

“A JOURNEY THROUGH THE GOSPEL OF JOHN” SERIES

#33: “Jesus’ Arrest and Trial and Peter’s Denial”

SCRIPTURE: John 18:1-27

INTRO:

We are rapidly approaching the end of Jesus’ earthly ministry. The shadow of the cross has appeared. It won’t be long, now, when He faces the agony and cruelty of crucifixion. But first.

JESUS IS ARRESTED.

He and his eleven disciples were in a garden across the brook Kidron, where He met with them often when a band of Roman soldiers, along with some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees arrived with lanterns, torches, and weapons, arrived.

Jesus, knowing what was about to happen, stepped forward and said, *“Whom do you seek?”* (v. 4). They said, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus said, *“I am he.”* When Jesus said this, John records that *They drew back and fell to the ground.* This is strange, don’t you think? Were they just surprised? They intended to surprise Him, but He surprised them instead. Matthew recorded Jesus as saying, *“Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me”* (26:55). What a bunch of cowards!

It was at this point that Peter drew a sword and cut off the right ear of the servant of the high priest. I would like to have seen that, wouldn’t you? Luke says that Jesus *“touched his ear and healed him”* (22:51). Matthew tells us that Jesus said to Peter, *“Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?”* (26:52-53).

What’s the deal here? In Luke 22:36 Jesus tells the disciples to take a sword when they go out to spread the gospel. Hours later, when Peter uses a sword to try to protect Jesus, Jesus rebukes him; He tells him to put it back into its sheath. The obvious question is

why did Jesus tell the disciples to arm themselves but then rebuke Peter the first time he used such a defense?

Note that Jesus, in Matthew's account, in chapter 26, verse 54, Jesus says to Peter after He had restored the man's ear, "*But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?*" Now, what *Scriptures* was He referring to? I believe He was referring to the prophecies of His suffering and death and the prophecy that the Messiah "would be "*...numbered with the transgressors*" found in Isaiah 53:12. Many connect this prophecy with Jesus being crucified between two thieves, but it could also indicate that the Messiah would be found among rebels or among the lawless.

Some would take Jesus' words to Peter to mean that Christians should not arm themselves – that all who live by the 9-millimeter will perish by the 9-millimeter. I beg to disagree. Jesus' words have nothing to do with Christians owning firearms. It's one thing to own firearms for sport and self-defense and yet another to "live by them."

Let's move on...

The soldiers then bound Jesus and took Him to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest, who had advised the counsel earlier that Jesus should die.

CAIAPHAS AND THE SANHEDRIN QUESTIONED JESUS ABOUT HIS DISCIPLES AND HIS TEACHING.

John doesn't bother to mention the Jewish high court as the other gospel writers do. He probably didn't think it necessary, since it was a forgone conclusion that they would find Him guilty and merely pass Him along to Pilate, who had the authority to sentence Him to death.

But, according to Matthew, the high priest, scribes, and elders tried to find witnesses whose testimony could be used to sentence Him to death, but they could find none. There were plenty of *false* witnesses, but the only witness against Him was one who said, "*This man said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days'*" (Matthew 26:61). They couldn't get Jesus to say

anything until Caiaphas said to Him, *“I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God”* (Matthew 26:63). Jesus answered him, *“You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven”* Matthew 26:64). The Amplified Bible has it this way: **“Jesus said to him, ‘You have [in fact] said it; but more than that I tell you [regardless of what you do with Me now], in the future you will see [Me revealed as] THE SON OF MAN SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER and COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.’”**

At this, according to Matthew *“...the high priest tore his robes and said, (to the Sanhedrin) ‘He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your judgment?’”* (26:65).

His fellow priests, scribes, and Pharisees answered, *“He deserves death”* (26:66).

Then, *“...they spit in his face and struck him. And some slapped him, saying, ‘Prophecy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you?’”* (Matthew 26:68).

They treated Him worse than Bret Kavanaugh was treated when he was nominated for the Supreme Court!

They could sentence someone to death, but they couldn’t actually carry out such a sentence. That authority rested with the Roman governor.

Meanwhile,

PETER WAS SITTING OUTSIDE IN THE COURTYARD...

...warming himself by a fire and listening to the proceedings when a servant of the court approached him and said, *“You also are not one of this man’s disciples, are you?”* and Peter said, *“I am not.”* He lied through his teeth.

Then *“One of the servants of the high Priest. A relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, ‘Did I not see you in the garden with him?’ Peter again denied it, and at once a rooster crowed.”*

Matthew describes these events a little more colorfully, revealing Peter's character a little more fully.

Have you ever thought about how often we deny Jesus? Maybe we need to define what we're talking about here. To deny something is to declare it untrue. To deny Jesus is to say with our words, thoughts, or actions that we don't really believe the truth of Who Jesus says He is or what He says He'll do.

So, how do we deny Jesus? I think one of our most common denials is our worry, fret, and frustration over situations, which reveal our lack of trust in Him to do what He has said He will do. I know I'm guilty. How about you?

You could probably think of other ways we deny Jesus.

IN CLOSING...

Consider where Peter was in his faith when he denied Jesus three times and then where he was after the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit made the difference for him and all the rest of the apostles. He'll make the difference in your life and mine, too.