

Everyone's Last Night

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[0 : 0 0] As we continue with our progress through this section of Mark's account of the gospel, we come to this last part of chapter 14, from verse 53 onwards, where we have three main players, we might say, or sets of players in this passage.

There is Peter, obviously, and his sad story is told here about the beginning and towards the end of this passage. There is Jesus right in the centre, and there is also the Sanhedrin, or the High Council of the old Jewish church, meeting, as it were, for the last time with any proper authority.

And as they gather to seek to condemn Jesus, to gain their short-term advantage, we have a certain irony here, that they are gathering, as it were, with the authority of God, as the elders, the high priests, the Pharisees, the rulers, the chief priests, all the people of Israel, the people of God.

And he himself has instituted the priesthood and the ruling council of all his people, the temple he has given to them, all the ordinances, all the sacrifices, all leading up, ironically, to this fulfilment, which they are now seeking, above all else, to extinguish.

And in many ways, we could say, this is the last night for old Israel. Because the next day, Jesus is crucified.

[1 : 3 2] And the final sacrifice has been made, and all else that has gone before, though it continues outwardly for that time, the temple and the sacrifices and the priesthood, the life has gone out of it.

It is as though sometimes, you know, one says, if somebody's already dead, but you turn over a corpse, they might sort of groan or exhale a certain amount of, you know, air or whatever, but that's just the air leaving the body as it changes position.

It doesn't mean they're alive. So if you turn over a corpse and he goes, ugh, like that, it doesn't mean the person is alive still, although it might seem that way. They're already dead. And with the death of Christ, the final sacrifice has been made, all the purpose, all the reason for the temple, the sacrifice, the priesthood, and so on, has all been not dispensed with, but fulfilled.

This was the last night of old Israel. It was the last night when the Passover actually would be celebrated for the purpose for which it was intended, leading up to the final sacrifice.

It was the last night that Peter would presume to stand in his own strength. It was the last night of Jesus in his earthly ministry.

[2 : 4 9] Because the next day, as we said, by nine o'clock the next morning, he is crucified. By three o'clock in the afternoon, he is dead. And by the time night falls on the next day, he's already in the tomb.

Yes, he will rise again. Yes, there will be other days and nights, perhaps, that he will spend with his disciples in his resurrection body. But in terms of his earthly life and ministry, our Lord in the flesh upon this earth.

This is also, if we may say it, reverently, the last night for our Lord upon earth in that sense. It is Jesus' last night. It is old Israel's last night.

It is the Sanhedrin's last night with any meaning, power, or authority. It is Peter's last night in his own strength. In a sense, it is everyone's last night.

And if we could use or perhaps seek a title for this passage, that may be it, everyone's last night. And they are all facing it with different purpose and from different direction and with different outcomes in the end.

[3 : 55] And ironically, the only person who knows that it's going to be the last night of this type for all of these people is Jesus, right at the center of it. So we read, they led Jesus away to the high priest and with him were assembled the chief priests and the elders and the scribes.

Probably in the same location of the high priest's palace, who of course was Caiaphas, his father-in-law Annas. Some of the other gospel accounts mention that Jesus was taken first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of the high priest.

He was a wily character who had held the high priesthood previously, but had been dismissed from it under one of Pilate's predecessors, one of the previous governors of Judea.

But rather than just go quietly, yes, he had accepted the dismissal, but he wangled it so that first of all, not only his son-in-law would get, first of all, one of his own sons would get the high priesthood after him.

Then his son-in-law, Caiaphas would get it after him. And then a further, at least three more sons became high priest in succession. So it really was a family affair in that sense.

[5 : 04] And Annas was like a godfather, if we can say that, of all this kind of high priestly mafia. And there he was the one pulling all the strings. So Jesus was taken first of all to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priesthood.

And there he was interrogated, and then they passed him over to the gathered Sanhedrin. And it's Luke, I think, and possibly John mentioned first of all that he was taken first of all to Annas.

