

Last week we went over the arrest of Jesus in the Garden. We saw how He went out to meet them. We read of the power of His "I AM" declaration. We saw His command of the situation in ordering that His followers be let go. This week we see two of the closest followers, one that I believe was the youngest, John, and the other I believe was the oldest, Peter, follow the mob from a distance to the High Priest's home.

15 Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard, This very home and courtyard have been identified with some degree of certainty. The first century steps that Jesus would have been taken up out of the Kidron Valley are still there. The courtyard now has a bronze statue of Peter, a Roman soldier and a servant girl by a charcoal fire with a rooster on a pillar above them. Just inside the building is what appears to me to be an interrogation chamber. Archways have been carved in the stone near the middle of the room with holes above through which chains or ropes could have held a prisoner's arms. Just below is a dry cistern about 25 feet deep in which the most dangerous prisoners could be kept. (Psalm 88:4-6)

The fact that John was known to the high priest has brought up a great deal of speculation. Was the family of Zebedee a priestly family? Did John bring salted fish down from Galilee for the high priest's home? Did James and John previously have some kind of political ambitions? (Matthew 20:21) We don't know. We just know what Scripture tells us, that he knew John. In this passage, John mentions his knowledge of the relations of some of the servants of the high priest. That is why John is the only disciple that mentions Malchus' name (the one whose ear was chopped off by Peter) and that Peter's third accuser was a relative of Malchus.

We fault the disciples for abandoning Jesus, but these two showed great courage and love to follow Him into what might have ended in their own arrest and crucifixion. If the high priest's servants knew John, surely they knew he was now a follower of Jesus. The other Gospel writers have the first accuser saying, "You also were with Jesus the Galilean." (Mark 14:67) The word "also" points to the fact that they knew John was a follower of Jesus. These two stepped right into the lions' den. That was an incredibly bold display of their commitment to Jesus, in spite of the denial that was to follow.

16 but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the girl on duty there and brought Peter in. It was not uncommon for a mature woman to keep the gate. (Acts 12:13) From the inside she would judge whether or not the guest should be let in by lifting the bar that kept the door sealed shut. John went back and told her that Peter was okay. This means she probably knew John as well, adding to the mystery of John's relationship with this powerful family. You can ask John about it when you get there.

Commented [notes1]: 4 I am counted among those who go down to the pit; I am like a man without strength.
5 I am set apart with the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave, whom you remember no more, who are cut off from your care.
6 You have put me in the lowest pit, in the darkest depths.
Psalms 88:4-6 (NIV)

Commented [notes2]: 21 "What is it you want?" he asked. She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom."
Matt 20:21 (NIV)

Commented [notes3]: 67 When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked closely at him. "You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus," she said.
Mark 14:67 (NIV)

Commented [notes4]: 13 Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer the door.
Acts 12:13 (NIV)

¹⁷ "You are not one of his disciples, are you?" the girl at the door asked Peter. He replied, "I am not." Why didn't she ask John? I don't know, but Peter has just given his first denial. Fear for personal safety, anxiety, concern for John, desire to get in to assist in some way, all may have been going through his mind, but he just did what he vowed he would never do. His mind probably justified it in the same way that we do. (Genesis 3:12) "If I tell the truth, I'll never get in and won't be able to help my Lord." Or, "I don't want to get John in trouble. God knows my heart." How can I think of these justifications? I think you know, because you can most likely relate. Most of us go through these times of testing when we can take a stand, but we choose not to and then justify it in our mind.

Commented [notes5]: 12 The man said, "The woman you put here with me--she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." Gen 3:12 (NIV)

Jesus had been asked if He was Jesus of Nazareth. He answered, "I am!" (John 18:4-6) Peter is asked if he is a follower of Jesus, and he answered, "I am not." The contrast struck me as I read the passage. Jesus won't deny being our Savior, but we come up with excuses to deny being His follower. Every follower of Jesus has to come to the place where they boldly confess their allegiance to Jesus as their Savior. Our "I am not!" must be changed to a passionate, "I am!" regardless of the consequences. We say it with our decisions, with our responses to situations, and even to those who ridicule believers. "I am His follower. I am a Christian." What will we do the next time we are faced with the opportunity? (Acts 5:41)

