

Four Gospels, one night

I AM. I AM NOT.

Inside the high priest's house Jesus confesses who He is, and it costs Him His life. Outside by the fire Peter denies who he is, and it saves his. *John sets the two answers side by side.*

IN THE GARDEN · JOHN 18

Jesus

ἐγώ εἰμι

“Whom do you seek?” “Jesus of Nazareth.” “I am he.” 18:5

ἐγώ εἰμι

At the words the soldiers drew back and fell to the ground. 18:6

ἐγώ εἰμι

“I told you that I am he. So, if you seek me, let these men go.” 18:8

ARRESTED, BOUND AND LED TO DEATH

IN THE COURTYARD · JOHN 18

Peter

οὐκ εἰμί

A servant girl at the door asks whether he is a disciple. “I am not.” 18:17

οὐκ εἰμί

Warming himself at the fire, he is asked again. “I am not.” 18:25

ἤρνήσατο

A relative of Malchus saw him in the garden. He denied it again, and a rooster crowed. 18:27

UNBOUND, AND WALKS OUT FREE

The One who **is** gives Himself for the one who says **he is not**.

I FOUR WITNESSES, ONE TRIAL

Mark

14:53–72

JESUS
ANSWERS

“I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power.” Psalm 110 and Daniel 7 meet in one sentence. The high priest tears his garments. 14:62

PETER DENIES

“I neither know nor understand what you mean.” He backs out to the forecourt. The rooster crows twice, exactly as Jesus said. 14:68, 72

ONLY HERE

The sandwich. Peter follows, Jesus confesses, Peter denies. The reader watches the faithful witness and the faithless disciple at the same moment.

PORTRAIT

The suffering Son of God

Matthew

26:57–75

Put under oath “by the living God,” He answers, “You have said so.” The high priest's own words become the confession. 26:63–64

A denial, then a denial with an oath, then cursing and swearing. His Galilean accent gives him away. 26:70–74

Caiaphas is named. Two witnesses come forward, the legal minimum (Deut 19:15). The charge becomes a claim of power: “I am able to destroy the temple of God.”

The Messiah of power

Luke

22:54–71

A morning session. Asked whether He is the Christ, He will not say. To “Are you the Son of God, then?” He says, “You say that I am.” 22:67–70

Plain denials with no oaths. Then “the Lord turned and looked at Peter,” and Peter remembered the word. 22:61

No false witnesses at all. He is condemned on His own testimony: “We have heard it ourselves from his own mouth.” 22:71

The Lord of compassion

John

18:12–27

No Sanhedrin trial. Before Annas He questions the questioner: “Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me.” 18:21

“I am not,” beside a charcoal fire. His last accuser is a relative of the man whose ear he cut off. 18:26

Struck by an officer, He demands justice: “If what I said is right, why do you strike me?” The accused is the judge. 18:23

The sovereign revealer

II FROM FIRE TO FIRE

A charcoal fire

Peter stands warming himself with the servants and officers, and three times denies his Lord.

JOHN 18:18



The Lord looked

The rooster crows. Jesus turns and looks at Peter. Peter remembers His word, goes out and weeps bitterly.

LUKE 22:61–62



A charcoal fire

On the shore of Galilee the risen Jesus has a fire laid and breakfast ready, and He restores Peter.

JOHN 21:9

άνθρακιά, a charcoal fire, appears twice in the New Testament: at the denial and at the restoration.

III WORDS FROM THE COURTYARD

προφήτευσον

PROPHĒTEUSON · MARK 14:65

Prophesy! The guards mock a blindfolded prophet at the very hour His prophecy about Peter comes true outside.

καταθεματίζειν

KATATHEMATIZEIN · MATT 26:74

To call down a curse on oneself. Peter invokes God's judgment if he is lying, and he is lying.

ἀχειροποίητον

ACHEIROPOIĒTON · MARK 14:58

Not made with hands. The witnesses garble His saying and still point to the temple of His body, raised in three days (John 2:19–21).

λαλιά

LALIA · MATT 26:73

Speech, accent. Peter uses his voice to deny Jesus, and his voice gives him away.

δύναμαι

DYNAMAI · MATT 26:61

I am able. He could call twelve legions and could raise the temple. He holds that power back.

ἐπιβαλὼν

EPIBALŌN · MARK 14:72

A hard word for Peter's collapse: he threw himself down, or covered his head, or thought on it and wept.

THE FAITHFUL WITNESS

Truth under oath.

Adjured by the living God, Jesus answers truthfully, and the answer is His death sentence (Matt 26:63–66).

THE FAITHLESS DISCIPLE

Lies under oath.

No one puts Peter under oath. He volunteers his oaths to tell a lie, and the lie keeps him alive (Matt 26:72–74).

The verdict of guilty spoken over the faithful witness becomes the verdict of forgiven for the faithless disciple.

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And the Lord turned **and looked at Peter**.