

# A Denotations of Ginōskō (Γινωσκω) in Matthew 7:21-23 and Its Apocalyptic Implications for the Contemporary Christians

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**Abstract:** This paper was born from the researcher's inquisitiveness in prying into such discourses in the Bible that seem to pose so much philosophical concern, which has led to many psychological semantic and theological arguments in the scholastic realm of beliefs. The purpose of delving into this area, then, is in view to demystify the accurate meaning of the response of Jesus Christ when he said, "I never knew you," thus helping young preachers of the word and, indeed, scholars avert possible future misapplication of the passage and to further recommend to the contemporary Christians the possible ways of averting such scenario in the imminent post-generational judgment and reign of the Lord. The researcher keenly used the best articulate methods for arriving at the preconceived goal, so the study utilized the descriptive exegetical method via historical-grammatical and lexical syntactical tools to analyze the verses of the text.

Fantastic discoveries were realized, which assert that what they claimed intimacy with Christ is just what He repudiates and with a certain scornful dignity. This means then that his acquaintance with the impostors was not broken off- but they have never at any point in time known the Lord via belief, confession, repentance, and salvation. This heightened the researcher's curiosity, culminating in suggesting some physical, social, spiritual, and ethical implications for contemporary Christians. Finally, the researcher recommended that contemporary Christians must not allow themselves to be overdriven with a fervent passion for miraculous works, prophecies, and demonic exorcisms that outweigh the central focus befitting called people of God that will witness to the redemptive work of Christ.

**Keywords:** Philosophy, Apocalyptic Implication, Contemporary Christians, Judgment, Ginōskō, Implication, Jesus Christ, Judgment, Eternity, Lord, Salvation.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Relationship, by implication, is a concept that involves two persons who may have, either by agreement or circumstance, come to believe in themselves in pursuing a common goal or objective. Amos 3:3 also buttresses this fact when it states unequivocally, posing, "Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?" Ethically and technically speaking, there seems to be the possibility of a relationship growing naturally into friendship without due agreement on the terms of the relationship, but this is almost rare in life. Another thought that may be raised would be the possibility that two persons have begun a relationship but later had challenges that bridged the contract of such a relationship. This is possible anyway, as relationships, in their natural sense, demand maintenance just like everything would require it or risk the possibility of losing it.

Subjective thoughts on the mind about Jesus' statement in John 10: 27- "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me" will keep one wondering if Jesus does not know his sheep again. This is how Blackaby puts it; "the ways of God are wonderful and mysterious! Eternity is the starting point for God's activity."<sup>1</sup> Paul added in Ephesians 1:4-5 about his thought on predestination and called- to assure the Ephesians believers that they have been chosen "before the foundation of the world, having been predestined... according to the good pleasure of His will." If that statement is true, then it suggests that it is either Jesus has not chosen these people he had labeled impostors and claimers in this text or that he has predestined some believers as the choicest candidates of his kingdom and had decided to leave some out- this may be very proximate to partiality anyway, which is unlike Him or maybe there is just a qualifiable sensor which is but lacking in the lives of these individuals.

Many Gospel Preachers and writers have preached and written exhaustively on this passage. This research then seems to achieve a compendium of knowledge on this documented incidence that has, since the canonization of the scriptures, begun to raise many philosophical thoughts leading to many psychological semantic and theological arguments. The researcher's interest and inquisitiveness then are born on demystifying the true meaning of the response of Jesus Christ, thus suggesting possible ways of averting such a scenario in the imminent post-generational judgment and reign of our Lord. How on earth could one lavish or relinquish so much power and authority to someone and would later deny ever knowing the person, or come to think why Jesus Christ so chose to allow this class of people ever use his name to perform mind-blowing miracles and later deny knowing them; what happened to his knowability attribute then? To further stress this point, how on earth should one party in such a long relationship look straight to the face of the other party to deny ever knowing the individual? Why should so much disconnect not be fixed until the relationship is broken? This seems to the researcher as an unfair situation or judgment. Jesus Christ's affirmation of this apocalyptic statement makes studying this scenario imperative and timely.

