

Jesus of the Gospels, and Jesus of today

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Abstract

Starting from the contemporary dominant values of tolerance, dialogue, and political correctness, this article analyses Jesus' speech and teachings in the synoptic gospels in the light of these values. First, the article analyses Jesus' speech about love, and then the focus is on Jesus' harsh language and teaching. After that the article analyses reactions of different people and groups on his language and teaching. Based on this analysis, in the final section the article compares Jesus of the gospels with the distorted portray of Jesus that is sometimes present in contemporary Christianity. The conclusion that is made is that contemporary Western culture has distorted the image of Jesus from the gospels and has created modern Jesus which in his speech and teachings reflects today's dominant values. However, Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever, and we should be very careful to follow not some "contemporary Jesus," but Jesus of the gospels.

Key words: *Jesus of the Gospels, contemporary Jesus, postmodernism, political correctness, God's love, sin, harsh language, and teachings*

Introduction

In the age of tolerance, dialogue, and political correctness in today's Western culture, there is a strong emphasis on showing honor and respect towards others who think, believe, or argue differently. In accordance with the doctrine of post modernism, everyone has a voice and everyone should be heard. There is no

universal truth, and everyone's opinion is equally valid. We can express our belief, but in doing so, it is not commendable to judge others or declare that other beliefs are wrong, false, degrading, or dangerous. Even among the Evangelicals who traditionally uphold the Bible as the only infallible authority for faith and life, there is a growing tendency to refrain from speaking the truth in love, and replace it with speech about "dialogue," "tolerance," and "judge not" or a "who are you to judge others" attitude. More and more we are going toward a situation where love becomes segregated from the truth so those who "speak the truth in love" are labeled as "without love," and those who offer "love without truth" are praised as examples of Christian love.

If we turn to the pages of the New Testament, particularly synoptic gospels, we encounter Jesus who with his style of speech and behavior is radically different from today's postmodern culture. We encounter Jesus who is rude, abrasive, disrespectful, and straightforward in his speech. Because of that, Jesus often provokes negative reactions. His teaching is sharp and strict and in that there is not much space for unending grace and goodness toward the wicked.

In order to prove such image of Jesus, in the synoptic gospels we will observe the following: a) all places where Jesus speaks about love; b) all the places where Jesus uses harsh words; c) all places where Jesus employs harsh teaching and; d) all places where Jesus provokes negative reactions due to his speech, behavior or teaching. The purpose of this research is to establish the proper picture of Jesus from the synoptic gospels and compare it with the picture of Jesus that emerges from today's culture which is shaped by postmodernism and political correctness – to name at list two factors that shape today's western culture. Hopefully, we will be able to see the stark difference between Jesus of the synoptic gospels and Jesus of the postmodern age and draw some valid conclusions for our behavior today.

1. Jesus' Speech About Love

It may come as a surprise, but Jesus in the synoptic gospels did not speak much about the subject of love. If we take aside John's gospel, we can observe the following: The love of God for the people in synoptic gospels is virtually missing. Except in two instances (Matt. 5:43-46; Lk. 6:27-35) which indirectly speak about God's love for the people, the majority of places where love is mentioned speak about people's love for God (Matt. 6:24; 22:37; Mk. 12:30, 33; Lk. 7:42-47; 10:27; 16:13). Almost in proximity the synoptic gospels speak about the love toward neighbor or enemy (Matt. 5:43-46; 19:19; 22:39; Mk. 12:31, 33; Lk. 6:27-35). In one instance Jesus felt love for one person (Mk. 10:21), one Roman soldier is described as someone who loves the Jewish nation (Lk. 7:5), and in one instance

love has a negative connotation because it describes the love for sinful honor and pride (Lk. 11:43).

2. Jesus' Harsh Language

Synoptic gospels reveal a potentially unpleasant picture of Jesus' style of speech since we see Jesus who uses such harsh language that today would be inappropriate and labeled as "hate speech" to say the least. We will identify each of these words and their targeted groups.

The noun, "hypocrites," (ὕποκριτής) appears 17 times, and it is directed toward three groups: first, most often Jesus defines Pharisees and sometimes also Sadducees as hypocrites (Matt. 15:7; 22:18; 23:13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 28, 29; Mk. 7:6; Lk. 13:15); second, Jesus speaks generally about hypocrites (Matt. 6:2, 5, 16; 7:5; Lk. 6:42). What makes people hypocrites in these instances is particular behavior or activity; third, Jesus labels multitude as hypocrites (Lk. 12:56).

