

PETER'S DENIAL

The denial of Jesus Christ by Peter is recorded in all four gospels and is a major event in the story of the gospel as well as in the story of Peter's life. The events of this story greatly shaped the apostle's life and added tremendous strength to his faith. Peter, who denies three times in one night and then appears to be turning from the ministry back to his craft of fishing in John 21, is transformed by the confrontation of Christ later in John 21, and he becomes the deliverer of the first gospel sermon in Acts 2. It is easy to identify with Peter's plight as we examine the text in Matthew, but with a fuller study of all four passages, questions arise about the character of Peter in this story.

As Matthew is regarded as the most read book of the New Testament, it follows that Matthew 26:58,69-75 is likely the most read account of this particular episode. In these verses Peter is without in the Palace, attempting to blend in with the crowd. He is approached three times, and he gives three progressively emphatic denials. In the final verse of the passage, the cock crows and Peter seems to first realize his mistake. His remorse for the denial is obvious in all four gospels.

John's account, John 18:15-18,25-27, follows a similar pattern with progressive denials. And like Matthew, John gives no interjections of any time frame or any other reason why Peter would have paused to consider his responses. It seems as if Peter were caught in the midst of a teasing mob that instantly probed and prodded him with ever-loudening jeers. We can almost feel his heart racing and sense panic setting in. The negative peer pressure quickly takes its toll, and Peter resorts to swearing and shouting to prove he is really part of the crowd—the crowd that does not stand with Christ. Prove it he does.

A light reading of these two passages might lead us to think that Peter was hoodwinked into the denial. Two facts are evident in Mark and Luke that illustrate otherwise.

Mark 14:68 gives the first denial by Peter. It states that after this he *"went out into the porch; and the cock crew."* The

mention of this fact changes the above view that Peter simply caved in to the pressure of a rowdy crowd. With evidence of the cock's crow in Peter's ear, we have to consider that the words of Christ's warning to him (as recorded by all four authors prior to the unfolding of this story) about the denial must have flooded his mind. Was he keeping a running score in his mind - "now I've denied him once"? The fact that there was time to think at all and to consider the warning of Christ shows us how frail human strength is in comparison to the cunning craftiness of our adversary. No doubt Peter was shocked by his own actions and likely vowed to himself that he would not fall again. But his strength would fail.

The final account of this event not discussed as of yet is found in Luke 22:54-62. Another detail is present in this passage that adds more color to the story. The dimension of time is revealed. There is "*a little while*" (vs. 58) between the first and second denials, and then "*the space of one hour*" (vs. 59) between the second and third denials. Combining the information of the accounts yields the following timeline: Peter was without in the Palace when he was first accused of being a companion of Christ; he went to the Porch and heard the first cock crow; a "little while" elapsed; the second denial occurred; about one hour of time elapsed; the third denial took place, followed immediately by the final cock crow; Peter weeps bitterly. The image of Peter being swept away in a panicked frenzy disappears with this time line. Likely Peter was amazed by his first denial and attempted to avoid the second by his own strength. He denies again. After one hour to contemplate his inability to stand for Christ independently, he falls terribly in the third denial and realizes immediately the full sorrow of his sin.

John 21 contains the story of the Risen Savior confronting Peter about his denial. Repeating his question three times - to number Peter's transgressions, Jesus nurtures Peter and gives him His strength. It is by this strength, - not Peter's, but the Lord's - that Peter speaks boldly to the people gathered together at Pentecost in Acts 2. It is Peter, who denied Jesus three times, who delivers the first gospel sermon.

The Church today can value from this story in consideration of several factors: the gospels compliment one another and a fuller picture of Christ is seen when considering the stories as told by the different authors; Peter was unable to stand when he

attempted to use his own strength, but was able when he stood with the strength of Christ; trials of faith in an individual's life prepare him or her for great works in the future. *"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong"* (2 Cor 12:10).

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APOLOGIA

QUESTION: Were the apostles of Jesus baptized?