The other gospel accounts mention it. And then he is taken to the high priest, to the Sanhedrin. Peter, meanwhile, follows, we read verse 54. Now, it's helpful for us perhaps to understand something of the topography of such a house.

There would be these large houses in the ancient Middle East would be built around a central quadrangle. They would have sort of flagstones in the middle. That would be the sort of courtyard or palace area, you might say.

And there the servants would be gathered, although, yes, it's a warm country and so on. Once the night comes down, especially in the early spring there, it would be cold at night. John tells us in his account of the gospel that it was cold and the servants had made a fire of coals to warm themselves at.

[6 : 27] The actual trial is probably going on in an open room, which is maybe up a few steps in a flat area, no doubt, with pillars and so on. Raised up from where the servants are in the main quadrangle, but within sight and within hearing of the servants in the main sort of quadrangle area, the main central courtyard.

And Peter would be down there with the servants and they could all hear and see what was going on. And likewise, if they had been of a mind to listen, those standing up on the higher level could hear the banter that was going on with the servants down below.

One reason that we say this is because first they must have been visible to each other. is that Luke tells us that after his betrayal, or just when he, well, not betrayal, denial, rather, after he denies Jesus the third time, we read that Jesus turns and looks at Peter.

Which means they must be within eye shot, eye line of each other somehow, somewhere. They can't be in a separate closed off room. They can't be run the corner and run out of sight. They must be within the vision of the servants down below.

And Jesus must be able to hear what is going on down there as well. So they are in sufficient proximity for them both to hear what is going on with the others.

[7 : 44] But Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest. He sat with the servants and warmed himself at the fire. And we'll come back to poor Peter in due course.

The chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death and found none. Now notice right away what is the object here. They're not saying, well, let's see if this man is guilty or not.

Let's see if all the things we've heard about him are true. Let's have a proper trial and see what the evidence is. No, they're intending to put him to death. They intend to make sure that he dies.

They have almost certainly already arranged with Pilate to deliver him a malefactor who must be put to death the next day. Because they didn't have the power to carry out a capital execution.

The Romans reserved that to themselves. So they want to make sure he gets killed. They want to be able to say, yes, we've had a trial. Yes, we've pronounced on it. And he's definitely guilty of this capital crime.

[8 : 42] You have to put him to death. They are determined to put him to death. And that's what they're doing from the start. It is how they are choosing to use the power which the Lord has placed in their hand for this last night of old Israel.

Old Israel is encapsulated, if you like, in Jerusalem and in the province of Judea. And the Jewish population that is there, of which the pinnacle, the crown, is Jerusalem, the city.

Of which the jewel in the crown is the temple. Of which the ruling body is this Sanhedrin. The elders, the chief priests, the scribes, they're all gathered here. Well, we suspect they are not all gathered here.

Because whilst we read at verse 64, when due course they all condemned him to be guilty of death. We read in Luke's account of the gospel, in chapter 23, verses 50 and 51.

Behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor. And he was a good man and a just. The same had not consented to the decision of them all to put Jesus to death.

[9 : 50] He had not given his voice. He had not given his vote. He had not consented to the deep counsel and deed of them. He was a man of Theia, a city of the Jews, who also himself waited for the kingdom of God. This man went unto Pilate and begged the body of Jesus.

He took it down, wrapped it in linen, laid it in a sepulchre. It was hewn in stone. And so never a man was laid. And we read in John's account that Nicodemus, who had come to Jesus by night in John chapter 3, was also with him.

It is highly unlikely that these men would behave in this way if they had only the previous night been quite content to condemn Jesus to death. Joseph, we are told explicitly, did not consent to the decision that they had taken.

And yet we are told in Mark's account in verse 64, they all condemned him to be guilty of death. What do we conclude from this? Are the gospels inconsistent? No. Rather, what we take from it is that almost certainly the council did not invite, did not make aware of their secret gathering that night, any who might be a contradictory voice.

The sympathy that Joseph, perhaps, or Nicodemus had shown for Jesus in the past would have been noted. And they would have made sure we can't risk inviting these guys.

