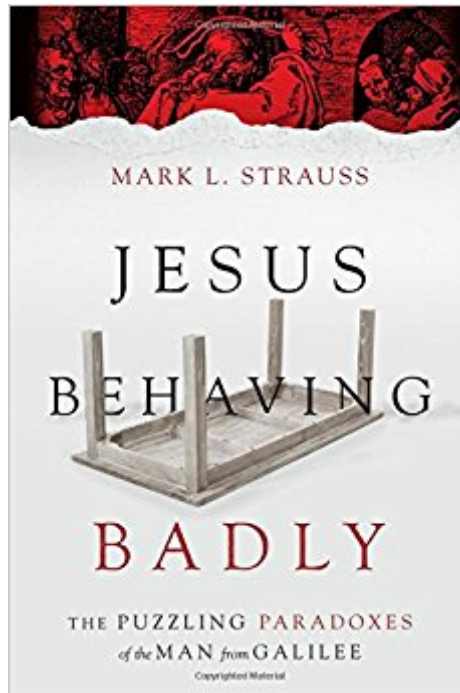




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# **Jesus Behaving Badly: The Puzzling Paradoxes Of The Man From Galilee**



## Synopsis

Everybody likes Jesus. Don't they? We overlook that Jesus was Judgmental – preaching hellfire far more than the apostle Paul. Uncompromising – telling people to hate their families. Chauvinistic – excluding women from leadership. Racist – insulting people from other ethnic groups. Anti-environmental – cursing a fig tree and affirming animal sacrifice. Angry – overturning tables and chasing moneychangers in the temple. He demanded moral perfection, told people to cut off body parts, made prophecies that haven't come true, and defied religious and political authorities. While we tend to ignore this troubling behavior, the people around Jesus didn't. Some believed him so dangerous that they found a way to have him killed. The Jesus everybody likes, says Mark Strauss, is not the Jesus found in the Gospels. He's a figure we've created in our own minds. Strauss believes that when we unpack the puzzling paradoxes of the man from Galilee, we find greater insight into his countercultural message and mission than we could ever have imagined.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"In *Jesus Behaving Badly*, Mark Strauss provides a clear and compelling portrait of Jesus in his own terms and historical context. Strauss skillfully guides the reader through the maze of current questions about Jesus, such as 'Was Jesus a revolutionary?' and 'Why did Jesus curse a fig tree?' Students and pastors alike will find *Jesus Behaving Badly* an enriching read and invaluable tool in understanding the Jesus of the Gospels." (Lynn H. Cohick, Wheaton College) "Mark Strauss

provides a wonderful account of Jesus full of wit and wisdom that shows that the meek and mild Jesus is Sunday school fiction. The Jesus of the Gospels is a much more complicated character who felt compassion and anger, who preached peace and kicked over tables, who made friends with prostitutes and offended the religious establishment, who resisted family values of the day and even started a revolution in Judaism. Reading this book could be like meeting Jesus for the first time." (Michael F. Bird, lecturer in theology at Ridley College, Melbourne, Australia)"We have rehabilitated Jesus so much today that we can't imagine how anyone wouldn't admire Jesus. How could anyone hate this lovable guy enough to scream, 'Crucify him!'? Yet, a fuller reading of the Gospels reveals a tree-hating, name-calling troublemaker who often didn't play well with others. Maybe the home crowd at Nazareth wanted to stone him because he was a 'stubborn and rebellious son' (Deut 21:18-21). Yet, in a delightfully written book, Strauss treats fairly these typical objections to Jesus and guides the reader to a fuller understanding of this complex man from Galilee. Anyone wanting to understand Jesus better, whether in a classroom or Bible study, should read this book." (E. Randolph Richards, dean, school of ministry, professor of biblical studies, Palm Beach Atlantic University)"Strauss tackles these issues with honesty, humility, and occasional humor. He provides a wealth of political, cultural, and historical background information that clarifies the meaning of Jesus' words and deeds. He addresses the tough questions that arise, drawing implications for Christians today. . . . Jesus Behaving Badly offers insightful information for seekers, new Christians, and longtime believers." (Daniel Johnson, CBA Retailers+Resources, November 2015)"The author crafts chapters with an eye toward orthodoxy, posing questions first in a negative, then a positive light. His underlying agenda is made plain: 'Knowing about Jesus is one thing; knowing him is something else.' . . . In a day and time when many people are trying to get a handle on life, Jesus Behaving Badly provides a clear, thoughtful and engaging forum to begin framing a new or renewed relationship with the Word made Flesh. This book is a treasure." (Thomas W. Blair, The Presbyterian Outlook, March 17, 2016)"Many people have the view that Jesus was basically a friendly and warm teacher. Those who have read the Gospels closely recognize, though, that Jesus said and did things that upset this rosy portrait. Jesus Behaving Badly engages the hard 'sayings' and 'doings' of Jesus, not by merely explaining them away, but by representing a fullness of Jesus in the three dimensions of a real historical figure and in the fourfold portrayal of the Gospels. If the aim of this book is to reckon with the whole Jesus and not a mere caricature, Strauss has accomplished this with sense and wit." (Nijay K. Gupta, George Fox Evangelical Seminary)

Mark Strauss (PhD, University of Aberdeen) is professor of New Testament at Bethel Seminary San

Diego. He is the author or coauthor of several books and numerous articles, including *How to Read the Bible in Changing Times*, *Four Portraits, One Jesus: An Introduction to Jesus and the Gospels*, *How to Choose a Translation for All It's Worth* (with Gordon D. Fee), *The Essential Bible Companion* (with John Walton) and commentaries on Mark's Gospel in the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series and *Expositors Bible Commentary*, Vol. 9. He is New Testament editor of the Expanded Bible and the Teach the Text Commentary Series. He also serves as Vice-Chair of the Committee for Bible Translation for the New International Version and as an associate editor for the NIV Study Bible. Strauss has a heart for ministry and preaches and teaches regularly at churches, conferences and college campuses. He is the weekly teacher at the Cove Bible Study at The Church at Rancho Bernardo. He lives in San Diego with his wife, Roxanne, and three kids.

