



Church of God Sunday School

PETER DENIES THE LORD JESUS

Matthew 26:31-35, 58-75

Mark 14:27-31

Luke 22:31-34, 54-62

John 13:36-38; 18:15-27; 21:14-17

Peter was one of Jesus' twelve disciples. He had seen Jesus work miracles of healing, walk on water, calm the storm, feed thousands, and so much more! Peter must have been thrilled to have been a part of all that!

But now Jesus was telling His disciples this very night He was going to die and all of His disciples would be "offended" (lose trust and leave Jesus). Peter was sure he would never do this. He told Jesus, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." Peter must have wondered how Jesus could say such a thing!

Jesus answered Peter, "This night, before the cock crow [the third watch of the night; Mark 13:35], thou shalt deny me thrice [three times]." Peter strongly disagreed: "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." The other disciples agreed with Peter. They, too, said that they would never deny Jesus.

Within a few short hours all that Jesus had told His disciples came true. When Judas brought a large crowd to the Garden of Gethsemane and Jesus was arrested, all the disciples deserted Jesus and ran away. As Jesus was led to the high priest, Peter and another disciple followed far behind.

When Peter arrived at the "palace of the high priest," he was let into the courtyard by a servant girl. Peter went near the fire to warm himself along with the servants and officers, "for it was cold." While Peter was near the fire, the servant girl looked at him closely and then said, "This man was also with him." To this Peter strongly stated, "Woman, I know him not." (This was Peter's first denial.)

Peter left the fire and went to a nearby porch. (No doubt, he was trying to not be recognized again.) Someone else saw Peter and said, "This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth." But Peter denied Jesus a second time, saying, "I do not know the man."

About an hour passed. Then people who were standing nearby came to Peter and said, in so many

words, "You must be one of Jesus' disciples; we can tell by your accent." (Peter was from Galilee and had a very different accent from the people of Jerusalem.) Then Peter began to curse and swear and said, "I know not the man." (That was Peter's third denial.)

Immediately, Peter heard the sound of the cock-crow, and he remembered what Jesus had said. Not only that, but at that moment Jesus turned and looked at Peter. Can you imagine how Peter must have felt? He had denied ever knowing Jesus and had even cursed. The Bible says Peter "went out, and wept bitterly."

Soon after this, Jesus was taken to the Cross where He died for the sins of the whole world. Three days later He rose from the grave (just as He said He would). When Peter heard this news, he must have wondered what Jesus thought of him. Jesus had heard Peter's three denials. Perhaps, this is why the angel at the empty tomb told the women to take the news to "his disciples *and Peter*" (Mark 16:7).

What great love Jesus had for Peter! He had warned him this would happen, for he knew Peter's weaknesses. But Jesus was not angry with Peter, nor did He hold a grudge. Jesus was patient with Peter. He sent word to Peter that He would meet with him in Galilee.

When Jesus met with Peter and the other disciples, He had a question to ask of Peter: "Simon, son of Jonas, Lovest thou me more than these?" Peter's answer was much humbler than it had been when Jesus had told him of his denials. Peter did not declare that his love was greater than all the other disciples' love for Jesus. Peter did not describe how strong his love was. He just said, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee."

Jesus told Peter, "Feed my lambs." Then He asked Peter the same question a second time, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Peter gave the same answer, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." Jesus gave Peter these instructions: "Feed my sheep."

A third time Jesus asked Peter this same question: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Peter was sad that Jesus had asked this question three times. Did He doubt Peter's love? Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." Again, Jesus told Peter, "Feed my sheep."

Love is an action word. Peter could only prove his love for Jesus by obeying Him. When Jesus told Peter to feed His lambs and His sheep, He was not talking about literal animals. In John 10:1-16 Jesus compared sheep to the children of God. Jesus was saying that Peter was to feed and care for "the flock of God" (1 Peter 5:2).

It is possible that Jesus asked this question of Peter three times because Peter had previously denied Him three times. In the future, there would be times when it would be hard to stand up for Jesus, times when it might be easier for Peter to again deny Jesus. Jesus' kind and tender way of dealing with Peter made him much stronger spiritually. There was a great work for Peter to do, and never again would he deny his Lord!