[11 : 08] They might be a voice to the contrary. They might be those who would give a different view. And, you know, we read at the end of John chapter 7, where Nicodemus, he that came to Jesus by night, he asked them, you know, do we condemn a man?

And Nicodemus said unto them, he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them, does our law judge any man before it hear him and know what he doeth? They answered and said unto them, art thou also of Galilee?

Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet. And every man went unto his own house. That's all he said. You know, do we condemn somebody without having, you know, heard them and giving them a fair trial?

And then you say, well, are you stupid or something new from Galilee as well? Why are you taking his side? Right? Now, although it's such a little thing, he said, it would have been noted, just as Joseph van Amatheer's natural sympathy would have been noted.

And it would have been recognized. You can't trust these ones to get the right voice. Don't invite them. Just don't bring that. Clearly, for whatever reason, they were not giving their consent. We're told explicitly that Joseph was not giving his consent.

[12 : 15] And since Mark tells us they all condemned him to be guilty of death, we must conclude that certainly Joseph, and almost certainly Nicodemus too, although members of the council, were not there.

And the implication would be they have not been notified. They have not been told this gathering was taking place. They could form a quorum without them. They didn't need their voice as long as they got enough people ready to condemn Jesus.

That is their purpose. That is what they are using their last night for. They sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death. But they found none.

For many bear false witness against him, but their witness agreed not to govern. Now, it's an inconvenient fact of their law, given, of course, by God. In Deuteronomy chapter 17, verse 6, we read, And likewise in chapter 19, at verse 15, One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity or for any sin, and any sin that he sinneth.

At the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established. Now, it follows from that, that even if you've got a confession, even if you've got one person saying, Yes, yes, I did it. I'm guilty.

[13 : 37] And so on. That's still only one voice. That's still only one witness. It's not enough. So even getting the so-called guilty party to admit his guilt is not enough in and of itself.

You need two witnesses, and they need to have their testimony needs to agree. But their witness agreed not together. And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hats.

But neither so did their witness agree together. Matthew makes reference to this kind of witness as well in chapter 27, when they bring together these kind of witnesses.

I think it's chapter 26. When they bring together these witnesses, and they say, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.

That's verse 61 of Matthew 26. But saying, I'll destroy this temple, and I'll rebuild this temple, the same temple, in three days, is not the same as saying, you know, destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I'll build another temple made without hands.

[14 : 48] That's clearly a sort of divine initiative to rebuild a temple made without hands. The two do not agree together. They can't say, oh, this is what he's going to do. It's resurrection he wants.

He wants a rebellion to destroy this temple. That's what he wants. The Romans will have to put him to death. Now, if all they're talking about is demolishing their own temple, Romans are going to say, well, go ahead and do it. We're not bothered.

We don't care. If you want to do that, they're not going to be bothered. All they care about is potential political unrest. It's not enough to say, oh, yeah, if you say I'll destroy this temple and rebuild it in three days.

And even so, in order to get that kind of witness, they have to go back to the beginning of Jesus' ministry. They've got nothing in his more recent witness or testimony.

They've got nothing, although he got more and more bold in his confrontations with the Pharisees and the scribes and the chief priests, they had nothing they could put on him except the fact that if you go back to John chapter 2, read it verse 18.

[15 : 48] Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? After the first cleansing of the temple, the beginning of his ministry, Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.

Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple and building, and wilt thou read it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them, and they believed the scripture and the word which Jesus had said.

He spake of the temple of his body. The disciples recognized this, but only after. What John is saying is, yes, he did say this. Yes, this is what he was referring to.

But now we know with hindsight and by the giving of the Spirit that Jesus meant that his body would be restored. He would be raised back to life. Why does he call himself the temple then in that respect?

Because when he says destroy this temple, he doesn't mean destroy this temple. Looking around means destroy this temple, meaning himself. In which temple, in which spirit and temple that was enshrined the glory of the eternal word.

