

THE SIX TRIALS OF CHRIST

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Chapter 11

THE TRIAL BEFORE HEROD

Only Dr. Luke records the trial before Herod (Luke 23:6-12). This trial would add nothing to the theme of Matthew, Mark or John, but it does to the theme of Luke. The Man JESUS CHRIST went through this experience, and He came out vindicated of any wrong. Pilate used this in his argument for CHRIST's release (Luke 23:15). This trial is referred to also in Acts 4:27.

In order to understand the full significance of the events that transpire as CHRIST appears before Herod, we must understand something of the background behind this man's life.

There was a family of Herods, and it is essential to keep the various ones in mind in order to understand the various events. Thus the name "Herod" was not a personal name, but the family or surname.

There is one major Herod in each generation.

Herod the Great sought to kill the infant JESUS by putting all babies to death in the area of Bethlehem.

Herod Antipas was the one responsible for killing John the Baptist and it is before this Herod that CHRIST appears now for trial.

Herod Agrippa I killed James the brother of John, and would have killed Peter also, but Peter was miraculously delivered from prison.

Herod Agrippa II was the king before whom Paul appeared, and it was this man that said: "**Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.**"

Herod Antipas is the major Herod of Scripture. That is to say, more is said about him and he is found involved in more incidents than any other Herod. These incidents give us an insight into what is happening at the trial and why. Let us consider them, and then we will look at the trial itself.

LUKE 13:31-33

:31 -- **"The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee"** (Literally, "for Herod wills to kill thee").

Can you imagine the Pharisees being interested in saving the life of JESUS CHRIST? Not at all. What they were interested in is terrifying JESUS from ministering in Galilee under Herod's jurisdiction and so have Him come into Judea and to Jerusalem where their authority could exercise more control over Him. But the Lord JESUS CHRIST does not terrify.

:32 -- **"And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, behold, I cast out devils (demons), and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected."**

Since you are the message bearers to Me from him, go and return a message. I am working today and tomorrow, and then I am perfected. That is it. No man is going to do anything to Me before My time has come.

CHRIST accommodates the message bearers with a message to return. It may be that the Pharisees had picked up a bit of gossip from Herod's courtiers of what Herod expressed once to them: **"And king Herod heard of him; (for his name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him"** (Mark 6:14). They capitalize upon it for their own ends.

JESUS calls Herod **"that fox"** and it was a perfect description of his character. Just because He used such an epithet does not mean that we have this right. We are still **"not to speak ill of the ruler of thy people."** Here is a case when the prophet is not sparing the king in denouncing his actions. Herod was plotting snares as a fox, while CHRIST was continuing to work His good works. He can plot all He wants, it will do him no good.

"To day and to morrow" seems to indicate a specific period of time which is very definite and it will neither be lengthened nor shortened by anyone. In the context it can neither mean literal days nor stand for years. It is used as a figure of speech for a period of definite duration.

"I am perfected." The next verse parallels this verse and shows that CHRIST will be perfected through suffering and death that He will encounter in Jerusalem. This word is the same as that used in Hebrews 2:10 and 5:9.

". . . to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering" (2:10).

"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect . . ." (5:9).

:33 -- "Nevertheless I must walk to day, and to morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem."

It seems that this verse is addressed not to Herod so much as it is to the Pharisees. Jerusalem has the monopoly of killing the prophets, and the city will not be deprived of its right to kill the PROPHET. When I die, it will be Jerusalem, but I am not there yet, and I have the time until I arrive.

With the mention of Jerusalem as the executioner of the prophets, His heart breaks forth into what will be a prelude to the tears of Palm Sunday. Here it is anticipation; there it will be realization.

MARK 6:14-29

Here we have the events that led up to Herod Antipas killing John the Baptist. The details are important to understand in order to understand the trial of CHRIST now before Herod.

:17 -- "For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her."

:18 -- "For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife."

:19 -- "Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him, but she could not."

