

Doesn't Religion Cause Violence?

Matthew 5:38-48

Series: Confronting Christianity – Summer 2021

Preaching Date: June 20, 2021

Worship: Prince of Peace

Chapter in *Confronting Christianity*: 5

Key Sentence: True Christian faith does not glorify violence. It humiliates it.

Outline:

- I. Jesus' rejection of violence (Matthew 5:38-48)
- II. Christianity's rejection of violence (Ephesians 2:13–18, Romans 12:17-21)
- III. Christianity's record of violence
- IV. Non-Christianity's record of violence
- V. The violence at the heart of Christianity (Matthew 20:17–19)

Matthew 5:38–48 “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ ³⁹But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. ⁴⁰And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. ⁴¹And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. ⁴²Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you. ⁴³“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Matthew 20:17–19 And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside, and on the way he said to them, ¹⁸“See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death ¹⁹and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day.”

Ephesians 2:13–18 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the

hostility. ¹⁷And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

Romans 12:17–21 Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. ¹⁸If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” ²⁰To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” ²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

All religions have violence. Violence has been done in the name of Christianity, but Christianity is the opposite of a religion of violence:

Staked at the heart of Christianity is a symbol of extreme violence—the brutal, torturous, state-sponsored execution of an innocent man. Christians believe that this execution was orchestrated by God himself. Some argue from this that Christianity glorifies violence. But the meaning of the cross is precisely the opposite. Violence is the use of power by the strong to hurt the weak. At the cross, the most powerful man who ever lived submitted to the most brutal death ever died, to save the powerless. Christianity does not glorify violence. It humiliates it.

McLaughlin, Rebecca. *Confronting Christianity* (pp. 97-98). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

Doesn't Religion Cause Violence? Matthew 5:38-48

But are there real consequences to disagreements about religious truth, or does religious truth simply boil down to cultural preference? If I say, "Christianity is true, and Hinduism, Islam, and Buddhism are not," is that like saying, "Stop smoking; it could kill you," or is it more like saying, "My grandmother's cooking is better than yours"?

McLaughlin, Rebecca. *Confronting Christianity* (p. 54)

Notes

(1) The worship theme is "Prince of Peace," focusing on Jesus as the source of peace and us as its recipients and practicers. "For Today," "Great is Thy Faithfulness," "In Christ Alone," "O For a Thousand Tongues," "Lead On, O King Eternal." "Justice Shall Roll Down," I'm sure there are a lot more I'm not thinking of. There can almost be a Christmassy feel to this: "Welcome to Our World," "Light of the World," "Hark the Herald Angels Sing," "I Heard the Bells" (Casting Crowns)."

I have a Ron Block / Rebecca Reynolds video "Lord, I Lay My Armor Down," that might make a good transition to communion.

(2) This is a communion week. We will do a transition song.

(3) The Scripture at the start of worship will be chosen to go along with the songs.

(4) The Children's Corner will be "Telemachus"

(5) The sign will be "Is Christianity a religion of violence?" Matthew 5:44

(6) The visual theme will be "river sunrise" or "misty river sunrise," just cause these are peaceful images.