

Into Thy Word Ministries Bible Study www.intothyword.org

General Idea: Jesus faces another betrayer, His other most trusted Disciple; now, two go against Him, while the rest, except for John, abandon Him. So, He is sandwiched between the jealous, scheming, religious leaders along with the hostile Romans and the absence of His followers! Peter, along with John, follows Jesus as He is being taken away into custody to face the coming mock trials and then His heinous crucifixion. John knew people at the court's courtyard so he went in as Peter stood outside, warming himself by a fire. Then, he was given the third degree by the people there who asked if he was one of Jesus' disciples; shockingly, Peter said *no*. Even though the people there recognized him, Peter blatantly denied Jesus publicly! Meanwhile, Jesus is hostilely questioned by the high priest; He is questioned about His teachings and ordered to reveal information about His Disciples, which Jesus refused to do. People will betray Him, but He will never betray us. Jesus said, *what I teach is widely known; Go ask anyone who has heard me; I do not teach in secret*. This irritated the guards who hit Him; thus, the undeserved beatings commenced. Jesus meekly (strength under control) defended Himself by asking what He had done or said that was wrong. Annas became frustrated that he could not outwit Jesus' humility by his pride, so he sent Him to Caiaphas the high priest. Meanwhile, Peter had another opportunity, as he stood warming himself, to stand up for Jesus but instead, he denied Him again! *Are you not one of His followers?* Even a relative of the man Peter stabbed confronted him, and yet, Peter protested *I am not!* At that point, just as Jesus had prophesied, the rooster crowed!

Contexts and Background: During this and the following passages, Jesus exhibits "meekness," which is not weakness or a lack of strength, but rather, humbleness. Meekness is not about being weak! It is *strength under control*, as we yield our personal rights and expectations to God. This means when we feel like hurting others or overpowering them in personality and expectations, we don't do it—period! God does not do this with us (Psalms 62:5)! Later, during the Passion, Jesus models the ultimate meekness as He is able to endure being heinously and personally attacked while keeping His focus on God's plan and our redemption. If we would be meek, we must focus on Christ and humility (Psalm 118:26).

Is there a contradiction here? The liberal view is that this passage is one of the main and great contradictions in the Bible, because the Gospels record a different order and number of Peter's refuting, to whom he refuted, and the crows of the rooster. But, the Gospels are honest and that is how humans bear witness and how testimony works. Several people see an accident. One sees a blue car hit the red car; another sees the red car hit the blue car. Another sees two cars collide, while someone else just sees the police and ambulance; another only hears the crash. Each one places the focus upon his/her view. It is the same here. Each Gospel says Peter betrayed Jesus after being questioned by the servant girl; another said to a man questioned him. Each one tells that the rooster crowed. There are no significant or meaningful divergences in the story. Basically, the key word is, *they*; several people were standing by the fire, and were all speaking and repeating the questions, and roosters would have crowed many times during that occurrence at that time.

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings

- *Peter.* Peter follows at a distance, watching as all these events unfold. Three times he is confronted with being a follower of Jesus, and at least three times he adamantly denies it. Then, a rooster crows, and he realizes that the strength he claimed would last was no longer there. His loyalty, which he had passionately articulated, left him; all he had now was betrayal (Matt. 26: 47- 75).
- *Another disciple.* Referring to the humbleness of the human instrument of this Gospel, John the Apostle. The three men closest to Jesus were John, Peter, and James and the most trusted one, Judas, who handled the money and the logistics of ministry matters. John was also a friend—at least more than an acquaintance, perhaps even a relative of the high priest to have the clout to get in after hours (John 13:23; 20:2; 21:20-24).
- *Following Jesus.* Peter and the rest of the Disciples missed an opportunity to be strong and loyal as they declared they would be.

