

Denied, Mocked, and Rejected

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[0 : 0 0] word. Second century Greek philosopher, Kelsus, was a staunch opponent of the church, and he made a career criticizing Jesus and his followers. He denied Jesus' virgin birth, disparaged his upbringing, and claimed that Jesus worked his miracles by sorcery.

It's interesting that he actually never denies that Jesus performed miracles. He just disputes how he performed these miracles. He mocked that Jesus' disciples amounted to, quote, 10 boatmen and a couple of tax collectors who are not at all respectable. He disputed Jesus' resurrection by saying that the first report of Jesus' resurrection came from an unreliable, hysterical female. He was not the first critic of the church, not the first critic of Christ, nor was he the last. To this day, our world is full of people who deny, deride, and doubt Jesus Christ. But Luke teaches us in this passage that despite appearances to the contrary, the crucified Christ is the Lord and judge over all whom we should follow. That's the main point of this passage. And we're going to go through each scene looking at the deniers, the deriders, and the doubters of Christ. It says in verse 54,

And it's interesting that they don't take Jesus here to the temple courts because that's where the formal proceedings, court proceedings are supposed to take place. Instead, they take him to the high priest's house. So this is a continuation of the shadowy operation that we've been witnessing of the Jewish leaders when they came at night in the cover of darkness with swords and clubs to secretly arrest Jesus because they didn't want the crowds to see and they didn't want to get in trouble. They didn't want to create an outcry. They wanted to do it in secret because they knew Jesus hadn't done anything warranting arrest and death. And as they seized Jesus and brought him to the high priest's house, it says that Peter was following at a distance. Remember that he had just impulsively cut off the ear of a servant of the high priest. He could have been charged for assault, but thankfully,

Jesus healed the servant. And so Peter is understandably apprehensive as he follows Jesus. He follows behind at a safe distance so that he can observe what's happening to Jesus, satisfy his curiosity without being detected, being identified. And from this, we can see that Peter's earlier bravado, that he said earlier in verse 33, when Jesus warned him that Satan was trying to destroy him, Peter said to Jesus, Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death. But now that earlier bravado is gone, Peter is no longer with Jesus, he now follows at a distance.

And what Peter does in verse 55 is even more troubling. He says, when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them. Not only is Peter no longer with Jesus, he is now with them, the band that had come to arrest Jesus. The phrase in the middle of in that verse, the phrase in the middle of in that verse, and the word among in that verse are actually different translations of the exact same Greek word.

[3 : 54] And so it's emphasized, repeated twice for emphasis. When they had kindled a fire in the midst of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down in the midst of them. Peter is not trying to blend in, fit in, trying to pass as one of them. And since Jesus' arrest took place at night, Peter seems to think that no one will be able to recognize him. But unfortunately, there's a servant girl who's very good with faces. It says in verse 56, then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, this man also was with him. When Peter sits by the fire to warm himself by the light of the fire, this girl notices a strangely familiar face and looking closely at him, she concludes, this man also was with Jesus. Remember, that's exactly what Peter had insisted before that he would do. I will go with you to prison and to death. And so you would expect him to now say, yes, I am with him. But it says in verse 57, he denied it, saying, woman, I do not know him.

This is a heart-wrenching denial because it's the one that Peter most easily could have avoided. His accuser is a lowly servant girl who by virtue of her gender and her class in this ancient world had the lowest status in society. Her testimony was not even legally admissible in the courts.

Not only that, Peter is not under threat of being arrested. The Jewish leaders have conspired to arrest Jesus only because they knew that by striking the shepherd, they will scatter all the sheep.

We know from John 18 that John, another disciple, is already in the courtyard and he was familiar with the high priest and is able to go in and observe Jesus more closely. So we know that the disciples of Jesus are not under immediate threat. And even though Peter did assault that servant, no one has identified him as that man and they're not accusing him of assault. Their accusation merely is, this man also was with him. But Peter nevertheless succumbs under the pressure and says, I do not know him. Jewish synagogues, when they excommunicated members, kicked people out from membership in their synagogues, they would say, they would use this formula, they would formally pronounce over them, we no longer know you. They're saying, we no longer have anything to do with you.

