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The Rock Who Wept
Matthew 26:58, 69-75; Mark 14:54, 66-72; Luke 22:54b-62; John 18:15-18 and 25-27
About 3:30 am Friday morning, the fifteenth of Nisan

The rock who wept DIG: Peter was brave enough to follow Yeshua right to the high priest's house. What do you think Peter and John hoped to do? Why do you think Kefa disowns Jesus now? When did Peter realize what had happened? Why then? Why cry?

REFLECT: How does the story of Peter both humble and encourage you? When have you felt like Peter? When have you dealt with someone whose mind was so made up that the facts didn't matter? How do you deal with that when it relates to your faith? What was the "rooster" in your life reminds you of failure and guilt? How did you make a comeback?

The night air was now very chilly. There was a wet wind out of the west and **the guards** shouldered **their** robes and built an open **fire**. **They** crouched around in the courtyard of **Caiaphas** and the glow of the coals painted **their** faces in brief, ruddy flicks. **Then those who had arrested Jesus led Him away and took Him into the residence of Caiaphas the high priest.** There **all the Sadducees, Pharisees, and the Torah teachers came together (Mt 26:57; Mk 14:53; Lk 22:54a).** While the trial was being held in an upper story of **the high priest's** home, our attention now turns back to another important person also named **Kayafa**, of that fateful Passover early morning. **Kefa** (the same root word as **Caiaphas**), was still sitting outside in the courtyard.[1523]

When **Jesus** was taken prisoner, **Simon Peter and John followed Him at a distance right up to the courtyard gate (Matthew 26:58). They** had **followed** behind the raiding party and the two of **them** had seen **their Master** disappear inside **the gate**. **They** argued if **they** should follow **Him**. **Because the high priest knew John, he went with Jesus into the high**

priest's courtyard, but Peter had to wait outside at the gate. While **Yeshua** was at the house of **Caiaphas, the young apostle** knocked on **the servant's gate**.

John spoke to a servant girl on duty there. She opened **the gate** a little way and, holding a lamp in **her** hand, looked at the face of **Yochanan**. **She** greeted **him** and **he** greeted **her**, and **he** was admitted without question because **the high priest** favorably **knew John** and **his** family. **The** young **apostle** wandered around **the courtyard**, trying to glean some useful information, and then **he** crouched by **the fire** with the others.

When **John** was certain that **he** was not suspect, **he** got up and spoke to **the** same **girl servant** and said that a friend of **his** was **outside the gate**. **Yochanan** said that **he** would vouch for **his** friend, **and she brought Peter in (Lk 22:54b; Jn 18:15-16). She** shaded **her** lamp and saw a barrel-chested **man** with wild dark hair and beard.

The first denial was simple: It was cold, so **Simon Peter sat with the servants and the guards** who were on duty **in the courtyard** warming **himself** by **the fire.** Somewhere, **a rooster** ruffled **his** feathers. **The servant girl saw him seated there in the fire light. She gazed at him intently and** said: **This man was with that Nazarene. Kefa** had tried to keep a low profile because **he** was so afraid. **He** wanted to know the fate of **his Master**, **but he denied it before them all. Peter** paused. **He** swallowed hard and glared at **the girl** in outrage. **I don't know or understand what you're talking about: he roared**, obviously hoping that any accusations would end right then and there **(Mattityahu 26:69-70; Mark 14:54, 66-68; Luke 22:55-57; John 18:17-18).**

The second denial was accompanied with an oath: As Simon Peter stood warming himself, the servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him once again **and said, "This man was one of them." But he denied it again,** in the sense of **an oath: I don't know the man (Matthew 26:71-72; Mark 14:69-70a; Luke 22:58; John 18:25).** But even **an oath** wasn't enough to stop the accusations aimed at **him**.

Members of the Great Sanhedrin were arriving and they glanced briefly around as they walked across the courtyard. Some were old; some seemed young. Most seemed irritated from lack of sleep. They walked with dignity to the stairway of **the high priest**, their hands clutching both sides of their magnificent robes near the neck as befitting judges, and then they went up the stairway and inside.

