

Football referees are unbiased... right? ... They would **never** be influenced by fans or football players - right? ... (Do we have any college football fans here today who would **agree** with that...? Duck fans...? Beaver fans...? What do you say...? Are football referees (in this day of instant replay challenges) **unbiased**...? Or are they influenced by fans... coaches... and players...?

I wish that I had data that was more recent (since the game today relies so heavily on reviews on instant replay)... but I have watched enough PAC-12 games since then to suspect nothing has changed. (You see...) according to a 2016 study... football refs are **often** swayed by their surroundings. Michael Lopez... a researcher and statistician at Skidmore College in New York... led a study that referees are much more likely to make calls that favor the team whose coaches and players are on the sideline closest to the potential penalty.

Lopez analyzed five years of NFL games... reviewing 1,400 penalty calls where the action happened close to one team's sideline or the other. One of the files he examined was whether referees called a late hit on a player. If one player is tackling another, you're allowed to do it while the opposing player is within bounds but not if he's out of bounds. But the bodies are usually flying into one another near a sideline. It's what's called a bang-bang play: it all happens so quickly and the refs have to make a judgment call.

Lopez measured how often these kinds of judgment calls go in favor of the team whose coaches are on the sideline closest to where the potential penalty is taking place. He found referees are much more likely to make

calls that comply with what people nearest to them are demanding. In short... it seems that intimidation works. ... Pressure the refs... get in their face... and they are likely to cave into the social pressure.

Stop for just a moment and consider how much is at stake – when it comes to professional (and college) football. There is so much **betting** that goes on every Saturday and Sunday. Commercials incessantly advertise on television broadcasts... for viewers of the game to call in their bets... to large betting houses. ... So... thousands and thousands of dollars are on the line with every game-influencing call. The call that is made will effect whether or not betting fans will lose a week's paycheck... or other things that they can ill-afford to lose... such as their homes. ... [P A U S E] ...

Now stop and consider *this*. Losing your home or a lot of money from betting on the outcome of a game... is **horrible!** But here is something even worse! How much MORE is lost when intimidating social pressure makes you and I decide *spiritual matters in our life*. (One involves *temporal* loss. But the second one involves *eternal* rewards and consequences. Wrong spiritual decisions go on and on FOREVER!)

Getting knocked away from your spiritual conviction – by an overwhelming sense of threat or nerve-wracking coercion from intimidating family or friends ... may have **more dire** results - than a bad call of a football referee – who was influenced by fans... coaches... and nearby players.

... [P A U S E] ...

My prayer is that every listener (today) will be emboldened to stand on your Biblical convictions ... in spite of any intimidating social pressure that gets

thrown our way. (And we are seeing an increasing amount here in America today... aren't we?)

The event that is recorded in our passage in Luke today... took place when Jesus was in Perea (on the other side of the Jordan River from Jerusalem)... while Jesus journeyed to *the Holy City*. ... Perea was a region that was ruled by Herod Antipas.

Herod Antipas! ... THAT is a name of infamy. ... Herod had first **imprisoned** and then **murdered** John the Baptist. ... There is no doubt that he had his spies everywhere... reporting on all of Jesus' activities. ... If Herod had been afraid of John... (and he was)... he must have been terrified of this new "prophet" (Jesus)... who was now in his territory.

John had performed no miracles... but all of Israel (and surrounding areas) were curious and enthusiastic over the countless signs... wonders... and mighty miracles that Jesus was performing. ... It would be good policy to leave Him well enough alone. ... Sure... he wanted to see (for himself) some of the amazing things that Jesus reportedly had done. ... But Herod was MORE interested in having Jesus leave his area of rule... **as quick as possible** – before any disturbances occurred that would bring anger from Rome.

In the end... Herod decided to take a cowardly action. He called for some of the Pharisees who Herod knew wanted Jesus in Jerusalem (where they could arrest Him much easier.) Together the Pharisees and Herod (who were normally enemies) tried to frighten Jesus away. "*Tell Him I'm going to kill Him,*" he told the Pharisees. ... That was just what they wanted to hear... and they took great relish (I'm sure) in telling Jesus. Plenty of proof

existed that Herod was quite capable of killing Jesus. After all... hadn't he already murdered John...?

If the Lord's foes thought that they could scare Jesus away... they were very much mistaken. Herod? Murder Jesus? Frighten the Lord of glory? With countless angels encamped around Him? Jesus was not afraid of Herod... Annas... Caiaphas... Pilate... or anyone else. ... So Jesus sent a message back to Herod - **THROUGH** these natural enemies of this Roman authority.

So... here (now) is why I have said all these things about Herod Antipas and the Pharisees who came to warn Jesus. It is all deduced from the first three verses of our passage for today... From them... I will show you what I have been saying.

Luke 13:31-33

Awww! Wasn't that friendly and considerate of these Pharisees to issue this warning...? ... And notice how rude Jesus is by not thanking them for their kindness. (He doesn't seem to appreciate their effort at all.) ... But on the other hand... WHY would the pharisees want to protect Jesus? All through Luke's gospel... they have snubbed Him... sneered at Him... and slandered Him.