The adjective, "blind," (τυφλός) appears 9 times in the synoptic gospels. In six instances, it is gyred toward Pharisees and sometimes Scribes (Matt. 15:14; 23:16, 17, 19, 24, 26), once toward those who follow Pharisees (Matt. 15:14), and once it is directed in general toward people (Lk. 6:39).

In five instances, Jesus addresses his "generation" as "evil" (adj. πονηρός) and "adulterous (adj. μοιχαλίζ)" with notion that in two instances he uses both words (Matt. 12:39; 16:4). In two instances (Matt. 12:45; Lk. 11:29), he uses only "evil" (adj. πονηρός), and in Mk. 8:38 Jesus describes his generation as "adulterous" (adj. μοιχαλίζ) and "sinful" (adj. ἀμαρτωλός). Similarly, Jesus also labels his generation as "unfaithful" (adj. ἄπιστος) and "perverse" (verb διαστρέφω) (Matt. 17:17; Lk. 9:41), but in Mk. 9:19 uses only the adjective "unfaithful" (ἄπιστος). Furthermore, in two occasions Jesus does not use any particular words to describe them, but through parabolic teaching, he reveals that they are never pleased with God's messengers (Matt. 11:16-19; Lk. 11:31-35).

"Fools" (adj. μωρός) is used five times: once for those who do not keep Jesus' words (Matt. 7:26), once it is used to describe Pharisees and scribes (Matt. 23:17), and three times in the parable of the Ten Virgins (Matt. 25:2, 3, 8). Likewise, five times Jesus uses word "evil" (adj. πονηρός): once it is used generally (Matt. 7:11); once he calls his disciples "evil" (Lk. 11:13), twice he labels in such a way scribes (Matt. 9:4; 12:34), and once to describe Pharisees (Lk. 11:39).

"Wolves" (λύκος) is used three times: once as a description for false prophets (Matt. 7:15), and twice for people in general (Matt. 10:16; Lk. 10:3). Also, "robbers" (ληστής) is used three times and every time it refers to the merchants in the Temple (Matt. 21:13; Mk. 11:17; Lk. 19:46).

Twice he uses the word "little dogs" (κυνάριον) for one pagan woman (Matt.

15:26-27; Mk. 7:27-28), but indirectly he describes in this way all pagan nations. Likewise, twice Jesus describes people as “blind and deaf” (Matt. 13:13; Mk. 4:11-12). Although he is not using these words verbatim, his description of them as “though seeing they do not see; though hearing, they do not understand” certainly points in this direction. “Offspring of vipers” (γεννήματα ἔχιδνῶν) is also used twice (Matt. 12:34; 23:33) as a description for Pharisees (and scribes in Matt. 23:33).¹ Twice (Matt. 23:31; Lk. 11:47-48) Jesus describes Pharisees and scribes as “sons of the fathers who killed prophets” referring to their participation in the same guilt as their fathers. Also, twice (Matt. 23:25; Lk. 11:39) Jesus accuses Pharisees and Scribes for “stealing/greed” (ἀρπαγή).

“Serpent” (ὄφις) is used once (Matt. 23:33) as a derogatory description for Pharisees and scribes. On one occasion, Jesus calls unidentified persons as “dogs” (κύων) and “pigs” (χοῖρος) (Matt. 7:6). Also, once (Matt. 23:28) Scribes and Pharisees are described as “full of lawlessness” (μεστοὶ...ἀνομίας). Once (Matt. 23:15) Jesus uses the expression “sons of hell” (υἱὸν γεέννης) to describe Pharisees and Scribes. In Matt. 23:27, Jesus calls Pharisees and Scribes as “whitewashed tombs” (τάφοις κεκοιναμένοις) full of “dead bones” and “unclean,” in Lk. 11:44 he describes them as “unmarked graves” (μνημεῖα τὰ ἄδηλα), and in Matt 23:25 Jesus describes Pharisees and Scribes as ἀκρασία which literally means “without power,” that is, they lack self-control which is manifested in their self-indulgence life style.