And the phrasing of Peter's denial is very similar in content. I do not know him. I am not with him. I have nothing to do with that man. It's a blatant backpedaling from his earlier resolute commitment.

[7 : 02] And it stems from his fierce desire to be counted among them. He's saying, I'm with you. I'm not with him. Associating with Jesus will bring embarrassment and persecution at times.

You actually believe that God created the world? Do you not know that science has disproven the existence of God?

Do you really believe that Jesus was a real human being that was crucified and then raised from the dead? Do you really believe that the Bible is the word of God?

What about all those regressive ethical standards and fantastical stories? Notice that all of those questions are merely accusations and not arguments.

They're unargued assertions that are intended to create a feeling, a powerful feeling, that preys on people's insecurities and fears.

[8 : 12] They make you feel like what you believe is ridiculous without offering any proof that it is ridiculous. More often than not, when you actually start to reason with people who say such things and press them on why they think that your beliefs are so far-fetched, you find that they actually don't have good reasons, many of them, behind their assumptions.

Nowadays, too many so-called Christians compromise their convictions and lose their faith. Not after a careful examination of their beliefs, but out of fear, out of insecurity, out of a survival instinct to flee that which others consider regressive and ridiculous.

Don't give in to that pressure. Are you with Jesus? Or do you want to belong to this world? Do you want to fit in to this culture?

Philippians 3.20 reminds us our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as every subsequent drink goes down more smoothly for an alcoholic, every subsequent sin comes more easily to a sinner.

Sin begets more sin. It desensitizes our conscience. And likewise, Peter's denial doesn't stop there. It says in verse 58, And a little later, someone else saw him and said, You also are one of them.

[9 : 50] But Peter said, Man, I am not. The first accusation by the servant girl was, This man also was with him. She was telling the other people in the crowd, seated around the fire, that Peter was with Jesus.

And Peter denied that personal association with Jesus. And this time, the accusation is posed directly at Peter. You also are one of them. And the accusation is that Peter belongs to the band of Jesus' followers, that he's one of his disciples, which he is.

He's one of the 12 apostles. But Peter, having already denied his allegiance to Jesus, now denies his fellowship with other disciples as well. Man, I am not.

I am not one of them. I'm one of you. Sometimes we also can be tempted to distance ourselves from the fellowship of believers, the church.

Oh, I'm not one of them. I'm not that kind of a Christian. I'm not one of those Bible-thumping Christians. I'm a red-letter Christian.

[11 : 04] I only follow those red letters in the New Testament that Jesus said. I don't follow that other stuff in the Bible. I'm a more rational kind of Christian. I believe the Bible is a collection of myths and stories written to capture our imagination, not a literal history.

I'm a more enlightened kind of Christian, more progressive kind of Christian. People say these things as if it's an act of courage to disagree with the church's historic teachings, much like a teenager that wears his rebellion against his parents as a badge of honor.

But distancing yourselves from the church in order to align yourself with the culture that is critical of the church just like distancing yourself from your well-meaning family members in order to get some street cred with your friends.

It's not an act of courage. It's self-serving cowardice. If we really care about the church of God, we should seek to reform it, not reject it or ridicule it.

To distance oneself from the church of God, which is the family of God and the bride of Christ, is to distance oneself from Christ himself, who is the head of the church.

[12 : 29] Though our sinful flesh might crave the approval of the world, it's the people of God that we will spend eternity with, not the people of this world. I once met a chaplain.

It was at Harvard. There's a lot of chaplains. You'll never figure it out, so don't try to identify who this person is. But I met a chaplain at Harvard. He's supposed to be one of the Christian chaplains, but he steadfastly refused to call himself a Christian because he didn't want to be identified with the term in any way.