Behind a man often stands a woman either for good or for ill. In this case, as with Ahab (Jezebel), it was for ill.

Herod Antipas was educated at Rome with Archelaus and Philip, his half-brother, son of Mariamne, daughter of Simeon. It was here that he acquired the tastes and the vices of the Romans. Herod Antipas was first married to the daughter of Aretas, the Arabian king of Petra. But while visiting in Rome with his half-brother, Philip, he fell in love with Philip's wife, Herodias, who was also niece to both. She left Philip and married Herod Antipas on the condition that Antipas would get rid of his first wife. Antipas' first wife learned of this and fled back to her Father.

Here, then, was a ruler of the Jews shamelessly defying the Jewish laws, first by marrying his niece, and secondly by marrying his brother's wife. This is the evil relationship that John the Baptist fearlessly denounced: **"It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife."** For this it eventually cost him his life. Luke adds another detail: **"But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison"** (Luke 3:19-20).

Herodias would have gotten rid of John the Baptist right now, but she couldn't get Herod to move any further than to put John in prison. She had the will; Herod had the power.

:20 -- "For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and

observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly."

The attitude of Ahab toward Elijah is remarkably similar. It was Jezebel, not Ahab, who plotted Elijah's death (I Kings 19:2). John was both just and holy. He was righteous in all his relations to his fellow men, and holy in all his relations to GOD.

Now there seems to be much stated here. It seems that Herodias felt Herod might "get religion" from this Baptist as he had began to change certain things about his life and was hearing this John gladly. Now she knew that if he got "converted" she would go, for the Baptist said it is unlawful for Herod to have her. But she could not go back to her first husband, therefore an evil mind only plots more evil. Herod had commenced to do many things in response to John's preaching to him. It only remained for him to do the one major thing and Herodias would be gone. She felt forced to act.

:21 -- **"And when a convenient day was come,"** that is, when a convenient day had come for Herodias to act and secure what she wanted, **"that Herod on his birthday made a supper for his Lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee."**

Everybody that was anybody was there.

:22 -- **"And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in,"** (who was Salome according to Josephus) **"and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee."**

What a contrast. Here was a man who was listening to John preach one day and throwing off all restraint the next. Here is wine, women and song, and it leads to the silencing of a man of righteousness. You cannot go sin's way without reaping sin's wages.

:23 -- **"And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom."**

What a promise of a fool. He has fallen into the trap set by his wife, and soon it will spring shut.

:24 -- **"And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist."**

She was totally unprepared for knowing what to request, but her mother wasn't. Yet when her mother spoke, she entered right in with the request. She was one with her mother in wickedness else she would not have danced this kind of dance in the first place.

:25 -- **"And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by** (Literally, "*as soon as possible*," or "*at once*.") **in a charger the head of John the Baptist."**

She returns immediately while the guests are still present and before the spell of her dancing has passed, and makes her request to be carried out at once.

:26 -- **"And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him he would not reject her."**

This brought him back to reality, and grim reality it was. He felt he could not slight her by treating the oath and promise he had made as a joke. Had she waited until another day, he might have done so.

:27 -- **"And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison,"**

:28 -- **"And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother."**

The deed was done, but the consequences linger on. Mark is telling us this entire episode because when Herod hears about JESUS, his conscience is so sensitive that **"he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him"** (Mark 6:14). His murdering of John the Baptist haunted him, and because he heard JESUS was also righteous, he felt this was John risen from the dead now performing miracles. This is startling. Herod was Idumean by descent through his Father, and Samaritan through his mother, yet by religion was a circumcised Jew and a Sadducee. But Sadducees do not believe in resurrection (Acts 23:8). In reality, they try to convince themselves there is no resurrection when they know better. Every once in a while their true feelings come to the surface under extreme pressure: **"And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"** (Revelation 6:15-17).