3. Jesus’ Harsh Teaching

If Jesus was not so pleasant conversation partner, his teaching also reflects this note of harshness, and severity. In this section, we will analyze Jesus’ harsh teaching which is partially present in his *language*, as we have seen in the previous section, but also in the *content* of his teaching. The purpose is not to summarize *everything* that Jesus taught in this fashion, but to offer a partial presentation of his teaching that will hopefully be sufficient to see harshness and severity of Jesus’ teaching.

In Matt. 7:19 and Lk. 6:44, Jesus talks about “Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire,” and in Matt. 7:21-23 Jesus will deny entrance into his kingdom to anyone who does not do the will of his Father. Here are included those who do prophecy, heal the sick, and cast out demons – all things that Jesus promised his followers will do as well. But the main problem with this category of people is that despite of their charismatic gifting, are those who break the law – that is practice lawlessness (ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἀνομίαν).

1 In Lk. 3:7 John the Baptist uses the same expression in his preaching.

In Matt 8:11-12, Jesus continues this type of speech by saying that “sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the darkness.” Similarly, in Lk. 13:25-30 Jesus speaks about those who “ate and drank with him” but nevertheless they will be cast out of the kingdom.

In Matt. 10:14-15, Jesus very directly speaks about the fate of those who reject disciple’s testimony: “If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town, and shake the dust off your feet. Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.” In Mk. 6:7-12, Lk. 9:5, and Lk. 10:10, Jesus is even more direct instructing his disciples that if their testimony is not accepted, they should leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.

In Matt. 12:25-37 and Mk. 3:22-30, he speaks about the blasphemy against the Spirit as the unpardonable sin, and in Matt. 18:6-9, Mk. 9:42-50 and Lk. 17:1-2, Jesus speaks against people who cause “one of these little ones—those who believe in me” to stumble. For such people “it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.” Although the precise nature of “little ones” is debatable, nevertheless their destiny will be harsh.

“Woe to you” (οὐαὶ δὲ ὑμῖν) speech against Pharisees and scribes appears in Matt. 23:1-36; Lk. 11:37-54, and in Lk. 24-26. “Woe to you” is against those who are rich, who have full stomachs, who laughs, and who are praised by the people.

In Matt. 12:30 and Lk. 11:23 Jesus is very clear when he says that who is not for him and does not gather with him, is against him and scatters. There is not “in between,” but only “either-or” position.

Although Jesus is the “prince of peace,” in Lk. 12:49-53 he declares that he didn’t come to bring peace on earth, but rather division, and in Lk. 13:1-5 Jesus uses the examples of people that were killed by Pilate and says that were killed when the tower at Siloam fell on them to say to the crowd that they are sinful as those people and that they will also die if they do not repent.

In Matt. 7:14 and Lk. 13:24 Jesus speaks about “narrow gate” and “constricted road that leads to life.” Conversely, Jesus often spoke about “hell” (γέεννα): Matt. 5:22, 29-30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mk. 9:43, 45, 47; Lk. 12:5; and sometimes he used synonyms for hell such as: “blazing furnace...place there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 13:42, 50), “eternal fire” (Matt. 25:41), “eternal punishment” (Matt. 25:46).

The next four examples that come from parables also reveals Jesus’ harshness in his teaching: a) in the parable of the *Unmerciful Servant* in Matt. 18:34-35, Jesus says that if we do not forgive when asked, we will be handed over to the jailers to be tortured; b) in the parable of the *Wedding Banquet* in Matt. 22:12-13, those

who do not wear wedding clothes will be thrown outside into the darkness; c) in Lk. 19:27 in the parable about the *Coins* Jesus says, “But as for these enemies of mine who didn’t want me to be their king—bring them here and slaughter them in my presence!” and finally; d) speaking about the unknown day and hour of his coming in Matt. 25:51, Jesus says that the unfaithful and wicked servant will be cut to pieces and assigned to the place of punishment together with hypocrites.

Lastly, let us consider the way Jesus treats certain groups of people. First, in conversations when he is questioned and challenged, he puts to shame his opponents by putting them to silence, and therefore regaining his honor (Matt. 22:22, 34, 46; Mk. 12:12, 13-34; Lk. 13:17; 14:1-6; 20:20-39).

