



The tribe of Issachar understood the times and knew what Israel should do  
Issachar Ministries UK seeks to be a people who understand the times, listen to the Lord and know what should be done

## ***Resourcing for Prayer Network*** **Spiritual Guidelines**

# **Teaching on the Kingdom** **The Sermon on the Mount (vii)**

***“Blessed are the pure in heart,  
for they will see God”***

***(Matthew 5.8)***

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The dictionary definition of 'Purity' always gives me the impression that something is absolutely perfect and is 'not mixed or adulterated by any other substance or material'. It is often used in secular terms as authentic, genuine, faultless, real and true. There is a degree of innocence about this and it is often acquainted with being uncontaminated by immorality - especially that of a sexual nature - or of any sin. In spiritual terms we look to Jesus as epitomising perfection - and having a holiness that we all seek to emulate.

### **Aspiring to Purity**

While we can aspire to this purity is it possible that we can attain it? We are commanded '*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart*' (Matthew 22:37) but we also understand the Psalmist when he says '*Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear falsely*' (Psalm 24:3-4). We do doubt that we can become pure by our own efforts '*Who can say, "I have made my heart clean; I am pure from my sin?"*' (Proverbs 20:9). In Matthew 19 the story of the rich young man caused consternation when Jesus said to his disciples, '*I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God*' and the disciples responded: "*Who then can be saved?*". We know that, as sinners, we are far from God '*But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he will not hear*' (Isaiah 59:2). We know that it is only through the grace of God that we can be made pure in heart and we must look to Christ '*who gave himself for us . . . to purify for himself a people*' (Titus 2:14).

### **The Refining Process**

The Greek word for purity is '*katharos*' and this can also refer more specifically to that which is refined by fire or by pruning. So when we study this Beatitude we need to think of those who have been made spiritually pure with God's help - those who have been through the refiners fire (Malachi 3.2), or been baptised not only with the Holy Spirit but also by fire (Matthew 3.11). John's lovely passage of the vine also refers to those branches who are already bearing some fruit as needing to be pruned by the Lord so that they can bear even more fruit - but real fruit that will last (John 15 1-17).

## A Clean Heart

This recognition that we cannot be pure without the Lord's help and his working within us is portrayed beautifully in the words of the Psalmist as he prays: *"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me"* (Psalm 51:10). We can all pray this prayer too as it picks up not only our need for help to enable us to be pure but also the need for inner cleanliness - a clean heart. Jesus condemned the Pharisees for giving an outward appearance of cleanliness emphasising that true cleanliness starts from the heart *'Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean'* (Matthew 23:25-26).

The heart is particularly seen as the centre of everything, of our whole life. We know that Proverbs 23:7 says, *"As a man thinks in his heart, so is he."* And Jeremiah warns us that *"the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked"* (Jeremiah 17:9).

## Striving Single-mindedly for Holiness

'Pure' also comes from the Latin *'purus'* and can be translated as 'uncontaminated, free from extraneous matter'. It also gives us the concept of being FOCUSED or single-minded. One of the best spiritual understandings of *'being pure in heart'* is that of **'holiness'**. The desire to be pure in heart is to pursue God with utter single-mindedness. Blessed is the one who loves God with his whole heart, soul and mind. This is being single-minded not in a worldly sense but with a dependence on God to enable us to do his will and to be at one with him. We believe James when he promises *"Draw near to God and he will draw near to you"* (4:8).

We can imagine what God is like because we are made in his image (Genesis 1:27), and we also know that we will be admitted to his presence, experience his glory and be comforted by his grace and so we strive for a holiness which will prepare us for this *'Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord'* (Hebrews 12:14). But surely actually **'seeing God'** is not quite the same.

## 'Seeing' God

It has always been man's desire to 'see God' but even Moses was not allowed to see God's face. In Exodus 33 Moses asks God *"Now show me your glory."* And the Lord said, *"I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But,"* he said, *"you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live"* (18-23).

Moses was however allowed to experience the presence of God. When he came down from the mountain top with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands having been with God, his face was radiant, and Aaron and the Israelites were afraid to come near him. Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went to speak with the Lord (Exodus 34:29 - 35). Moses so radiated God's glory that others benefited and this seems to be what Paul means in 2 Corinthians 4-6 *'For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ'*. Our lives should be radiating Christ to others.

Will everyone see God? Habakkuk 2.14 says that *'For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord'* and Revelation 1.7 that *'every eye will see him, even they also who pierced him'*. We are also told that those who will inherit God's Kingdom, *'They shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads'* (Revelation 22:4).

So the promise **'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God'** is repeated throughout scripture and summarised in John's letter *'We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is'* (1 John 3:2).

*This paper comes to you as part of the Issachar Ministries Resourcing for Prayer e-mail in MayJ 2017  
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