Quite the contrast from the Christian man that was tortured for his faith in 2nd century, Christian pastor Irenaeus from the 2nd century testifies about this man, With such determination did he stand up to their onslaughts, he's being tortured for his faith, that he would not tell them his own name, race, and birthplace, or whether he was slave or free.

To every question he replied in Latin, I am a Christian. This he proclaimed over and over again. Instead of name, birthplace, nationality, and everything else, and not another word did the heathen hear from him.

Before I am a Christian. Before I am Sean. Before I am a pastor of Trinity Cambridge Church.

[13 : 57] Before I am a husband to Hannah and father to Ine and Inji. Before I am a graduate of Williams College or Gordon-Conwell Seminary. Before I'm a Korean American.

Before all of that, I'm a Christian. I'm a follower of Christ. That's who I am. That's what is most fundamental to my identity.

And that's the name by which all my brothers and sisters in Christ in church history have been known. We should not be ashamed of it.

But Peter unfortunately denies his allegiance to Christ yet again. Yes, I am not one of them.

And he's still not done. It says in verse 59, This third accuser is the most insistent.

[15 : 04] He says, But certainly this man also was with him. For he too is a Galilean. Peter's appearance or accent has somehow betrayed his identity.

But Peter doubles down on his denial in verse 60. Man, I do not know what you are talking about. And immediately while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed.

That's in fulfillment of what Jesus said earlier in Luke 22, verse 34. He says in verses 61 to 62, And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times.

And he went out and wept bitterly. The rooster crowed, even as Peter was still speaking, to leave no doubt in his mind that this was in fulfillment of Jesus' prediction earlier.

And remember, Peter, his name means rock. The name was given by Jesus himself. But in this instance, he crumbles under the pressure, not like a rock, but like a house of cards.

[16 : 17] Wept bitterly. That refers not to a quiet sniffing, but to an audible sob. And in Peter's failure, we see Jesus is for knowledge.

We see that even though everything seems to be spiraling out of control, that Jesus is still in full command of the situation. And that point is emphasized by the repetition of the word Lord.

And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord. The last time Peter called Jesus Lord was in verse 33, where he said, Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death.

But that same Lord to whom Peter had made such a blustering promise, now turns and looks at him as he is denying him, reminding him through his gaze that he knows that Peter is denying him right now.

And reminding him with his gaze that he had predicted that he would deny him, reminding him through his gaze also of the comfort that he had given to Peter earlier.

[17 : 28] Verse 31 and 32, Jesus' gaze just melts Peter.

And deducing from what we know about Jesus, his character, his teachings, it was in all likelihood not a look of condemnation and disdain, but a look of compassion, love, mercy.

And Peter can't handle it. He goes out and weeps bitterly. If you're a Christian who's serious about pleasing the Lord, you have probably cried the bitter tears of Peter.

Literally or figuratively. When you remember the saying of the Lord, when you were convicted of your unfaithfulness and sinfulness by the Holy Spirit, when you realize that you brought dishonor to your Lord and your Savior, but that bitter tear, like Peter's, shows that you still belong to Christ.

Because Peter still believed in Jesus and loved Jesus, he was heartbroken that he had failed. His denial was a temporary lapse in courage.

[19 : 04] It was not a permanent loss of conviction. Remember when Peter first met Jesus earlier in the gospel, he fell before him saying, depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

And now, even after three years of following Jesus and ministering with him, Peter's bitter tears testify that his confession hasn't changed. Please don't misunderstand what I'm about to say.

Every true Christian grows in holiness with each passing year. Every true Christian does. That growth might be imperceptible in the short term, but it is undeniable in the long term.

But no matter how much progress we make in faith, we always remain sinners saved by the grace of God. No matter how mature we are, we never stop needing God's mercy, his forgiveness, until the day we die.

Because apart from the righteousness of Jesus credited to our account, we can only say, depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. And that's exactly why Jesus came.

[20 : 32] To save sinners, to atone for our sins, by dying on the cross for our sins, and being raised from the dead. So, if you're here this morning, and you're heavy laden with guilt, condemnation, if you're crying bitter tears of failure and unfaithfulness, remember that it's not your performance.

