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The story of when Peter denies Jesus can be found in all four Canonical Gospels of the Bible. They state that during Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples, he predicted that Peter would deny knowledge of him, stating that Peter would disown him before the rooster crowed the next morning. Following the arrest of Jesus, Peter denied knowing him three times, but after the third heald the rooster crow and recalled the prediction as Jesus turned to look at him. Peter then denied to cry bitterly. Read the Bible story of Peter denying Jesus according to each gospel below and find articles, videos and audio sermons relating to this advisory story.Photo credit, Wikipedia. The Denial of Saint Peter, an oil-on-canvas painting by Gerard Seghers, dating to around 1620-1625 and now held by the North Carolina Museum of Art.[1] Peter's denial of Jesus is found in all four Gospels, and unfolds in the hours of Jesus' greatest need. Peter, one of Jesus' closest disciples, transitions from a declaration of unwavering loyalty to a sequence of denials that he ever knew Jesus. While this decision highlights Peter's weaknesses—fear being central to his actions—it also sets the stage for his later redemption and reaffirmation of faith.Discover the facts about this Holy Week event, why it is an important part of the Easter story, and what lessons we can learn from Peter's mistake.Peter Denies Jesus: Table of ContentsPreceding EventsWhenWhyAftermathLessonsFollowing the Last Supper with His disciples, John 17 displays a quiet moment of spiritual intimacy between Jesus and His Heavenly Father. In the Garden of Gethsemane, He prays for His disciples, asking that they be one, kept by God, protected from evil, sanctified by the Word, and present with Jesus where He is going. This prayer can be considered the finishing touch on an evening of increasingly shocking and comforting statements made by Jesus to His closest followers, preparing for the horrific events of what is now known as Good Friday.Though they had followed Him for a significant amount of time, and though the Gospels record Jesus' earlier mentions of His coming sacrifice, the disciples seem unsure about exactly which events will unfold or how they will unfold. As late as John 16, some say Jesus is now "speaking plainly and not using figurative speech"—to which Jesus questions if they now truly believe (John 16:29-30). Perhaps they wondered why Jesus seemed to be preparing them for His departure. It was, after all, the Passover. Though the parallel between the sacrificial lamb (Exodus 12) and the Lamb of God would occur to them days later, the disciples likely thought they would celebrate the holy festival with their rabbi before continuing ministry with Him. But then Jesus makes a startling statement. He says they will be scattered and leave him alone (John 16:32). When Did Peter Deny Jesus?The story of Peter's denial appears in all four canonical gospels, though accounts of the details vary. During the Last Supper, Jesus surprisingly states that on that very evening, one of the twelve will betray Him (John 13:21)—and though most of the disciples seem distressed about the thought of abandoning Jesus, it is Peter's response that is given the most weight. Peter insists that he could never betray his Lord, but Jesus replies that before the rooster crows the following morning, Peter will deny Him three times (John 13:38). As they leave the upper room where they've just celebrated the Last Supper, Jesus and the disciples go out to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane. Roman guards subsequently arrest Jesus in the garden for crimes against Caesar.John 18:17 tells us that when Jesus is arrested and taken to the high priest Caiaphas, Peter is shut out of the courtyard, away from the proceedings. The servant girl at the courtyard door asks if Peter is one of Jesus' disciples, and Peter denies this. As Jesus is being questioned, Peter is later asked in John 18:25-27 by two different individuals if he is a follower of Christ, one asking, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?" Peter denies both queries, leading to the third denial and the rooster's crowing as prophesied by Jesus.Why Did Peter Deny Jesus? According to author and former religion professor Eric D. Huntsman, "... we ought to be particularly careful about how we judge the actions and especially the motivations of historical figures about whose circumstances we know so little. Nevertheless, there is a long tradition of using Peter's failing that night first as a criticism of the Apostle himself and then as a model of how believers should not act."It's commonly held that Peter denied Jesus out of