

Matthew 26:74

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew.

Analysis

Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man (τότε ἤρξατο καταθεματίζειν καὶ ὄμνύειν ὅτι Οὐκ οἶδα τὸν ἄνθρωπον)—Peter's third denial reached maximum intensity. The verb καταθεματίζω (katathematizō, 'to curse, to invoke curses, to bind oneself by oath') and ὄμνύω (omnyō, 'to swear, to take oath') show Peter calling down curses on himself if lying—'May God curse me if I'm lying!' He repeated Οὐκ οἶδα τὸν ἄνθρωπον ('I do not know the man'), his most vehement denial. This violated Jesus's teaching (5:33-37) and showed how far Peter fell—from sword-wielding defender (v. 51) to curse-swearin denier.

And immediately the cock crew (καὶ εὐθέως ἀλέκτωρ ἐφώνησεν)—The instant (εὐθέως, immediately) Peter finished denying, the rooster (ἀλέκτωρ) crowed (φωνέω). This fulfilled Jesus's specific prediction (26:34): 'before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.' The cock-crow was simultaneously natural event and divine sign—God's creation rebuked Peter's denial. Luke 22:61 adds 'the Lord turned and looked at Peter'—Jesus, in midst of His trial, glanced at denying Peter. That look, plus cock-crow, broke Peter's heart.

Historical Context

Roosters crow at various times but especially near dawn. Roman military practice divided night into four watches; the third watch (midnight-3 AM) was called 'cock-crow' (ἀλεκτοροφωνία). The crowing occurred in Jerusalem though rabbinic tradition later forbade keeping fowl in Jerusalem (due to cleanliness laws),

suggesting either the law wasn't yet enforced or applied only to certain areas. The cock-crow's timing—immediately after the third denial—demonstrated Jesus's omniscience and providential orchestration even of animal behavior.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does Peter's progression from evasion to oaths to cursing illustrate sin's downward spiral when not immediately repented?
2. What 'cock-crows' (sudden reminders of Christ's Word) has God used to awaken you from spiritual compromise?

Interlinear Text

τότε	ῆρξατο	καταναθεματίζειν	καὶ	όμνύειν	ὅτι	Οὐκ
Then	began he		to curse		saying	not
G5119	G756		G2653		G3754	G3756
οἶδα	τὸν	ἄνθρωπον	καὶ	εὐθέως	ἀλέκτωρ	ἐφώνησεν
I know	G3588	the man	And	immediately	the cock	crew
G1492		G444	G2532	G2112	G220	G5455

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 3:19 (Parallel theme): As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

1 Corinthians 16:22 (Parallel theme): If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.

Matthew 10:28 (Parallel theme): And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

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