*Jesus Behaving Badly* explores the apparent contradictions in the life of Jesus. How can it be that some people view Jesus as a revolutionary and others view Him as a pacifist? Some people view Him as angry and others view him as loving. Some people consider Jesus an environmentalist and other claim He's an earth scorcher. Some see Jesus through the lens of hellfire preacher and other see a gentle shepherd. Legalist or grace filled, sexist or egalitarian, and on and on. Some people look at one set of Bible passages and come to one conclusion and others gravitate to a different set of Bible passages and come to different conclusions. Mark Strauss has done a masterful job of looking at Jesus from all sides. For each pair of apparent contradictions, he builds a case for one side and then he turns around and lays out a convincing case for the other side. Then, he masterfully paints the whole picture in a way that gives you a new perspective and appreciation for the complexities of Jesus. He pulls in extra-biblical details to help explain things like the withering fig tree Jesus cursed or the cultural and political viewpoints of the time. The author's work relies on historical documents of the New Testament era, but his text is story-like and very readable to non-academic folks. This was a thoroughly enjoyable book and as soon as I finished I was tempted to start over, but I'll come back to this one again in due time. This review, along with additional book quotes, first appeared on my blog, [ChristyBower.com](http://ChristyBower.com).

The book deals with several of Jesus' sayings and shows the paradoxical tensions between modern perceptions of what Jesus said as opposed to Biblically contextualizing what Jesus says, it's a book I recommend

Paradox is an important way to get a grasp on truth. Jesus, who is the truth, was a man of puzzling paradoxes. This book was an insightful and enjoyable exploration of them.

In *Jesus Behaving Badly*, Mark Strauss looks at gospel material that may trouble some Christians. To Strauss, it seems that "everybody likes Jesus" only because we each make Jesus in our own image. To a Muslim, Jesus was a great prophet. To New Agers, he was an enlightened sage who can help us find our True Self. To Jews he was a noble Jewish reformer. Even to Atheists, he may be seen as a great moral teacher. When each of us searches for the "real Jesus" we tend to see only our own reflection. We domesticate Jesus and then, of course, we like what we see. Throughout the book Strauss examines what may be considered the "bad behavior" of Jesus found in the Gospels. Contrary to what we tend to believe, the Gospels seem to portray Jesus as being angry, legalistic, anti-family, a stern prophet warning against hell-fire, racist, and sexist. Chapter by chapter, Strauss examines the gospel data that shows Jesus in these lights. By not shying away from these sayings, he finds Jesus' message often more shocking than we first assume. If we truly say we are following Jesus, Strauss believes that we can't simply look past these difficult texts. This is an interesting book because a lot of these gospel sayings are looked past or minimized in conservative churches. I agree with Strauss that the Gospels present a much more paradoxical and troubling Jesus than we are typically led to believe. Jesus was not just a nice guy who would be fun at a dinner party and who just wants everyone to get along. He was a radical 1st Century Jewish prophet. While I appreciate Strauss examining these difficult texts, I depart from his interpretation sometimes as I feel he always finds a way to "get Jesus off the hook" for the particular "hard saying." Strauss writes as a conservative Christian and therefore Jesus' actions and sayings need to be justified. So although Strauss can look sayings that imply Jesus was racist, he needs to explain that "this is ok because \_\_\_\_\_. " Jesus' bad behavior is, in Strauss' mind, only "apparently" bad behavior. In some cases I agree with Strauss and in other cases I don't. In particular, I think that Strauss' treatment of Jesus' "Apocalyptic sayings" (i.e. sayings that seem to imply that Jesus thought the end of the world was at hand) fails to get Jesus off of that hook. Personally, I stand in the line of Schweitzer and, more recently, EP Sanders, Bart Ehrman, Dale Allison, etc. in believing that when Jesus said "the Kingdom of God is at hand," he meant it quite literally. But Strauss gives his detailed exegetical arguments on key texts in this debate and the reader will have to decide for themselves. This issue is often not even talked about in conservative scholarship, and I like that it was addressed in this book. Overall this was a good read that discusses many difficult sayings of Jesus. If someone claims to follow Jesus, this book will help them explore more fully what that

means.

Mark Strauss does an excellent job of presenting what appears to be a paradoxal portrait of Jesus. His carefully researched answers gives the reader a more complete picture of who Jesus was. He writes in a clear and easy to read style for anyone.

Jesus Behaving Badly is a VERY interesting and enjoyable read. Author Mark Strauss takes on some very controversial acts and statements made by Jesus, and explains them perfectly.

Difficult facts and Scriptures are addressed and Jesus is portrayed as the most wondrous person in history-a good read for all

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