But how does all this relate to CHRIST and His appearance before Herod now? Herod knew that he had done wrong in regard to murdering John the Baptist, and so did everyone else. Soon after this event, the Father of Herod's first wife, King Aretas, invaded the country to avenge his daughter's wrong, and Herod's forces were totally defeated. The populous considered this as divine punishment for what he had done concerning John the Baptist.

Herod's own mind too was haunted with remorse for this action, and, in order to deaden his piercing conscience, he began to fill his court with constant activity. He had singers, dancers, jugglers, circuses -- anything now was welcomed at Tiberius. His constant pursuit was for pleasure and something new with which to amuse himself.

Once the very mention of the name of JESUS and the hearing of his deeds would have filled Herod's heart and soul with terror and trembling, but that time is passed. Now

when he saw JESUS, (whether he was coming in chains or not made no difference) **"he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him"** (Luke 23:8). CHRIST had acquired great fame as a miracle worker, and perhaps he would display His skill before Herod. this would have given great satisfaction to him, and he might out-perform any of the magic Herod had previously seen. Certainly the Lord ought to consider it an honor to display his abilities before the ruler al all the others that had come to his court. As far as Herod was concerned, this was going to make this day, and his visit to Jerusalem, complete. How wonderful it was to have the opportunity to see JESUS since He had never honored Tiberias, where Herod resided, with a personal visit.

Herod had become like a fat blob of protoplasm, like a spineless jellyfish, without character or stamina. All that entered his mind was his own pleasure. He never allowed it to cross his conscience once that he was trying a man, and that righteousness and justice were at stake. His conscience had been so seared that these things were no longer issues of importance. All that mattered was Herod's enjoyment and pleasure.

No wonder CHRIST warned His disciples to beware of the leaven of Herod (Mark 8:15). Herod was mad after pleasures. All that Paul states will come in the last days of the church age, and is in truth, here today, is true of Herod.

"This now also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (II Timothy 31-5).

This is the leaven of Herod and "from such turn away," child of GOD, or it will corrupt your character likewise.

CHRIST is now standing before Herod in the ancient palace of the Maccabees where Herod resided when he was in Jerusalem. Herod had never before seen the face of JESUS, though most of the Lord's life and ministry was in Herod's territory of Galilee, nor had he heard a word from the Saviour's lips. But **"he had heard many things of him,"** perhaps from his steward Chuza, whose wife Joanna was one of our Lord's disciples (Luke 8:3).

Herod's highest hopes were "to have seen some miracle done by him." CHRIST was to Herod just as another juggler or magician that came to his court. His only interest was that which satisfied the flesh. He was looking for the pleasure of a moment.

To this CHRIST did not respond. He had not come to be a Miracle-worker. He said: **"An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas"** (Matthew 12:39). The sign He will give Herod, and the world, will be His resurrection. This is His sign; this is His

vindication for His claims.

There are men like this in every age who desire to see and hear GOD's servant, not to be changed in life, but to be entertained and to reveal their broadmindedness. They will marvel at the Lord's power and even seek to hear what He has to say, but that is as far as they will ever go. They are a part of this world system. They love it, and they are not about to change. They will die in it, and will die in their sins.

Woe be to the man of GOD that will do anything to satisfy their flesh. We are only to reason with them in reference to righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come (Acts 24:25).

LUKE 23:9

-- **"Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing."**

Concerning the subject of Herod's questions, Scripture is completely silent. Many a man would have considered this the opportunity of a life time, and would have used it to give forth the truths of GOD. But the Lord's ways are not our ways, and His thoughts are not our thoughts (Isaiah 55:8). He does not cast pearls before swine.

But why did the Lord answer not even one word? Herod had heard the truth over and over again from John the Baptist. Herod's need was not more knowledge, but to act upon what he already knew. Until he did this, no more truth would be given him.

Kings and rulers came to Solomon to hear his wisdom. Yet a greater than Solomon was present, and by the very fact that He was greater, He spoke not a word. Here in this instance the Lord's silence hurts far worse than speaking could have. I feel we are thoroughly justified to complete the picture.

