

# **First Serve**

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Studies in the Gospel of Mark

Text

Mark 14:53-72

Topic

Peter denies he is a follower of Jesus, but the more he protests, the more his Galilean accent gives him away

Title

*"Peter Piped-up and Produced a Personally Perilous Predicament"*

## Introduction

He's Sean Connery, so we give him a pass. But it seems lazy that he didn't even try to use a Lithuanian accent when he played defecting submarine commander Marko Ramius in *The Hunt for Red October*. He spoke in his usual thick Scottish accent.

Meryl Streep, on the other hand, is renowned for being able to nail just about any accent. To play the title role in *Sophie's Choice*, she not only mastered German and Polish accents, but also learned Polish. She was so convincing in-character that when she filmed on location, locals thought she was Polish.

The apostle Peter needed an accent coach. He followed Jesus after the Lord was arrested, but tried to keep his relationship to the Lord a secret.

As he warmed himself by the fire, a servant girl thought she recognized him as one of Jesus' disciples.

1 of 16

Mark 14:53-72

*"Peter Piped-up and Produced a Personally Perilous Predicament"*

Peter denied it, but his thick accent gave him away. Hearing him talk, the crowd said, "Surely you are one of them; for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows it" (v70).

Jesus warned Peter that he would deny the Lord three times before the rooster crowed twice. It happened, just as the Lord predicted.

Even though He had been arrested, and was being tried by the authorities, that second crowing, at the precise moment, indicated that Jesus was the one presiding over the events of that morning.

As we read through the verses, we'll focus on the Lord presiding, both in the future, and now.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 Jesus Will Preside Over The Future Trial Of Those Without Faith, and #2 Jesus Presides Over The Fiery Trials Of Your Faith.

#1 Jesus Will Preside Over  
The Future Trial Of Those Without Faith  
(v53-65)

Judge Wapner was the first reality-TV judge I can remember. There have been a bunch of them since Wapner; Judge Judy and Judge Joe Brown come to mind. Courtroom drama appeals to us on some level.

The hours leading up to His crucifixion are filled with judges and courtroom drama for Jesus. Mark begins with His interrogation by the Jewish ruling council, the Sanhedrin.

Mar 14:53 And they led Jesus away to the high priest; and with him were assembled all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes.

Mark omits a few things that are not pertinent to his telling of the story. Jesus was first taken to Annas, the former high priest and the father-in-law of Caiphas, the current high priest. Then Jesus was interrogated as recorded by Mark, at an illegal “night court” of the Sanhedrin. After that He was subjected to an “official” daylight trial of the Sanhedrin, then sent to Pilate, who sent Jesus to Herod, who sent Jesus back to Pilate, where He was sentenced to the Cross.

Everything the Sanhedrin did was illegal. Their end game was to have Jesus crucified by the Romans, and they'd bend or break both God's laws and the laws of men to see Him dead.

Mar 14:54 But Peter followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he sat with the servants and warmed himself at the fire.

We will pick-up the story of Peter, by the fire, in just a moment. This is put here as a place holder. Make a mental note of it; especially the "fire."

Mar 14:55 Now the chief priests and all the council sought testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none.

They were working backwards from His sentencing to try to establish a crime worthy of the death penalty.

It would prove impossible. Jesus was the sinless Son of God, without any fault. There was no cause for which He should even be on trial, let alone found "guilty," and condemned to death.

Today, a lot of folks pre-sentence Jesus. They don't necessarily pre-sentence Him to death, but rather to insignificance. Without even hearing testimony from witnesses, nonbelievers have decided Jesus can be ignored as having no significance to them.

Mar 14:56 For many bore false witness against Him, but their testimonies did not agree.

If I understand Jewish law correctly, for a conviction, you needed the sworn testimony of at least two witnesses who agreed. If a witness perjured himself, it was punishable as a crime.

Jesus' case ought to have been thrown-out of court for lack of evidence. If the stakes weren't so high, the proceedings would have been comical.

Mar 14:57 Then some rose up and bore false witness against Him, saying,

Mar 14:58 "We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.' "

The second Temple, sometimes called Herod's Temple on account of King Herod's remodel project, was the heart and soul of Jewish life. It was still under construction in Jesus' time.

