

Bi123 The Gospels 2

Lesson Bi123-18 Peter's Denial

We have studied how several people wanted to follow Jesus. Because they refused to pay the price of being a disciple, they went away sad. There was something they wanted more than they wanted Jesus. What do you think happens when a follower of Jesus, overcome by fear, refuses to tell someone they are a believer? What is the response of Jesus? Peter had declared strongly to Jesus, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you. And all the others said the same" (Mark 14:31). But when he felt afraid, he did disown his Lord.

In your last lesson you learned what happened in the upper story of the house of Annas. He was the former high priest and father-in-law to Caiaphas, the ruling high priest. While Annas was questioning Jesus, another drama unfolded in the courtyard below. A fire had been kindled in the middle of the courtyard. The apostle Peter sat down with the servants and officials to warm himself. One of the servant girls of the high priest, perhaps the door keeper, happened to come by. When she saw Peter seated there in the firelight, she looked closely at him. "You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus," she said.

But he denied it. "I don't know or understand what you're talking about," he said, and went out into the entryway.

The servant recognized Peter as one of the followers of Jesus. She identified Jesus as being a part of a despised group of people, the Nazarenes, not someone from Jerusalem. As a female and a slave, she had the least amount of power and position in her world. Even so, Peter feared being considered a friend of Jesus. He implied that he didn't even understand her words, that he was a foreigner. At the same time Jesus was being questioned and abused upstairs.

What Peter shockingly denied was ever being with Jesus. Being with the Master was the very reason Jesus called the disciples in the first place. After this first denial, Peter tried hiding himself in the shadows. When the servant girl later saw him in the shadows, she said again to those standing around, "This fellow is one of them." For a second time, he denied it. He forgot what he had said to Jesus earlier that evening, that he would rather die than disown his Lord. Peter faced the true testimony of this slave girl, which he denied. In the hearing nearby, Jesus faced the true accusation about his claims to be Messiah. This true statement he could not and did not deny. The contrast between the two responses could not be greater.

After a little while, the men standing near said to Peter, "Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean. Your accent gives you away" (Mark 14:66-70). Galileans were easily identified by their dialect. His presence in the courtyard among Judeans suggested to them that he was a follower of Jesus. John's Gospel says that one of the high priest's servants there was a relative of Malchus, whose ear Peter had cut off. The servant recognized Peter from the olive grove (John 18:26).

Peter began to call down curses upon himself, and he swore to them, "I don't know this man you're talking about." As Peter was speaking, the rooster crowed the second time. Then he

remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him: “Before the rooster crows twice you will disown me three times.” And he broke down and wept bitterly (Mark 14:71-72).

Luke tells his readers that as the rooster crowed, Jesus turned and looked straight at Peter across the courtyard. Perhaps that was just as Jesus was being taken from the house of Annas to where the Sanhedrin was gathered with Caiaphas (Luke 22:61).

A third and final time Peter had been given the opportunity to confess his relationship with Jesus. A third time he failed! When Peter heard the rooster crow, he remembered Jesus’ words and wept with great emotion. He ran from the house, realizing what he had done. He had failed his closest friend in his greatest hour of need.

At this questioning, Jesus refused to do any sign to prove his identity. Yet outside, his words about Peter’s denial were coming true. The leaders didn’t know it, but God was still directing all these events.

This story is **important** because it reveals how fear can overtake a believer. Even though Peter denied knowing Jesus, he later repented and was restored.

The **main truth** of this story is that though Peter denied Christ three times, Jesus still loved him and later restored him with love.

Let’s **review** this lesson—

1. What accusation was made against Peter while Jesus was being questioned?
A. [Pause] If you answered that they said, "You also were with Jesus of Nazareth," you are right.
2. How did Peter respond each time he was accused of being with Jesus?
A. [Pause] If you said Peter answered, “I don’t know this man you’re talking about,” you are correct.
3. What happened to Peter after his third denial of Jesus?
A. [Pause] If you said that Peter heard the rooster crow and he remembered the prophetic words of Jesus, you answered correctly.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to learn the story so you can tell it from memory. After you tell it to a fellow believer, ask them this question, “What fear might cause you to deny you even know Jesus?” Whether the person is willing or not to share this fear, offer to pray with them for courage and boldness about sharing Christ.