[17 : 03] Remember, the temple was meant to be the glory of Israel. The symbolic place of God's dwelling. Now, in John chapter 1, of course, we read it, verse 14. It says, you know, the world was made flesh and blood among us, and we beheld his glory.

The glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. We beheld his glory. That glory which dwells in the person of Jesus Christ.

That which once dwelt within the temple. You know, when the cloud filled the temple, it now dwells in this person of Jesus Christ. Whilst he is in the temple, that spirit, that glory is in the temple too.

When he leaves, the glory departs from the temple. And in this temple, the glory and power and spirit of God is enshrined. Destroy that temple.

And in three days, he will raise it up. Now, just as the temple that is made with hands, that stone temple is really just a shadow of the true temple that God is talking about, where his spirit would dwell.

[18 : 08] That stone temple, there's no life in and of itself. God had condescended to dwell for a time in the first temple that Solomon had made. But it's just a building of stone.

And when God is not honoured in it, his presence, his spirit would depart from it. Now, if we think, take an example of this from way back in the Old Testament. When after the Israelites had come and settled in the Promised Land.

And they had raised up the altar of the Lord at the place of the tabernacle. And then when the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh in Joshua chapter 22. They went to their inheritance to the east side of Jordan.

And on the banks of the Jordan, they built a replica of that altar of the Lord. They built this stone replica.

And they said, oh look, they're making another altar there. They're setting themselves up as a rival nation. They're turning away from the worship of God. And they gathered all the forces together, ready to go to war with the Reubenites and the Gadites.

[19 : 08] And before they actually came to battle, they sat down together and said, look, why have you done this? You know, you're raising up a fake altar. You're worshipping other gods. They said, no, no, no, we're not doing that at all. We know the true altar is there in front of the tabernacle.

This is a copy. This is a stone replica so that we can point to it when people say, oh, you don't belong to Israel. When they say, no, no, this is the promised land on the west side of the Jordan.

You people on the east, you've got no inheritance amongst the Lord's people. You don't belong with this tabernacle and this altar. Then we can say to our children, yes, we do. Here's the copy of it. Here's the replica, the copy, the reproduction of the altar that is there before the tabernacle.

Here it is on this side of the Jordan. This is exactly the same thing, just like the one over there. This is like the altar of the Lord to which we come to offer our sacrifices. We can point to it to our children.

We can say, this is where you belong. It's just like the one over there. This is to show you what it's meant to be like, to remind us of our inheritance. This stone replica is to point to the true altar.

[20 : 14] And they said, okay, that's fine. You're still worshipping the true God. That's great. Okay, we go back in peace. And war was averted. And also, likewise, the temple itself is a stone replica of that which is meant to house the spirit and the grace and the glory of God, which, of course, is housed in the person of Jesus Christ himself.

Peter can have hints at this in chapter 2 of 1 Peter, where we read from verse 4. To whom coming, the Lord Jesus, to whom coming is unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious.

Ye also as lively, that means living stones, are built up a spiritual house and holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

Wherefore, also it is contained in the scripture, behold, I lay inside a chief cornerstone, elect precious. And he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. This true temple is a spiritual temple.

And it is personified in Jesus Christ. Destroy that. And he'll raise it up in three days. Because the true temple of the Lord is where his glory dwells.

[21 : 29] The stone temple is just a replica. It's just a reproduction of where God at one time was willing to dwell. But at the same time now, when the glory of the Lord has departed, it becomes just a shell.

They couldn't see that. They didn't understand that or they didn't believe that. And they were so addicted to the outward form and the outward shell that they were prepared to attempt to extinguish the reality in order to keep the replica in its place and in its outward glory.

We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands and within three days I will build another temple made without hands. And yet, although he's referring to the raising up again of his body, and although in a sense his disciples may not have understood or got that, there is, as some commentators have pointed out, a suggestion that the chief priests understood what he meant.

They recognised what he meant. Because if we go to Matthew's account in chapter 27, where we read, you know, when we read of how the chief priests said to Pilate at the end, they say in verse 63, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said while he was yet alive, after three days I will rise again.