Second, occasionally Jesus rebukes his disciples: in Mk. 8:17-19 he asks them whether their hearts are hard, eyes are blind, and ears are closed since they are unable to understand what Jesus is trying to say to them. Similar speech occurs at the end of Mark’s gospel (16:14) where Jesus rebukes his disciples for their “unbelief and stubbornness.” On the same track is Jesus’ speech from Lk. 24:25 where he calls his disciples “foolish” (adj. *ἀνόητος*) and “slow you are to believe everything the prophets said!” In Lk. 11:13, he even calls them “evil” – “So if you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children...”

Third, Jesus condemns various groups of people and places: a) his generation (Matt. 11:16-19; 12:41-45; 23:33-36; Mk. 9:19; Lk. 11:49-51; b) Pharisees and Scribes (Matt. 15:13; 23:1-36; Mk. 12:38-40; Lk. 11:37-54; 20:45-47; c) various cities (Matt. 10:14-15; 11:20-24; Mk. 6:11; Lk. 9:5; 10:10-12; 10:13-15), and in particular Jerusalem (Matt. 23:37-39; Lk. 13:34-35; 19:41-44); d) the Temple (Matt. 24:1-2; Mk. 13:1-2; Lk. 21:5-6), and the merchants in the Temple (Matt. 21:12-16; Mk. 11:15-18; Lk. 19:45-46).

4. Reaction to Jesus’ Words, Teachings, and Actions

Thus far, we have identified some places where Jesus in his words, teachings, and behaviors displayed harsh teachings. We can conclude that he was not a pleasant and an “itching ears” teacher/preacher. For that matter, the response of others was often intense. Although he was praised by the people, his sharp and harsh language and behavior brought an ever-growing opposition that at the end cost him his life. For that matter, we will identify negative reactions that Jesus experienced during his ministry:

- They asked him to leave their region: Matt. 8:28-34; Mk. 5:1-17; Lk. 8:26-37
- They think he blasphemes God: Matt. 9:3-4; Lk. 5:21-26
- They laughed at him: Matt. 9:24-25; Mk. 5:40
- They plan to catch him or kill him: Matt. 12:14; Mk. 12:12; Lk. 4:22-30; 13:31-33; 19:45-47; 20:19-20

- They connect him with Beelzebul: Matt. 10:25; 12:24-27; Mk. 3:22; Lk. 11:15-19
- They are angry at him: Matt. 21:16; 21:46; Lk. 6:7-11; 11:37-54; 13:14-17
- Jesus as a prophet is without honor in his own town: Matt. 13:57; Mk. 6:4; Lk. 4:24
- They mock him because of his teaching: Lk. 16:14-16
- They object to his teaching and behavior: Mk. 2:6, 16, 24
- They think he is crazy: Mk. 3:21
- They put him to the test by asking questions: Matt. 16:1; 19:3; 22:35; Mk. 8:11; 10:2; Lk. 10:25; 11:16
- People complain about Jesus: Matt. 9:11; Lk. 5:30-32; 15:2; 19:7
- He is a scandal for them: Matt. 13:57; 15:12; Mk. 6:3
- People feel offended by Jesus: Lk. 11:45
- They look for a reason to accuse him: Matt. 12:10; Mk. 3:2, Lk. 6:7; or similarly, to trap him in his words: Matt. 22:15; Mk. 12:13
- He was being carefully watched: Lk. 14:1; Lk. 20:20
- Mocking, torture and death: Matt. 26:67-68; 27:27-38, 39-44; Mk. 14:65; 15:29-32; Lk. 22:63; 23:34-37

We must realize that Jesus was condemned by Jewish authorities as the blasphemer against God (religious charge), and Roman authorities executed him by the shameful death of crucifixion under the charge “the king of Jews,” which labeled him as a criminal and a rebel against Rome (legal charge). The point is that during his ministry, Jesus was in constant opposition with Jewish religious authorities, but also with his generation. He was praised and followed by many, but eventually, oppositions grew, and Jesus’ actions and words led him to the cross.