ANSWER: With the exception of Paul (Acts 9:18, 22:16), there is no record in Scripture that any of the other twelve disciples or the seventy were baptized. But in view of the multitude of passages supporting the purpose of baptism and recording instances of others being baptized, it would be contrary to principle that these were not also baptized.

"TO FULFIL ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS"

At John's doubt about his own worthiness to baptize Jesus, Jesus Himself *"Answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered Him"* (Mat. 3:15).

It is to be noted that even though He had no sin, Jesus set the example of fulfilling all righteousness by being baptized. The example surely followed by those who would be His disciples.

JOHN'S BAPTISM WAS WIDELY RECEIVED

"John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins" (Mark 1:4-5)

"And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized" (John 3:23).

We are left unadvised as to the number or names of those thus baptized, but the implication is that there were multitudes.

Although it is not stated, the disciples certainly could have been in this number.

JESUS HIMSELF BAPTIZED OTHERS

"After this came Jesus and His disciples into the land of Judea; and there He tarried with them, and baptized" (Mark 3:22).

It is reasonable that if Jesus Himself was baptized and was baptizing others, that His own disciples would surely have also been baptized. Otherwise they would have been disobedient to Jesus' teaching.

JESUS' OWN DISCIPLES ACTUALLY PERFORMED THE BAPTISMS

"When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus Himself baptized not, but His disciples,) He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee" (John 4:1-3).

Again, it would be unreasonable to conclude that the disciples had not submitted to the very action which they were assisting others in doing.

DISTINCTION MADE BETWEEN THOSE BAPTIZED AND THOSE NOT

"...Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he. And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of Him" (Luke 7:28-30).

Note the contrast: Those who responded to John's baptism were baptized. Those who rejected the counsel of God were not baptized.

Who would suppose the disciples rejected the counsel of God?

THE DISCIPLES WERE COMMISSIONED TO BAPTIZE

In Matthew 29:19-20 Jesus commissioned His disciples saying, *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them..."*

Consistency would have demanded that the disciples practice what they were exhorting others to do; otherwise their practice and

effect would have been contrary to the very principle they were teaching.

Although the Scriptures do not specifically state that the apostles or the seventy were baptized, it is reasonable to conclude that they were. To conclude otherwise would be to find them at fault in not doing what they were requiring of others. Paul wrote, "*Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth*" (Rom. 14:22).

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NEXT MONTH'S APOLOGIA QUESTION

Could you explain the command that Paul gives when he says, "*If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.*" (Col. 3:1)? How do we obey this command?

GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
July 7-9	Dowell Hill Congregation Columbus, IN	Bill Prince (Oxford, AL)
July 9-14	Temple Hill Congregation Smithdale, MS	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY) & J.D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
July 12-14	Summer Fellowship Conference 2006 Desoto State Park Schedule Fort Payne, AL	Various Speakers
July 14-16 Fri. and Sat. 7:30 PM EST Sun. 10:30 AM & 1:30 PM EST	Antioch Congregation Douglasville, GA	Ron Scott (Bloomington, IL)
July 16-21	Oak Grove Congregation Woodland, AL	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
July 21-23	Valley Congregation Valley, AL	J.D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
July 23-28	Napoleon Congregation Woodland, AL	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)

July
28 – 30

Verona Congregation
Verona, KY

J.D. McDonald
(Woodbury, TN)

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. How many camels did Abraham's servant take in his search for Isaac's wife?
2. When Paul was at Troas, a man in a dream asked him to come to what country to help them?
3. What would the Psalmist be if God could wash him?
4. What common fate do man and beast have, according to Ecclesiastes?
5. What did Job take to scrape himself with when he was afflicted with boils?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. Which king was considered worse than any other king of Israel? KING AHAB (1 King 16:33)
2. Which creation day did God create the stars? FOURTH (Gen. 1:14-18)
3. What did the angel of the Lord do with the offering given by Gideon? CONSUMED IT WITH FIRE (Jud. 6:21)
4. James 3 says one who offends not in word may be called what? A PERFECT MAN (Jas. 3:2)
5. What did Moses do without, during the 40 days he spent on Mount Sinai? HE ATE NO BREAD AND DRANK NO WATER (Deut. 9:9)