

Peter's Denial of Jesus

Some initial comments

Some of the events described in these accounts overlap. Though mentioned in separate paragraphs, part of Jesus' trial would have occurred at the same time as the events surrounding Peter's denial. Also, different accounts sometimes record different events. Because of this, it may be possible for some events to be arranged in a slightly different order, and still fit the data we have available.

The Scripture passages are copied from the American Standard Version (public domain). Refer to other translations, as desired.

Events before this

Event	Matthew 26 and Mark 14	Luke 22	John 13
Events before this.	[Matthew 26:20-29; Mark 14:17-25] Passover meal; Jesus warns that he will be betrayed; the bread and cup.	[Luke 22:14-30] Passover meal; the bread and cup; Jesus warns that he will be betrayed; an argument over who was the greatest.	[13:1-30] Passover meal; Jesus washes the disciple's feet; Jesus warns that he will be betrayed; Judas leaves.
Jesus says: (1) that he has been glorified; (2) that he is going somewhere the disciples cannot go (until later - v. 36); and (3) that they are to love each other.			31 When therefore he [Judas] was gone out, Jesus saith, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him; 32 and God shall glorify him in himself, and straightway shall he glorify him. 33 Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say unto you. 34 A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. 35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

Notes:

1) Luke does not follow the same order as Matthew and Mark. He appears to focus on "the significant events during the meal," rather than "the chronology of the meal."

2) Many things were involved in a Passover meal, including several times that they would partake of the bread and the cup.

3) The events of John 13:31-35 (which are mentioned only in John) may have occurred during the events described in the Matthew/Mark/Luke accounts. They have been separated out, because of their connection with what follows.

Peter's *first* claim that he will not deny Jesus

Event	Matthew 26 and Mark 14	Luke 22	John 13
Peter asks where Jesus is going, and is told he can't come until later.			36 Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered, Whither I go, thou canst not follow now; but thou shalt follow afterwards.
Peter is told that they (<i>all</i> the apostles) will be tested, and when he (Peter) has returned ("turned back"), he should build-up (encourage) the others.		31 Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat: 32 but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not; and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, establish thy brethren.	
Peter insists that he is strong enough to follow Jesus. He'd even be willing to suffer and die for Jesus.		33 And he said unto him, Lord, with thee I am ready to go both to prison and to death.	37 Peter saith unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee even now? I will lay down my life for thee.
Jesus tells Peter that the rooster will not crow until he has denied him three times.		34 And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, until thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.	38 Jesus answereth, Wilt thou lay down thy life for me? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.
Misc. not directly related to the denials.		35-38 (The disciples are told to get supplies, etc.)	14:1-31a (Encouragement; Jesus instructs them.)

Notes:

- 1) The events described in this section may overlap those of the previous section.
- 2) The rooster will not crow "this day": The Jewish day began at 6 p.m. It was already dark and the new day had begun, so the next time the rooster would crow would be in the morning (or at some point before daybreak).
- 3) This is the first of *two* times that Peter claims he will not deny Christ.

Peter's *second* claim that he would not deny Jesus

Event	Matthew 26	Mark 14	Luke 22	John
They sing a hymn, leave the upper room (where they had celebrated the Passover meal), and begin to walk.	30 And when they had sung a hymn, they went out unto the mount of Olives.	26 And when they had sung a hymn, they went out unto the mount of Olives.	39 And he came out, and went, as his custom was, unto the mount of Olives; and the disciples also followed him.	14:31b Arise, let us go hence.

Event	Matthew 26	Mark 14	Luke 22	John
Jesus continues talking to them.				[John 15:1-16:31]
Jesus tells them that they are all going to be "offended" and will abandon him...	31 Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended in me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.	27 And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered abroad.		32 Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone:
... but the Father would be with him ...				and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.
... and later he will meet them in Galilee.	32 But after I am raised up, I will go before you into Galilee.	28 Howbeit, after I am raised up, I will go before you into Galilee.		
Peter claims he will never be offended, even if everyone else is.	33 But Peter answered and said unto him, If all shall be offended in thee, I will never be offended.	29 But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I.		
Jesus reminds Peter that, before the rooster crows, he will deny him.	34 Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.	30 And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that thou to-day, even this night, before the cock crow twice, shalt deny me thrice.		
Peter argues with Jesus - he would die for Jesus, if necessary, but would not deny him.	35 Peter saith unto him, Even if I must die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.	31 But he spake exceedingly vehemently, If I must die with thee, I will not deny thee.		
The other disciples make the same claim.	Likewise also said all the disciples.	And in like manner also said they all.		

Notes:

- 1) Although Luke doesn't record this *second* reference to Peter's future denials, his quote in v. 61 closely matches it.
- 2) Mark mentions *two* rooster crows. See the note at Mark 14:68 (below).

