

Fact Sheet for **“Peter Denies Jesus”**  
**Luke 22:54-62**

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I put out a communiqué about the Coronavirus yesterday. Here are some other details. Will people in Cottage Grove catch this virus? Several will. Will some Americans who catch this virus die? Yes... as with any other virus. Will the cancellations of schools and gatherings of over 250 people stop the spread of this virus? No... these cancellations are designed to slow the spread of this virus so that our medical facilities won't get overwhelmed. In fact, I'm certain that most Americans will be exposed to this virus by Christmas. Is it a time for panic? No. It is a time for reasonable precautions and preparations.

But think about this. Does this crisis present an opportunity to share the gospel? Absolutely it does. Look for those opportunities to communicate the gospel to those who are worried about this virus.

We are tracing the record of the Gospels coming up to Jesus' resurrection, and we will arrive there on Easter Sunday. The night before Jesus was crucified has one of the most well-known events in the Bible, Peter's three denials. Peter's denials have been a consistent reminder to Christians over the years to not deny Christ. This story has strengthened those who were facing martyrdom. But this record of Peter's denials can also strengthen us. Here's an interesting question. If you are presented with the clear opportunity to share the gospel during this Coronavirus crisis, and you choose to be silent instead, are you subtly denying Christ?

I have another reason for preaching on Peter's three denials. I want to help you trust your Bible. The harmonization of Peter's three denials (pulling all four Gospels together) poses some difficulties, though each of them has a resolution. Recognize that this is a unique section of the Gospels where two related but distinct scenes are taking place at the same time, one in the house of the high priest and the other around the courtyard below.

The first difficulty is that the four gospels appear to record different orders of events for Peter's denials and Jesus' Jewish trial. Matthew and Mark record the trial before Caiaphas and the others, then the denials. Luke records the denials, then the trial. John records the second denial, then the initial questioning before Annas, then the first and third denials, then the trial.

Another difficulty is that the four gospels record varying details surrounding each of Peter's three denials. But remember that Peter was with a group of people. Each denial was a response both to an individual who had initiated the questioning and to the group who had joined in the questioning.

Still another difficulty relates to the rooster crowing. In the upper room Jesus had told Peter that he would deny him three times before the rooster crowed (Matthew 26:34; Luke 22:34; John 13:38). But look at Mark 14:30 and the rooster crowing twice. This is likely **not** a scribal error. Matthew, Luke, and John just chose to record the final crowing of the rooster.

But there were only three denials... one by the fire, one by the gate, and one before the rooster crowed. Each of these denials was part of a group questioning Peter.

**ESV <sup>54</sup> Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house, and Peter was following at a distance. <sup>55</sup> And when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them.**

Carefully read Matthew 26:57-58; Mark 14:53-54; and John 18:12-16, 18 while looking for the differences.

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Denial

**<sup>56</sup> Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, "This man also was with him." <sup>57</sup> But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him."**

Carefully read Matthew 26:69-70; Mark 14:66-68; and John 18:25 while looking for the differences. *NIV does not mention the rooster crowing in Mark 14:68, but most other translations do. This is due to a difference in a few manuscripts*

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Denial

**<sup>58</sup> And a little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not."**

Carefully read Matthew 26:71; Mark 14:69-70a; and John 18:17 while looking for the differences. *John recorded this denial first because he had just mentioned Peter coming in through the gate.*

#### 3<sup>rd</sup> Denial

**<sup>59</sup> And after an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, "Certainly this man also was with him, for he too is a Galilean." <sup>60</sup> But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. <sup>61</sup> And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times." <sup>62</sup> And he went out and wept bitterly.**

Carefully read Matthew 26:73-75; Mark 14:70b-72; and John 18:26-27 while looking for the differences.

You can trust your Bible! There were only three denials. But let's go back to a question I posed earlier.

If you are presented with the clear opportunity to share the gospel during this Coronavirus crisis, and you choose to be silent instead, are you subtly denying Christ?

Look for those opportunities to share the good news of the gospel with those who can only see the bad news of the Coronavirus. Life is terminal for all of us, and none of us knows our expiration date. But the good news is that we can have eternal life through Jesus Christ. Jesus' death on the cross and his resurrection that Sunday morning has provided for the forgiveness of sins for everyone who believes in him. How long we will continue in this world is uncertain. But eternal life is eternal! That is good news. Look for those opportunities. Be creative. You may find that you can pray with someone to receive Christ during this global emergency.