

John 18:25-27

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Peter Denies Knowing Jesus Two More Times

Peter's second and third denials of Jesus occur during the Lord's religious trial held at Caiaphas's house. One of the men to whom Peter denies being with Jesus is a relative of Malchus, the servant whose ear Peter cut off when defending Jesus at His arrest. After this third denial, a rooster crows, thus fulfilling Jesus's prediction that Peter would deny Him three times before the rooster crows.

The parallel gospel accounts of this event are found in Matthew 26:72-75; Mark 14:68b-72; and Luke 22:58-62.

The main event in this passage is *Peter's* final two denials of *Jesus*.

Peter's first denial of his Lord occurred in the courtyard of the former *high priest*, Annas, during *Jesus's* preliminary trial (John 18:15-18). It happened a “little” before these other two denials (Luke 22:58).

Peter's second and third denials most likely took place on the night of Nisan 15 (the dark and dim hours of Friday morning by Roman reckoning) in the courtyard of Caiaphas, *the high priest*, as *Jesus's* second night-time trial was underway inside Caiaphas's home.

See “[The Bible Says Timeline of Jesus's Final 24 Hours](#)” to learn more about the timing and sequencing of this event.

As was observed in TheBibleSays commentary for John 18:15-18 discussing *Simon Peter's* first denial of *Jesus*, there were three significant moments as part of the back-story leading up to *Peter's* denials. We will only restate them in summary here. If the reader desires to see a fuller explanation of these three significant moments, they can be found here.

The first moment was *Jesus's* warnings to *Peter* that *he* would deny *Him* three times before the rooster crowed that night. *Jesus* appears to have warned *Peter* of this twice: once in the upper room following *Jesus* and the *disciples'* celebration of the Passover (Luke 22:31-34; John 13:38); and again as they walked to the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:34; Mark 14:30). As *Jesus* gave *Peter* this warning, *Peter* strongly disagreed with his Rabbi and swore *he* would never deny *Him* and that *he* would die for *Him* (Matthew 26:33, 35; Mark 14:29, 31; Luke 22:33; John 13:37).

The second moment was in the Garden of Gethsemane, when *Jesus* asked *Peter* and the other *disciples* to “pray that you may not enter into temptation” (Luke 22:40). *Jesus* was trying to prepare them for the most difficult trial they had yet faced—the trial of seeing their Lord arrested, crucified, and buried for three days. But instead of praying, as *Jesus* told them to do,

Peter and the other *disciples* fell asleep (Mark 14:37). Therefore, when the trial came, none of the *disciples* were prepared to overcome it by faith and in God's strength. All of them were spiritually weak.

The third moment came when Jesus submitted to arrest and rebuked *Peter* for trying to attack *His* captors (Matthew 26:52-54; Luke 22:49-53; John 18:7-11). By defending Jesus, *Peter* showed that *he* was ready to die for Jesus as *he* claimed, but when Jesus submitted to arrest, *Peter* and the rest of *His disciples* fled in fear and confusion (Matthew 26:56; Mark 14:50). *Peter* and the rest of the *disciples* were prepared to die and follow Jesus on their own terms, but they were not prepared to do so on *His* terms. In this moment, they did not have the faith to follow Jesus when circumstances diverged from their expectations.

After Jesus was taken away, *Peter* followed the armed captors at a distance all the way to Annas's house (Matthew 26:58; John 18:12-13, 15). Once there, another disciple (probably John) who also followed Jesus and knew the door keeper at the high priest's house asked his friend if he would let *Peter* inside, which he did (John 18:15-16). As *Peter* was inside warming himself by the fire, a slave-girl asked him if *he* was one of Jesus's *disciples*. And *Peter* said: "I am not" (John 18:17; see also Matthew 26:69-70; Mark 14:66-68a; Luke 22:54b-57).

This was *Peter's* first denial of Jesus.

From there *Peter* followed the proceedings from Jesus's preliminary trial in the home of Annas, the former high priest, to Jesus's night-time religious trial in the home of Caiaphas, the sitting high priest (Matthew 26:57-58; John 18:24).

In the courtyard of Caiaphas was where *Peter's* second and third denials took place. Luke writes that *Peter* asserted his second denial of Jesus, "a little later" from the first denial, which suggests that *he* did this around the time Jesus's second trial was getting started (Luke 22:58).

John describes the scene:

Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself (v 25a).

But it seems that as *Peter* was leaving Jesus's preliminary trial at Annas's house and stepped "out onto the porch" (Mark 14:68) and had "gone out to the gateway, another servant-girl saw him and said to those who were there, 'This man was with Jesus of Nazareth'" (Matthew 26:71).

These men took note of *Peter* and when they saw him *standing and warming himself* by the fire in Caiaphas' courtyard a little later, *they said to him*, "You are not also one of His disciples, are you?" (v 25b).

Again, *He denied it, and said*, "I am not" (v 25b).