5. Jesus of Today

If we look at our Western culture today, we can easily see that two factors strongly shape it: postmodernism and its child, “political correctness.” Without trying to define postmodernism which is a somewhat difficult task in the context of this article, we would rather describe it. According to Christopher Norris, postmodernism has three main aspects: epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics. Epistemologically postmodernism functions on the premise of skepticism about the possibility of knowledge and truth, and the possibility of a constructive, cooperative enterprise aimed toward truth at the end of inquiry (2000, 57). If it is not possible to define truth or ultimate truth, postmodernism naturally argues that different people have a different set of beliefs, values, ideas, etc., which are all equally valid and good. Hence, we are not in a position to judge between good and bad. Con-

sequently, we should respect other opinions without trying to impose our version of the truth. Although this approach looks respectful and honorable, if we follow these premise to their ultimate conclusions, they lead us toward a monolith and amorphous society where any meaningful communication and relationships are impossible. If all beliefs, values, ideas, whether they belong to an individual or particular group, are equally good and positive, and there is no way to assess or adjudicate them, then we are heading toward dysfunctional society.

According to Geoffrey Hughes (2009, 3) the term “political correctness” became part of the modern lexicon as a consequence of the wide-ranging public debate which started on campuses in the United States from the late 1980s. Initially connected with education and the curriculum on USA campuses, this term today is used in many different areas of life such as political, literary, educational, gender, cultural, and behavioral. Without trying to extensively define it,² we can say that “political correctness inculcates a sense of obligation or conformity in areas which should be (or are) matters of choice. Nevertheless, it has had a major influence on what is regarded as ‘acceptable’ or ‘appropriate’ in language, ideas, behavioral norms, and values” (Hughes 2009, 4). Hughes (2009, 38) explains that political correctness is fundamentally concerned with changing norms in behavior and language by seeking to stress human communality and downplay engrained differences and exclusivity, discouraging judgmental attitudes, and outlawing demeaning language. Simultaneously, a new framework of values and morality arise which, to some extent, supplanted traditional orthodox categories (cf. Hughes 2009, 58-59).

But more importantly is how this concept affects everyday language or speech. Hughes (2009, 14) explains that “[t]ypically, politically correct language avoids judgmental terms, preferring an artificial currency of polysyllabic abstract euphemistic substitutions.” Also, euphemisms are used because “political correctness show avoidance of direct reference to some embarrassing topic or condition”

- 2 According to Hughes (2009, 17), it is problematic to define the term “political correctness” because definitions are often problematic or inadequate: “In essence this is because the formula political correctness is an inherently problematic semantic construct. In the first place, there is no such thing as a ‘correct political attitude,’ for various reasons. Politics is by any definition a diversified term covering a wide spectrum of activities going far beyond affairs of state and government to include local politics, office politics, family politics, marital politics, sexual politics, identity politics, and so on. We are virtually in the realm of the Marxist interpretation which sees politics in everything. Furthermore, outside the confines of totalitarian societies, not one political system or party can claim to be ‘correct.’ Even within major political parties, there are ‘moderates,’ ‘hardliners,’ and ‘extremists.’ Correctness, by contrast, denotes conformity to certain agreed standards or practices. Consequently, political correctness does not have an agreed, clear literal meaning, in the way that grammatical correctness or political corruption do.”

(Hughes 2009, 18). However, as Otto Jespersen (1912, 243) observed: “This is the usual destiny of euphemisms; in order to avoid the real name of what is thought indecent or improper people use some innocent word. But when that becomes habitual in this sense it becomes just as objectionable as the word it has ousted and now is rejected in its turn.”

This introductory analysis helps us to see how only these two factors (of course, there are other factors that shape the contemporary Western culture) tremendously shape our Western culture – culture in which Christian church lives. Is it surprising that this dominant culture shapes and reshapes Christian church and its theology? Christianity is a result of God’s revelation, and consequently, it has a belief system which contains absolutes based on which we can say that something is wrong and bad, or that something is right and good. That which is wrong and bad the Bible often labels as “sin” or “lawlessness,” and that which is right and good is often labeled as “holiness” and “righteousness.” Accordingly, Christianity has a set of beliefs, behavior, relationships, standards, values, and practices which are the result of God’s revelation and as such are non-negotiable.

Unfortunately, modern Western culture more and more shapes and reshapes traditional evangelical Christianity into something unrecognizable. This change can be the most easily detected in the arena of Christian “terminology” which is then followed by further changes in doctrines. Let us observe some evidence or examples:

(1) How much local churches, denominations or well-known Bible teachers speak about “truth” and how much about “love?” If some comprehensive survey can be conducted, I have no doubt that it would show declining trend of speech about “truth,” and growing trend of speech about “love.” What is problematic in this trend is that God’s love is not devoid of God’s truth. In other words, we cannot have God’s love without God’s truth.

