





Peter's Second and Third Denials

Here's a **Full Breakdown** of MT 26:71-75, MK 14:69-72, LK 22:58-62, JN 18:25-27 — Peter's Second and Third Denials — with harmonized narrative, historical-cultural context, theological depth, and a Gospel comparison.

Parallel Gospel Chart

Sequence	 Matthew 26:71-75	 Mark 14:69-72	 Luke 22:58-62	 John 18:25-27
Setting	Peter at gateway; another servant girl spots him	Same servant girl (or another) sees him again	Another person notices Peter	Standing with servants & officials
Second Accusation	"This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth."	"This is one of them."	"You also are one of them."	They ask, "You are not one of His disciples, are you?"
Peter's 2nd Denial	"I do not know the man!"	Denies again	"Man, I am not!"	Denies again
Third Accusation	Bystanders: "Surely you are one of them; your accent betrays you."	Bystanders: "Surely you are one of them, you are a Galilean."	Another insists: "Surely this man was with Him; he is a Galilean."	High priest's servant (relative of Malchus): "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?"
Peter's 3rd Denial	Curses and swears: "I do not know the man!"	Began to curse and swear: "I do not know this man!"	"Man, I do not know what you are talking about."	Peter denies again
Rooster Crows	Immediately rooster crows	Rooster crows second time	Rooster crows immediately	Rooster crows
Aftermath	Peter remembers Jesus' words, weeps bitterly	Remembers Jesus' words, weeps	Jesus turns & looks at Peter; Peter weeps bitterly	—

Historical & Cultural Context

- **Location:** Likely the courtyard of the high priest's residence, possibly a large walled home with an inner courtyard where servants warmed themselves by a fire.
- **Servant Girls' Role:** In ancient households, servant girls were gatekeepers and worked near doorways, making them the first to see comings and goings. Their words carried weight in group settings, especially in tense political climates.
- **Galilean Accent:** Galileans spoke Aramaic with distinct pronunciation. This made Peter's origin easy to detect, even in the dark.
- **Oaths and Curses:** In Jewish culture, to "swear" was to invoke God as a witness to truth; to "curse" here likely means calling down divine judgment on oneself if lying — showing Peter's desperation to be believed.
- **Rooster Crow:** The phrase could refer to an actual rooster or to the Roman term for the third watch of the night (3–6 AM). Mark's "second crow" suggests two calls in that period.
- **Jesus' Look (Luke):** Unique to Luke, showing a silent but piercing moment of awareness and compassion, not condemnation.

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Likely Time Sequence

1. **First Denial:** Around **1:00–1:30 AM** (in the high priest's courtyard, at the door).
2. **Second Denial:** Shortly after, as Peter moves to the gateway or another part of the courtyard.
3. **Third Denial:** Within an hour (Luke 22:59), possibly near 3 AM, before the rooster's "second" crow (Mark).



Theological Insights

- **Prophecy Fulfilled:** Jesus had predicted Peter's three denials before the rooster crowed (MT 26:34; MK 14:30; LK 22:34; JN 13:38).
- **Human Weakness:** Peter's bold promises (MT 26:33-35) collapse under fear, showing the danger of self-confidence without prayer (cf. MT 26:41).
- **Jesus' Compassion:** Luke's "look" implies mercy even in failure — Peter's tears mark repentance, contrasting with Judas' despair.
- **Witness Pressure:** Multiple accusers, each slightly different, heighten Peter's fear of association with Jesus — a subtle warning about public witness in hostile settings.
- **Galilee-Jerusalem Divide:** The recognition by accent reminds us of cultural divisions within Israel, even among Jews.



Greek Word Notes

- **ἀρνέομαι (arneomai)** — "to deny, refuse to acknowledge." Used for Peter's denials; in 2 Tim 2:12, it warns that denying Christ leads to being denied by Him — unless repentance follows.
- **ἐπιβαίνειν** (in Mark's account) — "to insist strongly" in the accusation, showing rising tension.
- **καταθεματίζειν** — "to call down curses," indicating Peter's escalating desperation.



Messianic & OT Connections

- **Zechariah 13:7** — "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered." Peter's failure fulfills the scattering of disciples.
- **Psalms 32:5** — Confession after failure brings restoration; Peter's bitter weeping prefigures his restoration in John 21.
- **Micah 7:8–9** — Falling but rising again, enduring God's rebuke until vindication.



Reflection & Application

- Fear can make even the strongest falter; courage in witness requires prayerful dependence on the Spirit.
- Jesus' foreknowledge of Peter's fall did not prevent His plan for Peter's restoration, giving hope to any who have failed publicly.
- The "look" of Jesus invites repentance, not shame.