

Keeping Ourselves Unspotted from the World  
(Lesson 61)

Introduction:

1. We learn from James 1:27 that "keeping ourselves unspotted from the world" is an essential part of "pure and undefiled religion before God."
2. Jesus presented a number of instructions in His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) that will help us to remain free from the world's spots.
3. In Matthew 5:21-48 Jesus addressed 5 important subjects by first mentioning what the Jews had heard and then revealing His will.
4. In vs.38-42 the Lord dealt with "retaliation" [taking vengeance].

Discussion:

- I. (vs.38) JESUS MENTIONED WHAT THE JEWS HAD HEARD ABOUT TAKING VENGEANCE
  - A. They had heard, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth."
    1. Most people know that the Bible makes this statement.
    2. Quite often, this statement is quoted to show that God approves of taking vengeance.
  - B. Let us consider several passages from the Law of Moses that contain this statement:
    1. Exodus 21:22-25 ["the judges" would be involved in determining the punishment]
    2. Leviticus 24:19-20 [the person who was to inflict punishment is not mentioned]
    3. Deuteronomy 19:15-21 ["the judges" were to settle this matter].
  - C. Those who harmed others were to be punished on the basis of what they had done.
  - D. The Jews had begun to take matters into their own hands.
    1. They interpreted the law to allow them to personally take vengeance on others.
    2. However, they were actually forbidden to personally inflict vengeance (Leviticus 19:18).
    3. This responsibility was given to "the judges."
  - E. According to the law, evil doers were to be punished; however, the Jews were not allowed to personally administer justice.
  - F. After dealing with what the Jews had heard on this subject, . . .
- II. (vs.39a) JESUS REVEALED HIS WILL ON TAKING VENGEANCE
  - A. He said, "Resist not evil" [him who is evil].
  - B. Jesus did not teach that evil doers are not to be punished.
  - C. Evil doers are to be punished; however, we are not personally given that responsibility (Romans 12:19; 13:1-4).
  - D. Not only does the Lord forbid taking vengeance -- He wants us to go further.
- III. (vs.39b-42) JESUS TELLS US HOW FAR HE WANTS US TO GO
  - A. See vs.39b
    1. The Lord does not forbid us from protecting ourselves as well as our families.
      - a. (Luke 22:36) Jesus told His apostles to buy a sword if they did not have one.
      - b. Vengeance and protection are not the same -- Jesus dealt with vengeance.
    2. Those who bear up under persecution will be blessed (Matthew 5:10-12).
  - B. See vs.40
    1. The items of clothing included a "coat" [inner garment] and a "cloak" [outer garment].
    2. We ought to be willing to do without rather than be drug into court.
  - C. See vs.41
    1. Government representatives could require Jews to bear their burdens.
    2. Jesus wants us to go the extra mile -- not just what is required.
  - D. See vs.42
    1. Remember that Jesus is still talking about the way we are to treat others who wrong us.
    2. We are shown in Romans 12:20-21 why we should be willing to help someone who has wronged us.
    3. We read about the Lord's example in 1 Peter 2:20-23.