It's not even the intensity, your emotional intensity of remorse that you feel. These are not the things that make you acceptable before God.

What makes you right with God does not reside in you. It resides in Christ only, and on what he has accomplished on the cross, for you.

His sacrifice only. His righteousness only. And remembering that truth will keep us humble, and dependent on him. It will make us watchful, and prayerful.

It will guard us from temptation. But if we forget this truth, we'll become, like Peter was earlier, prideful, self-sufficient, and will lead to our failure.

[21 : 45] And remember this comforting truth. The Lord knew that Satan would tempt Peter. The Lord knew that Peter would deny him three times before the rooster crows.

The Lord knew that ultimately Peter's faith would not fail because he had prayed for him. The Lord knew that Peter would turn back again.

And so he had charged him ahead of time, when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers. This blows my mind. If any failure is worth demoting somebody, a disciple, I mean, that's, I think that warrants it.

It wasn't once, three times. I mean, at least demote him a little bit, you know, maybe make him like just one of the disciples, but not the twelve apostles. But Jesus, does not dismiss the disgraced leader of the twelve apostles.

He restores him, he reinstates him, and entrusts to him the weighty task of strengthening his fellow brothers. That's the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[23 : 08] God knows all of your sins, all of your sordid pasts, our present failures, our future sins.

That he doesn't look at you and say, oh, not worth saving, not worth my time. He so loves you that he sends his only son to die as your substitute.

He eats the loss of your sin and your debt himself. He patiently endures your shortcomings and gently restores you. and in spite of all of our demonstrated unreliability, he gives us a sacred trust and sends us out as his ambassadors to share this precious good news of Jesus Christ with others.

What an amazing grace! From the outside looking in, Jesus looks totally pathetic and pitiful in this scene.

betrayed by one of his 12 apostles, denied by the leader of the 12 apostles, deserted, defied, derided, and doubted by the very people he came to save.

[24 : 38] But this narrative shows us that despite appearances to the contrary, the crucified Christ is the Lord and judge over all whom we should follow.

It's all according to God's sovereign plan. In addition to a denier, we meet those who deride Jesus in verses 63 to 65.

It says, Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking him as they beat him. They also blindfolded him and kept asking him, Prophecy!

Who is it that struck you? And they said many other things against him, blaspheming him. The men who were holding Jesus in custody are likely the soldiers. After an initial inquiry at the high priest's house, Jesus is now being detained until the formal proceedings of the Sanhedrin in the morning.

And during that time, the guards who are holding Jesus are bored and they make sport of Jesus. That kind of public abuse was never legal. It was never permitted.

[25 : 47] It wasn't permitted even for people who had already been condemned. But in this case, Jesus has not been proven guilty yet and yet they abuse him in such a way. Knowing that Jesus had a reputation as a prophet, the soldiers strike him and then challenge him to identify who his abuser is.

Mocking him. Blindfolding him. Who struck you? If you're a prophet, you should know. What's his name? Where is he standing? The irony of it all is that while the soldiers are deriding him and challenging him to prophecy, they are themselves fulfilling Jesus' prophecy about himself.

He said earlier in Luke 18 verses 32 to 33, for he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon.

And after flogging him, they will kill him and on the third day he will rise. Jesus prophesied that he would be mocked and shamefully treated. And the soldiers are doing exactly that.

And in mocking Jesus' prophetic ability, they are proving his prophetic powers. Moreover, the Jewish leaders later accused Jesus of blasphemy.

[27 : 08] But Luke tells us here in verse 65, it's not Jesus who blasphemed. It's the men who held Jesus in custody who were blaspheming Jesus. The Jewish leaders acted like they were defending God's honor by persecuting Jesus.

But in reality, they were dishonoring God because they were blaspheming the Son of God. The word blaspheme can be used in a generic sense to slander someone if the object of the verb blaspheme is a human being.

But the word blaspheme is used most often with God as the object. And it means specifically to misuse God's name or to belittle God's unique glory by speaking ill of Him or by falsely making oneself or another human being to be God.

