostles obeyed and started teaching in the Temple courts. Meanwhile the High priest was being told that the prison was securely locked with the guards outside the doors but the Apostles were not inside.'



Someone arrived to report, 'The men you put in jail are teaching in the Temple courts.'

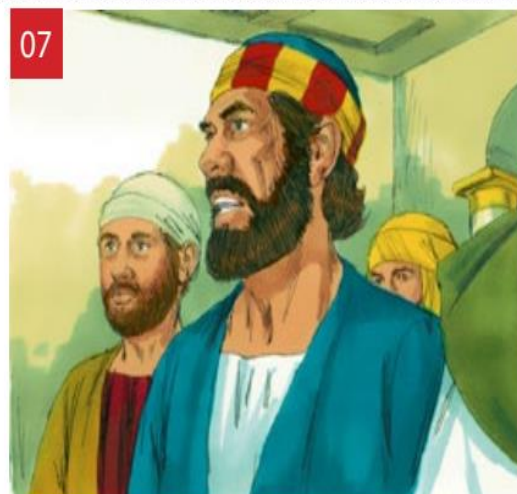
The captain and his officers were dispatched to bring the Apostles before the Jewish leaders of the Sanhedrin.



'We gave you strict orders not to teach in the name of Jesus,' the High Priest fumed. 'You have filled the city with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty for the death of Jesus.'



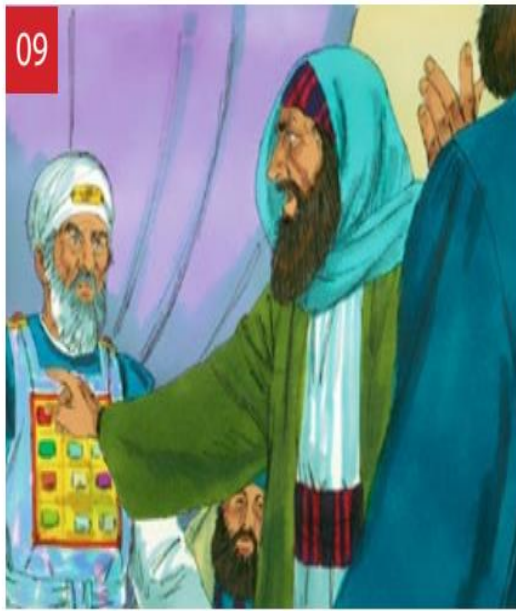
'We must obey God before human beings,' Peter replied. 'God has raised Jesus from the dead and has exalted Him as Prince and Saviour so that bring us to repent and have forgiveness for our sins. We are witnesses to this.'



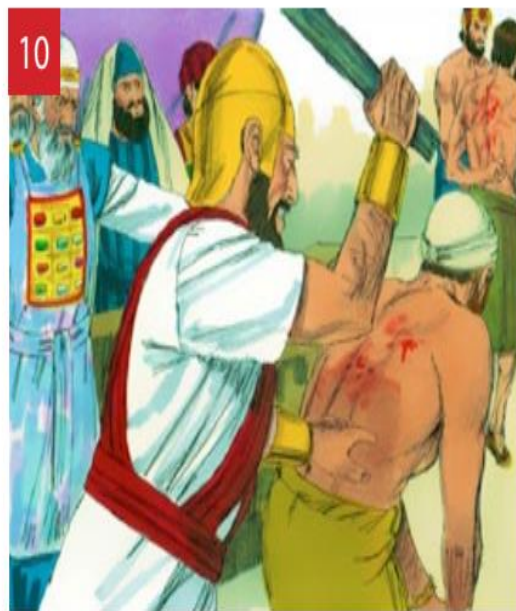
When the Jewish leaders heard this they were so furious they wanted to put the Apostles to death.



However, a respected Pharisee, Gamaliel, asked that the Apostles were taken outside. 'Some in the past have claimed to be the Messiah and gathered followers but none of them have succeeded,' Gamaliel pointed out. 'If these men are using human power they will fail, but if God is behind them you will not be able to stop them.'



Gamaliel's speech persuaded the Jewish leaders not to kill the Apostles. Instead the Apostles were brought back in and flogged. Then they were ordered once more not to speak in the name of Jesus.



The Apostles left, not feeling sorry for themselves, but happy they had been worthy to suffer for Jesus. Every day they continued to tell others that Jesus was the Saviour, the Messiah.

