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Throughout history, many have wanted to see God. Humans worship many things. But there is a very strong need in many people to see what we worship. This has been there through all generations and religions. Many do believe what they see.

Idols represent their gods. If you go to India, you will see statues of the wide variety of Hindu gods. Greek, Roman, Nordic and other gods almost always had pictures or statues for people to sacrifice at. Even atheistic Buddhism developed a wide variety of gods in some areas, as it mixed with Hinduism, and other religions.

The spirit-type religions have sacred mementos, whether rainbow serpents, odd shaped stones, trees or whatever. They give a solid visual impact. But the Bible clearly states that you cannot see God and live, and that no-one is to make an idol or image of what he could look like. No graven image, no picture, no icon, for who really knows what God looks like. We are to be an image-free worshipping people.

But that has not stopped Christians trying. There are statues, pictures and sacred symbols thick on the ground everywhere.

The Old Testament allowed some symbols to be made and used in worship. However the New Testament does not direct any symbol to be made. The beauty and simplicity of New Testament worship is that we can worship God anywhere, and directly because of what Jesus has done. There is no need for a visual cross, no need for a table, pictures, statues, windows etc.

We relate to God personally, not through symbols.

Only two symbols were given by Jesus, and both are not physical things to carry around or enshrine. They are both things that people do together. The first is the washing in baptism, and the second is the act of eating and drinking together in Holy Communion. They are our symbols or signs or sacraments.

However, Christians have always desired to push the limits more. So we have pictures of Jesus etc, even though no-one knows what he looked like.

But we still want to see Jesus, to see God. And we know that Hebrews, Colossians and John's Gospel all say that Jesus is the visible form of God. If we want to see the Father, then look at Jesus. If we want to see God, look at Jesus. If we want a vision of God, look to Jesus.

So people have yearned to see Him. There are reports of sightings throughout history, just as Stephen saw him before he was killed, and Saul saw him before he was about to arrest more Christians in Damascus and John saw him while on the Island of Patmos.

Whether we still see him in visions or only in the words of the New Testament has always been hotly contested by Christians.

But the New Testament does say that we will see God, and we will see Jesus.

1 Corinthians 13 and many other places say that in heaven we will see God face to face. And some claim they have seen Jesus in visions now. Many Christians are still trying desperately to see him now... maybe you know some who want to. But whether we see him now or just then, one of the promises to us as Christians is that we will see God as he really is.

But what do we have to do to see him, (apart from die)? Do we have to be really special to see him? Jesus said *Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God.*

Does that mean we have to work really hard in purifying our hearts, before we can see God?

In the Medieval church many thought that because God is holy and far removed from sin, we had to repent of doing wrong, by being sorry for sin and turning away from it. But then they wanted to purge themselves from its stain. So they beat themselves, flogged, and made themselves suffer, so that God would see just how sorry they were, and that they would clean themselves up, like bashing washing on rocks beside the river.

It did not work! Our guilt is stained in thoroughly. It takes more than hardships and good desires to remove it. We need to be made pure again.

Yet that did not stop them wearing their hair shirts, suffering and trying to be blessed by their hardships.

It may sound strange, but it is still very common in Christianity. And many people are suffering as a way of making penance, to try to atone or pay for their sins.

But it will not work. Our suffering will never make us pure. It will make us feel all sorts of emotions, but it will not fix up the relationship between us and God. It will not give us a pure heart.

Even putting us in a brand new environment will not work. God knew that about Noah. After the

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flood, in a whole new world, God knew we would go wrong again, for he says in Genesis 8:21 *Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood.*

Jesus said in Matthew 15:19 *Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a person unclean.*

Only Jesus can clean our hearts and purify them. He suffered on the cross for us. He suffered once and for all. He died for you and me, to take our punishment, to clean us, to wash us, to make us pure in heart. As we trust him, trust that he has done it for us, then our relationship with God is fixed, and God gives us a pure heart.

In John 13, as Jesus washed the disciples' feet, Peter refused to let Jesus do such a menial task. But Jesus replied that unless he washed his feet, he had not part in Jesus. So Peter said do not just wash my feet, wash all of me. Jesus replied that they were clean, just that their feet were dirty, and needed cleaning. So it is with us. He cleans us when we trust, and then washes away the extra debris day by day.

Will you see God, maybe on earth, but certainly in heaven? The answer is Yes, if you trust in Jesus. For seeing God is a sure promise for all who trust Jesus. It is another way of saying that we will be in heaven with God.

Do not try to get there on your own. Go with Jesus, He is the only way.

Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God.