Events leading up to the betrayal

Event	Matthew 26	Mark 14	Luke 22	John
Jesus encourages and prays for his disciples.				[16:33 - 17:26]
They finally reach the garden.	36 Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, ...	32 And they come unto a place which was named Gethsemane: ...	40 And when he was at the place...	18:1 When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Kidron, where was a garden, into which he entered, himself and his disciples.
Various events in the garden.	[26:36b-56]	[14:32b-52]	[22:40b-53]	[18:2-11]

Note:

1) The events in the garden include Jesus' exhortation to "watch and pray," Judas' betrayal, the scattering of the disciples, etc.

Jesus is taken to be questioned

Event	Matthew 26	Mark 14	Luke 22	John 18
Jesus is captured and led away.	57 And they that had taken Jesus led him away	53 And they led Jesus away	54 And they seized him, and led him away,	12 So the band and the chief captain, and the officers of the Jews, seized Jesus and bound him, 13 and led him...
He is taken to the house of Caiaphas...	to the house of Caiaphas the high priest,	to the high priest:	and brought him into the high priest's house.	
...where all the leaders had assembled.	where the scribes and the elders were gathered together.	and there come together with him all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes.		
He is first taken to Annas, the high priest's father-in-law.				to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, who was high priest that year.

Event	Matthew 26	Mark 14	Luke 22	John 18
A reminder of the attitude that Caiaphas had previously expressed about Jesus.				14 Now Caiaphas was he that gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.

Notes:

1) Annas had been the high priest, but was deposed by the Romans. Many would still consider him the high priest, because, according to the Law, the high priest held that position for *life*.

2) John 18:14 shows that Jesus would not get a fair trial.

Peter and John enter

Event	Matthew 26	Mark 14	Luke 22	John 18
(After Jesus' capture) Peter follows behind Jesus and the mob.	58 But Peter followed him afar off,	54 And Peter had followed him afar off,	But Peter followed afar off.	15 And Simon Peter followed Jesus,
So does John.				and so did another disciple.
John is able to enter the high priest's courtyard.				Now that disciple was known unto the high priest, and entered in with Jesus into the court of the high priest;
John asks the servant girl at the door to let Peter in.				16 but Peter was standing at the door without. So the other disciple, who was known unto the high priest, went out and spake unto her that kept the door,
Peter enters.	unto the court of the high priest, and entered in,	even within, into the court of the high priest;		and brought in Peter.

Notes:

1) Only John mentions his own presence in the courtyard. However, this is the reason he can record some of the details that others do not mention in their accounts.

2) These events may overlap those mentioned in the previous section. John (and maybe Peter) may have been inside by the time Jesus was taken into Annas and Caiaphas.

The girl at the door later asks Peter about his relationship to Jesus

Event	Matthew 26	Mark 14	Luke 22	John 18
This girl is one of the people who later questions Peter about Jesus (and he denies being one of Jesus' disciples).				17 The maid therefore that kept the door saith unto Peter, Art thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not.

Notes:

1) John, as an acquaintance of the High Priest, specifically recognized two of the people who questioned Peter. The other accounts are more generalized in their identification of the people.

2) This servant girl was the "leader" of the *second* group that questions Peter. John refers to this denial when he *introduces* this girl, whereas Matthew, Mark and Luke record this denial at the *chronological* time that it happened. (They also mention more details about the events surrounding this second denial.)

Peter warms himself by a fire

Event	Matthew 26	Mark 14	Luke 22	John 18
A fire was made, so the people could keep warm.			55 And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the court,	18 Now the servants and the officers were standing there, having made a fire of coals; for it was cold; and they were warming themselves:
Peter warmed himself by the fire (standing).				and Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself.

Note:

1) This occurred during the prolonged time that Jesus was being questioned. (See the following section.) Part of the time Peter was sitting (according to Matthew, Mark and Luke); part of the time he was standing (according to John). However, *all* of the time he was trying to blend in with the crowd that was milling about!

Jesus is being questioned

Event	Matthew 26 / Mark 14 / Luke 22	John 18
While Peter is warming himself, Jesus is being questioned by Annas.		<p>19 The high priest therefore asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his teaching.</p> <p>20 Jesus answered him, I have spoken openly to the world; I ever taught in synagogues, and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and in secret spake I nothing.</p> <p>21 Why askest thou me? Ask them that have heard me, what I spake unto them: behold, these know the things which I said.</p> <p>22 And when he had said this, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?</p> <p>23 Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?</p>
Then Jesus is taken to Caiaphas.		<p>24 Annas therefore sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest.</p>

Note:

1) The questioning mentioned in John occurred in the presence of Annas and some officers (see John 18:12). It resulted in Jesus being sent to Caiaphas. The questioning mentioned in Matthew and Mark occurred after this (see below), and resulted in Jesus being condemned and sent to Pilate. (This second questioning involved the entire Jewish ruling council, with Caiaphas presiding. Peter's denials occurred during this time.)

