

Grace to You :: esp Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time

Drawing Near

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8).

Legalism can't produce a pure heart.

By the time Jesus arrived, Israel was in a desperate condition spiritually. The Jewish people were in bondage to the oppressive legalism of the Pharisees, who had developed a system of laws that were impossible to keep. Consequently, the people lacked security and were longing for a savior to free them from guilt and frustration. They knew God had promised a redeemer who would forgive their sins and cleanse their hearts (Ezek. 36:25-27), but they weren't sure when He was coming or how to identify Him when He arrived.

The enormous response to John the Baptist's ministry illustrates the level of expectancy among the people. Matthew 3:5-6 says, "Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea, and all the district around the Jordan; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins." The uppermost question in everyone's mind seemed to be, "How can I enter the kingdom of heaven?"

Jesus Himself was asked that question by many people in different ways. In Luke 10:25 a lawyer asks, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" In Luke 18:18 a rich young ruler asks exactly the same thing. In John 6:28 a multitude asks, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" Nicodemus, a prominent Jewish religious leader, came to Jesus at night with the same question, but before he could ask it, Jesus read his thoughts and said, "Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

As devoutly religious as those people might have been, they would remain spiritually lost unless they placed their faith in Christ. That's the only way to enter the kingdom.

Still today many people look for relief from sin and guilt. God can use you to share Christ with some of them. Ask Him for that privilege and be prepared when it comes.

Suggestions for Prayer

- Pray for those enslaved to legalistic religious systems.
- Be sure there is no sin in your life to hinder God's work through you.

For Further Study

Read Galatians 3.

- Why did Paul rebuke the Galatians?

-What was the purpose of the Old Testament law?

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