## 2. THE CONCEPT OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

Though philosophy has been thought of as not a bedfellow with religious concepts, this has been resolved recently. In its etymological meaning, philosophy is the "Love of Knowledge," Conversely, religion presents God (Cause) as Wisdom personified. Here again, is the relativism between philosophy and religion or, put it- the "commonality center." Geisler and Feinberg presented the concerns of philosophy in determining whether a proposition is true or false, known as clarification.<sup>2</sup>

In its sense of prying into details, philosophy is synonymous with science in its methodical process of clarifying concepts or ideas. Some philosophers have claimed that the scientific method applies to all posterior areas of inquiry involving morality, aesthetics, and religion. Other contemporary philosophers, however, reject the universal and absolute application of the scientific method, though they admit its importance in much of empirical inquiry.<sup>3</sup> Philosophy presents a positive and negative challenge to the Christian as it constructs the Christian system and refutes contrary claims and views.<sup>4</sup> At some point in his ministry, Paul warned the Colossian church: "Beware lest any man spoils you through philosophy" (Col. 2:8 KJV).<sup>5</sup> However, philosophy does not always oppose religious concepts, especially concerning natural theology. Each time philosophy engages in interrogations, it does that frankly to clarify ambiguous and sometimes metaphysical concepts beyond reason.

Furthermore, let it be clear that religion operates majorly based on revelation: a supernatural disclosure by God of truth that the unaided powers of human reason could not discover. While philosophy operates in the realm of "Reason," it is the human mind's natural ability to discover the truth.<sup>6</sup> Tertullian, one of the church fathers, is sometimes stereotyped as a "revelation only" proponent. As far as Tertullian was concerned, philosophers were "those patriarchs of all heresy"<sup>7</sup> Cornelius Van Til, a reformed theologian and apologist (1895), perhaps is the best example among contemporary evangelical thinkers who exalts revelation over reason.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Henry T. Blackaby, *Created to be God's Friend* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Inc., 1999) 3.

<sup>2</sup>Norman L. Geisler and Paul D. Feinberg, *Introduction to Philosophy: A Christian Perspective* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1980), 61.

<sup>3</sup>Geisler and Feinberg, 63-64.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid, 73.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid, 255.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid, 262-263.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

Depending on the extent of exposure to proper knowledge, philosophers have different ideas about God and gods. Generally, the supreme God may be viewed as the “Ultimate Cause.” This applies to most religions worldwide, whereas some condescend to believe in many other “causes.” Even the group that believes in God still has different concepts about Him. God is viewed in five different ways: (1) *Theism* (God as transcendent and immanent); (2) *Deism* (God is transcendent but not immanent); (3) *Pantheism*- believes God is in the world but not beyond it; (4) *Panentheism*- the universe is Gods “body,” and God is the “Soul” of it; (5) *Finite Godism* (opposed to theism) - God is beyond the universe, but is not in supreme control of it.<sup>9</sup>

More controversies continue to loom as generated by the problem of evil, hence, another concept by the Atheist known as Atheism: denying the reality of God. This thought affirms evil and denies God, so if God exists, it suggests He is not essentially good.<sup>10</sup> Driving this further, there indeed are many who lightly reject belief in God because they say, the existence of God cannot be “proved,” which implies there is no single, obvious, irrefragable line of evidence for God’s existence.<sup>11</sup> Hence, it advocates applying specific scientific methods or steps; observation, hypothesis, implication, and verification.<sup>12</sup> The doubts, notwithstanding the theological claims of the existence and knowledge about God, have been authenticated by historical validation. No wonder the Hebrews looked upon their survival as evidence of God’s being and care.<sup>13</sup> Well, the way to authenticate religious claims and beliefs in the concept and knowledge of God is through the “General revelation” of God as the “Ultimate Cause” through historical records of His miraculous and dumfounding manifestations on earth at different times.