Jesus is further questioned.

Event	Matthew 26	Mark 14	Luke 22	John 18
Peter warmed himself by the fire (now sitting).	and sat with the officers, to see the end.	and he was sitting with the officers, and warming himself in the light of the fire.	and [when they...] had sat down together, Peter sat in the midst of them.	
Jesus is now questioned by the chief priests and the council.	<p>59 Now the chief priests and the whole council sought false witness against Jesus, that they might put him to death;</p> <p>60 and they found it not, though many false witnesses came. But afterward came two,</p> <p>61 and said, This man said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.</p>	<p>55 Now the chief priests and the whole council sought witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found it not.</p> <p>56 For many bare false witness against him, and their witness agreed not together.</p> <p>57 And there stood up certain, and bare false witness against him, saying,</p> <p>58 We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I</p>		

Event	Matthew 26	Mark 14	Luke 22	John 18
	<p>62 And the high priest stood up, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?</p> <p>63 But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou art the Christ, the Son of God.</p> <p>64 Jesus said unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Henceforth ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.</p> <p>65 Then the high priest rent his garments, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy: what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard the blasphemy: 66 what think ye? They answered and said, He is worthy of death.</p> <p>67 Then did they spit in his face and buffet him: and some smote him with the palms of their hands, 68 saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ: who is he that struck thee?</p>	<p>will build another made without hands.</p> <p>59 And not even so did their witness agree together.</p> <p>60 And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?</p> <p>61 But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and saith unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?</p> <p>62 And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.</p> <p>63 And the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What further need have we of witnesses?</p> <p>64 Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be worthy of death.</p> <p>65 And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophecy: and the officers received him with blows of their hands.</p>		

Note:

1) This questioning took a long time. What we have recorded in these accounts is just a summary. Peter's denials probably happened *concurrently* with this questioning. (Note that the time between Peter's second and third denials was about 1 hour - Luke 22:59.)

Peter's first denial

Event	Matthew 26	Mark 14	Luke 22	John 18
A reminder that Peter is at the fire (sometimes standing and sometimes sitting).	69 Now Peter was sitting without in the court:	66 And as Peter was beneath in the court, [warming himself - v. 67]	56 And a certain maid seeing him as he sat in the light of the fire,	Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself.

One of the servant girls comes by and notices Peter.	and a maid came unto him, saying,	there cometh one of the maids of the high priest; 67 and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and saith,	and [the maid] looking stedfastly upon him, said,	
She tells the group.			This man also was with him.	
Together, the group questions him.				25 They said therefore unto him,
What they (including the servant girl) say.	Thou also wast with Jesus the Galilaean.	Thou also wast with the Nazarene, even Jesus.		Art thou also one of his disciples?
Peter denies Jesus before them all.	70 But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest.	68 But he denied, saying, I neither know, nor understand what thou sayest:	57 But he denied, saying, Woman, I know him not.	He denied, and said, I am not.
Peter leaves that area (and the rooster crows the first time).	71 And when he was gone out into the porch,	and he went out into the porch; <and the cock crew.>		

Notes:

- 1) A crowd of people were present each time Peter was challenged. In each instance, however, there were only one or two main speakers in the crowd.
- 2) For at least part of the time, Jesus was somewhere that he could see what Peter was doing. (Compare to Luke 22:61.)
- 3) This servant girl is *not* the one who was at the doorway.
- 4) Though the Matthew passage makes direct reference only to the servant girl, he is aware that many were present, because he says that Peter denied Jesus "before them *all*."
- 5) Mark is the only account that mentions the rooster crowing twice. The first crowing is mentioned *only* by Mark: possibly here in v. 68 (not found in some manuscripts) and by implication in v. 72. It may have been a single utterance by the rooster, as it was beginning to wake up. The second crowing - the main focus and mentioned by all - could have been a reference to the beginning of its ongoing crowing for the day (now being fully awake).
- 6) Early church tradition says that Mark's gospel was strongly influenced by Peter. In addition to mentioning the rooster crowing twice, Mark also mentions that Peter *vehemently* denied that he would deny Jesus (see 14:31). It's as though Peter's influence led Mark to show the contrast between how emphatic Peter was in saying he *wouldn't* deny Christ, and how blind he was when he was in the act of doing so. (It took *two* rooster crowings, before reality sank into Peter's head! The first crowing, a "warning," had no effect on him.)

