

Jesus Was Denied by Peter

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why the high priest and the religious leaders had decided several weeks earlier that Jesus should die so that they did not lose their power and control. In this topic, we will see that Peter denied Jesus three times as he sat with the servants of the high priest.

We begin this topic by seeing what the religious leaders did immediately after they condemned Jesus to death. Matthew 26:67-68 says, “Then they spat in His face and beat Him; and others struck *Him* with the palms of their hands, saying, ‘Prophecy to us, Christ! Who is the one who struck You?’” Mark gives us further details about the way that the religious leaders treated Jesus immediately after they condemned Him to death. Mark 14:65 says, “Then some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him, and to say to Him, ‘Prophecy!’ And the officers struck Him with the palms of their hands.” In these verses, we see that several things happened to Jesus right after He was condemned by the religious leaders. They blindfolded Jesus and began to spit in the face of Jesus. Apparently, they thought Jesus would not know who did it if He could not see them. This showed that they failed to understand that He knows all things.

Here, we see that the religious leaders acted more like an out-of-control mob than like the religious leaders they were supposed to be. The hearts of these men were controlled by their hatred for Jesus because they did not want to recognize Him as Lord. In addition, they also mocked Him as they said, “Prophecy to us, Christ! Who is the one who struck You?” They refused to accept the statement of Jesus when He said that He is the Christ. At the same time, they treated Jesus with a total lack of respect as they mocked and made fun of Him. These men were showing by the way that they treated Jesus that their hearts were totally controlled by evil.

Meanwhile, Peter was sitting with the servants of the high priest so that he could see what would happen to Jesus. Matthew 26:69-72 says, “Now Peter sat outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came to him, saying, ‘You also were with Jesus of Galilee.’ But he denied it before *them* all, saying, ‘I do not know what you are saying.’ And when he had gone out to the gateway, another *girl* saw him and said to those *who were* there, ‘This *fellow* also was with Jesus of Nazareth.’ But again he denied with an oath, ‘I do not know the Man!’” Jesus had warned Peter that Peter would deny Jesus three times that night. Mark 14:29 tells us, “Peter said to Him, ‘Even if all are made to stumble, yet I *will not be*.’” Instead of praying for strength when he was in the garden with Jesus, Peter had been sleeping. After trying to defend Jesus with the sword, he then fled. He followed afar off as the mob took Jesus to the house of the high priest. Now, he was in the courtyard of the high priest sitting with the servants of the high priest.

One of the servant girls came to Peter as he sat with the servants. This was not a soldier or even one of the mob that had come to arrest Jesus. It was not even someone who was looking for followers of Jesus that could also be arrested. Mark 14:66-67 says, “Now as Peter was below in

the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came. And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, ‘You also were with Jesus of Nazareth.’” Instead, this was a servant girl who had recognized Peter as he sat there with the other servants. She just said that he was a follower of Jesus of Nazareth. Peter had been boastful when he said he would not stumble. In 1 Corinthians 10:12, we read, “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” Here, we see that Peter fell as he said, in front of all of the servants that were there, “I do not know what you are saying.” He had not prayed and prepared for this time of testing and so he could not stand because he was trying to stand in his own strength.

We see that Peter immediately moved away from warming himself by the fire and moved to the gateway that led into the courtyard. However, as he stood near the gate, another girl saw Peter standing there. She said to the people who were standing near the gate, “This *fellow* also was with Jesus of Nazareth.” This time, Peter denied with an oath. Jesus had taught the disciples, in Matthew 5:33-37, “‘Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’ But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No’, ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.’” Here, we see that Peter was under the influence of the evil one. The fact that Peter used an oath meant that he did not even think about what Jesus had taught earlier. Instead, he chose to give an oath followed by his statement, “I do not know the Man!”

So far, it was just two servant girls that had caused Peter to deny Jesus because of the fact that he was depending on his own strength. This is a reminder of the danger that all Christians face when we depend on our own strength. Jesus had told the disciples, earlier that night, in John 15:5, “‘I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.’” Peter was certainly not bearing any fruit for Jesus that night. Instead of speaking boldly for Jesus, even the words of two servant girls had filled Peter with fear and caused him to deny that he even knew Jesus. However, the worst denial was yet to come.

Matthew 26:73-75 says, “And a little later those who stood by came up and said to Peter, ‘Surely you also are *one* of them, for your speech betrays you.’ Then he began to curse and swear, *saying*, ‘I do not know the Man!’ Immediately a rooster crowed. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.’ So he went out and wept bitterly.” Luke tells us that a period of time had passed before the third denial. Luke 22:59-60 says, “Then after about an hour had passed, another confidently affirmed, saying, ‘Surely this *fellow* also was with Him, for he is a Galilean.’ But Peter said, ‘Man, I do not know what you are saying!’ Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed.” From Luke, we see that this third denial happened about an hour after the second.

During this time, Peter had begun to talk with the people who were around him. One of the people who had been standing nearby heard Peter speaking. This person came up to Peter and said, “Surely you also are *one* of them, for your speech betrays you.” Here, we see that Peter was recognized by the very way that he talked. Every language has local accents people use when they

are talking. That night, they were gathered in the courtyard of the high priest in Jerusalem. Peter was from Galilee and had a different accent and pronounced some words differently than the people of Jerusalem. This same thing was recognized on the Day of Pentecost just fifty days later. Acts 2:6-8 says, “And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, ‘Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how *is it that* we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?’” Verse four tells us that these people were Jews from different parts of the world but they all recognized that those who were speaking were Galileans.

This time, Peter began to curse as well as take an oath. The word is translated “curse” here and the even stronger word used in Mark 14:71, “Then he began to curse and swear, ‘I do not know this Man of whom you speak!’”, means *to pray against or wish evil on a person*. This means Peter was saying that God should judge him with death if he was not telling the truth. God showed His mercy to Peter that night because God did not strike him dead. Jesus had just told Peter a few hours earlier, in Matthew 26:41, “‘Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak.’” At that very moment, the rooster began to crow. Suddenly, Peter remembered what Jesus had said earlier.

One other thing also happened at that very moment. Luke 22:61-62 says, “And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.’ So Peter went out and wept bitterly.” We see that Peter remembered what Jesus had said when the Lord looked at him. Suddenly, Peter felt the tremendous pain of knowing that he had denied his Lord, in spite of the promise he had made earlier. The word translated “bitterly” is only used in these two verses in Matthew and Luke and means *to cry with great grief*.

This word speaks of the fact that Peter was truly repentant for his sin of denying Jesus. This shows the great contrast between Judas and Peter. In Matthew 27:3-5, we read, “Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, ‘I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.’ And they said, ‘What *is that* to us? You see *to it!*’ Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself.” Judas had a false repentance that leads to death. In the case of Judas, we see that his sin led to both physical and spiritual death. In 2 Corinthians 7:9-10, we read, “Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance *leading* to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.” In contrast, Peter had the sorrow that led to true repentance. Peter would be greatly used only fifty days later on the day of Pentecost. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the difference between the false repentance of Judas and the true repentance of Peter. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain this total difference.