

Two Swords is Enough . . . enough for what ?

Luke 22.34-38 *And he said: I tell thee Peter, the cock shall not crow this day before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me. 35 And he said unto them: when I sent you without purse and scrip and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said: nothing. 36 Then said he unto them: but now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip. And he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one. 37 For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me: And he was reckoned among the transgressors. For the things concerning me have an end. 38 And they said, Lord, behold here are two swords. And he said unto them: **IT IS ENOUGH.***

In this passage, Jesus counsels us to take up the weapons of war, despite anything he may have said to the contrary. That is how the Secular Christians want to understand him. Like any confusing scripture passage, this one has to be read in context--the context of the surrounding chapter, the context of related chapters, and the context of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. What is the general subject of this chapter, and the related chapters of other gospels ? **THEIR LOSS OF FAITH.** He warns them that they will all lose their faith in him, when he falls into the hands of those that mean to kill him. When Peter proclaims his unshakeable loyalty, Jesus, in response, prophesies Peter's betrayal: *thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.* Then he reminds them of a time when they did put their faith in him and how it all worked out: *lacked ye any thing ? And they said: nothing.* We can see his instructions in Matthew 10.9-10: *Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses 10 Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, NOR YET STAVES.*

He sent them out without money or weapons and it all worked out. But now he says, they need **BOTH MONEY AND WEAPONS.** Why ? Clearly, he means that, without faith in Him, they become like other men. When they lose their faith in Jesus Christ, they must put their trust in their trusty swords and in their purses like other men. The coin we use says *In God We Trust* but it is **IN MONEY** that we put our trust--in our wallets and our purses, in our bank accounts and our investments--that is where Real Security comes from. Only the fool puts his trust in God. Our safety lies in 100 billion dollars worth of wonderful weapons. The revolver in the dresser drawer will keep me safe from harm.

The followers of Jesus never really understand him at this time. (John 12.16, Luke 18.34) In this place they understand him to mean that **NOW, TONIGHT,** they need swords. They tell him that they do in fact have two swords. And Jesus responds: **IT IS ENOUGH.** +Enough **FOR WHAT ? !** Imagine leading a group of people into a situation where you know you will encounter a mob of armed men, including policemen and soldiers. You tell them that nonviolence is passe, that we need guns this time. And they volunteer the information that there are two revolvers in the group. That is enough, you say. Enough **FOR WHAT ? !** To get everyone killed ? ! You are going to take on a small army with just two weapons among your followers ? Was Jesus a 60s style careless rebel who pushed his followers into fights they had no chance to win ? In Orangeburg, South Carolina, in Jackson, Mississippi, and at Kent State in Ohio, the student rebels took on the police and the national guard with a revolver or two somewhere in the crowd. The predictable result was a bunch of dead students.

Did Jesus mean to give miraculous power to those two swords so they would be more than a match for the armed mob that came out against him ? Did he mean to multiply the two swords as he once multiplied the two fishes ? We know what he meant to do because we know what he did. He used those swords for one last lesson in the gospel of nonviolence: Matthew 26.52 *Then said Jesus unto him, put up again thy sword into his place. For all that take the sword shall perish with the sword.* Luke 22.51 *And he touched his ear and healed him.* What better witness could there be to the consistency of his own teachings? *Love your enemies do good to those that hate you.* He has no need of Peter's sword: Matthew 26.53 *Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels ?*

My Servants Don't Fight

And he spells out the reason for his pacifism in John 18.33-37: *Art thou the King of the Jews? . . . 36 Jesus answered: My kingdom is not of this world. **IF MY KINGDOM WERE OF THIS WORLD, THEN WOULD MY SERVANTS FIGHT THAT I SHOULD NOT BE DELIVERED TO THE JEWS.** But now is my kingdom not from hence. 37 Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered: thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.* Was it only Jesus who could forego the use of military force? Are his followers supposed to fight for worldly power like other men ? Jesus plainly states that we belong to the same kingdom and must fight for it the same way he did. As John 17.16 says: *they are not of the world even as I am not of the world.*

In his book, **On Idolatry**, chapter 19, written about 210 AD, the church father Tertullian explains why Christians cannot join the army: *There is no compatibility between the oath to serve God and the oath to serve man, between the standard of Christ and the standard of the devil, the camp of light and the camp of darkness. One life cannot be owed to two masters, God and Caesar. Of course--if you like to make a jest of the subject--Moses carried a rod and Aaron wore a buckler, John had a leather belt, Joshua led an army and Peter made war. Yes but tell me how he will make war, indeed how he will serve in peacetime, without a sword--which the Lord took away ? Even if soldiers came to John and were given instructions to keep, even if the centurion believed, the Lord afterwards unbelted every soldier when he disarmed Peter.* These arguments for Christian soldiers which Tertullian buried early in the 3rd century were dug up by Augustine late in the 4th century and they are still used today to negate the pacifist faith of the early church.

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