CHRIST is standing before Herod and looking straight at the murderer of John the Baptist. The Lord's eyes were piercing into the very innermost secrets of Herod's heart.

There was another voice that was speaking still to Herod. Long had Herod sought to put out of his consciousness the voice of John the Baptist, but **"he being dead yet speaketh."** CHRIST was silent to allow his voice to be heard.

Herod becomes all the more uncomfortable because CHRIST would not break His silence. The air is electrified with tension. Again the king is on trial, and the PRISONER is the JUDGE. Now the CREATOR stands before the creature who sits in sinful splendor, but there is another day and another place when the Lord will sit upon a great white throne, and it will be in truth a throne of righteousness and purity. Before Him the dead, small and great, will stand. There the books will be opened, and every man will be judged according to the atrocities that he has done against the truth, which are recorded in the books. Then they will be cast into the lake of fire for ever and ever (Revelation 20:11-15).

LUKE 23:10

-- "And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him."

These bitter enemies of our Lord had seated themselves to watch the show, but when it failed to materialize they stood to their feet vehemently accusing Him. Their last accusation before Pilate had been sedition, and this charge was now brought before Herod. The acts of sedition had supposedly taken place in Herod's province.

Herod finally has had enough.

LUKE 23:11

-- "And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate."

Here is Herod's verdict. It is acted out by him and his bodyguard that had accompanied him to Jerusalem. Herod indicates by this that he regards JESUS as a foolish and contemptible person. He is to be mocked and ridiculed, not to be feared.

So calloused of conscience, Herod makes as if CHRIST's silence manifested His stupidity, and that the reason why he did no miracle was because He was powerless. It is either this or fall down before the Lord JESUS and confess his sins, but Herod is not about to do this. He has traveled the road of sin too far to retreat now. He had set his course and hardened his heart before, and now he was reaping the consequences of that hardened heart.

CHRIST would not put on a show for them, so they will make their own. Herod with his bodyguard set Him at nought, i.e., they treated Him with contempt and ridicule. In their mocking, CHRIST is arrayed "**in a gorgeous robe.**" This is significant and deserves our attention.

The expression means "bright" and it signifies a glistening white robe. This adjective comes from the verb "to shine." Another related word signifies a "torch," "lamp." The same word used here is used in Acts 10:30 and Revelation 15:6 of the glistening garments of angels.

Roman princes wore purple robes, and this is why the Roman soldiers put on CHRIST a purple robe when they mocked Him as KING. The Jewish kings, however, wore a white robe, which was often rendered shining or gorgeous by interweaving silver in the cloth. Josephus tells us that the robe which Agrippa wore was so bright with silver that when the sun shone on it, it so dazzled the eyes that it was difficult to look on it.

Now one does not have a robe around like this just anywhere. How was it that one was available here in Jerusalem? Josephus tells us that Herod Antipas' full brother, Archelaus, after mourning seven days at his Father's funeral feast, i.e., of Herod the Great, "put on a white garment and went up to the temple" (Wars, II, i.i). There the people were want to make him king, but he wanted, from the Roman's first, the complete title to the kingdom. He later received it, and was reigning in Judea when

Joseph returned with Mary and JESUS from Egypt, and it is for this reason that Joseph returns to Galilee (Matthew 2:22).

When the Jews complained to Caesar that they would rather be subject to Roman governors, Caesar divided Herod the Great's kingdom into two parts, giving "the one half of Herod's kingdom to Archelaus, by the name of Ethnarch, and promised to make him king also afterwards, if he rendered himself worthy of that dignity; but as to the other half, he divided it into two tetrarchies, and gave them to two other sons of Herod, the one of them Philip, and the other to that of Antipas who contested the kingdom with Archelaus" (II, vi, 3). Archelaus did anything but render himself worthy of this dignity, and was finally banished to Gaul. Archelaus' ethnarchy is reduced into a Roman province, and Pilate was sent as procurator.