Peter's second denial

Event	Matthew 26	Mark 14	Luke 22	John 18
The servant girl who was originally at the gate (and who let Peter into the courtyard) sees Peter again.	another maid saw him,	69 And the maid saw him,		[Mentioned by John at the time he introduces the girl - John 18: 17.]
She tells the crowd that Peter was one of Jesus' followers.	and saith unto them that were there, This man also was with Jesus of Nazareth.	and began again to say to them that stood by, This is one of them.		
The woman questions him.				[John 18:17: The maid therefore that kept the door saith unto Peter, Art thou also one of this man's disciples?]
Another person in the crowd directly accuses him.			58 And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou also art one of them.	
Peter denies it.	72 And again he denied with an oath, I know not the man.	70 But he again denied it.	But Peter said, Man, I am not.	[John 18:17: He saith, I am not.]

Notes:

1) A second maid was involved here. Since there was a crowd, the first maid might (or might not) have also been present.

2) Luke 22:58 - There are two words in the Greek New Testament, that are translated "man." One focuses specifically on the male gender. However, the word used here is a generic word that can refer to *both* male and female, like the word "human." Peter may have used the word "man" in reply to the specific accuser mentioned in this verse (who may have been a man). But since Peter was addressing a crowd of people, he might not have been focusing on any specific individual. [In contrast, the word translated as "woman," in Luke 22:57, refers specifically to the female gender.]

Peter's third denial

Event	Matthew 26	Mark 14	Luke 22	John 18
One hour later, a group of people are standing nearby.	73 And after a little while they that stood by	And after a little while again they that stood by	59 And after the space of about one hour	
A person makes some comments about Peter (apparently to the group).			another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this man also was with him; for he is a Galilaean.	

Event	Matthew 26	Mark 14	Luke 22	John 18
The group approaches Peter, to question him.	came and said to Peter,	said to Peter,		
Their first accusation is that Peter is a Galilean.	Of a truth thou also art one of them; for thy speech maketh thee known.	of a truth thou art one of them; for thou art a Galilaean.	[see above]	
A person (whether or not the same as the one already mentioned) has a second accusation.				26 One of the servants of the high priest, being a kinsman of him whose ear Peter cut off, saith,
He personally saw Peter with Jesus, that evening.				Did not I see thee in the garden with him?
Peter curses, swears and denies Jesus.	74 Then began he to curse and to swear, I know not the man.	71 But he began to curse, and to swear, I know not this man of whom ye speak.	60 But Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest.	27 Peter therefore denied again:
The rooster crows (the second time).	And straightway the cock crew.	72 And straightway the second time the cock crew.	And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew.	and straightway the cock crew.

Notes:

- 1) This was an hour later. Jesus' "trial" took a long time.
- 2) Since the two accusations are mentioned in different accounts, we cannot tell if they are made by two different people or by one person.
- 3) See the note at Luke 22:58 (the second denial), for comments about Peter's use of the word "man." See also the note at Mark 14:68, about the crowing - the number of times, etc.

Peter realizes what he has just done, and leaves

Event	Matthew 26	Mark 14	Luke 22	John 18
Peter sees Jesus looking at him, ...			61 And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter.	
... and remembers what Jesus had said.	75 And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said,	And Peter called to mind the word, how that Jesus said unto him,	And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how that he said unto him,	

Event	Matthew 26	Mark 14	Luke 22	John 18
A quote of what Jesus had said.	Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.	Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.	Before the cock crow this day thou shalt deny me thrice.	
Peter leaves and weeps over what he has just done.	And he went out, and wept bitterly.	And when he thought thereon, he wept.	62 And he went out, and wept bitterly.	

Notes:

1) Luke's quote of what Jesus said matches what appears to be Jesus' *second* warning to Peter, mentioned by Matthew and Mark, that he would deny Jesus. The *first* warning, mentioned by Luke and John, was worded differently.

2) Peter was close enough to Jesus, that Jesus knew what Peter was doing.

Events that follow

Event	Matthew 26	Mark 14	Luke 22	John 18
Luke's account makes a few comments about what happened during the questioning.	[Matthew 26:67+]	[Mark 14:65+]	22:63-65 - Here, Luke mentions some of the abuse Jesus experienced during the questioning.	[John 18:22+]
After this... Jesus is condemned and sent to Pilate; Judas has remorse for his actions; etc. ...	[Matthew 27:1 +]	[Mark 15:1 +]	[Luke 22:66 +]	[John 18:28 +]

Note:

1) Again, the trial took a long time. Since Luke doesn't go into detail about what happened while Jesus was being questioned, he briefly comments about it here. (The other accounts mention it during the questioning.)