

Matthew 26:70

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest.

Analysis

But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest (ὁ δὲ ἡρνήσατο ἔμπροσθεν πάντων λέγων, Οὐκ οἶδα τί λέγεις)—The verb ἀρνεόμαι (arneomai, 'to deny, to refuse, to disown') is the same word Jesus used in 26:34 predicting Peter's denials. The phrase ἔμπροσθεν πάντων ('before all, in the presence of all') shows public denial—not private failure but open repudiation. Peter's response Οὐκ οἶδα τί λέγεις ('I don't know what you're saying') feigns incomprehension—'I don't understand your accusation.' This is evasive denial, pretending confusion rather than outright rejection, but still denial.

Peter's denial contrasts sharply with his earlier boast: 'Even if I must die with You, I will not deny You' (26:35). Hours earlier, he drew a sword against armed mob (26:51); now he capitulates before a servant girl. This demonstrates human weakness—bold in imagined scenarios, cowardly in actual tests. Yet Peter's failure was predicted and bounded—Jesus prayed for him (Luke 22:32), ensuring failure wouldn't be final. This encourages all who've failed—apostasy and momentary denial differ; Peter's tears (v. 75) proved his faith remained, though courage failed.

Historical Context

Peter's denial occurred in the high priest's courtyard during Jesus's trial before Caiaphas (vv. 57-68). Multiple Gospel accounts show slight variations in details (different questioners, exact wording), suggesting multiple people questioned Peter, and he denied Jesus repeatedly over perhaps an hour (Luke 22:59 says

'about an hour'). The denials escalated from evasion ('I don't know what you mean') to oath ('I do not know the man,' v. 72) to cursing and swearing (v. 74), showing progressive hardening when initial sin isn't repented.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does Peter's denial despite earlier bravado warn against trusting your own promised faithfulness rather than Christ's preserving grace?
2. What's the difference between Peter's momentary denial (leading to repentance) and Judas's betrayal (leading to despair)?

Interlinear Text

ὁ	δὲ	ἡρνήσατο	ἔμπροσθεν	πάντων	λέγεις	Οὐκ	οἶδα
G3588	But	he denied	before	them all	saying	not	I know
	G1161	G720	G1715	G3956	G3004	G3756	G1492
τί	λέγεις						
what	saying						
G5101	G3004						

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 10:12 (Parallel theme): Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

Revelation 21:8 (Parallel theme): But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

