

The Poser – Herod Antipas or Herod the Tetrarch CCC – 3/12/2023

Let me ask about a scenario that some of you may have experienced at some time in your life. Have you ever experienced a politician that you didn't like? Have you ever found someone in charge of a country or a state who you thought was just a criminal? Have you ever experienced somebody who was just downright immoral? Has there ever been a politician who has been utterly incompetent? Have you ever experienced a time when the government had a bad impact on you or your family or your finances?

Dealing with immoral, incompetent politicians seems to be the order of the day. And while there are some who are upstanding, moral, high character people, there are also some slimeballs. And it seems to be the nature of the game that in order to climb to the highest echelons of government you HAVE to compromise. So we wind up with some real gems in our highest offices. And if you really like the people who are in office now, just wait four years... yours is coming.

Now some of you will think I am talking about a particular person. I am not. But my guess is that if I say just four names, one will make your skin crawl. Biden. Trump. Obama. Bush. How many people got the willies there?

So, if you think YOU have it bad, it is just the case that horrible politicians have been the norm in nations around the world for all of history. How about some of these names: Pol Pot. Joseph Stalin. Mao Tse Tung, Adolf Hitler, Nero, ... Herod Antipas.

Jesus lived in a time when his political leader was as slimy and incompetent as they come. And watching him deal with such a horrific political figure will teach us much about how to live in our politically charged and divisive culture.

Herod Overview – First we need to do a survey of Herods. Because there are five Herod's mentioned in the Bible. Three of them kind of dominate the storyline.

- Herod the Great – Builder, Babies, Bad Guy
- Herod Antipas/Tetrarch – John the Baptist, Jesus, Jerk
- Herod Agrippa – Paul, Prison, Pawn
- (Note, the Herodias Slide will come up later)

OK, so back to Herod Antipas – Herod Antipas has a pretty bad lineage. But he is not condemned because of his dad. He earns that distinction himself.

Luke 3:19 *But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of his marriage to Herodias, his brother's wife, and all the other evil things he had done, 20 Herod added this to them all: He locked John up in prison.*

So why is John rebuking him publicly? Herod, **stealing Phillips wife, Herodias.** Herodias was married to Phillip. So she was Phillips niece and Herod Antipas' niece. Herod Antipas was married to Phasaelis, a political marriage to keep the peace with the neighboring Nabateans. After 20 years of marriage, Herod goes to Rome for a bit, and while there has a fling with Herodias. He comes back and divorces his first wife. He marries Herodias. And for those who are tracking, this makes Herodias his Neice, his sister in

law AND his wife! And he alienates the king of the Nabateans through this. So John rightly says: Herod is both evil and dumb. Can you imagine that? A politician who would leave his wife for a younger, prettier version? So John makes Herod mad and Herod throws him in prison.

While in prison, John starts having his spiritual doubts. Life is not going well. In fact, he wonders if he has the “Jesus is the messiah” thing right after all. I mean, this isn’t how it should play out. Jesus was supposed to be a king and upend the political system, right? Herod wasn’t supposed to WIN... he wasn’t supposed to imprison the good guys, right?

So let me pause and ask a contemporary question here. Do you ever feel like the bad guys are winning? Do you ever feel like culture is sliding down a slippery slope? Like morals are worse than ever. Porn is on the increase. Political leaders are ignoring the laws they made for political expedience. Our hard earned tax dollars are being spent frivolously while the REAL problems are being ignored? Our prisons are overcrowded while political criminals just seem to get rich and live in bigger palaces? Anybody feel that? John the Baptist did. It feels like the kingdom of God that just started is slipping away.

And I have heard Christians say it about the USA as well. It feels like our nation, founded by a whole lot of pastors who signed the declaration of independence and a whole lot of Christian basis for the thinking and structure and bill of rights... is just slipping away into decay. God? Where are you? Why are you letting this happen to our country?

Friends, we need to learn this important lesson. God’s means of accomplishing his kingdom are not through political power. His kingdom is not top down. His plan is not to put Christians in power and force our morality on a nation through better laws. Our hope is not in our country. Our hope is in Jesus.

