

The Child that Christmas Forgot: How Would Jesus Fare in the American Police State?

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“Once upon a midnight clear, there was a child’s cry, a blazing star hung over a stable, and wise men came with birthday gifts. We haven’t forgotten that night down the centuries. We celebrate it with stars on Christmas trees, with the sound of bells, and with gifts... We forget nobody, adult or child. All the stockings are filled, all that is, except one. And we have even forgotten to hang it up. The stocking for the child born in a manger. It’s his birthday we’re celebrating. Don’t let us ever forget that. Let us ask ourselves what He would wish for most. And then, let each put in his share, loving kindness, warm hearts, and a stretched out hand of tolerance. All the shining gifts that make peace on earth.”—[The Bishop’s Wife](#) (1947)

The Christmas story 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 (a barn), where Mary gave birth to a baby boy, Jesus. Warned that the government planned to kill the baby, Jesus’ family fled with him to Egypt until it was safe to return to their native land.

Yet what if Jesus had been born 2,000 years later?

What if, instead of being born into the Roman police state, Jesus had been born at this moment in time? What kind of reception would Jesus and his family be given? Would we recognize the Christ child’s humanity, let alone his divinity? Would we treat him any differently than he was treated by the Roman Empire? If his family were forced to flee violence in their native country and sought refuge and asylum within our borders, what sanctuary would we offer them?

A singular number of churches across the country are asking those very questions, and their conclusions are being depicted with unnerving accuracy by [nativity scenes in which Jesus and his family are separated, segregated and caged](#) in individual chain-link pens, topped by barbed wire fencing.

These nativity scenes are a pointed attempt to remind the modern world that the narrative about the birth of Jesus is one that speaks on multiple fronts to a world that has allowed the life, teachings and crucifixion of Jesus to be drowned out by partisan politics, secularism, materialism and war.

The modern-day church has largely shied away from applying Jesus' teachings to modern problems such as war, poverty, immigration, etc., but thankfully there have been individuals throughout history who ask themselves and the world: what would Jesus do?

What would Jesus—the baby born in Bethlehem who grew into an itinerant preacher and revolutionary activist, who not only died challenging the police state of his day (namely, the Roman Empire) but spent his adult life speaking truth to power, challenging the status quo of his day, and pushing back against the abuses of the Roman Empire—do?

[Dietrich Bonhoeffer](#) asked himself what Jesus would have done about the horrors perpetrated by Hitler and his assassins. The answer: Bonhoeffer risked his life to undermine the tyranny at the heart of Nazi Germany.

[Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn](#) asked himself what Jesus would have done about the soul-destroying gulags and labor camps of the Soviet Union. The answer: Solzhenitsyn found his voice and used it to [speak out about government oppression and brutality](#).

[Martin Luther King Jr.](#) asked himself what Jesus would have done about America's warmongering. The answer: declaring "my conscience leaves me no other choice," King risked widespread condemnation when he [publicly opposed the Vietnam War](#) on moral and economic grounds.

Even now, despite the popularity of the phrase "What Would Jesus Do?" (WWJD) in Christian circles, there remains a disconnect in the modern church between the teachings of Christ and the suffering of what Jesus in *Matthew* 25 refers to as the "[least of these](#)."

As the parable states:

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' The King will reply, '[Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.](#)' Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'"

This is not a theological gray area: Jesus was unequivocal about his views on many things, not the least of which was charity, compassion, war, tyranny and love.

After all, Jesus—the revered preacher, teacher, radical and prophet—was born into a police state not unlike the growing menace of the American police state. When he grew up, he had

powerful, profound things to say, things that would change how we view people, alter government policies and change the world. “Blessed are the merciful,” “Blessed are the peacemakers,” and “Love your enemies” are just a few examples of his most profound and revolutionary teachings.



When confronted by those in authority, Jesus did not shy away from speaking truth to power. Indeed, his teachings undermined the political and religious establishment of his day. It cost him his life. He was eventually crucified as a warning to others not to challenge the powers-that-be.

Can you imagine what Jesus’ life would have been like if, instead of being born into the Roman police state, he had been born and raised in the American police state?

Consider the following if you will.

Had Jesus been born in the era of the America police state, 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 Jesus' parents been undocumented immigrants, they and the newborn baby might have been shuffled to a [profit-driven, private prison for illegals](#) where they first would have been separated from each other, the children detained in [make-shift cages](#), and the parents eventually 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 a 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.

Had anyone reported Jesus to the police as being potentially dangerous, he might have found himself confronted—and killed—by police officers for whom any perceived act of non-compliance (a twitch, a question, a frown) can result in them shooting first and asking questions later.

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 have “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](#).

Indeed, as I show in my book [Battlefield America: The War on the American People](#), given the nature of government then and now, it is painfully evident that whether Jesus had been born in our modern age or his own, he still would have died at the hands of a police state.

Thus, as we draw near to Christmas with its celebrations and gift-giving, we would do well to remember that what happened on that starry night in Bethlehem is only part of the story. That baby in the manger grew up to be a man who did not turn away from evil but instead spoke out against it, and we must do no less.

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This article was originally published on [The Rutherford Institute](#).

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