

Bible Study Guide: Week of 3-7-2022

1. Read through the passage below
2. Read my notes and commentary
3. Read the questions at the end and ponder or discuss with others

Pastor Andrew

Luke 13:31-35

³¹At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to [Jesus], “Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.” ³²He said to them, “Go and tell that fox for me, ‘Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. ³³Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.’ ³⁴Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁵See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

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The appearance of Pharisees likely makes the reader anticipate conflict, as Jesus repeatedly has clashed with the Pharisees throughout the gospels. On the one hand, they are the primary antagonists of the gospels; on the other hand, Jesus also dines with Pharisees elsewhere in the gospel (granted, those occasions were often full of tension as well—see, for example, Luke 7:36ff). These particular Pharisees, however, come to warn Jesus of a looming threat. We can read their words as an act of sincere concern for Jesus’ well-being; that is, a genuine warning about a genuine threat on Jesus’ life. We can also read their words to Jesus as a veiled attempt to get rid of Jesus by scaring him into abandoning the area. In any case, Jesus is not deterred by their words. Herod certainly could have posed a threat to Jesus—after all, he had put John the Baptist to death (Luke 3) already. Herod was also the son of Herod the Great who ordered a hit on all male children under age two in order to eliminate Jesus (Matthew 2), so this was clearly a ruthless dynasty. At the same time, though, Luke tells us that Herod’s primary reaction to news of Jesus’ ministry was one of fear because Herod thought Jesus was a reincarnation of John the Baptist (Luke 9) or one of excitement because Herod wanted to see Jesus do a miracle (Luke 23). These reactions hardly seem consistent with such a bold threat on Jesus’ life. In any case, the Pharisees try to get Jesus to leave, ostensibly to avoid Herod’s wrath.

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Jesus calls Herod a fox, a term referring to a devious or sneaky person. Herod is more a nuisance than a true threat to Jesus. Indeed, Herod and Pilate will team up with some of the religious authorities to put Jesus to death later in the gospel and Jesus seems to realize that this will be the case. He correctly predicts that he will die in Jerusalem and his cryptic note that he will complete or fulfill his work on the third day draws attention to the day of Resurrection that is to come after Jesus’ suffering and death. In Luke 11, Jesus “set his face” to go to Jerusalem. Here, he shows that his resolve is still strong and he will be faithful to God’s mission.

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Jesus laments over the city of Jerusalem and particularly over its inhabitants. In the same breath, he speaks against the city’s actions of killing prophets and stoning those sent to it, yet also expresses loving desire to gather the people of Jerusalem. The contrast between Jesus portrayed as a mother hen and Herod portrayed as a fox is striking. Jesus knows that after he is handed over and crucified the people will be left under the charge of Herod rather than under the wing of the mother hen. His assertion that they will not see him until they say “blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord” portends not only the events of the triumphal entry (Luke 19), but also the second coming of Jesus.

Discussion/Reflection Questions:

1. Do you think the Pharisees were genuinely warning Jesus of a danger or trying to intimidate him into leaving? Does it matter?
2. What do you think Jesus means by saying “Your house is left to you”?
3. How do you think Herod would have reacted to Jesus’ words?