Can I get really raw here? I am concerned about who is discipling you. Because some of you are Don Lemon disciples – you listen to or watch him five hours a day. Some are Tucker Carlson disciples. Some are Ben Shapiro Disciples. Some are Poppy Harlowe disciples. You are allowing your world view to be driven by a political view. Is there anybody that you allow more hours of influence in your life than Jesus? Just add up your hours watching your favorite show or listening to your favorite podcast. How does that compare to your hours in scripture or prayer of church?

Who do you want molding your thoughts? Jesus and his followers or highly polarized politicians? It is important to LIVE a Biblical worldview and fit our political enterprise inside our Biblical priority. Jesus first, Jesus only.

Don’t get me wrong. I love our country. I love when Christians vote, when we influence for righteousness, when we run for office and bring the light of Jesus with us. We NEED that. But we cannot place our hope in political institutions that are by their very nature corrupt and fallen. Whenever Christians get in power and try to enforce our will through coercion, it goes badly for culture and the church. If we think we will win through political strength, we are making a huge error. The same one John the Baptist was making.

So John sent messengers to Jesus: ummmm? Jesus? Were we just wrong about this the whole time? Is the kingdom really coming?

7:21-23, ²¹ *At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind.* ²² *So he replied to the messengers, “Go back and report to John what you*

have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy^[a] are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. ²³ Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me."

Notice Jesus' answer. The evidence of the kingdom is not that Christians are winning in politics, or even not being imprisoned. The evidence is that Isaiah's prophecy is coming true! Blind receive sight! Lame walk! Leprosy cured! Deaf hear! Dead are raised! Good news for the poor! Jesus is telling the messengers to note that THIS is the kingdom and THIS is happening. As a church, we do not quantify if the kingdom has come through by how our State or National politics is rolling, but: do we see lives being changed, marriages put together, anxiety give way to peace, miracle power poured out, people delivered from darkness, new followers of Jesus. This is the evidence of kingdom victory! John would instantly recognize this when his messengers came back. The kingdom is never the power of force, it is the power of miraculous individual transformation.

7:24-27²⁴ *After John's messengers left, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind?"²⁵ If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear expensive clothes and indulge in luxury are in palaces. ²⁶ But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ²⁷ This is the one about whom it is written:*

"I will send my messenger ahead of you who will prepare your way before you."^[b]

v. 24 – A reed was the **symbol for Herod**. He put it on the back side of his coins because no images were acceptable to the Jews. But the reed was him. Fine clothes can mean a rich guy or literally "a softie". It was not a masculine image, it was someone who didn't have to work, didn't have callouses, and was just surrounded by 'soft things.' Herod was a softie in a palace. And nobody wants to see him.



Contrast with John the Baptist – tough, smart, confrontational, Camel's hair – but people flock to see him. You want to go and see him because he has something substantive to say! He is a prophet. Your life is not changed by softies in palaces, nope. It is changed by truth speakers in camel's hair by rivers. And you think he's good, wait til you encounter the one he is pointing to!

And it wasn't just common people who followed John and Jesus. It was members of Herod's own household! Five weeks ago, when we were studying the women disciples, we noted this passage.

8:3, 3 *Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means*

Ha! Even people who lived with Herod and depended on him for their daily life followed Jesus and used Herod's money to support Jesus! That's the kingdom of God! And eventually, all of the word about Jesus get's to Herod's ears. Maybe through Joanna. Maybe through heralds or messengers from Herod.

9:7-9, 7 *Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was going on. And he was perplexed because some were saying that John had been raised from the dead, 8 others that Elijah had appeared, and still others*

that one of the prophets of long ago had come back to life. 9 But Herod said, "I beheaded John. Who, then, is this I hear such things about?" And he tried to see him.

Rumors are all over the place about Jesus. Herod is in his fine palace and hearing that possibly the prophecies about Elijah are coming true. Or that John was back. But Herod was like "I saw the head of



John B. on a platter. I know that is not right. He has to be something special and he is right here in my back yard. **MAP – Tiberius, Capernaum and Galilee. 8.2 miles. Magdala, Bethsaida, Cana, Nazareth.** At least intrigued by Jesus... Maybe he just wanted to witness a miracle. Maybe he heard about the loaves and fishes... or the healings... or the demons... or the walking on water. But he did hear and he tried to see him! But by chapter 13, the tide had turned.

Luke 13:31-33,

³¹ At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you."