So in light of Jesus' declaration in verse 70 that He is the Son of God, it's hard not to see Jesus' divinity implied here in Luke's use of the word blaspheme.

They're blaspheming God. though humiliated and mocked, Jesus is the Lord of all. And even though Jesus might be blasphemed by our friends, our family, our neighbors, He's the Son of God whom we must follow.

[28 : 33] And when day came, it says in verse 66, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes, and they led Him away to their council.

This council is, like I mentioned earlier, probably the formal gathering of the Sanhedrin, which is the highest religious ruling body of the Jews. And all Jews with some religious standing have, it seems to have gathered, the elders, the chief priests, the scribes, they've all gathered.

And they asked Jesus in verses 67 to 68, if you are the Christ, tell us. But He said to them, if I tell you, you will not believe. And if I ask you, you will not answer.

So here in this last scene, we encounter the doubters. The title Christ means anointed one, the Messiah, the promised king from the line of David who is supposed to save God's people and usher in the kingdom of God.

But the Sanhedrin is not asking a sincere question here. They're trying to frame Jesus as we've seen over and over again throughout chapters 20 and 21. They're not interested in the truth.

[29 : 47] They have a settled judgment about Jesus. They're simply looking for an excuse to kill Him. And what Jesus says to them is insightful because some people make a virtue of skepticism.

While there is a fair-minded skepticism that asks genuine questions seeking truth, there's also a biased, settled skepticism that will admit no evidence that forces it to change its position.

It's really the sin of unbelief masquerading as virtue of thoughtfulness and reasonableness. And throughout His ministry, Jesus consistently refuses to indulge such settled skeptics.

He said early in Luke 11, 29 to 30, this generation is an evil generation. He seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.

For as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so will the Son of Man be to this generation. The sign of Jonah that Jesus is referring to in the context of the Gospel of Luke is not His death and resurrection, which is the case in the Gospel of Matthew, but it's actually the preaching, the preaching of Jonah to the people of Nineveh.

[31 : 05] So likewise, Jesus is saying here to the people, my preaching, my proclamation of the Gospel of the kingdom is a sufficient sign. No other sign will be given.

And Jesus responded this way because He knew that the people seeking signs were already settled in their judgments. That if they don't believe His words, they will not believe His miraculous works.

If I tell you, you will not believe. And if I ask you, you will not answer. If you consider yourself a skeptic about Jesus, do you think the burden of proof is still on Christ and His church?

Because God's Word tells us that the ball is in your court. Even this morning, you have heard about Jesus.

You have heard the good news of the kingdom of God, but will you believe Him? But Jesus does remind the Jewish council of this fact.

[32 : 19] Though it appears as though they have authority over Him, it appears as though they have the upper hand, true authority and power lie with Him.

And so Jesus says in verse 69, Jesus' reply here combines two passages.

First, Daniel 7, 13 to 14. It's a messianic prophecy that describes one like a son of man who will appear before God and receive dominion and glory and a kingdom and all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him.

And the second passage is Psalm 110, which Jesus quoted earlier in Luke 20. It captures a dialogue between the Lord God and the messianic king. The Lord says to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.

And it continues, the Lord is at your right hand. He will shatter kings on the day of His wrath. He will execute judgment among the nations. According to Jewish rabbinic tradition, only God sits in heaven.

[33 : 33] everyone else must stand to worship, to wait on Him, or prostrate themselves before God.

Only the king gets to sit in court. And so for Jesus to claim that He will from now on, referring to His impending death, resurrection, and ascension, from now on, He'll be seated at the right hand of the power of God.

It's tantamount to blasphemy. That's of course if Jesus is not, in fact, the messianic king and the son of God. The Jewish council is incensed.

They say in verse 70, are you the son of God then? Do you really dare to claim to be God? Do you dare to claim the right hand of the throne of God?

to be seated by the ancient of days Himself? And Jesus responds, you say that I am. Now some revisionist historians like to use Jesus' response here to argue that Jesus never claimed to be the son of God.

