

Jesus Grieves Over Jerusalem

Luke 13:31–33 is a short but rich passage where Jesus responds to a warning about Herod with both courage and clarity about His mission. Let's break it down with structure, meaning, and background.

Explanation & Breakdown

Verse	Key Idea	Explanation
v.31	Warning from Pharisees	Some Pharisees (possibly sympathetic or manipulative) warn Jesus that Herod Antipas wants to kill Him. This is the same Herod who had John the Baptist executed.
v.32	Jesus' Defiant Reply	Jesus calls Herod a "fox"—a symbol of cunning, destruction, and insignificance (not noble like a lion). He boldly declares He will continue His work (miracles and exorcisms) and then finish His mission. "Today, tomorrow, and the third day" is a Hebraic idiom meaning a short, determined time leading to completion —not necessarily literal.
v.33	Jesus' Mission Must Continue	Despite the threat, Jesus must continue His journey toward Jerusalem , where He knows He will die. The phrase " <i>it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem</i> " is ironic and tragic : Jerusalem, the holy city, is also known for rejecting and killing God's prophets (see Luke 13:34–35).

Theological & Literary Highlights

Theme	Description
Prophetic Destiny	Jesus aligns Himself with the prophets of old who were killed by their own people, especially in Jerusalem.
Courage and Sovereignty	Jesus is not intimidated by Herod. He is fully aware of the danger but insists that God's timeline , not Herod's, determines His path.
Foreshadowing the Cross	"Finish my course" foreshadows His death and resurrection. He will not be stopped until His redemptive mission is complete.
Irony of Jerusalem	The city meant to honor prophets is the very place where they die. Jesus' lament in the next verses (vv.34–35) expands on this.

Historical Context: Herod Antipas

- **Title:** Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea.
- **Known for:** Beheading John the Baptist; politically calculating; Roman puppet ruler.
- **Why the warning matters:** Jesus was in **Perea** (Herod's territory) at the time. The Pharisees might have hoped to scare Him back to Judea where they had more power—or genuinely wanted to protect Him.

Application & Reflection

- **Fear doesn't determine your mission:** Jesus doesn't let threats derail His calling.
- **Boldness in the face of evil:** Jesus shows holy defiance—not arrogance, but confidence in God's plan.
- **God's timeline rules:** "Today, tomorrow, and the third day" reminds us that God has a timetable for our lives and work.
- **Tragic irony of religious rejection:** Jesus mourns that the religious capital rejects the very ones sent to save it.

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There is *much more* to Jesus' statement in **Luke 13:32–33** about “**today, tomorrow, and on the third day.**” On the surface, it may sound like a casual way to say, “*I’ll keep going a little longer,*” but it carries **layered meaning**: linguistic, prophetic, symbolic, and Christological.



The Full Statement

“Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course.” (*Luke 13:32b, ESV*)



MULTI-LAYERED MEANING

1. Hebrew Idiom for a Short, Set Time

This is likely a **Semitic idiom** meaning:

“I will complete My work in the time appointed — not a moment too soon or too late.”



Similar idioms appear in:

- **Hosea 6:2** — “*After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up...*”
- **Exodus 19:10–11** — *The Lord comes down on Mount Sinai “on the third day.”*
- **Esther 5:1** — Esther goes before the king “on the third day.”



These idioms carry the idea of **God acting decisively at a divinely appointed moment**, often **associated with deliverance, revelation, or resurrection**.

2. Foreshadowing of Jesus’ Death and Resurrection

Many scholars believe Jesus is **cryptically pointing to His resurrection**:

- **Today and tomorrow** = a limited, earthly ministry.
- **Third day** = the completion: His death and **resurrection**.

Compare:

- **Luke 9:22** — “...on the third day be raised.”
- **Luke 18:33** — “They will kill him, and on the third day he will rise.”
- **1 Corinthians 15:4** — “...He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.”

So Jesus could be **embedding a resurrection prophecy** within this phrase.

3. Divine Timetable, Not Human Threat

Jesus’ response to Herod’s threat is essentially:

“I will not die at Herod’s hand. I will finish My mission according to God’s schedule.”

He’s asserting:

- **Sovereignty** over His mission
- **Courage** in the face of political intimidation
- **Faithfulness** to His prophetic calling

4. Prophetic Pattern of Three Days

The “third day” language is also tied to **prophetic fulfillment**:

- **Jonah** was in the belly of the fish **three days and nights** (Matt. 12:40).
- **Abraham’s test** with Isaac climaxes “on the third day” (Gen. 22:4).
- **Jesus’ resurrection** is the ultimate “**third day**” intervention by God.

So this phrase aligns Jesus with a **pattern of redemptive timing**.

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Summary Table

Layer	Meaning
Idiomatic	Common Jewish way to speak of a short, fixed period of time
Prophetic	Echoes the “third day” as a time of divine action and fulfillment
Resurrection Allusion	Hints at His death and rising “on the third day”
Theological Assertion	God—not Herod—sets the timeline for His mission
Symbolic	Jesus’ mission has a beginning, middle, and divine end



Final Thought

Jesus isn’t just giving an itinerary — He’s *preaching theology* with poetic brevity:

“I know My time. I will heal and cast out demons until the appointed day. Then I will complete My mission — not Herod’s way, but God’s way. And on the third day... victory.”

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When He says in **Luke 13:33**, “it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem,” He’s speaking with **deep irony and sorrow**. It’s not that **every** prophet was literally killed inside Jerusalem, but that **Jerusalem** had become **symbolic** of Israel’s **historic rejection of God’s messengers**, especially those who called the people to repentance.