Commented [notes6]: 4 Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?"
5 "Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "I am he," Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.)
6 When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground. John 18:4-6 (NIV)

¹⁸ 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. Jerusalem has about the same climate as our city of Sedona, Arizona. If you've been to a sunrise service here, you know the season of Passover can have some very chilly nights, even snow. The servants and officials are around a charcoal fire. Officials are the Temple guards with their clubs. This tells us the Roman troops have gone on back to their fortress. The arrest was rather uneventful as far as a physical battle. Jesus is now safely in the high priest's compound. What a worldly perspective! If they had a clue, they'd be shaking in their sandals, knowing that Jesus could at anytime call on the armies of heaven. (Matthew 26:53)

Commented [notes7]: 41 The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Acts 5:41 (NIV)

¹⁹ Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. Jesus is undergoing an interrogation by Annas, a sort of unofficial preliminary trial. The outcome has already been determined (John 11:30), but Annas, the Jewish political powerbroker wants to find out who has been influenced by Jesus. Who else do they need to keep an eye on? How far has Jesus' influence infiltrated the ruling council, the Sanhedrin? (John 3:1-2) For Annas, it was all about maintaining his control and keeping the flow of money coming. (Mark 11:17)

Commented [notes8]: 53 Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? Matt 26:53 (NIV)

Commented [notes9]: 50 You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish." John 11:50 (NIV)

²⁰ "I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus replied. "I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. ²¹ Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said." A Jewish trial forbade self-incrimination. Witnesses' testimony had to agree to convict someone. Jesus is calling Annas on His political misuse of power. He would never betray His followers by giving Annas their names. Jesus was calling for a proper trial and an end to this secret political hunt for enemies.

Commented [notes10]: Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council.
2 He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him." John 3:1-2 (NIV)

Commented [notes11]: 17 And as he taught them, he said, "Is it not written: "'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations' ? But you have made it 'a den of robbers.'" Mark 11:17 (NIV)

In saying, "I have spoken openly to the world", I believe He was clearly pointing Annas and all who heard to Proverbs 8:1-4. Jesus had only spoken in the tiny land of Israel. That phrase "to the world" had to stir their minds to think of a similar phrase in Scripture. ¹ Does not wisdom call out? Does not understanding raise her voice? ² On the heights along the way, where the paths meet, she takes her stand; ³ beside the gates leading into the city, at the entrances, she cries aloud: ⁴ "To you, O men, I call out; I raise my voice to all mankind. (NIV) The chapter goes on to speak of wisdom being with God when the earth was created. ³⁰ Then I was the craftsman at his side. I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his presence, ³¹ rejoicing in his whole world and delighting in mankind. Proverbs 8:30-31 (NIV) It was a subtle declaration that Annas was standing before Wisdom Himself, the Craftsman of the universe, whom Annas had abandoned and was even trying to destroy. What futility! Annas thought Jesus was on trial, but Jesus reversed the roles. (John 5:27)

Unlike Annas and Caiaphas political maneuvering, Jesus declared that He did nothing in secret. This mock trial was going on at night, in secret, because they knew the public would not approve. (Luke 22:53) Again, Jesus is giving those who are honest a contrast of the accuser and the accused.

²² When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby struck him in the face. "Is this the way you answer the high priest?" he demanded. Because of Exodus 22:28, God's own injunction not to speak evil of your ruler, the temple guard thought Jesus was out of line. Actually, Jesus showed us the correct way to confront corrupt leaders. Ask them to obey the law that governs their behavior. Dear political activists, this is your example. You are not to speak evil of your ruler, but you can follow Jesus' example of requesting that they submit to the laws that govern them. Slandering political leaders has become a popular past time in the last few decades. It isn't helpful. (Romans 13:1) There is a proper way to confront rulers that abuse their power. Jesus demonstrated it here.

The word for "struck" denotes a sharp blow with the flat of one's hand. Striking a prisoner was against Jewish law, but that didn't seem to bother this crowd. Matthew tells us that they spit in Jesus' face, slapped Him, and struck Him with their fists. (Matthew 26:67) By the time he gets to Pilate, His face will be badly beaten.

