**Religion of Peace – Part 3**

In our first two articles in this series, we noted that acts of violence are sometimes perpetrated in the name of a particular religion or other, and there is a fear that peace loving adherents may be singled out for retaliation as a result. It is important to point out that mistreating innocent people because of the actions of someone else is never acceptable and is, in principle, exactly what the terrorists are doing. However, in their zeal to mitigate public sentiment toward the religion in question, some have maintained that Christianity is just as violent as any other religion. Consideration of the teaching of Scripture makes it crystal clear that this is simply not true.

In part one, we learned that the New Testament of Jesus Christ is the only rule of faith and practice for the Christian because the Old Covenant was nailed to the cross of Jesus. In Part two, we noticed that Christ’s kingdom, the church, is spiritual in nature and has no business involving itself in the political arena. In this article, we will see that acts of violence in the name of religion is totally out of character for the disciple of Jesus Christ.

Jesus had a lot to say about the nature of the kingdom and its citizens in what we often call His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chapters 5-7). He began by pronouncing blessings on the poor in spirit, the gentle, the merciful and the peacemakers (5:3-10). He made it clear that His disciples were not to retaliate when mistreated (5:38-42). He informed me in no uncertain terms that the Father’s willingness to forgive me is dependent on my willingness to forgive others (6:14-15). He summarized the Christian’s character in what has been called the golden rule: “In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (7:12).

Any good-hearted person could look at this list and lend enthusiastic support. But some of the most striking teaching of Christ deals with our attitude toward our enemies. In Matthew 5:43-44, Jesus taught, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” In Luke’s account, He added, “Do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you” (Luke 6:27-28).

The rest of the New Testament has a lot to say about the character of the Christian and it is all consistent with the teachings of Jesus Himself. “If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men” (Romans 12:18). “Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.” (Hebrews 12:14). “Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person” (Colossians 4:5-6).

Space doesn’t permit a thorough study of every relevant passage, but the entire New Testament consistently teaches the same principles. For this kind of study it is critical to consider what Jesus Christ taught, not examples from the past of men abusing His teachings. This entire series culminates in the following statement: ***While the adherents of some religions must ignore some of their founder’s teachings in order to be peaceful, any person who perpetrates violence against his fellowman in the name of Christianity must violate Christ’s teachings to do so.*** That is precisely why such cases are rare and limited to the mentally unstable or grossly ignorant. The kingdom of Christ is governed solely by the teachings of the New Testament, it is entirely apolitical and its citizens strive to emulate the peace-loving character of their Lord and Master in their lives. Anyone who tells you otherwise is misleading you.

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