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**The Beatitudes: Matthew 5:1-12 - The Character of the Kingdom**  
**Part Seven: Blessed are the Pure in Heart - Matthew 5:8**

By Tal Davis

*"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."*

For many years one of America's most popular bathing soap products was advertised on TV with the slogan "99 and 44 one hundredths percent Pure." The problem many viewers had with the soap ads was that they never addressed the question, "99 and 44 one hundredths percent Pure what?" Pure soap? Pure suds? Pure chemicals? I suppose there was a good answer, but they never said. According to the Dictionary "Pure" has several definitions: "unmixed with any other matter"; "free from dust, dirt, or taint"; or "spotless and stainless."

This brings us to the subject of this seventh installment of our series on the Beatitudes. In this part we will examine the sixth of Jesus' Beatitude principles: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." (Matthew 5:8)

The Greek word Jesus uses in this verse translated as "pure" is *katharos* (from which we get the English word "catharsis"), and it literally means "clean." However, in Scripture it has various usages depending on the context. It can be used as unstained (either literally, ceremonially, or spiritually), guiltless, innocent, or upright. "Heart" is *kardia* (from which we get "cardiac"). Though used primarily for the literal bodily organ that pumps our blood, it has other meanings as well, such as mind, character, inner self, the will, intention, and center. We still often use it those ways today. For instance, we say, "I know in my heart it

is true," or "She broke my heart," or "That's getting to the heart of the matter."

Our question, of course, is how Jesus uses those two words in this context: "pure in heart." To answer that question we will approach it the same way we have our previous studies. We will start by discerning what being "pure in heart" does not mean, then explore what it does mean. We will finally explain Jesus' promise, "for they shall see God." Now let's look at what it is not.

First, being pure in heart is not some concept of outward perfectionism. We previously discussed, in the analysis of "hungering and thirsting for righteousness," the problems with seeking sinless perfection in this life. Granted, some holiness churches and denominations assert that sinless living is attainable. The truth is, however, we are simply incapable of reaching that goal while still inhabiting this earthly tabernacle. In nearly every case, those holding the position that we are able to attain sinless perfection are forced to embrace some form of legalism. That is because they need some kind of outward evidence that they are not sinning. Therefore, they construct complex catalogs of behaviors they deem sinful, then determine not to do them. The problem is, sin is not basically an external issue. Scripture and Jesus Himself teach that evil comes from the heart:

*The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it? (Jeremiah 17:9).*

*"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries,*

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*deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man." (Mark 7:21-23).*

Second, being pure in heart is not just trying to be good as people usually understand that concept. Most individuals like to believe they are basically good people. How often do you hear someone say something like this, "I may not be perfect, but I think I am a pretty good man (or woman). I never hurt anyone and try to obey the law. I work hard and do the best I can." Sometimes they commend others for being good. My favorite is, "He's just a good ole' boy." That may be commendable in the eyes of the world. But just trying to be good by human standards is not what Jesus means by being pure in heart. He expects much more of His people in how they approach life. It goes much deeper. So, then what is it?

To start with, being pure in heart involves having a single-minded, uncompromising devotion to God. Life is filled with diversions. We have our families, our jobs, our hobbies, our friends, school, etc., that constantly fill-up our time. But no matter what we are doing, we must always keep God at the center of it all. Nothing should distract us from our devotion to Him. He should be the primary focus of all we do, and everything should be done for the purpose of giving Him glory and honor. Likewise, we should avoid anything that would cause Him dishonor. Being pure in heart means we desire to put God first in our lives in everything we do!

*Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. (1 Cor. 10:13)*

Being pure in heart is also a characteristic of someone whose heart

has been purified by the experiences of life. Life is tough. As people grow older they learn (or should learn) from their experiences, good and bad. This is especially true for believers who grow not only in age but in faith. We can see the hand of God at work in our lives over the years, in good times and bad. Consequently, our spiritual hearts become more attuned to God's purposes. We thus grow closer to Him and are able to see better from His point of view.

