

Matthew 26:52

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

Analysis

Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword (τότε λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Ἀπόστρεψον τὴν μάχαιράν σου εἰς τὸν τόπον αὐτῆς· πάντες γὰρ οἱ λαβόντες μάχαιραν ἐν μαχαίρῃ ἀπολοῦνται)—The command ἀποστρέψω ('turn back, return, put back') is urgent. Jesus immediately stops Peter's violence. The proverbial saying 'all who take the sword will perish by the sword' teaches the principle of violent reciprocity (Genesis 9:6; Revelation 13:10). The verb λαμβάνω (lambanō, 'to take up, to wield') suggests initiating violence, not legitimate defense or justice (Romans 13:4).

This isn't pacifistic prohibition of all force but rejection of violence to advance God's kingdom. Jesus's kingdom doesn't come through military conquest (John 18:36). Peter's sword couldn't prevent the cross—God's redemptive plan required Jesus's death. Misguided zeal that opposes God's purposes, however well-intentioned, earns rebuke. The principle warns that those who live by violence (as first resort, as primary method) die by violence—violence begets violence. Christ's kingdom advances through suffering love, not coercive power.

Historical Context

Jesus's teaching reflects Old Testament wisdom: 'He who digs a pit will fall into it' (Proverbs 26:27); 'Violence covers the mouth of the wicked' (Proverbs 10:11). The

early church took this seriously—Christians generally refused military service for three centuries, seeing violence as incompatible with loving enemies (Matthew 5:44). Only after Constantine did Christianity accommodate warfare. Jesus's rebuke established that the gospel advances through martyrdom, not militia; through witness, not weapons; through cross, not crusade.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus's rebuke of Peter challenge contemporary attempts to advance the gospel through political power or cultural warfare?
2. When has your well-intentioned 'defense' of Jesus actually opposed His purposes?

Interlinear Text

τότε	λέγει	αὐτῆς·	ό	Ἰησοῦς,	Ἀπόστρεψόν	σου	τὴν
Then	said	his	G3588	Jesus	Put up again	thy	G3588
G5119	G3004	G846		G2424	G654	G4675	
μαχαίρα	εἰς	τὸν	τόπον	αὐτῆς·	πάντες	γὰρ	οἱ
sword	into	G3588	place	his	all they	for	G3588
G3162	G1519		G5117	G846	G3956	G1063	
λαβόντες	μαχαίρα	ἐν	μαχαίρᾳ	ἀπολοῦνται			
that take	sword	with	sword	shall perish			
G2983	G3162	G1722	G3162	G622			

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 13:10 (Word): He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

Genesis 9:6 (Parallel theme): Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.

Romans 12:19 (Parallel theme): Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

1 Peter 3:9 (Parallel theme): Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

Revelation 16:6 (Parallel theme): For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.

Psalms 55:23 (Parallel theme): But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in thee.

Matthew 5:39 (Parallel theme): But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.