

Luke 22:31-34 ROOSTER CROWS (see also Matt. 26:34, Mark 14:30, John 13:38, Luke 22:56-62) *“And the Lord said, ‘Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren’. But he said to Him, ‘Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death’. Then He said, ‘I tell you, Peter, the rooster [1] (**cock**’ in KJV) will not **crow** {2} this day before you will deny three times that you know Me”*.

A common problem that exists in our English Bibles is mistranslation of the original text. Sometimes this seems to be the direct result of translators who were attempting to remove all hint of ‘Jewishness’ from the Renewed Covenant (Testament) in order to support their particular theology. Other times it appears to be caused by ignorance of the Hebrew idioms or expressions. A classic example of the latter can be found in the story concerning Peter's denial of Yeshua on the night of the Covenant Meal (Last Supper). The preceding verse is a perfect example of another translation error that has caused many people to mislead:

Because we don't have the original Hebrew it was written in, we must do the best we can with the Greek. The Greek word for “crow” is: [2] {Greek 5455 fo-neh'-o From Greek 5456: to emit a sound (animal, human or instrumental); by implication to address in words or by name, also in imitation: - call (for), crow, cry.

{Greek 5456 fo-nay' Probably akin to Greek 5316 through the idea of disclosure; a tone (articulate, bestial or artificial); by implication an address (for any purpose), saying or language: - noise, sound, voice.}

Later that night the Temple Guards arrested Yeshua and took Him to the house of the High Priest. There Simon Peter was allowed admission to the courtyard in view of where they were questioning Yeshua:

Luke 22:56-62 *“And a certain servant girl, seeing him as he sat by the fire, looked intently at him and said, ‘This man was also with Him’. But he denied Him, saying, ‘Woman, I do not know Him’. And after a little while another saw him and said, ‘You also are of them’. But Peter said, ‘Man, I am not!’ Then after about an hour had passed, another confidently affirmed saying, ‘Surely this fellow also was with Him, for he is a Galilean’. But Peter said, ‘Man, I do not know what you are saying!’ And immediately, while he was still speaking, **the rooster (cock) crowed**. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, ‘**Before the rooster (cock) crows, you will deny Me three times**. Then Peter went out and wept bitterly”*.

This is one of the more famous stories in the Gospel accounts; repeated in both Matt. 26:34, Mark 14:30, and John 13:38 as well. However, there is one problem with the translation; chickens were not allowed in the Temple area of Jerusalem in those days. The reason for this prohibition was because chickens have the obnoxious habit of finding their way into places where they do not belong. Therefore, to assure that chickens could not gain access to the Temple and desecrate the Holy Place or, worse yet, the Holy of Holies, the Priests simply forbid everyone in Jerusalem from having chickens.

So, what about this famous passage of Scripture? It clearly says in the New King James Version, just quoted, that a ‘rooster’ crowed and it was heard in the courtyard of the palace of the High Priest.

The Jewish practice was the dividing of the night into three watches. Cockcrowing was also known as the period of time between midnight and three o'clock in the morning; the third watch of the night. This reflects the Roman custom of dividing the night into four watches: late, midnight, cockcrowing, and early.

The proper translation is really quite evident when the practices of that time are understood. The 'rooster' or 'cock' that Peter and Yeshua heard was not a bird at all, but a man. That man was a priest at the Temple. He was the one who had the responsibility of unlocking the Temple doors each and every morning before dawn. Every night this priest would lock the doors to the Temple and place the key in an opening in the floor of one of the Temple side rooms. Then he would place a flat stone over the opening and place his sleeping mat over the stone. He would literally sleep over the key to the Temple. In the morning this priest would arise at first light and retrieve the key. He would then proceed to unlock the doors to the Temple and cry out three statements in a loud voice: "All the cohanim (priests) prepare to sacrifice". "All the Leviim (Levites) to their stations". "All the Israelites come to worship". Then he would repeat these statements two more times.

The priest in question was known as the Temple Crier, and he was called 'alektor' in Greek, which can either be a 'cock' or 'man' (cock is Gever in Hebrew). 'Alektor' here was incorrectly assumed to be the 'cock' or 'rooster' instead of the Priestly Temple Crier. It was his obligation to rouse all the Priests, Levites, and worshippers and call them to begin their preparations for the morning sacrifice service. In the stillness of the early morning, sound carries well and since the palace of the High Priest was within a very short walk from the Temple, it was the Temple Crier's cry that was heard in the courtyard where Yeshua was being questioned, and not a cock/rooster. Josephus, Josephus was a Jewish historian who lived 37-100 AD. His Hebrew name was Joseph ben Mattathias, and he received an excellent education in Jerusalem. After leading a failed revolt of the Jewish forces against Rome, Josephus was captured and became a Roman citizen. He served several Flavian emperors and is most widely known by the name he then acquired, Flavius Josephus. He confirms this by stating that no chickens were allowed inside Jerusalem's walls at all as they flew into the Temple and defiled the Temple.

While this example does not change the meaning of the event (that Peter would deny Yeshua despite his bravado earlier in the evening), it does serve to illustrate how English reading Bible students as well as other languages have been shortchanged in their understanding of some of the events as they actually took place. Also, by knowing the true facts about the situation, one's attention becomes focused on the fact that Yeshua, the Son of Yahweh, was being questioned while standing within earshot of His Father's House (the Temple).

(Mar 22/16) Jerry Hennig