A rumor had grown that Jesus planned to "destroy" the Temple. That He was some kind of terrorist with a plan to level the Temple to the ground.

The rumor was based upon an erroneous understanding of something Jesus had said. Asked by the Jews to give them a sign He was the Messiah, Jesus said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

Joh 2:20 Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?"

Joh 2:21 But He was speaking of the temple of His body.

Joh 2:22 Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.

They confused the Temple in Jerusalem with the temple of His body, taking the words literally, when Jesus was obviously using an illustration.

But even accusing Jesus of being a terrorist was failing:

Mar 14:59 But not even then did their testimony agree.

Right then, the witnesses ought to have themselves been accused and bound-over for trial. It was a farce.

The Sanhedrin wasn't very good at being very bad. They were sloppy and clumsy.

Seeing that they were getting nowhere fast, the high priest got involved.

Mar 14:60 And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, saying, "Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?"

The high priest, Caiphas, must have realized that nothing any witnesses could say would be sufficient to convict Jesus. He tried to get Jesus to defend Himself, hoping to trip Him up in His own words.

The witness testimony had been so obviously false that no rebuttal was necessary. Any answer Jesus gave would have only lent credibility to the lies - as if there were some underlying truth.

Mar 14:61 But He kept silent and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?"

Jesus adopted a "sound of silence" defense. He refused to dignify their lies with the truth.

Caiphas had one last strategy - get Jesus to commit blasphemy. He asked Him directly if He claimed to be two characters:

1. The first was "the Christ." He was asking Jesus, directly, if He claimed to be the Messiah Who was promised to the Jews throughout their Scriptures.
2. The second was "Son of the Blessed." It seems a strange phrase to us, until we remember that the Jews would not utter the name of God. They had catch phrases they substituted, and this was one of them. Caiphas was asking Jesus if He claimed to be equal with God.

Under oath, in direct testimony, Jesus was asked, "Are You the Messiah, equal with God?"

Mar 14:62 Jesus said, "I am..."

Jesus used the very word used to identify himself to Moses at the burning bush, when he said, "I AM who I AM" (Exodus 3:14). He could not have made a clearer declaration of His deity while veiled in humanity.

He said more:

Mar 14:62 Jesus said, "I am. **And** you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."

Jesus didn't stop with His true identity. He applied it. Since He was the Messiah, and very God Himself, He would one day be sitting in judgment over them.

Did the high priest understand Jesus? You bet he did.

Mar 14:63 Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "What further need do we have of witnesses?"

I hope, for their sakes, that Jewish leaders had a uniform allowance. It seems they were constantly tearing their clothes, to punctuate things like blasphemy.

Jesus' testimony cancelled-out the need for witnesses. He had condemned Himself (in their eyes) by claiming to be equal with God.

Mar 14:64 You have heard the blasphemy! What do you think?" And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death.

It wasn't blasphemy, because it was true. Jesus was their Messiah, and God come in human flesh. His life and ministry proved the claim.

Think of the mountains of evidence Jesus could have presented, and the multitudes of witnesses:

- All who had been healed of various diseases and conditions.
- Some who had been raised from the dead.
- He could have called upon demons to identify Him.

- He could have reminded them of John the Baptist's announcing Him as "the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world."
- He could have played the tape (as it were) of the Father's declaration from Heaven, "This is My beloved Son."

The Sanhedrin had long ago decided Jesus needed to be killed. It was more from jealousy than from any truly spiritual concern.

Mar 14:65 Then some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him, and to say to Him, "Prophecy!" And the officers struck Him with the palms of their hands.

This was not how the Sanhedrin did things, on a normal basis. This was mob behavior. Everyone, including the "officers," joined in, against everything they stood for. It was ugly - especially considering the pure and lovely life Jesus had lived openly before them.

Jesus' prediction that He will preside in judgment is described for us in the last book of the Bible. In the Revelation, we see the risen Lord step forward in Heaven and assume a position of power and authority at the throne of God.

He takes a scroll from out of His Father's "right" hand. The scroll has seven seals. As Jesus breaks the seven seals, God's grace is revealed in wrath upon the earth for a period of seven years. We call it the Tribulation, or the Great Tribulation.