This was the second time *Peter denied* knowing Jesus. And it was the second time *he* failed to keep his promise that *he* would never deny *Him* (Matthew 26:35).

Matthew records that this time, *Peter denied* knowing Jesus with “an oath” (Matthew 26:72). By denying Jesus with an oath, it gave greater strength and force to the denial than *Peter’s* first denial of his Lord.

Once again, the Greek word Matthew uses for “know” in *Peter’s* expression “I do not know” is a form of οἶδα (G1492 – pronounced: “Oi'-dah). This word describes theoretical knowledge. It is different from the other common Greek word for “I know” which is γινώσκω (G1097 – pronounced “Ghin-ōs-kō”). “Ghinōskō” describes relational or experiential knowledge or familiarity. By denying that he “oidah” Jesus, *Peter* is implying that *he* knows little to nothing about Him.

To say *he did not* “ginōskō” Jesus would mean that *Peter* may have talked with *Him* once or twice, but that he was not a real follower of Jesus. But to say that *he did not* “oidah” Jesus implied that *Peter* knew nothing of Jesus at all and/or had never interacted with *Him*. Therefore *Peter’s* “oidah” denial was a much stronger and more absolute denial than if *he* had merely *said he did not* “ghinōskō” Jesus.

“After about an hour had passed” (Luke 22:59) *Peter denied Jesus again* (v 27). He seems to have done this after Jesus’s second trial was over, which would suggest that this trial lasted “about an hour.”

This time: *One of the slaves of the high priest, being a relative of Malchus* (John 18:10) *the one whose ear Peter cut off, said, “Did I not see you in the garden with Him?”* (v 26).

John again phrases this servant’s accusation as a question—*Did I not see you in the garden with Him?* Apparently, this slave went with Judas, the Jewish leaders, and the Roman into *the garden* of Gethsemane to arrest Jesus. This man personally recognized the disciple who *cut off* the ear of his *relative*.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all mention how this servant commented about how *Peter’s* Galilean accent or manners also gave *Peter* away (Matthew 26:73; Mark 14:70; Luke 22:59).

John observes that *Peter then denied it again* (v 27a).

Matthew writes that *Peter* “began to curse and swear, ‘I do not know (“oidah”) the man!’” (Matthew 26:74a). In Matthew’s progression, first *he* simply denied knowing Jesus (Matthew 26:70), then gave an oath that *he did not* know *Him* (Matthew 26:72); finally, *he* cursed and swore that *he did not* know the man (Matthew 26:74; Mark 14:71).

All four Gospels record the moment *Peter* denied Jesus the third time: *and immediately a rooster crowed* (v 27) (See also Matthew 26:74; Mark 14:72). Luke goes so far as to say that the *rooster crowed* “while he was still speaking” (Luke 22:60).

Luke also includes this bitter detail, that as the rooster crowed during *Peter’s* third denial:

“The Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, ‘Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times.’”
(Luke 22:61)

Jesus and *Peter* made eye contact as the Lord’s accusers were taking *Him* from Caiaphas’s house to Jesus’s “official” religious trial before the Sanhedrin, which was scheduled for sunrise. When *Peter* saw Jesus, his Lord, whom *he* had denied, *he* recalled what Jesus had told him *he* would do and what *Peter* swore *he* would never do, and yet had now done—“you will deny Me three times” (Luke 22:61).

Luke then comments how Peter: “went out and wept bitterly” (Luke 22:62 – see also Matthew 26:75b; Mark 14:72).

This was *Peter*’s lowest moment. He had failed himself. But what was likely the most crushing of all was that he had failed Jesus. It is unlikely that *Peter* also recalled in this bitter moment what Jesus had also assured him when He told *His disciples* that they would all fall away (Matthew 26:31), “But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee” (Matthew 26:32). Though Peter had fallen and denied his Lord, there was still hope, even if Peter did not recall it as he wept bitterly.

Peter might have had this experience in mind years later when he penned his first epistle, in which he wrote:

“In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”
(1 Peter 1:6-7)

The same is true for all who believe in Jesus. If we belong to *Him* there is no condemnation (Romans 8:1), no sin (Romans 5:20), no danger, no disgrace, no death that will be able to separate us from His love (Romans 8:37-38). Even in the trials where we stumble and fall, God will redeem and use them to conform us to His image (Romans 8:29). But those trials we endure will prove our faith, and gain us great reward. Instead of a stinging rebuke, as *Peter* experienced, we can receive “praise and honor” from Jesus for our faithfulness.

[To see all three of Peter’s denials from the perspective of Matthew, go to The Bible Says commentary page for Matthew 26:69-75.](#)

Biblical Text

²⁵ Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, “You are not also one of His disciples, are you?” He denied it, and said, “I am not.”²⁶ One of the slaves of the high priest, being a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off, said, “Did I not see you in the garden with Him?”²⁷ Peter then denied it again, and immediately a rooster crowed.