Now, when did he say that to them? You know, he said it to his disciples a few times. He said it to his disciples when he would go apart with them and explain to them on the way up to Jerusalem, look, we're going up to Jerusalem and the Son of Man will be betrayed into the hands of the Gentiles, he'll be crucified and killed and the third day he'll rise again.

[23 : 16] He said it to them and he kept saying it, he kept saying it, and he kept saying it, but they didn't always get it. But this business about the temple of his body being destroyed and then coming, being rebuilt in three days, that could only refer to his body in which the glory of God is kept.

And the only way that the chief priests could have said, oh yeah, we heard him say this, because they weren't around when Jesus spoke it to his disciples, is that they heard him make the prophecy about destroying the temple and building it in three days.

In other words, they put two and two together. They understood sufficient to say that Pilate, this is what he was talking about. This is what he meant when he said, destroy this temple and in three days I'll rebuild it.

We remember that that deceiver said while he was yet alive, after three days I will rise again. Why did he say it to them? He never said it in their period. He never said it before them.

He said it to his disciples, plenty, but he didn't say it to the assembled chief priests. He didn't say it publicly in the temple as part of his public ministry of teaching. When did they hear him say it?

[24 : 27] Except in terms of this teaching about the temple which he gave near the beginning of his ministry. They knew what he meant. Or at least they put two and two together.

Which means that when they try to use this against him, not only are they lying, but they know they're lying. It's not an attack against the stone temple. But in all, he's talking about the witness of his own body.

Kill this temple, destroy this temple, three days it'll rise again. They know what it means. And so likewise neither so did their witness agree together. And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus saying, answerest thou nothing?

Which is it that these witness against thee? In other words, he's trying to get him to condemn himself out of his own mouth. But he held his peace and answered nothing. Again, the high priest asked him and said unto him, art thou the Christ, the son of the blessed?

We might think, well, why does he answer this question too? And again, this is where we have to keep on taking, and I apologize for jumping about from one gospel account to the other, but in one sense we have to do this.

[25 : 30] Because it's necessary to put all the pieces together. And it's only by comparing scripture with scripture we get the full picture. And it's through Matthew's account that we understand why Jesus is, if we can use the term reverently, compelled to answer this question in a way that he hasn't been compelled to answer any of the previous ones.

And that is because the high priest lays upon him a solemn oath. Verse 63 of Matthew 26. After he says, answers thou, what is it which these witness against thee?

But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adieu thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the son of God.

So in other words, he has laid this solemn oath upon him in the name of God. In the name of Jesus' own heavenly father. And he has done it as the high priest.

Now the high priest may be corrupt. And he may be, you know, abusing his position. But he is nevertheless the high priest. It's like if, you know, if the government passes a law that you don't like, or you don't like, and we are bound up, we still have to recognize, well, there's still the government.

[26 : 42] And this is still the law. And as long as it doesn't conflict with our obedience to Christ, or to the word of God, then yes, we're duty bound to obey it. To pay whatever taxes, or to do whatever it is they require of us, as long as it doesn't involve compromising our faith and obedience to Christ.

But they're the civil magistrate. They're the law of the land. And likewise, he is the high priest. For at least one night left, he is still the legitimate force of the ecclesiastical power.

He is still the head of the priesthood that God has instituted for this one last night. And he adjures the Lord Jesus in the name of his own Holy Father to answer.

Now, if Jesus doesn't answer now, not only is he repudiating the authority of a body which his father has instituted, the priesthood, going back to Aaron, but also in refusing to answer the solemn oath required of him in the name of the Holy God, he would be dishonouring his father.

He would be dishonouring the Holy Name of the true God. I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.

[28 : 00] Now, Matthew has given us this sort of little precious insight, this nugget of gold here, and his answer, the translation after that, thou hast said, isn't quite so helpful.

Luke's account, again, where Jesus gives the same answer and where he responds, you know, when he says to him, aren't thou the Christ? And he said to him, you know, if I tell you, you will not believe.