- *Courtyard.* An enclosed area with no roof used for public gatherings during the day. The high priest's courtyard was private property; to be there at night was trespassing. Now, Peter is being very bold to seek entrance! It is possible that it was open because of Passover. The reason for the night attack was that Jesus was popular, and they feared an uprising; they knew the Romans would quickly *squash* it, then remove their positions, and possibly even their lives from them.
- *The girl.* This was perhaps the high priest's personal assistant and servant, a young woman who was a hired worker like a maid and/or personal assistant who was from the "top of the class." This was a very favored and special position. This girl had more clout in this time than commoners like Peter. This girl's remark is also a slur as she looked down on fishermen. In addition, there was a cultural class war between Judeans and Galileans; each one looked with contempt at the other as high, upper class aristocrats versus blue collar workers or urban versus rural people. She would indeed know about him and Jesus, having kept an eye on them and reported back for some time, so there was no fooling to be done here. People's accents then, like Peter's Galilean versus her Judean, were even more varied than today's English versus Scottish versus Southern American, like Alabama, which would not be as distinct as an accent from this a few miles away, because people stayed in their close surroundings and communicated mainly just in their circles of relationships. Thus, she would have clearly known the difference (Matt. 26:71; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:58-59).
- *I am not.* Foretold by the Prophet Zechariah, this is a direct denial, a betrayal to renounce what you think and believe to be true. There were at least three times that Peter verbally disowns Jesus in public. Back then, to a Jew, this was more heinous than the backroom betrayal that Judas did. Peter's betrayal was more spontaneous due to emotional disturbance while Judas' was planned and calculated. As Peter warms himself and speaks out of hurt or frustration or by Satan's lead, Jesus endures, just as He does in our lives. Mark records that Peter curses too, perhaps not vulgar but rather a vow saying he does not know Jesus. This, of course, is a lie; this betrayal was unjust and unnecessary! Matthew adds *I do not know what you are saying*. Peter is denying Jesus outright (Matt. 26: 47- 75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:54-62)! Peter appealed to God and testified to facts that would be true but turned out not to be true (Matt. 5:33-37; 26:33-35)! This testifies not just to Peter's disloyalty, but rather, our sinful nature that seeks its own and not God. Later on, we will see how God's great mercy and grace covers our inadequacies and weaknesses (Zach. 13:6-7; Matt. 5:33-37)!
- *Cold... fire.* Jerusalem is 2,500 ft above sea level, and this takes place in springtime, so it is cold at night, a key detail to the integrity of the narrative. If this Gospel had been written much later, like many liberal commentators state, this information would not likely be here.
- *High priest.* These people were aristocrats and had a lot of wealth to have such a place of power and large homes. At this time, they were also puppets of Rome, helping collect the taxes and responsible for keeping the peace. They thought Jesus was a different kind of revolutionary, a militant one; and, if Jesus was militant and led an uprising, the high priest and officials could lose their jobs and lives, which would explain the intensity. However, the accused was not required to prove his innocence, so this may have been more of a preliminary inquiry or hearing and not a trial; it was still outside of legality due to the day and time.
- *Questioned Jesus.* Annas and Caiaphas both question Jesus at different times and locations. Either Jesus was moved a short distance or people came to Annas' courtyard; all the official houses were a very short walk from one another. The Judeo-Greco-Roman legal system was very similar to the U.S. except a peasant person was assumed guilty (culturally) until proven innocent as long as two or more witnesses presented reliable information and the presumption of a person's guilt was confirmed; on the other hand, a wealthy Roman citizen was presumed innocent until proven guilty. However, this was not an official trial or even a fair hearing and thus legally they did not have the right to question or beat Jesus or do this at night. These religious leaders were more concerned with their political power and position and appeasing others and they were not interested in truth (Ex. 22:28; Mark 14:1, 43; Luke 3:2; John 3:1; Acts 23:3-5).
- *Disciples and his teaching / doctrine.* The prime system of teachings and ideas. It was the rabbinic tradition to teach one thing publicly and another privately, so they were testing Jesus. Since this was a

prime question, their concern about Jesus was His theology and the threat to their positions (Mark 1:27; John 11:48; 19:7-12).

