

“Opposition to Jesus Increases”

October 11, 2020

Luke 13:31 – 14:6

I. Introduction

Jesus was without sin or any evil intentions (1 Peter 2:22). He was compassionate and generous. He offered to everyone, from the highest authority to the lowest of all, mercy and grace through the forgiveness of sin as well as deliverance from eternal punishment in hell and everlasting joy in heaven. These things didn't have to be earned; they were a free gift to be received from God. But in spite of all this, Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, had been the target of murderers throughout His time on earth.

As you all know, the attempts on Jesus' life began soon after His birth. Matthew 2:16 records the first attempt on His life when Herod the Great, after being outwitted by the Magi, “gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under.” Some 30 years later, at the beginning of His ministry, John 2:13-21 recorded Jesus clearing the Temple of the merchants and moneychangers who were turning “my Father's house into a market!” The Jewish leaders were beside themselves and demanded to know “What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?” Knowing that they desired to kill Him, “Jesus, speaking of the temple His body, answered them, ‘Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.’”

Throughout Jesus' ministry, the Jewish religious leaders, the Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, scribes, chief priests, and high priests, all sought to kill Him because He violated and condemned their corrupt, self-righteous religion. Their hatred really erupted after Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath and claimed deity—turn to John 5:16-18. In today's Scripture, another would-be killer of Jesus, Herod Antipas, appears.

II. Herod's Threat

A. The Pharisees' Warning Knowing that the Pharisees hated Jesus and wanted Him dead, it is surprising that they warned Jesus about Herod's threat. Jesus was in Perea, a region located east of the

Jordan River across from Samaria and Judea. It, like Galilee, was ruled by Herod Antipas. The Pharisees may have been trying to get Jesus back to Judea where the religious leaders could watch Him and, hopefully, trap Him. If nothing else, they may have been trying to scare Him into being quiet and to stop Him from proclaiming His words of warning and condemnation.

B. Herod's Threat Herod Antipas was a son of Herod the Great. After Herod the Great's death, his kingdom was divided among three of his sons. Archelaus received Judea, Samaria, and Idumea; Antipas received Galilee and Perea; and Philip got the rest ([Luke 3:1](#)). Herod Antipas, the Herod referred to in the Gospels, ruled from 4 B.C. until A.D. 39. Like his father, Herod was hated by the Jews.

Luke doesn't give the reason for Herod's threat to kill Jesus, but there are several possibilities. Since Herod had killed Jesus' forerunner and fellow evangelist John the Baptist, he may have feared that Jesus would condemn him like John had. Having beheaded John the Baptist ([Mark 6:14-16](#)), Herod may have feared that Jesus would use His supernatural power to retaliate and take Herod's life. Herod may have been afraid about the large crowds that followed Jesus. If Jesus were to start a revolution, Herod's career and power would have been lost, so perhaps he was trying to head off any possible problem. Or like his father, Herod may have viewed Jesus as a possible rival to the throne itself. Regardless of the reason or reasons, Herod wanted to kill Jesus.

C. Jesus' Reply But Jesus was not intimidated by Herod's threat. He was doing the will of God the Father and, as [John 7:30](#) says, "His time had not yet come." So, Jesus replied to the Pharisees, "Go tell that fox, 'I will keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.'" Using some "holy sarcasm," Jesus compared Herod to a fox, an animal not held in high esteem by the Jews. Known for its cunning and sneakiness, the fox was a fitting symbol for Herod. Herod was not at all a noble, powerful lion but a mere fox; more of a nuisance than a threat. Just like a fox could not kill a man, Herod would not kill Jesus. Jesus' message to Herod said that He would continue to do what He had been doing day after day until His earthly ministry was completed. His goal

was to do the Father's will and lay down His life to complete the work of redemption—1 John 3:16 says, "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us."

Jesus then went on to say, "In any case, I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day--for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!" He would continue to move day by day toward the goal God, not Herod or the Pharisees, had determined for Him. It was necessary that the Lamb of God, God's sacrifice for the sins of the world, die in Jerusalem, the location of the Temple where all the other sacrifices were made. And, sadly, this center of Jewish worship was also the scene of the deaths of many of the prophets (2 Kings 21:16; 24:4; 2 Chronicles 24:20-22; Jeremiah 26:20-23).

III. Israel's Rejection

A. Compassion There was Herod's threat, there was also Israel's rejection. Compassion is part of God's essential goodness—1 John 4:8 says, "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love." Turn to Lamentations 3:22-23. As God incarnate, Jesus felt compassion. So, as He thought about Jerusalem and the prophets and the people that needed Him, He was filled with compassion and said, "O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings."

In many places Jesus denounced the Pharisees and scribes, e.g., in Matthew 23:27 He said, "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean." He also denounced the people of Israel as evil, adulterous, sinful, and unbelieving—in Matthew 12:39 He said, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign!" Although they were sinners, Jesus had compassion for them. Jeremiah reflected this compassion; turn to Jeremiah 13:16-17—these words could be Jesus' words.

B. Rejection But in spite of the compassion that God had for His chosen people, in spite of all the pleas of the prophets and even the Son of God who came to earth to gather His people to Him, they “were not willing!” The response to God’s compassion, to Jesus’ compassion was rejection.