If I ask, you will not let me go. Hereafter, you'll see the Son of Man sit on the right hand of power of God. He said, aren't thou then the Son of God? He said to him, ye say that I am.

Now, that sounds almost like you say, well, you say it, but I'm not saying it. No, it's rather in the sense of, you know, you say that because, in brackets, and, in brackets, I am.

And this is where, you know, Luke is near a sort of understanding of what the original means, but I think Mark has it really nailed in the head here. Mark's account is both the most simple here and the most clear.

[29 : 03] You know, when they demand of an art, thou the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed, and Jesus answered and said, I am. This is the divine name summed up in this succinct statement, like the Lord reveals to Moses in chapter 3 of Exodus, you know, I am that I am.

This is what you'll say to the children of Israel when you go back to them and say, I am has sent thee unto you. In John's account of the gospel, when Jesus said before Abraham was, I am.

They knew what he meant. They knew that he was claiming a divine identity. And so when they said, you know, art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed, he says, I am.

And this declares his divinity. It declares his Messiahship. And the high priest rent his clothes and said, what need we any further witnesses?

No, this is just theatrics, of course. It is a pretense at religious horror. And oh, we've heard blasphemy, shock horror, somebody claiming to be God, which of course Jesus is God in the flesh in that sense.

[30 : 10] But they are bringing condemnation here on themselves. Ye have heard the blasphemy. What think ye? They all condemned him to be guilty of death. And he rents his clothes.

This is, of course, what you're meant to do. The high priest was meant to do. He had blasphemy to tear his mantle. But of course, what is he doing here? If we think back to that incident in 1 Samuel 15, where King Saul has acted foolishly against God's instructions, and Samuel comes and tells him that he has sinned against the Lord, Samuel said unto the Lord, I will not return with thee, for thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel.

And as Samuel turned about to go away, he, that is Saul, laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent. And Samuel said unto him, The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine that is better than thou.

The rending of Samuel's skirt or garment, he takes as being a picture of how the kingdom has been rent from the hand of Saul. There could be no clearer illustration here for the high priest who rents his own garment that the true priesthood has been rent out of the hands of this corrupted council.

It is the last night of old Israel, the last night when the council stands with any divinely appointed authority, the last time when the high priest can make this interrogation as high priest with the divinely appointed authority.

[31 : 51] Art thou the son of the blessed? And Jesus says, I am. And he tears his mantle. And in doing so, the priesthood is rent out of the hands of men and placed at last in the hands of our ultimate prophet, priest, and king.

It is the end of old Israel. Yes, the beginning of new Israel. Yes, the beginning of new ultimate perfected priesthood. Yes, it is the coming in of a new age, but it is the last night of old Israel, the last night of the Sanhedrin, the last night when the high priest and his council have any authority.

They all condemned him to be guilty of death. Some began to spit and then to cover his face and then to say, the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.

Peter was beneath in the palace. Yes, there come of one of the maids of the high priest. And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him and said, and thou also was with Jesus of Nazareth. Now we've looked at the subject of Peter before in the past.

I don't want to go over old ground so much. Here's the irony of it, that Peter is warming himself at the fire because it's cold, but ironically that light of the fire is what shows up his face, shows up his face in the crown.

[33 : 11] And so, no, you were with him as well. You were one of them as well. Now, the first time this is asked, and you'll have heard me say in the past, almost certainly if we look at John's account of the gospel, where Peter comes into the house of the high priest.

We read in John 18 from verse 15, Simon Peter followed Jesus and so did another disciple. That disciple was known unto the high priest and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest.

But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known to the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door and brought in Peter. Then said the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, art not thou also one of this man's disciples?

It's a perfectly normal question. It's a perfectly innocent question. Here's this man who we know to be one of Jesus' disciples, but we know him. And he's speaking for you to bring you in the door, so I have to let you in.

That's fine. He's a disciple. Are you also one of his disciples? But, you know, you couldn't get a more innocent question. But Peter, of course, panicked and said, No, no, no, I'm not. I'm not.

