

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

JOHN 18:15 And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and *so did* another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest.

16 But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter.

17 Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also *one* of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not.

18 And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.

19 The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine.

20 Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews al-

ways resort; and in secret have I said nothing.

21 Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.

22 And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?

23 Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?

24 Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest.

25 And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also *one* of his disciples? He denied *it*, and said, I am not.

26 One of the servants of the high priest, being *his* kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him?

27 Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew.

NOTES

Trials and Denials

Lesson Text: John 18:15-27

Related Scriptures: Matthew 26:59-75; Mark 14:55-72;
Luke 22:55-71

TIME: A.D. 30

PLACE: Jerusalem

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GOLDEN TEXT—"Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14:62).

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Lesson Exposition

PETER'S FIRST DENIAL— John 18:15-18

Trying to follow (John 18:15-16). When Jesus was seized in the garden, the disciples fled into the night. But true to his bold nature, though cautiously, "Peter followed afar off" (Luke 22:54)—that is, at a distance—to see what was going to happen. While we cannot be certain, most think that the reference to "another disciple" was to none other than the author of this Gospel, the apostle John.

Whether it was another disciple or John, he was known to the high priest. We do not know what the connection was, but it did make it possible for Peter to be granted access to the courtyard of his residence.

Standing in denial (John 18:17-18). As the woman let Peter into the courtyard, she asked him if he too was not one of Jesus' disciples.

At this point, Peter swiftly denied that he was one of Jesus' disciples. He would eventually deny the Lord three times, as foretold by Jesus in all four Gospels (Matt. 26:33-34; Mark 14:30; Luke 22:34; John 13:38).

The night was cool, so those gath-

ered had built a fire to keep warm. Peter was likely trying to blend in with those present, and he therefore stood close to them. This decision would eventually set him up to again be challenged about knowing Jesus, leading to his further denials of Him.

JESUS' FIRST TRIAL—John 18:19-24

Interrogation and reply (John 18:19-21). Jesus' first hearing was before Annas, the former high priest and father-in-law to Caiaphas, the current high priest.

Annas questioned Jesus about His disciples and His doctrine.

In response to the high priest's inquiry about His teachings, Jesus boldly referred him to what He had taught openly in public places of worship, both in synagogues as well as in the Jerusalem temple. It was not as though Jesus had been running a covert operation. All He had taught and done had been in open, public forums.

Abusive treatment (John 18:22). Earlier in His ministry, Christ had said, "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true" (5:31).

The above being true, it was not irregular that Jesus would answer the

high priest by referring him to those who had actually heard Him teach.

At this, one of the officers of the high priest slapped Jesus across the face with the palm of his hand. The Lord's indirect answer to the high priest was seen as insubordination and disrespect. This was just the beginning of the abuse Jesus would endure at the hands of both the Jewish and the Roman authorities throughout His trial and execution.

Honest challenge (John 18:23). In response to this abuse, Jesus challenged His attacker to give a valid reason for the attack. Since Jesus had said nothing evil and had meant no disrespect to the office of the high priest, why had the officer struck him?

Christ was innocent of all wrongdoing, and the officer's reaction was unwarranted. This was just one of many violations of the law that occurred during the trials of Jesus.

Abrupt dismissal (John 18:24). At this point, Annas had apparently heard enough. He sent Jesus to the current high priest, his son-in-law Caiaphas.

PETER'S FURTHER DENIALS— John 18:25-27

Denial two (John 18:25). Meanwhile, Simon Peter was still warming himself at the fire along with some servants and soldiers. Someone asked him, "Art not thou also one of his disciples?" As he had done previously, Peter denied Jesus by asserting, "I am not."

Denial three (John 18:26-27). One of the servants standing near the fire with Peter just happened to be related to Malchus, who had had his ear cut off by Peter. This servant had also been present in the garden when Jesus was arrested. But since it had been dark and there had been a large number of people there, he was apparently not completely certain that Peter was actually the one who had attacked Mal-

chus. He nevertheless was suspicious. So he asked Peter pointedly, "Did not I see thee in the garden with [Jesus]?"

Peter denied Christ again, and the rooster immediately crowed.

Most believers can remember times when they have in some manner denied knowing Jesus. The world is hostile to the claims of Christ and likewise hostile to those who follow Him.

We must therefore be ever vigilant concerning temptations to deny Christ that are continually before us in the world (cf. I Cor. 10:12-13). Concerning Satan's tricks, Paul declares, "We are not ignorant of his devices" (II Cor. 2:11). But bold reliance on the power of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us will give us courage to represent Christ as faithful ambassadors.

—John Alva Owston.

QUESTIONS

1. Which disciples followed Jesus after His arrest?
2. How did those disciples gain entrance to the high priest's house?
3. Who first challenged Peter about whether he was Jesus' disciple?
4. What did Peter do that set him up for his subsequent denials of Jesus?
5. Who first questioned Jesus after His arrest?
6. What two things was Jesus questioned about?
7. How did Jesus respond to the question about His teachings?
8. Why did the officer slap Jesus across the face?
9. Where was Jesus sent next?
10. Who challenged Peter about Jesus the third time?

—John Alva Owston.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. The Lord can use earthly connections to place us where He wants us (John 18:15-16).
2. A focus on our own comfort can keep us from testifying to others about our relationship with Jesus (vss. 17-18).
3. Integrity means doing and saying the right thing at all times (vss. 19-21).
4. Truthfulness is the best policy, but it is not always appreciated (vs. 22).
5. People who are out to destroy God's work will persist in their opposition (vss. 23-24).
6. Denying Jesus is another way of betraying Him (vss. 25-27).

—Charity G. Carter.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. There were eleven disciples, not including Judas Iscariot. Discuss why only two of them followed Jesus to the palace (John 18:15).
2. The Bible is not clear on who the other disciple was, but some say it was John. Do you agree? Why or why not?
3. Why did Peter deny Jesus (vss. 17, 25)?
4. Did the officer have a legitimate reason for striking Jesus (vss. 22-23)?
5. Peter denied Jesus three times (vs. 27). List ways in which people deny Jesus today.

—Charity G. Carter.

Golden Text Illuminated

“Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven” (Mark 14:62).

The account of Jesus' trial in Mark is significant for two reasons.

First, this week's text represents one of Jesus' most aggressive statements. The high priest was badgering Him for a confession: “Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” (Mark 14:61). The reply, “I am,” is more than a simple affirmation. The Greek is emphatic and recalls the divine name in Exodus 3:14. The high priest asked Jesus if He was the Messiah, and Jesus answered boldly, intimating that He was God Himself.

The second important feature in this verse is Jesus' reference to Daniel's vision of the Son of Man receiving eternal, worldwide dominion from God the Father (7:13-14). Jesus' interpretation is interesting because Daniel sees the Son of Man traveling *to* God on the clouds, which Luke seems to allude to in Acts 1:9. Psalm 110:1 continues the story: God invites the Son to sit at His right hand while He makes Messiah's enemies a footstool. Jesus, however, tells the high priest what happens next: Christ will return to earth on the clouds and take His throne.

We often view Jesus as a passive rabbi who hugged lambs, but we need to consider His response when the high priest bullied Him.

Christians today live in an increasingly hostile environment, so we need to remember that Jesus is Lord. The Lamb on the cross is also the Lion on the throne (cf. Rev. 5:5; 22:3).

—David Samuel Gifford.