After all seven seals are opened, and everyone on planet earth has heard the Gospel, the heavens open to reveal Jesus. He returns from His Father's right hand "with the clouds of Heaven." On the earth, the Lord sits in judgment over the survivors of the Great Tribulation:



- Believers enter the Kingdom of God on earth.
- Nonbelievers are confined to Hades to await their final judgment.

After the Kingdom of God on earth, which lasts one thousand years, Jesus will sit as Judge presiding at the Great White Throne Judgement. All the nonbelievers from all time will be sentenced and confined, for eternity, in the Lake of Fire.

Then there will be the creation of a new earth, and new heavens; and believers will go forward into eternity with the Lord, in glorified, sinless bodies and bliss.

Jesus is presiding over the future - a future which must and will come to pass exactly as it is written. The variable, today, is, "What is your place in that future?"

## #2 Jesus Presides Over The Fiery Trials Of Your Faith

(v66-72)

We left Peter warming himself by the fire, and Mark will remind us that Peter was "warming himself" by the fire.

*I think it's a clue as to how we ought to approach Peter's denials.*

"Fire" and Peter, in the same sentence, reminds me of something Peter will write in his letter:

1Pe 4:12 Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the **fiery trial** which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;

Peter's trouble at the fire was certainly a fiery trial. The Lord told Peter it was coming. And the Lord promised that He could see Peter through it, for Peter's good, and the good of other believers.

In the Gospel of Luke we read,

Luk 22:31 And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat.

Luk 22:32 But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren."

Luk 22:33 But he said to Him, "Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death."

Luk 22:34 Then He said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me."

The Lord let Peter in on a secret satanic strategy. Jesus helped Peter look behind the veil hiding the supernatural realm.

You and I might say that the devil is tempting us, or that Satan is the one behind our trials. But we don't really mean it's Satan himself. We use "Satan" as shorthand for demonic persons and powers in general.

In Peter's case, it WAS Satan, the devil himself, who was bent on destroying Peter.

Satan "asked" for Peter. It immediately reminds you of the opening chapters of the Book of Job. Satan appears in Heaven, before God's Throne, and asks permission to test Job. God permits it, while limiting it, and Job finds himself in a trial.

I never thought of it before, but you could even say that Job's predicament was a "fiery trial."

He is described as sitting among ashes as he scrapes his boils (2:7), which most likely puts him in a dump where they burned garbage and human waste.

Highlight this: Jesus promised Peter that he would come through the fiery trial. He promised he would "return" to the Lord.

Not only that, He promised that afterward he would be enabled to "strengthen" other believers on account of what he had endured, and on account of how the fiery trial had affected him.

Let's keep all that in mind as we take a fresh look at Peter's denials.

Mar 14:66 Now as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came.

Kudos to Peter. In danger as a disciple, and doubly so because he had assaulted the servant of the high priest, Peter nevertheless followed Jesus right into the courtyard of the high priest.

You'll hear in Bible studies that Peter followed Jesus from a distance, and that was the first step in his downfall. I ask you, "How else could he have followed, except from a distance?"

Mar 14:67 [one of the servant girls of the high priest came] And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, "You also were with Jesus of Nazareth."

Jesus and His disciples had been very visible the previous few days. The activities of Jesus turning over the tables in the Temple, and teaching, had made He and His posse the center of attention.

We know from accounts in the Gospel's that Peter was a big, burly, strong guy - someone who might stand out a bit from the other disciples.

The servant girl calls the Lord, "Jesus of Nazareth." Apparently the label Jesus was given among the servants of the high priest was this derogatory designation of where He had grown-up. It's a reminder of the common saying, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

Nonbelievers, if pressed, have some derogatory designation for Who Jesus is. He was a prophet... A philosopher... A guru... A revolutionary. Considering He was the sinless Son of God, very God Himself, those are insults.

It's a mental line nonbelievers draw so they don't need to further examine the Person and work of the Savior. Because if you do examine Him with an open mind and heart, the *only* conclusion you can arrive at, from all the evidence, is that He was exactly Who He said He was - "I AM."

Mar 14:68 But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you are saying." And he went out on the porch, and a rooster crowed.

It was Peter's way of saying, "Talk to the hand." He was trying to quickly, and decisively, dismiss the servant girl's observation.

The "rooster" crowing the first time isn't just an ominous warning. It was (or could have been) a reminder to Peter that this was a fiery trial - that he was being sifted as wheat by the devil.