[34 : 16] And there's the first weakness. Why is he lying about it? Why is he denying about it? And then a little while later, somebody else asked him, No, surely you are. Yes, we've seen you before.

And he said, No, no, no, I'm not. I don't know what you're talking about. Again, John gives a little more detail. John, the disciple who's, for whatever reason, family connections or known to the high priest, he gives a little detail that the third time, not only is it Peter's accent, as, you know, Matthew puts that lovely authorized version word, thy speech berait thee, it gives you away.

Your accent, your Galilean accent gives you away. But John gives the detail as well. A kinsman of the man whose ear Peter had cut off had said, Wait a minute.

I saw you in the garden. You know, you're the one that cut off my relatives, my cousin's ear, whatever. I remember you right enough. And so all these things come back against Peter.

And he denies. He began to curse at the swinger, saying, I know not this man of whom you speak. And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him before the cock crew, Twice thou shalt deny me thrice.

[35 : 32] And when he thought thereon, he wept. Both Luke and Matthew tell us that he wept bitterly. The bitterness of recognition that he had, in fact, let Jesus down.

Again, it is Luke that tells us that Jesus turned and looked at Peter. And immediately the cock crowed.

The Lord turned, verse 61 of Luke 22, and looked at Peter. Peter, remember the word of the Lord, how he had said unto them, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. Peter went down and wept bitterly.

He knew what he had done. He realized what he had done. Because we've dealt with this in the past, you know, my own understanding and interpretation of this would be that Peter is not the coward that sometimes people would make about to be.

It would have taken courage to go into the sort of lion's den there, the high priest's palace. He's the only one, apart from the one who's known to the high priest, he's the only one who takes his courage in both hands and goes.

[36 : 37] Perhaps he is exposed to danger. He's got to be near Jesus. He's going in his own bluff kind of strength. Oh, I wouldn't leave the Lord. He's already forsaken him and fled. But now he's back.

Now he's wanting to be near to Jesus. He's doing his best to be loyal. For whatever reason, he has panicked. Because of his own weakness, perhaps, going in his own strength.

He's asked a simple question. He just tries to sort of fend it off. Just leave me alone. No, no, I don't know what you're talking about. I don't understand. I don't know who this man is. I just want to listen in. I just want to hear how the trial is going.

Yes, I'm cold. I'm warming myself at the fire. I'm just trying not to say too much. But everything he says, he says with this thick Galilean accent. And it gives him away. He's just digging himself in deeper and deeper.

But he doesn't mean to. And he's not a coward. But he does get caught out by his own weaknesses. When Jesus had said, there's no point taking up the sword, Peter's the one who strikes the blow for him in the garden.

[37 : 38] And then one of the man's relatives remembers him. Peter's the one who's there warming himself with the brazier. And so his accent gives himself away. Peter's the one whose denial and whose very sort of shiftiness makes him an object of attention.

He draws it in upon himself. It is the last night. He will do anything in his own strength. After this failure that night, Peter is, to all intents and purposes, a broken man.

When we read in Mark chapter 16, when the women come to the tomb, we read of how the angels say to them, Be not affrighted. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified.

He is risen. He's not here. Behold the place where he lay. But go your way. Tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee. There shall you see him.

Does that imply that Peter could no longer bring himself together with the disciples because he was so ashamed? He is a broken man thereafter. And yet, on that day of his resurrection, Jesus makes a personal, one-to-one appearance to Jesus.

[38 : 50] When the two disciples come back from the road to Emmaus, Luke 24, we read it verse, I think it's 34, when they said, The Lord is risen indeed and have appeared unto Simon. Peter got a special appearance of the Lord on his resurrection day because Jesus knew that this wasn't a betrayer like that of Judas.

This was a mistake. He had slipped. He had fallen. He had denied the Lord, but he never stopped loving him. When he thought thereon, he wept. And after that, Jesus would reconcile him.

