



The DAILY JESUS NEWS #308
Friday... Day of Agony and Atonement

Jesus' Three-Phase Jewish Trial

Peter Gains Entry to Caiaphas' Courtyard
John 18.15-18 (Parallel Texts: MT 26.58; MK 14.54; LK 22.54B)

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15 Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus from afar, ^{MT}right up to the courtyard of the High Priest. Because the other disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard, 16 but Peter had to stand waiting outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the servant girl on duty there and brought Peter in.

17 "You aren't one of this man's disciples, are you?" she asked Peter, assuming that he was not.

He replied, "I am not."

18 It was cold, so when the servants and officials ^Lhad kindled a charcoal fire in the middle of the courtyard, ^Jthey stood around the fire to keep warm. Peter also took a place standing with them, and he was warming himself. ^LWhen they sat down together, Peter ^{MT}sat down with the guards to see the outcome.

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *red italics identify the words of Jesus*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

	CONTEXT DIGEST
Location	The Courtyard at the Home of Caiaphas, the High Priest
Timeline	Early April (Month 39)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage VIII: Passion Week
	E. Friday: Day of Agony and Atonement
	Jesus' Three-Phase Jewish Trial
Title	Peter Gains Entry to Caiaphas' Courtyard

This text leads into another heart-breaking element of Jesus' sufferings: Peter's three-fold denial of his Lord. In this reading we learn of the way Peter made his way into Caiaphas' courtyard, and began his descent into denial of Jesus. The next reading (DJN #309) will cover the ways Jesus actually disowned

Jesus three times. Today's text shows us the roots of Peter's issues in discipleship, that led directly into his failures and fall.

We need to remember that these events occurred simultaneously with Jesus' interrogation by Caiaphas, confession as the Son of God, and subsequent vicious beating. In other words, at the same Jesus was confessing his true identity and paying a terrible price for doing so, Peter was denying his own identity and his Lord, just to protect himself from paying a price for following Jesus.

Like the contrast between Jesus and Caiaphas in the last reading, the contrast between our Lord and his most trusted associate and designated leader, Peter, could not have been more profound.

There were three roots of Peter's denial of Jesus. First, all three synoptic writers pointed out that Peter followed Jesus from Annas' house (Phase I of the trial) *"from afar."* The new command of Jesus was to *"abide,"* or maintain the closest kind of intimacy and association with him. The physical distance between Jesus and Peter that night was a clear indication of Peter's wavering level of commitment.

It is impossible to follow Jesus intimately when we have a divided heart. We can only serve one Master at a time. Peter's attempt to follow Jesus from afar showed that he was already in deep trouble.

Secondly, when the servant-girl who was standing watch at the courtyard gate asked Peter if he was a disciple of Jesus, the Greek makes it clear that she was assuming that he was not. It was a rather perfunctory kind of question that was asked of all the people who came through the gate that night, and there were many. It raised no suspicion regarding Peter. He quickly snatched up the chance to deny his discipleship and slide through the door. It was easy to lie in those circumstances.

This first, private denial by Peter led directly into the three public denials that will constitute the next DJN reading. Including this "pre-denial" adds up to four denials by Peter. Jesus had predicted three. Is there a contradiction here? No. The fact that Jesus predicted three denials did not mean that Peter could not make more than three. It meant at least three.

Furthermore, Jesus was talking about public denials, which would make them "official" because there would be multiple witnesses to each denial. Under Jewish Law, every fact needed to be confirmed by at least two witnesses to be established. Peter's denial at the gate was a private matter.

In addition, it was made to a woman, which would also make it an "unofficial" matter in that culture. Finally, Peter denied being a disciple of Jesus, not his knowledge of Jesus. Therefore his lie was partial, less than the extent of his three public denials that would soon follow.

In any case, Peter's private denial at the gate was one more huge step downward, straight into the three public denials of Jesus that would soon follow. Trying to follow Jesus at a distance led into a private lie that mushroomed into public denial.

The third and final root of Peter's denials was his close fellowship with the enemies of Jesus. Disciples of Jesus should fellowship with non-believers, for the purpose of lovingly sharing the truth of the gospel with them.

However, Peter was fellowshiping with people who agreed with murdering Jesus in order to hide his own sin. That is a totally different thing. This fellowship strengthened him in denying Jesus. It led to his fall, rather than their salvation through his witness. Peter's fellowship with Jesus' enemies was his final step of distancing himself from Jesus in his own heart.

The bottom line: what filled Peter's heart--denial of Jesus--soon came out of his mouth three times.

APPLICATION:

Peter never thought he would publicly deny his Lord three times. He could not see the pattern that was developing until it was way too late. You and I are no different.

Huge failures in our relationship with God rarely happen out of the blue. They are the culmination of a process of increasing smaller failures tumbling out of control. As Jesus said, a person who is faithful in the small things will also stand true in the big issues. Peter's fall demonstrates this principle.

Are there small gaps in your obedience that you are currently tolerating, even cultivating? Please be extremely careful! Deal with them now.

Who will you share your struggles with, and enlist as a prayer/accountability partner to walk with you to victory?