

How Would the Radical Jesus Fare in America Today?

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(Amusing and Tragically True)

"[The Real] Jesus is too much for us. The church's later treatment of the gospels is one long effort to rescue Jesus from 'extremism.' " — Gary Wills



Jesus was good. He was caring. He had powerful, profound things to say—things that would change how we view people, alter government policies and change the world. He went around helping the poor. And when confronted by those in authority, he did not shy away from speaking truth to power.

Jesus was born into a police state not unlike the growing menace of the American police state.

But what if Jesus, the revered preacher, teacher, radical and prophet, had been born 2,000 years later? How would Jesus' life have been different had he been born and raised in the American police state?

Consider the following if you will.

The Christmas narrative of a baby born in a manger is a familiar one.

The Roman Empire, a police state in its own right, had ordered that a census be conducted. Joseph and his pregnant wife Mary traveled to the little town of Bethlehem so that they could be counted. There being no room for the couple at any of the inns, they stayed in a stable, where Mary gave birth to a baby boy. That boy, Jesus, would grow up to undermine the political and religious establishment of his day and was eventually crucified as a warning to others not to challenge the powers-that-be.

However, had Jesus been born in the year 2016...

Rather than traveling to Bethlehem for a census, Jesus' parents would have been mailed a 28-page American Community Survey, a mandatory government questionnaire documenting their habits, household inhabitants, work schedule, how many toilets are in your home, etc. The penalty for not responding to this invasive survey can go as high as \$5,000.

Instead of being born in a manger, Jesus might have been born at home. Rather than wise men and shepherds bringing gifts, however, the baby's parents might have been forced to ward off visits from state social workers intent on prosecuting them for the home birth. One couple in Washington had all three of their children removed after social services objected to the two youngest being birthed in an unassisted home delivery.

Had Jesus been born in a hospital, his blood and DNA would have been taken without his parents'

knowledge or consent and entered into a government biobank. While most states require newborn screening, a growing number are holding onto that genetic material long-term for research, analysis and purposes yet to be disclosed.

Then again, had his parents been undocumented immigrants, they and the newborn baby might have been shuffled to a profit-driven, private prison for illegals where they would have been turned into cheap, forced laborers for corporations such as Starbucks, Microsoft, Walmart, and Victoria's Secret. There's quite a lot of money to be made from imprisoning immigrants, especially when taxpayers are footing the bill.

From the time he was old enough to attend school, Jesus would have been drilled in lessons of compliance and obedience to government authorities, while learning little about his own rights. Had he been daring enough to speak out against injustice while still in school, he might have found himself tasered or beaten by a school resource officer, or at the very least suspended under a school zero tolerance policy that punishes minor infractions as harshly as more serious offenses.

Had Jesus disappeared for a few hours let alone days as a 12-year-old, his parents would have been handcuffed, arrested and jailed for parental negligence. Parents across the country have been arrested for far less "offenses" such as allowing their children to walk to the park unaccompanied and play in their front yard alone.

Rather than disappearing from the history books from his early teenaged years to adulthood, Jesus' movements and personal data—including his biometrics—would have been documented, tracked, monitored and filed by governmental agencies and corporations such as Google and Microsoft. Incredibly, 95 percent of school districts share their student records with outside companies that are contracted to manage data, which they then use to market products to us.

From the moment Jesus made contact with an "extremist" such as John the Baptist, he would have been flagged for surveillance because of his association with a prominent activist, peaceful or otherwise. Since 9/11, the FBI has actively carried out surveillance and intelligence-gathering operations on a broad range of activist groups, from animal rights groups to poverty relief, anti-war groups and other such "extremist" organizations.

Jesus' anti-government views would certainly have resulted in him being labeled a domestic extremist. Law enforcement agencies are being trained to recognize signs of anti-government extremism during interactions with potential extremists who share a "belief in the approaching collapse of government and the economy."

While traveling from community to community, Jesus might have been reported to government officials as "suspicious" under the Department of Homeland Security's "See Something, Say Something" programs. Many states, including New York, are providing individuals with phone apps that allow them to take photos of suspicious activity and report them to their state Intelligence Center, where they are reviewed and forwarded to law-enforcement agencies.

Rather than being permitted to live as an itinerant preacher, Jesus might have found himself threatened with arrest for daring to live off the grid or sleeping outside. In fact, the number of cities that have resorted to criminalizing homelessness by enacting bans on camping, sleeping in vehicles, loitering and begging in public has doubled.

Viewed by the government as a dissident and potential threat to its power, Jesus might have had government spies planted among his followers to monitor his activities, report on his movements,

and entrap him into breaking the law. Such Judases today—called informants—often receive hefty paychecks from the government for their treachery.

Had Jesus used the internet to spread his radical message of peace and love, he might have found his blog posts infiltrated by government spies attempting to undermine his integrity, discredit him or plant incriminating information online about him. At the very least, he would have had his website hacked and his email monitored.

Had Jesus attempted to feed large crowds of people, he would have been threatened with arrest for violating various ordinances prohibiting the distribution of food without a permit. Florida officials arrested a 90-year-old man for feeding the homeless on a public beach.

Had Jesus spoken publicly about his 40 days in the desert and his conversations with the devil, he might have been labeled mentally ill and detained in a psych ward against his will for a mandatory involuntary psychiatric hold with no access to family or friends. One Virginia man was arrested, strip searched, handcuffed to a table, diagnosed as having “mental health issues,” and locked up for five days in a mental health facility against his will apparently because of his slurred speech and unsteady gait.

Without a doubt, had Jesus attempted to overturn tables in a Jewish temple and rage against the materialism of religious institutions, he would have been charged with a hate crime. Currently, 45 states and the federal government have hate crime laws on the books.

Rather than having armed guards capture Jesus in a public place, government officials would have ordered that a SWAT team carry out a raid on Jesus and his followers, complete with flash-bang grenades and military equipment. There are upwards of 80,000 such SWAT team raids carried out every year, many on unsuspecting Americans who have no defense against such government invaders, even when such raids are done in error.

Instead of being detained by Roman guards, Jesus might have been made to “disappear” into a secret government detention center where he would have been interrogated, tortured and subjected to all manner of abuses. Chicago police “disappeared” more than 7,000 people into a secret, off-the-books interrogation warehouse at Homan Square.

Charged with treason and labeled a domestic terrorist, Jesus might have been sentenced to a life-term in a private prison where he would have been forced to provide slave labor for corporations or put to death by way of the electric chair or a lethal mixture of drugs.

Either way, whether Jesus had been born in our modern age or his own, he still would have died at the hands of a police state. Indeed, what Jesus and other activists suffered in their day is happening to those who choose to speak truth to power today.

Thus, we are faced with a choice: remain silent in the face of evil or speak out against it. As Nobel Prize-winning author Albert Camus proclaimed:

Perhaps we cannot prevent this world from being a world in which children are tortured.
But we can reduce the number of tortured children. And if you don't help us, who else in
the world can help us do this?

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