No. I believe that they wanted to scare Jesus into leaving Perea. ... Scaring Him into going on His way to Jerusalem served their purpose better. **There** they had much more control. They would have realized that in Judea their influence was far more potent than anywhere else.

I hinted at this earlier... but now I will say it more direct. Verse 32 shows how Jesus sent His message to Herod BY WAY OF these pharisees. Herod represented Rome – their hated oppressor! Herod and the pharisees opposed each other. Never-the-less they shared a common enemy... and for now... they worked as friends.

Both wanted Jesus to go to Judea. ... Herod... perhaps because he was afraid that the Jesus movement might cause political trouble for him. ... Perhaps **also** because Jesus reminded Herod too much of John the Baptist... and Jesus' presence in Perea bothered Herod's conscience. ... As for the pharisees... they wanted Jesus in Judea – where they could trap Him easier.

(And) Jesus must have known that they worked together. Why else would Jesus send a message to Herod through these pharisees...? Jesus addressed the matter as if it was a plot that was initiated by Herod.

Jesus was not fooled. He was the gentle Lamb of God... but even a lamb is suspicious of wolves when they feign concern for its safety. ... Jesus knew there was collusion between His enemies. Herod had already been politically damaged by his murder of John the Baptist... and he did not want another such blotch on his record. ... So he used the Pharisees to pass on the threat to Jesus... hoping that Jesus would be frightened into going south to Judea. And the Pharisees liked Herod's little ploy.

Jesus told the Pharisees: "*Go and tell that fox*"... ... Why did he call Herod a fox? ... "*Fox*" was common jargon in Hebrew for a person with base cunning and was used to designate someone as insignificant and worthless. It was an expression of utter contempt. In rural America... foxes

will sneak into barns and chicken coops at night to take the small farm animals. ... Consequently... they're seen as cowardly pests that prey upon the defenseless.

Significantly... Herod is the only individual whom Jesus is recorded as treating with contempt. Later when Jesus stood before Herod... the Master would say nothing to him at all... again showing contempt for him. As Leon Morris has remarked, "*When Jesus has nothing to say to a man that man's position is hopeless.*" Herod was a dead man in every way.

Jesus' disdain showed itself in His answer: "*I will drive out demons and heal people* Notice what He is saying... "*I will continue to do my normal ministry today and tomorrow... and on the third day I will reach my goal...*" (In other words: "*I will carry on my ministry for a short time and then I will be finished.*")

Jesus makes it clear that **He** is in control - not Herod. ... I got news! He is still in control! ... He is not surprised. He is not taken off-guard. He is not startled or shocked. He knows what is going on in our lives.

Jesus would do what He set out to do at His own pace... and His own schedule... until He was finished - despite Herod's attempts at manipulation.

But in the wider context of Luke... this was a cryptic reference to Jesus' death and resurrection - being under divine control. King Jesus had addressed Herod... the petty monarch... with regal contempt and kingly confidence. ... Look (again) at verse 33...

Luke 13:33

Jesus defines His mission in terms of Jerusalem. He must continue to fulfill His mission... and then depart from where He is... to head for Jerusalem.

Jesus sent a message that put all evil forces on notice. He said... in effect:

“You cannot stop, alter, interrupt, or ignore the objective God has sent Me to achieve. I will continue to battle evil during the time I have left, and I will keep My appointment with the cross in Jerusalem.”

Our Lord was not afraid of danger. He followed a “divine timetable” and nothing could harm Him. He was doing the will of God according to the Father’s schedule.

(Now here is one of our take-aways from this:) **The remarkable thing about fearing God is that when you fear God you fear nothing else... whereas if you do not fear God you fear everything else.** When you fear God you fear *nothing* else... whereas if you do **not** fear God you fear *everything* else. ... [P A U S E] ...

It had been decreed from eternity that the Son of God would be crucified in Jerusalem at the Passover... and NOT even Herod Antipas could hinder the purposes of God. ... In fact... our Lord’s enemies only helped *fulfill* the will of God.

Jesus had answered Herod and the proud Pharisees with royal disdain and irony. (He feared God – much MORE than them!)

The mention of His death in Jerusalem turned His loving thoughts to His people... represented by Jerusalem.

Luke 13:34

Jesus speaks about Jerusalem... since the city represents the nation. Jerusalem was the nation's religious center and it reflected the nation's response. He has long had a desire to care for it and protect it. But Israel has not responded well to God's love for them. The tone is sorrowful as well as prophetic. (Jesus... in many ways... would be just like this mother hen.)

The simile Jesus uses is unforgettable. A chicken hawk suddenly appears... its wings folded... its eyes concentrated on the farmyard... its ominous claws ready to grasp a chick. ... A storm is approaching. Lightning flashes become more frequent... the rumbling of the thunder grows louder and follows the electrical discharges more and more closely. ... Raindrops develop into a shower... the shower into a cloudburst. While this happens... with an anxious and commanding "cluck, cluck, cluck!" the hen calls her chicks and conceals them under her protecting wings.