[34 : 46] Hey, look, look at what Jesus says here. He was just a religious reformer and a political revolutionary. Look at what He says. He says, you said that I am. I didn't say that. But that interpretation simply can't overcome the very plain obstacle posed by the immediately following verse.

Then they said, what further testimony do we need? We have heard it from His own lips. The Jewish leaders are indignant because they think that Jesus has very obviously condemned Himself with His own lips by committing blasphemy.

They don't think that Jesus denied that claim. If Jesus was answering that question in the negative, then that would have been the end of the Jesus movement because people were claiming Him to be the Messianic King.

Jesus is not saying that. You can find the same thing in Matthew 26, 26. After Jesus predicts His betrayal, Judas, who would betray Him, answers Jesus asking Him, is it I, Rabbi?

And Jesus responds to him with the same phrase. He says, you have said so. That doesn't mean I didn't say that you said that. That means, yes, you are.

[36 : 16] What Jesus is saying here is, yes, I am. at His birth, the angel declared that Jesus was born would be called Holy, the Son of God.

At His baptism, God, the Father declared over Jesus, you are my beloved Son. And when He was transfigured to His glorious heavenly self in Luke 9, the Father said again, this is my Son.

And as a boy in the temple of God, Jesus said, I must be in my Father's house. And in Luke 10, Jesus said, all things have been handed to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.

Jesus has been saying over and over again, I am the Son of God. And Jesus is reminding the Jewish leaders, you think that you are standing over judgment over me right now, but it is I who will be seated on judgment day.

It is I whom your Lord and God, it is I whom you should bow down to and submit to, because despite appearances to the contrary, the crucified Christ is the Lord and judge over all.

[37 : 37] Some people in our world are willing to concede that Jesus was a good person, a moral exemplar, a spiritual guru, but they stop at that.

And that's a woefully inadequate acknowledgement. If you're going to come to terms with who Jesus is, at the very least, take into account what He said about Himself.

He did not merely claim to be a good moral teacher. He claimed to be the Son of God. And if He is not God, but claimed to be God, He lied.

He misled people. He was severely, or He was severely deluded. He could not possibly be a good moral teacher. But Jesus claimed to be the Son of God because that is who He is.

He could have gotten Himself off the hook with the simple denial. Oh no, I am not the Son of God. I'm not the Messiah. Oh, that's all just my crazy followers' wild claims. I had never said such things myself.

[38 : 51] But Jesus doesn't say that. Jesus could have remained silent when police officers interrogate criminals or accused criminals in our country. They read the Miranda rights.

You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law. And sometimes people invoke that right to avoid incriminating themselves.

Jesus didn't have Miranda rights. It's not the United States. But He could have remained silent. But He doesn't. He admits His lordship.

He admits His divine sonship. And in so doing He condemns Himself before the Jewish council. Why? Because it's true. Because even now it's not the wicked Jewish rulers who are in charge of Jesus' situation.

But it's Jesus who is in charge. And so He says in John 10 verses 17 to 18, For this reason the Father loves me. Because I lay down my life that I may take it up again.

[39 : 59] No one takes it from me but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.

Jesus is not a hapless individual that happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time and was killed for the wrong reasons and then His followers made up this crazy story about how He died for their sins.

That's not what happened. Jesus knew exactly what He was doing. He died for you. He incriminated Himself in the court of law because He knew He was laying down His own life to save His people.

so that He could die on the cross with our criminal records on His back so that He could wipe our slate clean with His own blood.

Many people have claimed to be God in human history. They all died and faded into oblivion. Only one person has claimed to be God has died and has been raised from the dead.

[41 : 19] Have you put your faith in Jesus? The world is full of deniers, deriders, and doubters but God's calling you this morning.

Don't be a denier. Be a confessor. Don't be a derider. Be a worshiper. Don't be a doubter.

Be a believer. Because despite appearances to the contrary, the crucified Christ is the Lord God whom we should follow, whom we should love, whom we should obey.

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