(2) And what about “sin?” How much local churches, denominations or favorite Bible teachers speak about “human sinfulness” and “evil human heart?” The growing tendency is not to say that people “live in sin” but that they are “not perfect.” Hence, we have a slogan “Christian’s aren’t perfect, just forgiven.” By changing the label, we change everything else. Being in sin requires repentance, being not perfect means that your situation is not that much horrible. Eventually, you maybe need help – that is it.

(3) Continuing on the previous topic, in today’s culture, it has become increasingly difficult to call a sin “sin,” and to label a sinner as “sinner.” It is simply not politically correct. Hence, Kevin A. Thompson (2003) writes:

You are a sinner. I’m sorry to break it to you. I know it’s not politically correct.
But it’s true. Many of your thoughts, actions, and deeds do not bring glory to

God. Neither do many of mine. Truth demands that we call things the way they are. You and I are sinners. We can live in denial of this fact. We can pretend like everything is ok. We can create a politically correct world in which we never tell the truth. But it won't change the truth—we are sinners.

What Thompson is saying is that in today's Western culture, which avoids using judgmental terms by using euphemisms, Christian terminology which proceeds from God's absolutes is undesirable, to say it mildly.

(4) Speaking on the subject of judging others, Thomas L. Carson (1988) says the following:

People do not say "Who am *I* to judge?" but rather "Who are *we*(*you*) to judge?" or "Who is (anyone) to judge?" The question is characteristically raised as a reproach or expression of disapproval for those who make moral judgments and is usually intended to convey the message that those who make moral judgments are guilty of some kind of arrogance or presumption. Asking "Who are we to judge?" is often a shorthand way of stating a version of moral skepticism. We are not to judge because we are incapable of attaining knowledge about moral questions... On the other hand, some of those who ask "Who are we to judge?" are more inclined toward a version of ethical relativism or meta-ethical relativism, according to which moral judgments aren't objectively true or false, but, at most, true or correct *for* the individual.

Can we honestly say that although we know God's absolutes³ we cannot judge because we have no sufficient knowledge? Or that we can approve ethical relativism? Surely not. And it is even more absurd that those who pose these questions, that is forbidding someone to judge others, in actuality are doing that very thing – they judge others.

Based on the previous examples, we can see that certain doctrinal presuppositions or convictions change the way we speak and how we relate to certain things. Consequently, the rest of doctrines also change to align with this new set of doctrinal convictions. But since Christians hold to a certain set of convictions, the clash between Christianity and culture is inevitable. On that note, Ruth

3 "We live in a world that increasingly strives to (supposedly) promote the idea of tolerance, but actually becomes intolerant of Christian absolutes as it does so. Whether it involves religion, behavior, or human sexuality, there is a growing anti-Christian sentiment in America and other Western nations. Ultimately, built into this 'tolerance' is the concept that truth is determined by each individual, not by God. This has led many people to conclude that making judgments on anyone (especially coming from Christians) is wrong because the Bible says 'judge not' (Matthew 7:1). Interestingly enough, those who reject the notion of God or the credibility of the Bible often attempt to use God's Word (e.g., by quoting verses out of context) to excuse their actions when they are presented with the gospel and the plight of sinners for rejecting it" (Ham, Ham & Chakranarayan 2013).

Meyer says: “It’s politically incorrect to say that Jesus is the only way to heaven. Those who dare to make such a claim are labeled ‘intolerant’ and ‘unloving.’ If we dare to take a stand on a moral or social issue, as Phil Robertson did against homosexuality, we start a firestorm and are called ‘haters.’ Hence, many Christians have found it easiest to just say nothing.” However, the problem for Christianity does not end here. Not only that we are often labeled as haters, intolerant and the like, but the very term “Christian” has become associated with many unchristian things. Hence, we have a “Christian yoga,” we have “Christian homosexuals,” “Christian dream books,” and even “Christian swingers.” In other words, we have competitive versions of Christianity which all claim to follow the teaching and example of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

If we accept the 21st century postmodernist, politically correct, all loving, never offending, open minded, never judging, “anything goes” Jesus as the genuine Jesus of the Bible, we do have two radically different Jesus’. And we have a choice: will we follow the Jesus of the Gospels or the Jesus of today. Bear in mind this choice is the result of one underlying process that is old as creation: when God made a man, He created him in his image. The fall was a result of a man wanting to be like God. Accordingly, throughout human history, men try to create God in their own image, yet the God of the Bible is in the process of recreating people back to His image.

