

Acts 5:3 and 4

(3) Then Peter said, “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land?

(4) Didn’t it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn’t the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men, but to God.” (NIV)

1. We must understand that both “God” and “*pneuma hagion*” (“holy spirit”) can refer to something other than a separate “person” in the Trinity. Since there is no verse that actually states the doctrine of the Trinity, its existence is built from assumption and by piecing verses together. Verses such as Acts 5:3 and 4 are used as “proof,” for the doctrine, but that is actually circular reasoning. The doctrine is assumed, and then, because this verse fits the assumption, it is stated to be proof of the doctrine. However, at best these verses could offer minimal support for the Trinity because there are other completely acceptable ways to handle them, specifically that “the Holy Spirit” is sometimes another designation for God.

2. It is clear in these verses that God and “the Holy Spirit” are equated, and this has caused Trinitarians to claim that this proves their case that God and “the Holy Spirit” are the same. But these verses are clearly an example of Semitic parallelism, which is one of the most commonly employed literary devices in Scripture. “God” is equated with “the Holy Spirit.” Obviously, the point is that Ananias did not lie to two different persons, but to one person, God, and the parallelism serves to emphasize that fact.

3. Trinitarians believe that “the Holy Spirit” is the third “person” in the three-person Trinity. Non-Trinitarians say that no “third person” exists. The original texts were all capital letters, so every use was “HOLY SPIRIT.” There are times in the English versions when “spirit” is spelled with a capital “S” and times when it has a lower case “s.” This is all the work of the translators, because all the early Greek manuscripts were in all capital letters. Thus, whether “HOLY SPIRIT” should be translated as “Holy Spirit” or “holy spirit” must be determined from the context (for more on capitalization and punctuation, see the notes on Hebrews 1:8).

To the non-Trinitarian, the holy spirit is either 1) another name for God the Father (in which case it is capitalized), 2) the power of God in operation, or 3) the gift of God’s nature (spirit) that is given to each believer. Peter spoke of this gift on the Day of Pentecost when he said, “ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38 - KJV). Because *pneuma* has several meanings the context of a passage of Scripture must always be studied carefully to determine the correct meaning.

4. God is known by many names and designations in the Bible. *Elohim*, *El Shaddai*, *Yahweh*, *Adon*, “the Holy One of Israel,” “the Most High” and “the Father” are just a few. Since God is “holy” and God is “spirit,” it should not surprise us that one of the names of God, the Father, is “the Holy Spirit.” The distinguished scholar and author of *Young’s Concordance*, Robert Young, wrote: “Spirit—is used of God himself, or the Divine

Mind, His energy, influence, gifts.”¹ When *pneuma hagion*, “holy spirit,” is being used as another name for the Father, it should be capitalized, just as any name is capitalized.

When “holy spirit” refers to the spirit that God gives as a gift, it should not be capitalized. Biblically, “the Holy Spirit” is quite different from “the holy spirit.” The record of the birth of Christ in Luke provides a good example of why it is important to recognize whether the “Holy Spirit” refers to the power of God or another name for God. “The angel answered, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God’ “ (Luke 1:35). This verse and Matthew 1:18-20 make Jesus Christ the Son of the Holy Spirit, yet all the other references to Jesus make him the Son of the Father. Did Jesus have two fathers? Of course not. In the records of Christ’s birth, “the Holy Spirit” is another way of referring to God Himself, and not a third person in the Trinity. This eliminates the “problem” of which person in the Trinity actually fathered Jesus. Also in Acts 5:3, “Holy Spirit” is another name for God. For a much more complete explanation of the uses of “holy spirit,” see *The Gift of Holy Spirit: Every Christian’s Divine Deposit*, available from CES. See also Appendix I.

Buzzard, pp. 101-107

Farley, pp. 96-108

Morgridge, pp. 129-138

Endnotes:

1. Young’s Concordance, Hints and Helps #66 (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 1964).

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