

THE SIX TRIALS OF CHRIST

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Chapter 6

THE DENIAL OF PETER

All Bible study begins with first determining what Scripture says about an event or a subject, and then and only then to interpret and apply what has been written. There is first of all the piecing together of facts so as to discover what happened, and then there is the significance of those facts.

The first part is tedious and time consuming, but it alone produces the true significance and a correct interpretation and application.

Never forget that nothing Scripture gives is without significance, and it is up to the Bible student to discover the reason and purpose behind what is recorded.

The denial of Peter is inseparable from the trials of CHRIST. It is a part of the whole story, for it occurs simultaneously with the trials and was not a separate picture. In order for us to treat it properly, it is necessary for us to look, however, at the denials of Peter as a unit by itself.

THE GOSPEL RECORD

All four Gospels speak first of Peter's self-confidence in not denying CHRIST, and then of CHRIST's prediction of Peter's denial.

"Peter answered and said unto him, Though all (men) shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples" (Matthew 26:33-35).

"But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I. And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all" (Mark 14:29-31).

"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me" (Luke 22:31-34).

"Peter said unto him, Lord why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice" (John 13:37-38).

The summary of what CHRIST said concerning Peter's denial is this: CHRIST first made the statement that Peter would deny Him **"this day"** I.e., a 24-hour period (Mark 14:30).

Then CHRIST took it one step further. Peter would three times deny the Lord before the cock even crowed once. It was this last statement that was recorded by Matthew, Luke and John.

But Luke records also that CHRIST tells Peter that this is because Satan wants you and desires to sift you as wheat. Yet CHRIST will allow Satan to go only so far and He Himself personally prayed for Peter and for his restoration.

LET US LOOK AT THE FIRST THREE DENIALS

Each of the four Gospels is content to record just three denials out of the many that took place. It only takes the three to fulfill the prediction of CHRIST and the recording of more than this would only add insult to an already pathetic situation.

When CHRIST was before Annas:

There was one denial that Peter made when CHRIST was before Annas.

1. Peter's denial to the servant girl that kept the door: **"Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not" (John 18:17).**

No other denial took place in Annas' court. Peter only "stands" with the servants and officers.

When CHRIST was before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin

All the rest of the denials take place before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin in the second trial. The third trial takes place after daybreak occurred and is beyond the scope of the early morning with its first rays of light and cock crowing. Peter never attended the third trial because following the second, he went out and wept bitterly.

2. Peter's denial "standing" and warming himself before the servants and officers: **"And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not"** (John 18:25).

3. Peter's denial to the servant of the high priest who was a kinsman to the man whose ear Peter cut off: **"One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew"** (John 18:26-27)

"And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilaean. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew" (Luke 22:59-60) must be the same incident as John records, signifying that much conversation was involved, and it was an hour after the second denial that Luke records. Furthermore, the cock crew even as Peter was speaking, and evidently it never registered in the consciousness.

So the cock crew -- the first time. There must have been quite a time period between these last two denials recorded in John, even as the other Gospels indicate.

THE OTHER DENIALS

But these were not the only denials before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin. In between the second and third denials recorded by John are several others that occurred.

1. Peter's denial to one of the maids of the high priest who spotted him as he "sat" in the light of the fire.

"And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not" (Luke 22:55-57)

"Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest" (Matthew 26:69-70)

"And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest: And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew" (Mark 14:66-68)

Mark tells us at this denial Peter got up and went out into the fore court or the entrance way from the street to the court proper.

2. Peter's denial to the very same maid who saw him again: **"And a maid saw him**

again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. And he denied it again" (Mark 14:69-70a).

This is not another maid but the same one from earlier, else how could she see **"him again?"**

3. Peter's denial to another maid who saw him and said to them that were there, **"This man also was with Jesus the Nazarene."** This time Peter denied it with an oath, i.e., he called GOD to record that he never knew the man: **"And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man"** (Matthew 26:71-72).

4. Peter's denial to a male servant who said, **"Thou also art one of them."** But Peter said, **"Man, I am not,"** (Luke 22:58).

This male servant was different than the male servant next recorded by Luke who must be the same as the last one recorded by John.

5. Peter's denial to all those who stood by after which the cock crew the second time.

"And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech betrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew" (Matthew 26:73-74).

". . . And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilaean, and thy speech agreeth thereto. But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak. And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept" (Mark 14:70b-72).

This time Peter began both to curse and to swear.

The cursing would be using the language of the unbeliever (but not taking the name of GOD in vain as in current swear words), and the swearing would be the act of again calling GOD to witness to the statement he had: "I know not this man whom ye speak."

This last denial followed the third denial recorded by John and the third recorded by Luke. There the cock crew the first time right as Peter was speaking. Here the cock crew the second time right after Peter had spoken.

This takes into account all the denials. We find that there were not three of them, but EIGHT of them. Seven of these take place during this second trial.

SUMMARY OF THE EIGHT DENIALS OF PETER

1. Door -- Servant girl -- Trial: Annas
2. Fire (standing) -- Men. -- Trial: Caiaphas (as are all the following)
3. Fire (sitting) -- Servant girl of the High Priest.
4. Forecourt -- Same servant girl
5. Forecourt -- Another servant girl
6. Not stated -- Servant
7. Not stated -- Servant of High Priest & kinsman to servant whose ear Peter cut off.
--- First Crow of Cock
8. Not stated -- All, Peter cursed and swore.
--- Second Crow of Cock

THE AFTERMATH

Four events now happen in rapid succession

1. The cock crew and Peter heard it this time with conscious significance. We might say, it registered.
2. The Lord turned and looked upon Peter: **"And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter . . ."** (Luke 22:61a)
3. Peter remembered what CHRIST had predicted would happen.

". . . And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice" (Luke 22:61b)

"And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice" (Matthew 26:75a)

"And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice" (Mark 14:72)

Evidently while these events were in progress Peter never called to mind what CHRIST had said.

4. Peter went out of the grounds of the high priest and wept bitterly.

"And he went out, and wept bitterly" (Matthew 26:75b)

"And when he thought thereon, he wept" (Mark 14:72b).

Sadly, it was certain that Peter was not singing that great hymn that night, "Oh for a look of the Saviour."

~ end of chapter 6 ~