In spite of this abuse of power, Jesus answered calmly and to the point. ²³ "If I said something wrong," Jesus replied, "testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?" Annas was getting nowhere with Jesus. In fact, Jesus was exposing Annas' abuse of power. Again, we see that Jesus is the one in charge. He is the one that is calm and collected, speaking truth, exposing evil, and even directing the conversation.

²⁴ Then Annas sent him, still bound, to Caiaphas the high priest. This may have been within the same expansive home. (Luke 22:54) Some of the Sanhedrin had been in on the arrest and others were most likely woken and came to plan the predawn trial of Jesus. They had to agree on what charges they would present to Pilate. The plan was to have Jesus crucified. They wanted Him humiliated in a way

Commented [notes12]: 27 And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. John 5:27 (NIV)

Commented [notes13]: 53 Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me. But this is your hour--when darkness reigns." Luke 22:53 (NIV)

Commented [notes14]: 28 "Do not blaspheme God or curse the ruler of your people. Ex 22:28 (NIV)

Commented [notes15]: Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Romans 13:1 (NIV)

Commented [notes16]: 67 Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him Matt 26:67 (NIV)

Commented [notes17]: 54 Then seizing him, they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed at a distance. Luke 22:54 (NIV)

that would convince the Jewish masses that He was not the Messiah. (Deuteronomy 21:23) The public equated crucifixion with being cursed.

²⁵ As Simon Peter stood warming himself, he was asked, "You are not one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it, saying, "I am not." This is the second denial. Now what justifications went through the mind of Peter? Did he think, "It's too late to change my tune now"? He could probably now see that this was headed toward crucifixion, the most torturous death imaginable. Perhaps he thought, "Surely Jesus wants me to survive to carry on His message?" Whatever the thoughts, he did again what he said he would never do. (Mark 14:31)

Luke (22:59) tells us that about an hour passed before another confrontation. It was time for Peter to consider what he had done, but also an increasing knowledge of where this was all heading! ²⁶ One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, "Didn't I see you with him in the olive grove?" It was Peter's third chance. Would he take a stand and suffer with Jesus? Will we? What choice will we make when it comes down to our own suffering? What choice do we make daily when given the chance to deny our self and live for Jesus?

²⁷ Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow. He'd done it. Jesus' words had come to pass, "Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." (Luke 22:34) Peter didn't think it was possible. He was sure that if everyone else ran, He would stand by Jesus. The rooster crow announced that he had just failed. The Gospel of Mark tells us there were two rooster crows, but some of the earlier manuscripts of Mark only have one. (Mark 14:30) Luke and Matthew only have one. It may be that this was the 3AM shift change for soldiers that were on watch. It was called "the cockcrow" and was announced with a trumpet. This may be more likely interpretation since chickens were not allowed to be raised in the city limits at that time.

Whatever it was, it was a wake up call to Peter. Perhaps he didn't even realize the countdown had begun until he heard it and knew it was too late. Luke tells us that at that moment, Jesus turned and looked straight at Peter. (Luke 22:61) Peter went out and wept bitterly. (Matthew 26:75) Remorse is different from repentance. Judas was remorseful. Peter was heartbroken with grief. He failed His Savior. He was not as strong as he thought he was. He was no different than the other disciples. He couldn't keep his promise to stand by his Lord.

This failure was his opportunity to come to grips with the fact that he trusted in himself more than in the Lord. He thought he loved Jesus more than himself, but this test showed him the truth about his own heart. Now he can repent and be changed. Our failures can be the same for us if we will take them to heart as Peter did. We can learn the truth about our own heart, repent, and be changed. Then our confidence will be in the Lord and not in our own strength.