Here’s a breakdown of prophets who **perished in or around Jerusalem**, along with others who were traditionally believed to have died there:

Biblical and Traditional List of Prophets Killed in or Near Jerusalem

Prophet	Biblical or Traditional Source	Death in/near Jerusalem?	Notes
Uriah (Urijah)	Jeremiah 26:20–23	✅ Yes	Killed by King Jehoiakim in Jerusalem; his body was thrown into a common grave.
Zechariah (son of Jehoiada)	2 Chronicles 24:20–22	✅ Yes (Temple court)	Stoned in the Temple courtyard on orders of King Joash. Jesus refers to this in Matt. 23:35.
Isaiah	Jewish tradition (Talmud, Martyrdom of Isaiah)	✅ Yes (traditionally)	Said to be sawn in two under King Manasseh. Possibly alluded to in Hebrews 11:37.
Jeremiah	Tradition: attempted martyrdom	❌ Survived Jerusalem	Persecuted, imprisoned, and nearly killed, but ultimately taken to Egypt.
Ezekiel	Exiled prophet	❌ No	Lived and likely died in Babylon, not Jerusalem.
Micah	Not martyred	❌ No	Lived in Moresheth, not Jerusalem; quoted in support of Jeremiah (Jer. 26:18).
Stephen	Acts 7:54–60	✅ Yes	Though not an OT prophet, he was killed in Jerusalem and accuses the people of always resisting the prophets (Acts 7:52).
Jesus Himself	Luke 13:33; crucified	✅ Yes	The ultimate Prophet, rejected and killed just outside the walls of Jerusalem.

Key Scriptures

- **Luke 13:34** — “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it...”
- **Matthew 23:29–36** — Jesus accuses the religious leaders of being sons of those who murdered the prophets, naming Zechariah specifically.
- **Acts 7:52** — Stephen: “Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute?”
- **Hebrews 11:35–38** — References unnamed prophets who were tortured, stoned, sawn in two, and killed with the sword.

Summary

- **Biblically**, **Uriah** and **Zechariah** were killed in or near Jerusalem.
- **Traditionally**, **Isaiah** was executed in Jerusalem.
- **Jesus’ point** is not just literal but symbolic — **Jerusalem**, the city of the Temple and covenant, has tragically become the **place where messengers of God are rejected**.

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There is a beautiful and likely intentional connection between Jesus' words in **Luke 13:34** ("...as a hen gathers her brood under her wings...") and the **Jewish tallit** (prayer shawl), especially in how it symbolizes **God's protection, presence, and authority**.



1. The Hen's Wings and the Tallit

♦ Luke 13:34

"...how often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing."

♦ Tallit Connection

- The **Hebrew word for "wings"** is **כנף (kanaph)**, which can mean:
 - A bird's wings
 - The **corner or fringe** of a garment — especially a **tallit** (prayer shawl)
- The **tallit has tzitzit (fringes)** on its four **corners (kanaphim)**, as commanded in:
 - **Numbers 15:37–41**
 - **Deuteronomy 22:12**



So when Jesus says "under her wings," He may be **evoking an image of protection under the garment** — similar to being gathered under the **kanaph** of the **tallit**.



2. Biblical Imagery of Protection Under Wings

This "under the wings" imagery appears multiple times in the Old Testament and is often associated with **God's protective presence**, much like the **symbolism of the tallit**.

Verse	Phrase	Meaning
Psalms 91:4	"He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you will find refuge."	A clear metaphor of God's shelter and security
Ruth 2:12	"...under whose wings you have come to take refuge."	Boaz speaks of Ruth taking shelter under God's care , possibly with marriage symbolism
Malachi 4:2	"The sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings."	Messianic hope; the word kanaph here may also suggest the corners of a garment



Many Jewish interpreters connected this "**healing in His wings**" with the **tallit** — this is likely why the woman with the issue of blood **touched the fringe** (tzitzit) of Jesus' garment (Luke 8:44), believing in the healing in His "wings."



3. Jesus as the One Who Wears the Tallit

Jesus, as a devout Jew, likely wore a **tallit** or outer garment with **tzitzit**, fulfilling Torah commands. When He says:

"I would have gathered you as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings" (Luke 13:34),

...He is likely **blending**:

- A **maternal image** of God's care (like a hen)
- A **Messianic image** of covering under **His own garment — the tallit**
- A **prophetic warning** that Israel has rejected this refuge

It is as though He's saying:

"You could have found refuge and healing under My covering — under My wings, under My authority, under My Word — but you refused."

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4. Spiritual Significance

Symbol	Meaning
Hen's wings	Nurturing, protecting presence of God
Tallit	God's Word, commandments, covenant identity
Tzitzit	Reminder of God's law (Num. 15:39)
Jesus' offer	Come under His covering for healing, identity, and salvation

Summary Chart

Symbol/Term	Hebrew	Meaning	Connected to Luke 13:34?
Wing	כַּנָּף (kanaph)	Wing or corner of garment	✓ Yes — “under His wings”
Tallit	טָלִית	Prayer shawl with tzitzit	✓ Symbolic covering
Tzitzit	צִיצִית	Fringes on tallit	✓ Reminder of covenant
Hen metaphor	—	Tender protection	✓ Directly used by Jesus
Healing in His wings	Malachi 4:2	Messianic hope & protection	✓ Likely alluded to