abject fear. Like the other disciples, he had heard Jesus' explanations of His coming death and yet reacted as one using trauma coping mechanisms. No Jew was ignorant of Rome's calculated violence toward detractors, and extreme shock could have caused Peter (and any of his peers) to respond self-protectively. Much is also made of Judas' betrayal of Jesus—though the other disciples fled the scene, it is Peter and Judas whose actions are highlighted. Here the gospel writers offer helpful contrast: Judas intentionally, willfully, and premeditatedly gave Jesus up to be arrested (Matthew 26:14-16). As for the other ten disciples, it is unclear whether they were questioned or otherwise held by strangers the way Peter was. From how the Gospels describe it, they fled and hid together, which meant they had at least comfort in numbers. One could argue that while Peter denied Jesus, he also placed himself in a position physically close to Jesus' trial to be near Him in some way. Though it may be a matter of semantics, Peter didn't deny Jesus; he denied knowing Jesus to three strangers. His later repentance would show that he never wanted to abandon Jesus.Perhaps Peter was angry that this was the plan. He didn't want Jesus to suffer but to ride out in glory; similar hypotheses have been made about Judas. Neither man seemed to be on the same page as Jesus and didn't want to face the reality of Jesus not doing what they hoped He would do.Most importantly, the denial fulfilled Jesus' prophecy. Had it not happened, Jesus' claim to be God's Son could have been questioned.What Happened After Peter Denied Jesus?... At that moment a rooster began to crow" (John 18:27). Thus begins the acceleration of Jesus' suffering. He is led away from high priest Caiaphas to Roman governor Pilate for further questioning (John 18:28-38); sentenced to death (John 18:39-40); is tortured and taunted (John 19:1-9); and ultimately crucified (John 19:17-18) and buried (John 19:38-42).What Can We Learn from Peter Denying Jesus?Jesus knows far more than we do about how we will think, speak, and act. Despite Peter's protestations, Jesus reveals that Peter will deny Him. Before this exchange, Jesus washes Peter's feet and the other disciples' feet, demonstrating servant leadership. After the exchange, Peter is still included in the final moments before Jesus' arrest. In other words, Jesus anticipates Peter's actions, yet He does not cast him out of the group. Rather, Peter receives the same instruction and encouragement as his peers. Jesus always stands ready to forgive and restore. After the resurrection, Jesus appears multiple times to the disciples and others. On one occasion, Jesus asks Peter three times if he loves him (some would say one for each time he denied knowing Jesus). When Peter affirms he loves Jesus, Jesus gives him the charge to care for the believers after Jesus ascends to His Father. Peter's response (John 21:15) indicates that he knew Jesus understood his denial was impulsive—a reflection of his poor understanding of Christ's upcoming resurrection.Jesus knew that Peter would deny him, and He loved him anyway. Similarly, He understands that the pressures of this life wear on us and can cause us to waver in our resolve. The Bible says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us..." (1 John 1:9). Jesus allowed his "faithfulness" for a time for the greater faith that would come after the resurrection. As 2 Timothy 2:13 says, "If we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself." Through Jesus, redemption is available. In the opening pages of the Book of Acts, following Jesus' ascension, who rallies the other disciples? Who speaks for the group, to a gathering of soon-to-be converts, about repentance and faith? Peter (Acts 1:15-26, 2:14-42). The disciple became a rock of the early church, as Jesus foretold—embarking on missionary journeys, penning two epistles, and more. A moment (or two) of weakness could not negate what Jesus wanted to accomplish through the life of Peter.Photo Credit: ©iStock/Getty Images Plus/Marjan ApostolovicAnna Oelereich is a Chicago-area church youth director, freelance writer, and graduate of Taylor University. She received her B.S. in Professional Writing in 2018, but has loved words—reading, storytelling, list-making, and even handwriting—for as long as she can remember. Previously, she served as the marketing and communications coordinator for a community foundation, where she shared powerful stories of generosity, and encouraged others to give. When writing an article, or developing programming for her students, Anna enjoys highlighting the historical and cultural contexts of familiar Bible passages so others feel they are living the stories for themselves.