Augustine said: “If you believe what you like in the gospels, and reject what you don’t like, it is not the gospel you believe, but yourself.” We have seen from the synoptic gospels that Jesus relatively seldom spoke about love. When he did, he emphasized the need for people to love God. Consequently, he did not speak much about how God loves people. Also, we have seen that in his teachings and speech, Jesus was very offensive. He clearly identified people’s sins, he called certain people and even the whole generation with names that described their spiritual condition (“fools,” “hypocrites,” “blind,” etc.). Because he was speaking the truth, people were often upset by him. The proof for this I have presented in the first part of this article.

If Jesus of the gospels would somehow end up in our time and repeat his earthly ministry as we can see in the synoptic gospels, I have no doubt that Jesus would be labeled as a “hater,” “bigot,” or “intolerant” toward others, “unloving,” “phobic,” etc. Probably many of those who bear his name would be insulted by his speech and behavior and would say that he needs to repent and get rid of his offensive attitude. Maybe they would say that he has a lack of “Christian love” or that he is “not spiritual.” If that would be the case, then we have missed the point.

Jesus of the gospels did not change. He is the same yesterday, today and forever, and we should be very careful to follow not some “contemporary Jesus,” but Jesus of the gospels.

Appendix

Table 1. Jesus’ speech about love

Content	Text
Love your enemy (because God loves them also)	Matt. 5:43-46; Lk. 6:27-35
No one can serve and love two masters	Matt. 6:24; Lk. 16:13
Love your neighbor as yourself	Matt. 19:19; Mt. 22:39; Mk. 12:31; Mk. 12:33
Love God with all your heart soul and mind	Matt. 22:37; Mk. 12:30; Mk. 12:33; Lk. 10:27
Jesus looked at him and loved him	Mk. 10:21
Centurion who loves the Jewish nation	Lk. 7:5
Parable of forgiveness and who loves more	Lk. 7:42-47
Pharisees who love the most important seats and greetings.	Lk. 11:43

Table 2. Jesus’ harsh language and teaching

Hypocrites	In general: Matt. 6:2, 5, 16; 7:5; Lk. 6:42 Pharisees: Matt. 15:7; 22:18; 23:13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 28, 29; Mk. 7:6; Lk. 13:15 Crowd: Lk. 12:56
Blind	Pharisees: Matt. 15:14; 23:16, 17, 19, 24, 26 Followers of Pharisees: Mt. 15:14 In general: Lk. 6:39
Evil, adulteress generation	Generation: Matt. 12:39, 45 (just evil); 16:4; Mk. 8:38; Lk. 11:29 (just evil)
Unfaithful and crooked generation	Matt. 17:17; Mk. 9:19; Lk. 9:41
Never satisfied generation	Matt. 11:16-19; Lk. 11:31-35
Fools	Whoever does not keep His words: Matt. 7:26; Mt. 25:2,3,8 Pharisees: Matt. 23:17