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**MEMORY VERSE:**

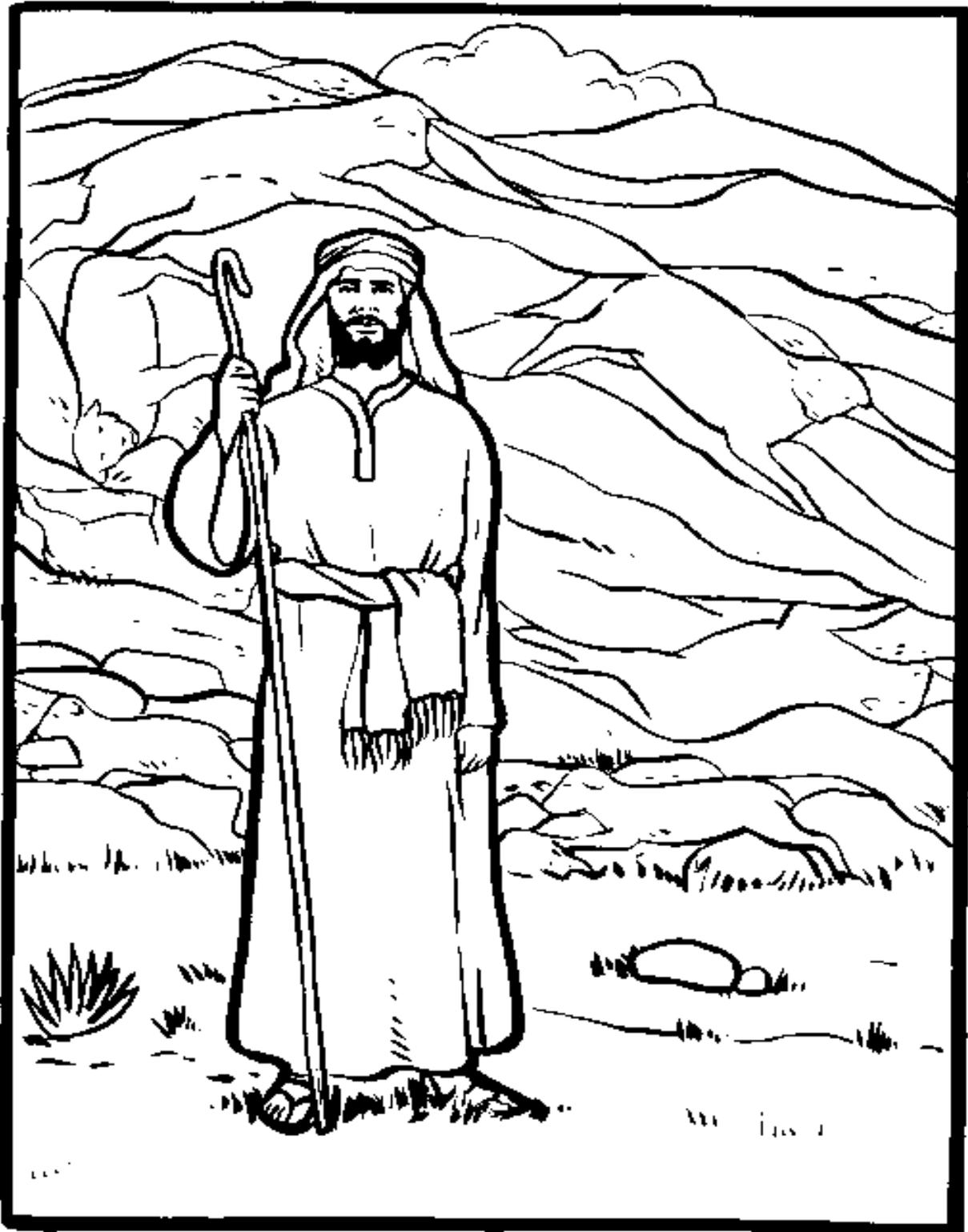
*"Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs."  
— John 21:15*  
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What Was Peter to Feed?

goats
horses
chickens
sheeps cows
pigs
lamb



When Jesus told Peter to "Feed my _____" and "Feed my _____," He was talking about the _____ of God.



Find the Hidden Sheep