- *Spoken openly to the world.* There is no question of the integrity of Jesus and His teaching! This was also a prompt about where to go to get witnesses and they had no right to accuse Him.
- *Nothing in secret.* Jesus never taught one thing in public and another in private as many then did; thus, there was nothing menacing, no cult, no revolutionary zealots, no conspiracy or threat to Rome or even the religious establishment, other than to show them they are pious frauds and prim and proper hypocrites (Ex. 22:28; Isa. 45:19; 48:16; John 2:14-21; 6:59; 7:14-28; 8:20)!
- *Know what I said.* Jesus did nothing wrong and violated no law—Roman or Jewish—yet points out that they had done so. Truth is self-evident for evidence persuasion (Ex. 22:28; John 3:19; Rom. 1:18).
- *Officials nearby struck him in the face.* A sharp blow by the palm of a soldier's hand to inflict pain while keeping the soldier's hand safe. It was unlawful to strike or force the accused, just as it is today. This shows the callous disregard of truth, justice, and the Law. It is our sinful nature to emotionally erupt when we are in the wrong and are proven wrong (Ex. 22:28; Isa. 50:6; Matt. 26:67; Acts 23:1-5; Acts 23:5).
- *Testify / witness.* This was a legal term for both Jews and Romans. This meant one who testifies in a court of law or before an official. Isaiah used this term to state how true believers would testify about God to evil nations and at the end of days. Here, Jesus endures God's wrath for us so we can testify about Jesus and people might believe in Him (Isa. 43:10; 44:8; John 1:7; 3:27-30; 10:41; 20:21)
- *Sent him.* This back and forth exchange of sending Jesus to the other person was done for several reasons: to avoid responsibility, to get a higher verdict against Him, and to build suspense and break Him down to humiliate Him when it was revealed publicly.
- *Still bound.* The Lord Creator submitted Himself to sinful man and endured unnecessary pain and God's wrath for our sins; He did it alone as prophesied (Psalm 69:20)!
- *Didn't I see you with him?* The relative of Malchus, the man whose ear Peter cut off, had the right to avenge; yet to Peter's credit, he stayed.
- *He denied it.* This was not the behavior of a religious person; rather, it was of someone who let his emotions run unchecked by his faith. Peter adds contempt to his denial, a very poor showing of who he was and was meant to be! But, for the sake of Peter and us, grace is coming!
- *Rooster began to crow.* A rooster crowing marked daybreak, and showed Peter His disloyalty as well as the truth of Jesus' prediction. Luke records that Jesus looked at Him during this! Imagine his remorse as he remembered what he told Jesus, and what Jesus' words told him. Peter is then overwhelmed with guilt and repents; Jesus will later restore him. Judas did not repent. Peter had a renewable faith while Judas was hardened and bitter. (Matt. 27:3-5; Mark 14:68-72; 16:7; Luke 22:61; John 13:37-38; 21:15-19)!

Devotional Thoughts and Applications: We all—at some point, more often than not, sooner than later—will stumble, make bad choices, and/or fail. The question is *where are we going with our faith and due diligence of His teachings?* We must seek to please God and submit our will to Him; by so doing, we will become humble, trusting, and obedient toward God and others (Ex. 32:19-20; 30-34; Num 12:1-3; Psalm 37:11; Matt. 5: 3-12; 11:29).

The great, principle comfort in our distress is that Jesus shows up; He is with us and for us because of His love. The principle of love, which is the essence of the Gospel, must be our mark so it is our impact; because we are influenced by His love, we will contemplate (think deeply) upon it and become empowered and stimulated by it, so it flows even when we are not thinking of it or are as Peter was when the rooster crowed—stressed, hurt, or confused. The point of this passage is the point of the Gospel. If we live out our Christian lives with the great commitment of love and faith with diligence, then we can succeed in life, ministry, and service to our Lord. If love and faith are not our marks, then we will be worthless and of no value. Nothing we want to do or attempt to do could amount to anything of value without love. What we think is important and

purposeful is not, unless it is joined to our growing faith empowered by His love. All we do must be in the cart that is pulled by the horse of our faith, with the reins of hope, and most of all love as the wheels, all because of Christ's love. Keep in mind that most people, including Christians, have a skewed idea of love. We get our ideas from TV and movies; we believe these flawed ideas based on our feelings and how people have treated us. As a result, we do not see the unmerited love called *grace* that we have already received from our Lord.

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. Have you ever faced a very public and embarrassing situation or messed up on something important? Did you lie to get yourself out of it?
2. What happens when we let our emotions run unchecked and away from our faith? How is Truth self-evident for persuasion and proof?
3. What do you think Peter hoped to do here? What were his options? What does this passage tell you about focusing on Christ and humility?
4. How would you describe meekness and humbleness? What does this passage teach you about meekness and humbleness?
5. What do you do when you feel like hurting others who have hurt you? Do you try to overpower them with your personality and expectations, or?
6. What are you willing to sacrifice for the Kingdom? Consider that Christ gave it all for us! So, what can you and your church do to avoid being destroyed by trivialities and rather focus your endeavors on Christ?
7. What do you think the difference is between Peter's and Judas' faith? What does it mean to you that you must deny yourself to follow Christ and that He will honor you for it?
8. What does it take for a prideful person to yield his/her personal rights and expectations to God? What about you?
9. Where are you going with your faith and due diligence of Christ's teachings? Where do you need to be with this? What will you do?
10. What do God's great mercy and grace mean to you? How does He cover your inadequacies and weakness? What can you do when you miss an opportunity to be strong and loyal?
11. What do you need to do to reach out to Christ and let Him grasp you so you do not see just the sea of problems and the ocean of deluge overtaking the ship of your faith and composure in Him?
12. How can you be better at focusing on Christ? What do you need to do to be better with humility and keeping your focus on God's plan?