

THE RACIST SLUR AGAINST HEROD BY JESUS

Jesus called Herod Antipas “that fox” in Luke 13:32. This is at first glance accusing him of being sly.

Let us look at the context.

31 At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, “Leave this place [Jerusalem] 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!

Nothing here hints at sly.

Some today say that fox is just a way of saying the other person is powerless and a failure. That is strange for the fox is one animal you could never use as a symbol for weakness and stupidity. And Jesus would be made very boastful and arrogant if he was sending messages to Herod to say how he could do wonders unlike Herod! It was not even very fair.

Jesus takes the report seriously but carries on as if there was nothing to fear and if Herod was going to kill him then why didn't he do so?

Ezekiel 13:4 where false prophets are called foxes among the ruins ie scavengers is no help either. Herod was not a scavenger.

Foxes usually hunt alone and we cannot think Jesus assumed Herod would sneak about on his own to kill him.

Anyway why the lies about the meaning of fox then?

The reason is that fox is a racist slur.

Herod's father Herod the Great was of Arab origin and his family had “converted” to Judaism. Herod and his sons were liberals in the sense that they had no problem funding pagan temples thus violating a core principle of the Jewish faith. In faith and in DNA they were not Jews. Jesus uses dog in a racist way against the pagan woman in the gospels. So fox, a dog is a racist slur.

Jesus is trying to tell Herod he is an animal and he does not fear him for he can do miracles. It is plain intimidation.