

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church  
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## TWO TYPES OF LEADERS

Acts 12:19-Acts 13:5

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There are three points to today's sermon:

- Herod's religion was self-centered.
- The church leaders were Christ-centered.
- The church's leadership style was the opposite of Herod's.

## HEROD'S RELIGION WAS SELF-CENTERED

**SCRIPTURE:** Acts 12:19-20

*After Herod had a thorough search made for him and did not find him, he cross-examined the guards and ordered that they be executed. Then Herod went from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there. <sup>20</sup> He had been quarreling with the people of Tyre and Sidon; they now joined together and sought an audience with him. After securing the support of Blastus, a trusted personal servant of the king, they asked for peace, because they depended on the king's country for their food supply.*

**EXPLANATION:** Rome gave Herod authority. As King of Judaea, his job was to make sure that the Jews were kept in quiet submission. History records that Herod thought highly of the Jewish faith. Supposedly, he followed Jewish laws, offered sacrifices, and tried to prevent the Romans from defiling the temple, but little else about his behavior indicated that he knew the one true God.

Herod killed James and arrested Peter. When Peter miraculously escaped, Herod killed all the soldiers who had guarded Peter. Then, he packed up and went on a trip. There is no indication that he gave a second thought to the devastation he left behind, no concern for the damage he had done, no pity for the families who were grieving because of his rash actions.

Meanwhile, in Tyre and Sidon, the people were growing concerned. Herod was angry with them, possibly on the brink of war. Herod could refuse to sell them the wheat, honey, and oil they so desperately needed. In addition, he could easily freeze their export business. Yet, Herod made no attempt at reconciliation. We see no evidence that he cared about their well-being.

Herod was given his authority by men to rule over men. He came and went at his own leisure. He did what he wanted when he wanted. He ruled with an iron fist, quick to kill, persecute, or harm anyone and everyone who got in his way or who did not do as he wanted. There is little doubt that Herod was self-centered.

**SCRIPTURE:** Acts 12:21-23

*On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. <sup>22</sup> They shouted, “This is the voice of a god, not of a man.” <sup>23</sup> Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.*

**EXPLANATION:** The people of Tyre and Sidon needed to do something to regain Herod’s favor. So, they banded together and found an ally—Blastus, “a trusted personal servant of the king.” It was probably through Blastus’s encouragement that they were able to achieve a meeting with Herod.

Of course, Herod put on a show. He flaunted his power. He wore his best royal robes. He sat on the throne and gave them a lecture. Blastus may have told the ensemble to appeal to Herod’s ego. Given human nature, it’s doubtful that they really thought of Herod as a god. They probably did not even like the man very much, but they knew how to flatter him. And Herod ate it up.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Adolf Hitler was the leader of the Nazi party. He initiated WWII and was a central figure in the Holocaust. His actions resulted in the death of 50 million people, many of them Jews in his own country. Joseph Stalin was the dictator of the Soviet Union. His decisions led to a famine in Russia. He also killed over 20 million people. Vlad the Impaler was the prince of Wallachia where he brutalized and killed 20% of the country’s population. Pol Pot was a Cambodian

revolutionary and head of the Khmer Rouge which orchestrated the Cambodian genocide.

There is no corner on evil. It is not limited to one race or one nationality. Throughout the course of history, again and again, we see people in positions of power who torment and kill not only their enemies but their own people, the people for whom they should be caring. Why?

It often begins with self-centeredness. People become blinded by their own wants and needs. Satan warps their thoughts and cultivates within them an insatiable lust for more—more power, more money, more of whatever they think will make them feel good. Before they know it, like Herod, they have no problem thinking of themselves as some type of god.

Herod did not correct the people when they praised him. He did not give glory or honor or thanksgiving to the God who allowed him to have the position he held. Instead, he soaked it all in. He basked in the false flattery, and the Lord punished him. He did not just lose his position; he lost his life.

- Herod's religion was self-centered.

## **THE CHURCH LEADERS WERE CHRIST-CENTERED**

**SCRIPTURE:** Acts 12:24-13:2

*But the word of God continued to spread and flourish.*

*<sup>25</sup> When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission, they returned from Jerusalem, taking with them John, also called Mark. **3:1** Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. <sup>2</sup> While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."*

**EXPLANATION:** When we think of prophets, we may think primarily about Old Testament figures like Elijah and Samuel, who foretold future events. However, the word *prophet* simply means an inspired teacher or someone who proclaims the will

of God. As the number of Christians grew, certain men came into positions of leadership in the church.