When we finally face the fact that we are as weak as every other person, it can be crushing, especially when we have been honored with a special position, or told that we would be leaders. We can deny Jesus with our actions (James 3:9-10), or our

Commented [notes18]: 23 you must not leave his body on the tree overnight. Be sure to bury him that same day, because anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse. You must not desecrate the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance. Deut 21:23 (NIV)

Commented [notes19]: 31 But Peter insisted emphatically, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the others said the same. Mark 14:31 (NIV)

Commented [notes20]: 59 About an hour later another asserted, "Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean." Luke 22:59 (NIV)

Commented [notes21]: 34 Jesus answered, "I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me." Luke 22:34 (NIV)

Commented [notes22]: 30 "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "today--yes, tonight--before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times." Mark 14:30 (NIV)

Commented [notes23]: 61 The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times." Luke 22:61 (NIV)

Commented [notes24]: 75 Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: "Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly. Matt 26:75 (NIV)

Commented [notes25]: 9 With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. 10 Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. James 3:9-10 (NIV)

words (Mark 8:38) or our refusal to live out Jesus' commands (John 14:15). We can justify it in our minds, but denial of Jesus is never justifiable.

Annas was succumbing to his lust for power and Jesus was a necessary casualty to maintain it. Peter was succumbing to fear for his personal safety, and betrayal of his dear friend and leader, the One he declared to be the Son of God (Matthew 16:16), was the casualty he accepted to stay safe. Peter and Annas both knew what they wanted and were doing whatever it took to get there. The difference is that Annas couldn't care less about Jesus, and Peter thought he loved Jesus, but at the time, he obviously loved himself more. That will change in the last chapter of John. There is hope for us to turn our eyes from the comfort and pleasures of this life toward the One that loves us. (Psalm 138:8)

Do we love Jesus more than our own personal safety? Jesus threatens our sense of security too. Neither Peter the fisherman, nor Annas the high priest, had real security. Peter was still trusting in his physical prowess. Annas was trusting in his fame and fortune. Both securities are an illusion. Annas was assassinated in 66 A.D. clinging to his wealth and position that he thought kept him secure. A few years before Annas' death, Peter was martyred and went to a glorious reward. He had long since given up trusting in himself for security and had thrown his lot in with the One who could call fish into his nets (Luke 5:6), or calm a sea with His command (Mark 4:39), or speak with wisdom and confidence before this world's most powerful men and face death with confident assurance. Peter fixed his eyes on eternity and the love he had seen in his Savior.

There is security for us, but it is not in anything the world places its trust. It's in the Craftsman of the world, the One who has forever enjoyed the presence of God, and who delights in mankind. He is called Wisdom. The angel that announced His birth called Him Jesus (Luke 1:31), for He would save us from our sins, including the sin of trusting in our self.

Annas saw the bound man from Nazareth and thought he could stop His followers from detracting from his personal lust for power and wealth. He demanded to know who were His disciples. (John 18:19) Jesus responded that He'd spoken openly to the whole world. Read on to the end of the chapter Jesus alluded to and we see a solemn warning to Annas and all who reject Wisdom.

³³ Listen to my instruction and be wise; do not ignore it. ³⁴ Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway. ³⁵ For whoever finds me finds life and receives favor from the LORD. ³⁶ But whoever fails to find me harms himself; all who hate me love death." Proverbs 8:33-36 (NIV) Jesus called Himself "the door" and "the life" earlier in John's gospel. (John 10:7; 14:6) There are those same words in this Proverb. No wonder Jesus pointed them to that passage!

Jesus was still in charge of every encounter on His way to the cross, declaring Himself to be Wisdom personified (by saying He spoke openly to the world), warning Annas and all who would reject Him of the consequences of hating Him and loving death!

Commented [notes26]: 38 If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."
Mark 8:38 (NIV)

Commented [notes27]: 5 Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"
John 14:5 (NIV)

Commented [notes28]: Matthew 16:16 (NIV)
16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Commented [notes29]: 8 The LORD will fulfill [his purpose] for me; your love, O LORD, endures forever--do not abandon the works of your hands.
Psalms 138:8 (NIV)

Commented [notes30]: 6 When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break.
Luke 5:6 (NIV)

Commented [notes31]: 39 He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.
Mark 4:39 (NIV)

Commented [notes32]: 31 You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.
Luke 1:31 (NIV)

Commented [notes33]: 19 Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching.
John 18:19 (NIV)

Commented [notes34]: 7 Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep."
John 10:7 (NIV)

Commented [notes35]: 6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
John 14:6 (NIV)