In John 21, three times asking, Do you love me? And three times giving him instruction. And after the Spirit is poured out of Pentecost, Peter is the undoubted spokesman and leader of the apostles.

He's the one that gives the strength, the leadership, which they all require. He's the one who, as Jesus said, I pray to you, while you're converted, strengthen your brethren. He becomes the man that Jesus intended him to be.

But all of that is in the future. And all of that is in the power of God's Spirit that he gives to Peter. This is Peter's last night in his own strength.

[39 : 58] And it is also Jesus' last night of his earthly ministry. This time of condemnation when he alone knows what is coming to a head. because the next morning because the next morning he will be crucified.

And by the next afternoon he will be dead. And by the next night he will be in the tomb. This is Jesus' last night. It is Peter's last night in his own strength.

It is the Sanhedrin's last night. It is the high priest last night as a high priest invested with the divine authority. It is the last night of old Israel, which is passing away even as its fulfillment, an ultimate sacrifice, is presented upon the cross.

All of old Israel has been leading up to this hour, but they don't quite see it. Nobody does except Jesus at the center of it all. For them, for each, it is in a sense everyone's last night.

Of course for us such a last night will come too. I don't want to get all morbid about it, but we have to recognize, of course, there will come a day when it's our last night upon earth or the Lord will come back, first of all.

[41 : 09] But what happens if our last night comes and goes without knowing Jesus as our personal Savior? I'd like us just to think for a wee second about it.

In John 14, where Jesus says that if anyone loves me, he that hath my commandments, John 14, verse 21, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and he that loveth me shall be loved in my Father.

I will love him. I will manifest myself to him. I'll make myself known to him. I'll show myself to him. And Judas, not Iscariot, says to him, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us and not unto the world?

Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto them and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sins.

In other words, if you love me, and you keep my commandments, you'll see me again. Last night or no last night. If this was to be our last night without Christ, how wonderful that would be.

[42 : 09] Because he would manifest himself to us. You know, are we going to be, like it says in Jeremiah, chapter 8, verse 20, the harvest is past, the summer is ending, and we are not saved.

How many last nights will it take before we know of our need to close in with Christ? This, in this chapter, as it draws to its close, is everyone's last night in their old ways, in their old strength, in their old ministry.

From then on, there's a new day dawning. And that's good news, if you're in it. What happens to those who do not know Christ as their Saviour? Well, Jesus says he will make himself known to those who do trust and believe in him.

He will, so that they will see him, they will know him, they will recognise him. What about those who don't? They will just never see him. They just won't see him anymore.

Jesus made himself known to his disciples after his resurrection for 40 days. Nobody else saw him. Nobody else saw him except those who believed in him. We can depart this life and never know Christ as our Saviour, in which case, we don't want our last night to come just yet.

[43 : 21] You know, all the days and nights you've got are opportunities to know Christ and to be saved by him. Imagine departing this life and never beholding Christ as your Saviour until finally you behold him as your judge.

This is everyone's last night. We will have a last night. When that last night comes, then let us be able to look forward to the morning. Let us be able to look forward to the new day when we will behold Christ, when we will see him as he is and we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is because for those who are in Christ there is a new day that dawns.

For those who are out of him, all the things they thought were precious are going to vanish away. The fashion of this world passeth away as Paul wrote to the Corinthians.

And so does everything that we think is so important here. Most of what we know and do and think on in this world has no eternal value. But Christ does.

And it comes for each of us as for Peter, as for the Sanhedrin, as for Jesus, earthly ministry. Everyone's last night. And if this was our last night, where do we stand with Christ?

[44 : 35] Because even if it's not, one day that last night will come. And the question is, what do we have to look for in the morning? What do we have to look for in the new day?

When we open our eyes, will it be to behold the Lord in glory? Or it will be like the rich man in Luke chapter 16 who opens his eyes in hell. These are the only alternatives.

There is everyone's last night. One day there will be ours. But for now and for each who have the opportunity, there's the opportunity not only of a new day here, but an eternal morning and glory forever and ever.

Let us pray.