- Barnabas was originally from Cyprus and was sent from the Jerusalem church to minister to the church in Antioch.
- Paul, of course, was an elite Jew and former persecutor of the church who was called by God to preach the gospel.
- John, also called Mark, was the young cousin of Barnabas and the son of Mary. (Peter went to Mary's house after his miraculous escape. Perhaps John Mark was at the prayer meeting when Peter showed up.) John Mark was new to the mission field.
- Simeon was a common Jewish name, and Niger was a common Roman name. It's likely that Simeon called Niger was from northern Africa and that he had dark skin. Lucius was from Cyrene which is in North Africa. His name may indicate that he was a Gentile.
- Manaen had been brought up in the household of Herod Antipas. This is the Herod who beheaded John the Baptist. Since Manaen was brought up around a royal household, he was probably a member of a noble family or the child of a personal servant who was later granted his freedom.

Among this group of leaders, we see a variety of languages and ethnicities. These men came from different backgrounds and social classes. They were different ages. They had diverse religious training and callings. Yet, they were all united in one goal—to serve the Lord by sharing the gospel message. They worshipped the Lord together. They fasted together. They sought God's will together, and they listened when He spoke.

- Herod's religion was self-centered.
- The church leaders were Christ-centered.

## **THE CHURCH'S LEADERSHIP STYLE WAS THE OPPOSITE OF HEROD'S**

**SCRIPTURE:** Acts 13:3-5

*So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. <sup>4</sup> The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia*

*and sailed from there to Cyprus. <sup>5</sup> When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper.*

**EXPLANATION:** God told these men that He had different work for Barnabas and Saul. I wonder how that made them feel. After all, the Jerusalem church sent Barnabas specifically to help the Antioch church, and Barnabas, seeing the need, had recruited Saul for the job as well. Now, God was removing these two pillars of faith from this local congregation.

The church elders at Antioch could have protested. They could have argued with God. They could have made a case about how their work was just as important as any other ministry, how they *really, really* needed Barnabas and Saul to accomplish their latest outreach plans. But they did not. They trusted in God's provision for them all. In unity, they prayed for Saul and Barnabas, blessed them, and sent them on their way.

This group of men received their authority and wisdom from God. They sought the Lord's guidance about where they could go and what they should do, and they used their positions to benefit others. Both those going and those staying sacrificed in order that others might hear the Good News.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Just as many men mark the pages of history with their evil deeds, there are those whose brave and selfless acts survive long after they died.

- Cori Ten Boom, a Dutch watchmaker and strong Christian, was put in a concentration camp because she helped Jews escape from the Nazis.
- J. Hudson Taylor spent his life sharing Christ behind closed doors in China.
- Adoniram Judson was an American missionary who survived all kinds of hardships to share the Gospel with the Burmese people.

Whether it's the missionary who leaves family, friends, and the comfort of home to take the gospel to a foreign country, or the schoolteacher who stays late and arrives early to help struggling students learn more, true leadership requires sacrifice.

**APPLICATION:** In this world, there are enormous possibilities for leadership. From sewing clubs to politics, in schools and churches and boardrooms, all over

this world, we have leaders. All of them can be divided into one of two categories. Like Herod, they can be ungodly and self-centered. Their objective may be self-promotion, and everything they do may be to gain something for themselves. Or they can be Godly leaders, like the prophets of the New Church, people who understand that any power or authority they have really comes from God and is given in order that they can use it to benefit others.

Leadership is not an opportunity to lord over someone else. Leadership is not a badge to be earned or a path to privilege. In God's economy, leadership is an act of service and sacrifice. And leadership is not something that is limited to a select few. We all lead someone. We are leaders in our homes—to our spouses, to our children. We are leaders at work—even if we are not the boss. We are leaders on the ball field or in the school hallways. We are leaders in the church, both in the classrooms and in the pews. Any time we have the opportunity to influence someone, we have the opportunity to lead.

Today, I want to remind you that there are two types of leaders. Which one are you?

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