

# Peter and His Epistles

## Lesson 3: Peter's First Big Mistake

### I. Denial #1: See Matt. 16:21-26, Mark 8:31-37, Luke 9:22-27

Consider the setting: Peter has just made the amazing confession that Jesus is the Messiah, the Anointed One. Moments later as the Lord begins to predict His own death, Peter is severely rebuked by Christ.

“Son of Man” is Jesus’ favorite term for Himself. It is used 81 times in the N.T.

#### A. Peter Has a Better Idea!

1. Peter rejects the concept of a suffering savior (Mark 8:31)
  - a. Notice how the people reacted a few days later on “Palm Sunday” (Mark 11) as they cried out “hosanna” (which means save us!”)
  - b. For some details on the “Suffering Savior” see Isaiah 52:13-53:12
  - c. A word about the Sanhedrin:
    - 1). A council of 70 Jewish men who served for life and ruled (under the Romans) the civil (and some criminal aspects) of the affairs of the Jews
    - 2). They were drawn from three distinct groups:
      - a). Chief Priest (current, previous and their families)
      - b). Elders (lay leaders)
      - c). Scribes (professional OT teachers)
2. In spite of the strong glare of Jesus (see also Luke 22:61), Peter rebukes Christ. He declares, “This shall never happen!” (Matt. 16:22)

“Peter’s strong will and warm heart linked to his ignorance produce a shocking bit of arrogance. He confesses that Jesus is the Messiah and then speaks in a way implying that he knows more of God’s will than the Messiah himself.”  
(Expositor’s Bible, Vol. 8, pg. 377)

#### B. Christ Rebukes Peter

1. “The tempter speaks in the voice of friend” so “get out my sight!” Jesus “cuts him off” (Matt. 16:23)

2. The rebuke: it is the same word used for the silencing of demons (see Mark 1:25 and 3:12)
3. Peter has gone from being “the ROCK” to the “STUMBLING BLOCK”  
This is a very unique word, “SKANDALON”
  - a. In the OT, it was a trap set with bait. The “skandalon” always denotes an enticement to conduct which could ruin the person in question.” (Word Study Dictionary, pg. 1292)  
See Lev. 19:14, Josh. 23:13 and I Sam. 18:21
  - b. In the NT, it is used in a figurative, moral sense. “It is concerned mainly with the fact that it produces certain behavior which can lead to ruin.” (Word Study Dictionary, same page)  
See Rom. 9:33, 11:9, 14:13, I Cor. 1:23, Gal. 5:11  
  
“No wonder Jesus turned so sharply against Peter, He saw the satanic trap set for Him in Peter’s words.” (Lenski)
  - c. “Satan”: Christ is stating that Peter is acting “diabolically.” He is at odds with the spiritual purpose at hand. In order to secure a place for sinners in the presence of Almighty God, the perfect sacrifice had to be made. Christ was the propitiation for our sins and MUST be offered up on our behalf.

## II. Denial #2: See Matt. 26:17-75, Mark 14:12-72, Luke 22:7-62, John 13:1-38, 18:1-27

- A. Setting: Feast of the Unleavened Bread (8 days) See Ex. 12:15-20

Was normally eaten standing up (Ex. 12:11). The meal consisted of unleavened bread, wine, bitter herbs, sauce and lamb. Was eaten within the city limits between sundown and midnight. It was Jewish custom to lend out a room for those out of towners who needed a place to have the meal together.

- B. The prediction of betrayal

1. Note that Jesus said they would all fall away (Mark. 14:27) and they all protested like Peter. But note who Jesus prays for. Jesus emphasized His response: “I tell you the truth (amen!), today – yes, tonight!”
2. NOTE: The Lord’s personal prayer and interest in Peter (Luke 22:31-32). Note: the sifting process – “a means to remove that which is impure so that which remains is pure.”

3. The warning of the crowing rooster
  4. Peter asserts his willingness even to die with Jesus. See John 13:37 and Matt 26:33-35.
- C. In the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:36-46)
1. The name means “oil press.” It is an enclosed piece of ground on the western slopes of Mount Olivet across the Kidron Valley from the city of Jerusalem. Jesus often frequented this garden (John 18:1-2).
  2. Eight disciples were told to sit at some distance. The inner three (Peter, James, John) were invited to keep watch with Jesus.
  3. Jesus addresses all three men but focuses in on Peter: “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing but the body is weak.”
  4. The arrest
 

Peter cuts off the ear lobe of the servant of the high priest (Malchus). He is confused and discouraged. He gets rebuked by Jesus (Matt. 26:52).
- D. Peter’s Denials
1. Peter (and John) followed the mob (Matt. 26:58, John 18:15) “at a distance”
  2. John entered (he was known by the high priest), Peter had to wait at the door.
  3. The denials:
 

1<sup>st</sup> denial: given to the girl at the door

2<sup>nd</sup> denial: given at the fire pit

3<sup>rd</sup> denial: about an hour later, given after Peter was confronted by a relative of Malchus.

Note: in the first two denials, Peter is denying identification with Jesus. In the third instance, Peter is denying Jesus himself.
- a. “Matthew and Mark in close agreement and list three denials: (1) before a servant girl, in the courtyard; (2) before another girl, but out by the gateway; (3) before bystanders, apparently in the court. Luke also lists three: (1) before a servant girl, apparently near the fire; (2) before another person, place not specified; (3) before yet another person, still in the courtyard (22:60-61). The three denials recorded by John are (1) before a servant girl at the door; then, after a break in the narrative, (2) before some people - the

verb is plural but may be generalizing one – (3) before one of the high priests servants, a relative of Malchus.”

(Expositor’s Commentary, Vol. 8, p. 557)

- b. Note: the variation of the accounts seems to occur because each writer is treating the sequence of the trials differently. Matthew and Mark do not record the examination before Annas. John does not speak of the Jewish trial and Luke seems to see only one trial before the Sanhedrin.
- c. The “oath” Peter made is not swearing but rather a kind of solemn curse on himself if he is lying. This is something Jesus taught them not to do (see Matt. 5:37)
- d. The cock crows – a bitter reminder of Jesus’ words (Matt. 26:34). Note: Matthew does not mention Peter again.
- e. Peter’s tears. “He burst into tears,” “he thought on it and wept,” “ he threw himself to the ground.” These were heavy, uncontrollable sobs, a kind of heart breaking wailing.
- f. The gaze from Jesus (Luke 22:61). He “looked straight at Him” – same word as John 1:42.

### III. So what?

We have the same basic problem that Peter has...we get frustrated when God does not meet our expectations. Peter wanted (and needed) a conquering warrior to subdue his enemies. Instead, Jesus was the suffering savior. Peter was filled with disappointment and despair and he reacted wrongly. So do we!

We need to learn the same lesson perspective that Peter learned.

1 Peter 4:12-13 “Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.”

### Discussion Questions:

1. Describe how you think Peter was feeling:
  - as he and John set up for the dinner
  - as Jesus prayed in the garden
  - as he followed the arresting mob
  - as he stood in the courtyard

- as he fled into the night
2. Why do you think Jesus warned Peter that His denial was coming?
  3. In light of the intense pressure of that night, what would you have done if you were confronted as Peter was? What would you have said?