As James put it:

*Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded ... Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you. (James 4:8,10)*

A good biblical example of one who lived this principle is Joseph. He was sold into slavery by his own brothers and faced a dismal existence. Yet he never lost his trust in the Lord to see him through. He was even elevated to the rank of special advisor to Pharaoh, allowing him to rescue his father Jacob and his brothers from a terrible famine. As Joseph told his brothers, "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive." (Genesis 50:20)

That is truly maintaining a pure heart. Joseph could have had his brothers killed. Instead he was able to see the bigger picture of God's plan for his life.

Being pure in heart, furthermore, is the internal discipline of placing one's thoughts under God's rule. It is one thing to behave in good ways. It is entirely something else, and far more challenging, to allow God to control our thoughts. It is easy to forget that God knows our thoughts and they are not really private. We all have two life existences. One is the physical and material external world. The other is the internal mental and intellectual

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world. Not only should we yield our physical bodies to Him, but we must also yield our mental processes.

This is perhaps the real key to being pure in heart. When we place our internal thoughts under His Lordship we are better able to reflect a righteous spiritual life. As we indicated before, Jesus said the evil people express comes from within. Certainly the converse is true. The more we submit our hearts to Him the better will be our behaviors. Granted, this is not simple. We should fill our minds with wholesome content. This is where study of the Word and prayer are crucial. Not only that, we should likewise avoid filling our minds with destructive ideas and substances. As the old saying goes, "Garbage in ... garbage out."

Remember Daniel? He and his Hebrew friends were taken to Babylon and was indoctrinated into the Chaldean culture and literature. Yet Daniel refused to compromise his convictions and kept his body and mind on the Lord and His ways.

*Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of his officials, to bring in some of the sons of Israel, including some of the royal family and of the nobles, youths in whom was no defect, who were good-looking, showing intelligence in every branch of wisdom, endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge, and who had ability for serving in the king's court; and he ordered him to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.*

*The king appointed for them a daily ration from the king's choice food and from the wine which he drank, and appointed that they should be educated three years, at the end of which they were to enter the king's personal service. Now among them from the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. Then the*

*commander of the officials assigned new names to them; and to Daniel he assigned the name Belteshazzar, to Hananiah Shadrach, to Mishael Meshach and to Azariah Abed-nego.*

*But Daniel made up his mind (lit.: purposed in his heart) that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself. (Daniel 1:3-8)*

So now we get who are the "pure in heart." But what does Jesus promise them? He says "they shall see God." We might ask just how does anyone actually "see God"? Is that even possible? It would seem to contradict several Bible passages that indicate no one has ever seen God (except the Son).

*No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him. (John 1:18)*

*He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen. (1 Timothy 6:15b, 16)*

*No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. (1 John 4:12)*

Given those passages how do we interpret what Jesus said. We probably need to take it in two ways, one figuratively and the other more literal. First is that if in this life we are pure in heart we can enjoy an intimate relationship with God. We know, of course, that is only possible through faith in Christ. We may not literally see God visually, but rather we can

experience His presence in ways that transcend our senses. In this way it is like a someone who is taught a complex principle of science or math and finally understands it. "Now I see!"

The other, more literal sense of seeing God, is yet to come. When Christ returns and we ultimately arrive at our heavenly home "we will see Him as He is."

*Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. (1 John 3:2, 3)*

In that time and place our experience of God will be so complete that we will literally see Him in His radiant glory and bask in it forever. As John describes the heavenly city (the New Jerusalem):

*I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. (Revelation 21:22-24)*

When that time comes we won't be just "99 and 44 one hundredth percent pure," we forever will be 100% pure before our Lord.

Here are a few other passages relating to this Beatitude.

*Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD?  
And who may stand in His holy place?  
He who has clean hands and a pure heart,  
Who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood  
And has not sworn deceitfully.  
He shall receive a blessing from the LORD  
And righteousness from the God of his salvation  
(Psalm 24:3-5)*

*But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. (1 Timothy 1:5)*

*Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. (2 Timothy 2:21, 22)*

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