Sanhedrin law number 4 said that there were to be no trials before the morning sacrifice, and some thought that **Caiaphas** would postpone the trial until after the 9:00 am *Chagigah* offering. Still, whether it was held now or later – no one was going to challenge **the high priest** because, in this matter, even the dreaded Pharisees were **his** allies. And if that was still many hours away, who was going to uphold **Sanhedrin law** and stand by the side of **Jesus**, crying, "Wait!" No one. The men around **the fire** heard a stir and they stood looking toward **Caiaphas' house**. Temple guards were coming down the steps with lanterns and **Yeshua** was between them.

The third denial came with curses: After a little while, one of those standing there went up to Kefa and said: **Surely you are one of them; you are a Galilean, your accent gives you away. The Galilean inability to properly pronounce the Hebrew gutturals** showed that there were cultural differences between the local Judeans living in Jerusalem and those visiting from the north. **These two Jewish groups were known to have differences, not only in**

some religious customs, but also in their dialects as well (Tractate Eruvin 53a). It was probably comparable to a Louisiana Jew, with his southern accent, visiting a Boston Jew, with his northeastern accent.[1524]

Again, **one of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him,** saying: **Didn't I see you with the Nazarene in the garden" (Yochanan 18:26)? Then Peter began to call down curses** on **himself** if **he** was not telling the truth**, and he swore to them: I don't know what you're talking about. I don't know the man (Mattityahu 26:73-74; Mark 14:70b-71; Luke 22:59-60a; Yochanan 18:27a)!** The Jews had a practice of putting themselves **under a curse (Acts 23:12-15).** Rabbi Sha'ul called down **a** divine **curse** upon those who preached a different **gospel**. **But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse (Galatians 1:8-9).** The same word for **swear** is the same word found in **Hebrews 3:11** were **God** is said to **swear**, that is, to put **Himself** under **an oath**.
Consequently, **Peter** declared **himself** to be under **a** divine **curse** if **he** wasn't telling the truth. The words *swear and curse* are normally taken to mean a person is using profanity. But the Greek text here shows that **Kefa** was not guilty of that.[1525]

Immediately, somewhere far off, **a rooster** stretched **himself**, shook **his** wings and **crowed. The guards** passed **the** little **fire** with **their prisoner** on **their** way to the Royal Stoa to be formally charged. **Jesus**, in the center, **turned and looked straight at Peter. The chief apostle** stared stoically at **the Suffering Servant** in chains, and watched **His** back as **He** was led away.

Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him: Before the rooster crows twice you will disown me three times. And he went outside, covered **his** face with both hands, **broke down, burst into tears,** ran from the

scene **and wept bitterly (Matthew 26:75; Mark 14:72; Luke 22:60b-62; John 18:27b). Wept bitterly** is in the imperfect, meaning he continued to **weep** and **weep** and **weep**. **His weeping** pointed not only to **his** grief, but also to **his** repentance. The next several days would be beyond difficult for **Kefa** . . . more like crushing. But **his** faith, and **his** leadership in the messianic movement would soon be restored (see **Mn – Jesus Reinstates Peter**).

The gathered members of the Sanhedrin filed out of the upper story of **Caiaphas'** house. They were to meet in the Royal Stoa for a formal vote. Being roused from their sleep in the middle of the night, some felt they needed to go home first to get properly dressed. Then they would trudge up the hill in the moonlight to the Temple Mount. Then up to the second floor of the Royal Stoa.

We can all relate to **Peter** at some point in our lives. We have all had our moments of doubt and disappointment. So it is really encouraging to see **Messiah's** mercy and love toward one of **His** wayward children. Would I have stood with **Christ** during **His** moment of great need? I would like to think so – we all would. But sometimes our fallen nature gets in the way of our good intentions and our halo slips. Yet, we should know that **God's** great love for us remains constant even when we fail **Him** miserably. The real question is "where are we in our relationship with **Yeshua**?" **His** hand reaches out to us even to this day.[1526]

Yochanan was also in the courtyard. When **Kefa** left to wallow in **his** remorse, **John** remained to find out what the Jewish Supreme Court would do. When word came that **the miracle-working Rabbi** was guilty of blasphemy, and that the judgment had been that **he** should die, **the apostle whom Jesus loved** waited long enough to get one more look at **Him**. **Young John** was close to tears as **his friend** was led down into the courtyard because **He** was bruised and dirty, with spit running down **His** face. Then **John** left. **He** needed wings on **his** young feet because there was much to do. **He** had to spread the tragic news among those who believed in **Jesus** and, sadly, **he** also had to run to Bethany to tell the news to **Miryam**, **the Lord's** mother.[1527]