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What If Jesus Had Been Born into the American Police State?



Photograph by Nathaniel St. Clair

“When the song of the angels is stilled, when the star in the sky is gone, when the kings and princes are home, when the shepherds are back with their flocks, the work of Christmas begins: to find the lost, to heal the broken, to feed the hungry, to release the prisoner, to rebuild the nations, to bring peace among the people, to make music in the heart.”

—Howard Thurman, theologian and civil rights activist

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 have asked those very questions in recent years, and their conclusions were 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.

Those nativity scenes were 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, all driven by a manipulative shadow government called the Deep State. 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 about the injustices of our modern age?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer asked himself what Jesus would have done about the horrors perpetrated by Hitler and his assassins. The answer: Bonhoeffer was executed by Hitler for attempting 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 as well as his life 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.”

Yet 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. More than 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 make clear in my book *Battlefield America: The War on the American People* and in its fictional counterpart *The Erik Blair Diaries*, 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 celebration of miracles and promise of salvation, we would do well to remember that what happened in that manger on that starry night in Bethlehem is only the beginning of the story. That baby born in a police state grew up to be a man who did not turn away from the evils of his age but rather spoke out against it.

We must do no less.

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