³² He replied, "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.' ³³ In any case, I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem

Go tell that FOX! Today, we usually have one adjective that describes a fox. What is it? Yeah. Sly. In the ancient world, they didn't think "sly". A fox came to eat the kill after the lion. Acted like he was 'all that'. A fox was not sly, but a poser, a fake. Herod Antipas was not a lion. That was Caesar... or maybe even his Dad – Herod the Builder. But Antipas? He didn't earn a thing. He was just born into the right family. He is a softie in a palace, a poser, a phony. And Jesus had no problem calling that out!

Did you notice that when it comes to politics, Jesus and John both spoke prophetically to power. But they did not try to use the world's brand of power to accomplish kingdom goals. Jesus said it direct. "I will keep on driving out demons and healing people and I WILL reach my goal." Nothing Herod could do to stop it. And to be honest, nothing he SHOULD do to stop it. It is all good stuff. Contrast his inherited power with Jesus kingdom power of healing and Demon casting – supernatural power being manifest for the express purpose of lifting up the poor, broken, trapped, enslaved and disenfranchised.

THIS is the kingdom of God. It is the express power of God given out to those who are most vulnerable. It is the poor, the cripple, the blind and the lame finding riches and healing and joy! It is heaven coming to earth. And friends, when we ask where to expend our credits, our influence and the power God has given us, it is not power OVER the systems, it is power UNDER the least of these. This! THIS is the kingdom of God.

Can I say that this is why the kingdom of God has staying power! If you lived in Jesus day and someone asked: which will last longer – the Herods or this rag tag group of fisherman? You would be on the Herods. If you were asked: which will have the most worldwide influence centuries from now – the Romans, or team Jesus, you would bet on the Romans. But, power OVER always fades, transformation power lasts forever!

OK, last Herod passage, it's the climax... are you ready?

23:7-12 ⁷ When he (Pilate) learned that Jesus was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time.

⁸ When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform a sign of some sort. ⁹ He plied him with many questions, but Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰ The chief priests and the teachers of the law were standing there, vehemently accusing him. ¹¹ Then Herod and his soldiers ridiculed and mocked him. Dressing him in an elegant robe, they sent him back to Pilate. ¹² That day Herod and Pilate became friends—before this they had been enemies.

Do you remember the scene from Jim Carey's grinch movie where the grinch is just hopping and skipping because he was just named the holiday cheermeister? This is how I picture Herod when Jesus comes to see him. He was greatly pleased! He wanted a magic trick. He wanted a healing... an exorcism... something cool that he could tell his friends about over dinner. But Jesus wouldn't dance for him...so he joined the mockers.

If Jesus won't be my entertainment toy, then I will ridicule and mock him. Oh, and those softie elegant clothes I have had, I'll put those on Jesus to mock him some more, this so-called King of the Jews. And weirdest thing... Pilate sent Jesus to Herod in order to pawn off the need to cast judgment. But Herod thought it was a favor... because he had always wanted to see Jesus. And because of THAT, they became friends.

Music Begins Here

But while Herod was the palace dwelling, luxury-filled consumer, hoping for the next piece of dramatic entertainment, he was missing the most valuable person, thing, experience in his lifetime – or in world history.

Right in front of him is the very wisdom of God and he does not seek the answer to a single question. He is face to face with the light of the world. He is interviewing the very WORD of God. And he just misses his most amazing golden opportunity of his life. Right there...

Friends. FRIENDS! We live in the most blessed nation in the history of the world. The strongest military, the best economy, the most balanced set of powers, the greatest constitution. I believe that. But right in front of us is JESUS> the one who is the king of kings and the king of the universe! Don't ever confuse a really cool thing for the God of the universe. Herod wanted to use Jesus for a days worth of entertainment when he should have left everything to follow him. How about you? Don't miss Jesus because you live in a luxurious country. Don't miss Jesus because of watching too much you tube. Don't miss Jesus because you make sports a priority. And don't miss Jesus for political power. Jesus is first and forever.

So lets stand and acknowledge his grace and power and wisdom! When we speak, we do not speak Republican, we do not speak Democrat, we speak... Jesus! As we worship, we do not worship country or power, we worship... Jesus. Jesus in our hearts. Jesus in our workplace. Jesus in our nation. We speak... Jesus...

Song – We speak Jesus