C. The Consequence The consequence for rejecting God’s compassion is judgment: Jesus said, “Look, your house is left to you desolate.” Jesus was addressing all the people, not just the Pharisees. The people had been given many opportunities to repent and be saved, but they had refused to listen to Him. “House” refers not only to the Temple but also to Jerusalem and the nation as a whole. As [John 1:11](#) says, Jesus “came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.” And for that reason, there would be judgment; the city and the temple would be destroyed, and the people scattered.

But Jesus went on to say that there would be a future for Israel—a time of hope; a time of restoration. The time will come when their Messiah will return and be recognized and received by the people. They will say, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.”

IV. The Pharisees’ Hatred

A. A trap was set. Finally, we see the Pharisees’ hatred. Luke wrote that “One Sabbath ... Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee.” This particular meal was a gathering of many of the elite Pharisees and scribes of the area. Because they were always seeking honor and prestige, the Pharisees associated only with those they considered equal or who would elevate their status. They would never invite those whom they considered below them to a meal. But this time to set a trap, they invited Jesus, whom they hated, and a man who was a despised outcast.

Jesus was often invited to a home to share a meal. Sometimes He was invited because the host wanted to learn more of God’s truth. This time, however, Jesus was invited because He was being set up. The Pharisees were hoping to trick Him into breaking the particularly strict rabbinic laws regarding the Sabbath. Since Jesus was fully aware of what was in men’s hearts ([John 2:24-25](#)), He was never caught

off guard. In fact, instead of the host or guests judging Jesus, it was Jesus who passed judgment on them when they least expected it.

B. The devious plan The bait for the trap “**was a man suffering from dropsy.**” Dropsy, or edema, is a medical condition in which the body abnormally retains fluids. It is a symptom of kidney trouble, a heart ailment, or liver disease. The Pharisees viewed such a condition as God’s judgment for immorality; therefore, the man was judged as being unclean. Since no Pharisee would have been in the same room with such a defiled person, they obviously planned on using him for their devious plan. They knew that Jesus could not be in the presence of human suffering very long without doing something about it.

What they wanted was to get Jesus to violate their Sabbath restrictions by healing the man—this, by the way, is the 7th Sabbath healing recorded in the Gospels ([Luke 4:31-37](#); [38-39](#); [6:1-5](#); [Luke 13:10-17](#); [John 5:1-9](#); [9:1-34](#)). If Jesus ignored the ailing man, then He was without compassion; but if He healed him, then He would be violating their Sabbath regulations and they could accuse Him. In their twisted logic, this would confirm their belief that He was not from God because, in their minds, God would not break their Sabbath rules.

C. The Tables were turned. Jesus turned the tables on those who tried to trap him and instead Jesus trapped them. Before He healed the man, as they knew Jesus would, “**Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the law, ‘Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?’**” There is nothing in the Old Testament about ministering to a sick person on the Sabbath. The man-made Rabbinic regulations, however, prohibited anyone from treating a sick person on the Sabbath unless that person was in imminent danger of death.

Jesus’ question caused a dilemma. If they said it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath, they would be officially authorizing Jesus to heal the man and put them in agreement with Him. Then they couldn’t accuse Jesus of anything. On the other hand, saying that it was not lawful might keep Jesus from healing the man and they would be stuck again. So, they evaded the issue by saying nothing.

As they muttered in their beards, Jesus defied their Sabbath regulations—"So taking hold of the man, he healed him." Knowing that the Pharisee's house was not the safest place for him to be and that he would want to share the good news of his healing with his family and friends, Jesus healed the man and then "sent him on his way"

The Pharisees must have felt they had won, Jesus had violated their Sabbath restrictions. But before they could accuse Him, Jesus, knowing what they were thinking, asked a new question, "If one of you has a son or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull it out?" If they would save a son or an ox from drowning on the Sabbath, why should they object to Jesus healing a man drowning in his own fluids on the Sabbath? Their plan to trap Jesus had backfired. Humiliated by Jesus pointing out their hypocrisy, "They again had nothing to say."

V. Conclusion

Looking back at Herod's threat, the people's rejection, and the Pharisees' hatred—Jesus' heart must have been breaking the whole time He was here on earth. 2 Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord ... is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." Because of that Phil. 2:7-8 says, "He made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death-- even death on a cross!" John 1:10-11 adds, "He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him." How it must have torn Jesus' heart as He saw men, women, and children on their way to hell because they rejected Him. How about you, does your heart ache when you see those around you who are bound for hell because they reject Jesus as their Lord and Savior? John 3:36 says, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them."

We are going through a difficult time in our society—there is division, hatred, and violence all around. Some is aimed directly at Christians and Christianity. For example, in California it is legal to

have marches and for taverns to be open, but it is illegal to hold church meetings, in some counties even in individual houses. Jesus said in [John 15:20](#), “Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.” Notice, Jesus said “will” not “might.” We as a church or as individuals may reach a time when we will have to make a decision, I hope and pray that we will be able to answer with Peter and the apostles in [Acts 5:29](#), “We must obey God rather than men “ [Turn to 1 Peter 2:19-21](#). **Are you following Jesus’ steps?**