

The Final Days of Jesus  
**PETER'S TRAGIC DENIALS...AND OURS**

Friday, March 27

Reading: John 18:15-27

***John 18:25** Meanwhile, Simon Peter was still standing there warming himself. So they asked him, "You aren't one of His disciples too, are you?" He denied it, saying, "I am not."*

Jesus' first "trial" is before the old high priest Annas. He had been high priest from AD 6-15 before being removed by the Roman governor. The current high priest Caiaphas was his son-in-law. Most Jews would still consider Annas the "real" high priest since according to the Law of Moses the high priest served for life. Annas was the real power behind the Temple. He would have a special hatred for Jesus for He had twice disrupted the Bazaar of Annas – the marketplace in the outer courts of the Temple (John 2; Matthew 21:12). To see Jesus as a bound prisoner must have greatly pleased the greedy old priest.

This first meeting was totally illegal! It is nothing more than a "fishing expedition" to try and get Jesus to incriminate Himself. But Jesus stands firm. Annas' attempts failed miserably as Jesus counters the priest's questions. His teachings had not been subversive or secret. He had spoken openly and there were thousands of people who could testify to what He had said. Jesus was demanding that the requirements of the law concerning witnesses be followed. It was illegal in Jewish courts to try and make the accused incriminate himself. One of the guards strikes Jesus in the face for this answer. This also was an illegal action as an uncondemned man was not permitted to be struck under Jewish law. Once again Jesus demanded a fair trial – something His enemies had no intention of giving Him since they had already determined their verdict.

While Jesus stands firm under pressure, Peter crumbles. He and another disciple (probably John) have followed the mob to the courtyard of Annas' home. There Peter is questioned as to his relationship with Jesus. Three times he is asked if he is one of Jesus' disciples and three times he denies it. At that moment he heard the cock crow and remembered Jesus' word which he had just fulfilled. Luke tells us that at that moment Peter turned and looked into the face of Jesus. In great remorse, the disciple then goes out and weeps bitterly (Luke 22:61-62).

LESSON ONE: "Again Peter Denied It." From Peter we learn the total futility of trusting in our own strength. Peter was sure he was strong enough to die for Christ but in the end his stated courage turned to whimpering cowardice. In his own strength, Peter always did the wrong thing. Likewise, we fail when we live in our own strength. Whether out of fear or indifference, every time we refuse to share Christ when God brings an opportunity across our path we are in a sense denying the Lord. May our eyes see people the way Jesus sees them. May we be bold to answer those who ask "Are you one of His followers?" with the saving gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

LESSON TWO: "A Rooster Began to Crow." Peter and Judas both betrayed Jesus. The difference is that while Judas' guilty conscience drove him to suicide (Matt. 27:1-5), that look into Jesus' eyes broke Peter's heart in repentance. I believe that look confirmed to Peter, "I know what you've done and I still love you and forgive you." Where do we look when we have failed the Savior? Do we accept His love and forgiveness or do we continue to wallow in our guilt and despair?