Peter is one of the most fascinating figures in the New Testament. As part of Jesus' inner circle and a prominent early-church figure, he gets featured in many Gospel stories. There's a lot of emphasis on Peter's penchant for hasty, reckless behavior, but the fact that he plays such a notable role in 90+ Gospels helps account for many of those stories. We're not given as much insight into the other disciples' personalities, so we're not as privy to their slips. Peter's denial of Jesus is one particularly heartbreaking moment featured in all four of the Gospels. As readers, we see Jesus warn Peter that this moment is coming; we watch the denial happen; and Peter's immediate heartbreak at realizing what he'd done. Thankfully, we also get a front-row seat to his restoration. Let's dive in and look at Peter's journey through this story. A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. You are those who have stood by me in my trials. And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." But he replied, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death." Jesus answered, "I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me" (Luke 22:24-34)\* This passage takes place during Jesus' last Passover meal with His disciples. He's just instituted the Sacrament of Communion and mentions a disciple [Judas] at the table who will betray Him. This naturally kickstarts an argument among the disciples about which of them is the best. Unfortunately, after all this time with Jesus, they're still so quick to launch into these kinds of discussions. Jesus reiterates a point He made when frustration erupted among the disciples to deny the charges. Peter, on the other hand, denies everything. Meanwhile, Simon Peter was still standing there warning himself. So they asked him, "You aren't one of this man's disciples too, are you?" He replied, "I am not." It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself (John 18:15-18). There is some discussion regarding the identity of this second disciple known to the high priest. Could it be Judas? Could it be some well-known disciple who was not one of the twelve? Could it be John himself? It's hard to say for sure, and John doesn't consider it critical to the narrative. He wants us to pay attention to Jesus and Peter. Peter is brought into the high priest's courtyard. This is probably a relatively small area and, due to the night's events, is occupied by soldiers, priests, and servants. One of the servants asks a fairly innocuous question about why Peter is there. She has no power over Peter, and her question doesn't necessarily put Peter in danger. Peter's impulse to lie probably has more to do with the others milling about in this area and who might overhear his answer. After Peter's first denial, John switches the narrative to Jesus before the high priest (John 18:19-24), brilliantly comparing Jesus' response to His interrogation with Peter's. As accusations are leveled against Jesus, He keeps in mind that it hated me first" (John 15:18; cf. Matthew 24:9). Peter quickly found he wasn't nearly as bold and courageous as he had proclaimed, and in fear he denied the One who had loved him. We might well wonder why Jesus allowed Peter to fail so miserably and deny his Lord three times that night. Jesus revealed to Peter that Satan had asked for permission to sift Peter like wheat (Luke 22:31). Jesus could have easily protected Peter and not allowed Satan to sift him, but Jesus had a higher goal. He was equipping Peter to strengthen his brothers (Luke 22:32). Not only did Peter strengthen the other disciples, but he became the pillar of the early church in Jerusalem, exhorting and training others to follow the Lord Jesus (Acts 2). And he continues to this day to strengthen us through his epistles, 1 and 2 Peter. As with all our failures, God used Peter's many failures, including his three denials of Christ, to turn him from Simon, a common man with a common name, into Peter, the Rock. Return to: Questions about Matthew What was the reason behind Peter's denial of Jesus? Share — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format for any purpose, even commercially. Adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially. The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms. Attribution — You must give appropriate credit — provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use. ShareAlike — If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original. 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Question Answer The story of Peter's threefold denial of Christ is found in all four Gospel accounts: Matthew 26:69-74, Mark 14:66-72, Luke 22:55-62, and John 18:15-18, 25-27. But why would the chief of the disciples deny even knowing Him? There were two main reasons why Peter denied Jesus: weakness and fear. Peter's denial was based partially on weakness, the weakness born of human frailty. After the Last Supper, Jesus took His disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane to await His arrest. He told them to stay awake and pray while He went off to pray alone. When He returned to them, He found them sleeping. He warned Peter to stay awake and pray because, although his spirit might be willing, his flesh was weak. But he fell asleep again, and, by the time the soldiers had come to arrest Jesus, it was too late to pray for the strength to endure the ordeal to come. No doubt his failure to appropriate the only means to shore up his own weakness—prayer—occurred to him as he was sleeping bitterly after his denials. But Peter learned his lesson about being watchful, and he exhorts us in 1 Peter 5:8, "Be on the alert, because your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." Peter's weakness had caused him to be "devoured" momentarily as he denied his Lord because he hadn't been prepared through prayer and he underestimated his own weakness. A second reason for Peter's failure was fear. To his credit, although all the others had fled (Mark 14:50), Peter still followed Jesus after His arrest, but he kept his distance so as not to be identified with Him (Mark 14:54). There's no question that fear gripped him. From the courtyard, he watched Jesus being falsely accused, beaten, and crucified (Mark 14:57-66). Peter was afraid Jesus would die, and he was fearful for his own life as well. 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