Through the misrule of Archelaus, the Herod family loses half of their territory, and this may be the personal problem between Herod and Pilate spoken about in Luke 23:12. Herod Antipas wanted the territory awarded to Pilate. He had contested it even when it was given to his brother. But now, through the politeness of Pilate sending JESUS to Herod this day because JESUS belonged to Herod's territory, that enmity of long standing was cleared up. They became friends. Luke gives us both the day and the occasion of it.

The white robe -- the gorgeous robe -- was then that worn by Archelaus and had been left in Jerusalem where he lived. Someone thought about it -- perhaps even Herod himself -- and placed it on JESUS to ridicule His claim to be a KING. Herod thought such a claim to be absurd. At this gesture Herod and those present must have doubled over with laughter. And it is while the assembly is in such a state that Herod orders JESUS sent back to Pilate.

But we cannot so leave this white robe. This is the only robe Luke mentions in connection with CHRIST, and if he mentions any, it has to be the white one. The reason is that the Gospel of Luke presents CHRIST as the Man, the Perfect Man. He is sinless and spotless. He is intrinsically white.

If the Father will cloth the sinner who has returned to Him with the best robe (Luke 15:22), how much more will He so cloth the SON. When CHRIST was transfigured before the three disciples, Luke tells us "**the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering**" (Luke 9:29). This word glistering means "*to send forth lightning, to lighten; to flash out like lightning, to shine, be radiant*" (Thayer). The same word is used of the glittering of armor in Nahum 3:3 and Ezekiel 1:7. This was our Lord's raiment, and the disciples "saw his glory" (Luke 9:32). The Lord is now "**crowned with glory and honor**" (Hebrews 2:9), and someday "**He shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels**" (Luke 9:26).

When David brought the ark of the covenant into the Holy City he was "**clothed with a robe of fine linen**" and "**David also had upon him an ephod of linen**" (I Samuel 15:27). The white linen all through Scripture speaks of purity and righteousness (Ezekiel 9:3). It is thus used in the tabernacle, and in the book of Revelation where the bride is "**arrayed in fine linen, clean and white**" and where the armies in Heaven

which follow the Lord are "upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean" (Revelation 19:8, 14).

When Eliakim is given the government of David, he is seen to wear the robe of that government: **"And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah: And I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a Father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open"** (Isaiah 22:20-22). Here is a picture of the true MESSIAH whom GOD will make as **"a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his Father's house. And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his Father's house"** (22:23-24). But the nail that was there previously -- the antichrist -- shall be removed completely out of his place (22:25).

Here is the picture, and in the Gospel we have a pre-picture of the future fulfillment. Archelaus was unrighteous and was removed, and the robe of the house of David and of its glory was laid upon the Lord JESUS CHRIST. Archelaus was not the nail but was an imposter.

Little did these unbelievers, acting in mockery and ridicule, realize the significance of their actions. But the robe was His to wear and someday He will wear it in His glory.

But not only will the Lord be wearing that white robe someday, also we have the privilege of being clothed in His righteousness and whiteness.

"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness . . ." (Isaiah 61:10).

That robe which Adam lost, we gain in CHRIST. We are to put on the Lord JESUS CHRIST (Romans 13:14), and be clothed with humility (I Peter 5:5). We are to be continually transfigured even as CHRIST was (Romans 12:2).

JESUS is sent back to Pilate wearing this white royal robe as He returns, for this is the meaning of the passage: **". . . and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate."** CHRIST is wearing this robe through the streets of Jerusalem, but He is wearing it bound and led as a prisoner of men. How different it will be when He comes again.

His wearing it was intended to be a parody of His royalty, but at the very same time it was an indirect declaration of His innocence. Though the Lord had spent most of His earthly life and public ministry in the territory of Galilee, yet the ruler of Galilee had nothing to lay to His charge.

He was **"without blemish, and without spot."**

~ end of chapter 11 ~