Evil	In general: Matt. 7:11; Lk. 11:13 (says this to his disciples) Pharisees: Lk. 11:39 Scribes: Matt. 9:4; 12:34
Wolves	False prophets: 7:15 People: Matt. 10:16; Lk. 10:3
Robbers	Merchants in the Temple: Matt. 21:13; Mk. 11:17; Lk. 19:46
Little dogs	Matt. 15:26; Mk. 7:27
Blind and deaf	People in general: Matt. 13:13; Mk. 4:11-12
Brood of vipers	Pharisees: Matt. 12:34; 23:33
Killers of the prophets	Matt. 23:29-32; Lk. 11:47-48
Greed/robbery	Pharisees and Scribes: Matt. 23:25 Lk. 11:39
Serpent	Matt. 23:33
Dogs and pigs	Matt. 7:6
Unjust	Matt. 23:28
Sons of Hell	Pharisees and Scribes: Matt. 23:15
Whitewashed tombs, dead bones, unclean;	Matt. 23:27
Unmarked graves	Lk. 11:44
Powerless	Matt. 23:25
Jesus shames his opponents in discussion	Matt. 22:22, 34, 46; Mk. 12:12, 13-34; Lk. 13:17; 14:1-6; 20:20-39
Rebukes his disciples	Peter Matt. 16:23 and Mk. 8:31-33; Mk. 8:17-19; 16:14; Lk. 11:13 (says that they are evil); Lk. 24:25
Judgment in words and deeds	Generation: Matt. 11:16-19; 12:41-45; 23:33-36; Mk. 9:19; Lk. 11:49-51 Pharisees and Scribes: Matt. 15:13; 23:1-36; Mk. 12:38-40; Lk. 11:37-54; 20:45-47 Cities: Matt. 10:14-15; 11:20-24; Mk. 6:11; Lk. 9:5; 10:10-12, 13-15 Temple: Matt. 24:1-2; Mk. 13:1-2; Lk. 21:5-6 Jerusalem: Matt. 23:37-39; Lk. 13:34-35; 19:41-44 Condemnation of Scribes because of their greed: Mk. 12:38-40; Lk. 20:47 Merchants in the Temple: Matt. 21:12-16; Mk. 11:15-18; Lk. 19:45-46
Hell	Matt. 5:22, 29-30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15 (sons of Hell); 23:33; Mk. 9:43; 9:45; 9:47; Lk. 12:5
Synonyms for hell	Matt. 13:42, 50; 25:41

Table 3. Negative reactions on Jesus

Pleaded with him to leave their region	Matt. 8:28-34; Mk. 5:1-17; Lk. 8:26-37
Accusation for blasphemy	Matt. 9:3-4; Lk. 5:21-26
Laugh at him	Matt. 9:24-25; Mk. 5:40
Plan to catch/kill him	Matt. 12:14; Mk. 12:12; Lk. 4:22-30; Lk. 13:31-33; 19:45-47; 20:19-20
Connection with Beelzebul	Matt. 10:25; 12:24-27; Mk. 3:22; Lk. 11:15-19
Angry at him	Matt. 21:16; 21:46; Lk. 6:7-11; 11:37-54; 13:14-17
Prophet does not have honor	Matt. 13:57; Mk. 6:4; Lk 4:24
Ridiculed him because of his teaching	Lk. 16:14-16
Objections against Jesus	Mk. 2:6, 16, 24
Think that he is crazy	Mk. 3:21
Putting him on the test (questions and discussions)	Matt. 16:1; 19:3; 22:35; Mk. 8:11; 10:2; Lk. 10:25; 11:16
Complain	Matt. 9:11; Lk. 5:30-32; 15:2; 19:7
He is a scandal for them	Matt. 13:57; 15:12; Mk. 6:3
Offended by him	Lk. 11:45
Looking for the reason to accuse him / trap him in his words:	Matt. 12:10; Mk. 3:2; Lk 6:7 / Matt. 22:15; Mk. 12:13
Keep close watch on him	Lk. 14:1; Lk. 20:20
Mockery, passion, crucifixion	Matt. 26:67-68; 27:27-38; 27:39-44; Mk. 14.65; 15:29-32; Lk. 22:63; 23:34-37

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Translated from Croatian by Davor Edelinski

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Isus iz evanđelja i Isus danas

Sažetak

Započevši navođenjem suvremenih prevladavajućih vrijednosti tolerancije, dijaloga i političke korektnosti, članak analizira Isusov govor i učenja u sinoptičkim evanđeljima u svjetlu navedenih vrijednosti. Prvo, članak analizira Isusov govor o ljubavi, a nakon toga usmjerava se na njegov oštar govor i učenje. Potom, članak analizira reakcije različitih pojedinaca i grupa ljudi na Isusov govor i učenje. Na temelju poduzete analize, u posljednjem dijelu članka uspoređuje se Isus iz sinoptičkih evanđelja s iskrivljenom slikom Isusa koja je ponekad prisutna u suvremenom kršćanstvu. Zaključuje se kako je suvremena zapadna kultura izopačila Isusovu sliku iz evanđelja, stvorivši suvremenog Isusa koji u svojem govoru i učenju odražava današnje prevladavajuće vrijednosti. Međutim, Isus je isti jučer, danas i zauvijek, i trebamo biti pažljivi da ne slijedimo nekakvog suvremenog Isusa, već onoga iz evanđelja.