The wings of the mother hen provide great safety for the baby chicks. She can conceal as well as cover the little chicks with her wings. This great defense is well illustrated by the famous illustration of the mother hen who saw a prairie fire coming and gathered her chicks under her wings to protect them from the fire. When the fire had passed... a farmer came upon the mother hen still covering her chicks with her wings.

Upon investigation... the farmer discovered that the mother hen was dead... but under her scorched wings were all the little chicks still alive and well! ... This incident illustrates the sacrificial death that Jesus was about to go through... as great protection for us. His death on Calvary saves us from the fires of Hell. It cost Him His life to gather us under the wings of

salvation... and He willingly paid it. Christ can give the greatest protection anyone can ever have. He provides protection to anyone who will come under His wings for salvation.

We not only enjoy protection from Hell... we enjoy His protection in this life... too. We do have problems... fears... and danger for sure... but the Lord has His own way of protecting us and meeting our needs like a hen that shelters her chicks. ... We are the Lord's baby chicks! The best place we can place ourselves is under His wings... under His care... under His authority.

"How frequently," says Jesus, *"I have similarly yearned to gather you. But you refused to come."* Only one thing stopped God from exercising such care: the people did not wish him to do so. ... As a result... the gathering... with its accompanying offer of protection... could not take place.

This metaphor very movingly expressed Jesus' heart cry for His people. But they were *"not willing"*! They were responsible for their aloneness and ultimate lostness. This is also true of us if we do not choose to be under the security of his wings.

Are you under His wings? ... Do you want to be? ... Will you come to Him?

Christ had great love and compassion for His people... but they would have nothing to do with Him. They *"would not!"* This word is very emphatic in the Greek text. They absolutely refused the Lord! Their stubbornness caused them to reject the Savior. ... The result of these constant refusals (this hardening of heart) is described in verse **35**.

Luke 13:35

The Jews (as a whole) have rejected Jesus' attempts to save and protect them. ... But there is a future for Israel. The time will come when their Messiah will return and will (finally) be recognized... welcomed... and received by the Jewish people. They will say, "*Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord*" (You see... Psalm 118:26 shows this phrase to be a Messianic greeting which will be said by Jews to recognize their Messiah.)

The Jews of Jesus' day knew this was a Messianic greeting. That is why on Palm Sunday (when Jesus entered Jerusalem)... many people waved palm branches and gave this greeting to Jesus. They were recognizing Him as Messiah.

In just a short time... after the events of our passage today in Luke... Jesus entered Jerusalem... as many people shouted "*Hosannah! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!*" ... But the National leaders... and the nation (as a whole) disapproved of their giving Messianic recognition to Jesus.

Luke 13:35 does not speak of Jesus' entry on Palm Sunday. It speaks of a different time – that is still in the future.

(You see)... when Jesus comes back... (and He **is** about to)... THIS NEXT TIME the national leaders and Israel *as a whole* will be greeting Him with the official Messianic greeting of Psalm 118. (Now) I would like for you to look with me at an INCREDIBLE Old Testament prophecy that tells about Israel's repenting reversal... This is going to prompt Israel to say the Psalm 118 greeting about Jesus.

Zechariah 12:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ *“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.*”

HUNDREDS of years BEFORE Jesus’ first coming... Zacharia foretold Messiah’s rejection... His piercing... but Israel’s eventual repenting over it with mourning and tears... seeing what a great loss they experienced (which was every bit as painful as a parent losing a child.) ... This will be what the 7 year Tribulation that the book of Revelation is about... will accomplish. 144,000 Jewish evangelists all over the world are going to lead massive revivals. While those terrible events of the Tribulation are going on... a lot of Jews will be repenting – including their national and religious leaders. Then Zechariah 12:10 will be fulfilled (the Jews will change their attitude about Jesus)... and (our passage today) Luke 13:35 will be fulfilled... (they will see Jesus again.)

Jesus will return and gather His chicks under His wings. The Jews will finally allow Jesus to save and protect them.

(And) by the way... the very next chapter in Zecharia is about Jesus setting up His Millennial Kingdom here on Earth... and giving His forgiven people (the Jews) a prominent place in it.

Our passage today (Luke 13:31-35) shows that nothing will deter Jesus from His call. ... Jesus was sent by God on a mission: He was headed to Jerusalem to die... and the threat of an earthly ruler like Herod would not stop Him. ... However... sadly... Israel is responsible to God for its rejection. ... Its track record has not been good in this regard... since

historically it has murdered and stoned God's messengers (the prophets.)
God often wished to gather in... love... and protect His people... but they
were not willing. ... Here again (in today's passage) they were not willing.
The result is clear: **God abandons them until they recognize Jesus.**

The necessity to choose Jesus is made so clear as the result of Jewish
national rejection. ... But these consequences also apply to individuals of
every nation today who reject Jesus. ... An individual's rejection or Israel's
rejection cannot stop God's plan.

Jesus' coming is either a warning or an opportunity.

Recognize Jesus as the Messiah Who wants to save and protect you.
Develop a full conviction of this that cannot be diminished – no matter what
kind of fear and intimidation others may try to use against it.