What Peter ought to have done at that point, I cannot speculate. He could have left; after all, the Lord had told the eleven that after His arrest, they would "scatter." So why not scatter?!

Peter stayed, and the thermostat on his fiery trial got turned up another notch.

Mar 14:69 And the servant girl saw him again, and began to say to those who stood by, "This is one of them."

Hey, servant girl: Do your parents know you're up this late? In his wildest imagination I doubt Peter thought he'd be tripped-up by a servant girl.

In fact, the whole sword-thing in Gethsemane makes for a good comparison.

- Facing hundreds of trained armed men, with an arrest warrant backed by the religious and civil authorities, Peter drew down on them, and cut-off the ear of the servant of the high priest.
- Surrounded by a few civilians, Peter cowered in fear at the questions of a servant girl.

Trials are like that. You never know where they are going to strike you. It could be at some weak point in your walk; or it could be where you think you're strong, when you least expect it.

Mar 14:70 But he denied it again. And a little later those who stood by said to Peter again, "Surely you are one of them; for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows it."

The Galilee region was the home of Jesus during at least 30 years of his life.

Much of the first three Gospels give an account of Jesus' public ministry in this province, particularly in the towns of Nazareth and Capernaum.

After the death of Jesus, His disciples returned to Galilee, and their experience of his resurrection took place there.

Did Jesus speak with an accent - being from Galilee? Just wondering. For sure, Peter was thick with a Galilean accent. He might be denying he knew Jesus, but his very denials were proving him false.

Mar 14:71 Then he began to curse and swear, "I do not know this Man of whom you speak!"

He didn't cuss; he cursed, meaning he called down curses upon himself if he were lying. He swore that he did not know Jesus.

Sadly, Peter called Jesus "this Man." Are we sometimes hesitant to use the Name of Jesus? To say, "Jesus?"

I think it's important we do, to let folks know that we believe Jesus IS God.

Mar 14:72 A second time the rooster crowed. Then Peter called to mind the word that Jesus had said to him, "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." And when he thought about it, he wept.

It was more than an accurate prediction of the future. I suggest it pointed further - **to Peter's future.**

We certainly get that in Luke's wording, which I quoted earlier. Luke makes it clear Peter will "return," be restored, and be enabled to "strengthen" others.

I think we can see that here, too, in Mark - even if it's only a glimpse.

We need to go back a few verses and give the context in which Peter's trial played-out. First, in verse twenty-five, Jesus said,

Mar 14:25 Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

Then, in verse twenty-eight He said,

Mar 14:28 "But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee."

One more reminder before we apply this to Peter. The Lord had not been shy about telling the disciples that one among them would betray Him, and be lost forever.

Here's what I see: Peter had assurances that he was *not* the one who would be lost forever, but, rather, that he would see Jesus risen from the dead in Galilee, **and** that he would be present in the far future at the celebration of the Second Coming of Jesus.

This restoration is what he might have "thought about" when it says "he wept" with tears of repentance.

Yes, Peter had denied the Lord as he was sifted by Satan. But after sifting, you're left with what you want. It's the chaff that is left behind.

In the refiners fire, it is the impurities that are burned away, leaving you with that which is genuine and valuable.

Peter's trial at the fire - his "fiery trial" - perfected him.

Yes, he failed, and for a moment seemed faithless. But when Peter was faithless, Jesus remained faithful, and brought Peter through it to serve Him.

Do you ever fail miserably in your trials? I do. But then I weep, and find that the Lord is with me, even in my most miserable failures.

If I'll let Him, He can strengthen me by what He has removed, or burned away. Let's all face it: This side of Heaven, we are heavy with chaff that needs sifting, and full with impurities that need the Refiner's fire to burn away.

We need not fail; but, when we do, we are not abandoned by God. Like Job, we all can say, "But He knows the way that I take; When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold" (23:10).

Do you listen for the rooster to crow? I think that, in our trials, the Lord gives us signals that He is at work. We should stop, right then, and repent, before we get any deeper into it.

But whether we do, or go on to fail, after hearing the second crowing, **the risen Lord wants to see us in our Galilee.**

**And He reminds us He will one day dine with us at His Second Coming.**