### 3. BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF GINŌSKŌ (ΓΙΝΩΣΚΩ)

It is necessary to locate the very suitable source from which the word *γινωσκω* (*ginōskō*) was drawn, which is the Bible. Furthermore, the researcher wants to x-ray its usage from the Old to New Testament times.

The Hebrew terms for “know” are majorly *yada* and *nakar*, though the latter has to do with “recognition” (Ruth 3:14); “several cognate forms of the verb *yada* usually express knowledge in the Old Testament. Such words as *daat* can allude to general knowledge (Prov. 24:4). In the sense of cognition, *daat* was used in Balaam’s fourth oracle to knowing God (Num. 24:16)<sup>14</sup> Another common and essential usage of the word “know” (knowledge) was in a sexual context to explain the act of coition which sometimes may be of an immoral form (Gen. 4:1; 1 Kings 1:4; Gen. 19:5).<sup>15</sup>

The Scripture is cautious to differentiate God’s knowledge from what is possible for humankind. The knowledge of the Almighty transcends time and anticipates events (Jer. 1:5). It takes cognizance of people and events alike, and nothing can be hidden from his perception (Psalm 139:1-10). He can declare the end from the very origin (Isa. 46:10). He knows our frame and physical limitations. He takes cognizance of our moves and the secrets of our hearts (Psalm 139:2; 44:21). He acknowledges our thoughts and knows in advance what people plan to say or do.

The usage of the term in the New Testament has several connotations. The word “know” is usually either *oida* or *ginōskō*, which is sometimes combined with *epiginōskō*, which can mean to know with clarity or completeness. It could also carry the force of “recognize.”<sup>16</sup> It is almost challenging to want to distinguish the forces of *oida* and *ginōskō*, mainly when they occur in the same context, appearing to express a distinction that is difficult to demonstrate (John 21:17; 1 John 5:20). A little distinction to them is that whereas *ginōskō* is sometimes used in the perspective of “learn” (Matt. 9:30; Luke 19:15), *oida*, on the other hand, denotes settled knowledge-desired from either revelation or instruction (John 8:55).<sup>17</sup>

<sup>9</sup>Ibid, 271.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid, 322.

<sup>11</sup>David Elton Trueblood, *The Logic of Belief: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publisher, 1942), 42.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid, 43.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Geoffrey W. Bromiley et. al. eds., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* vol 3 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B Eerdmann’s Publishing Company, 1986), 48.

<sup>15</sup> Geoffrey W. Bromiley., 48.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

In the New Testament, Jesus consistently and frequently affirmed that God knows the state of the human heart; indeed, He knows everything (Luke 16:15; 1 John 3:20; Heb. 4:13).<sup>18</sup> So much attention is given to the knowledge possessed by the Son. As a lad at twelve, He amazed the learned men who taught in the temple in those days (Luke 2:46). However, at some point in his life and ministry, he had to voluntarily admit that He did not know the time of His return, in that it gives assurance that His many affirmations about what He did know should be received with utmost seriousness.<sup>19</sup> It thus reveals how limited our Christian knowledge is as far as we are still putting on our fleshy coats; despite the illumination and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, perfect knowledge is reserved for the age to come. Paul categorically remarked in the book of 1 Corinthians 13:9, 10 that we know (*ginoskomen*) in part and prophecy in part, but when the fullness comes to be, that which is in part will be abolished.

Furthermore, Elwell noted in verse 12 how he presently knows in part, but there comes the fullness of time when he shall grasp it all even as he is known (*epiginosko*). It sure reveals or suggests that no one as far as in this earthly oat can grasp it all; however, when we shall have put on immortality, we will be able to understand better: this also does not underscore the intricate features of Christ's statement as the researcher seeks or intends to make more precise- how that Christ in his glorified state would respond that he never knew the disciples whom he labelled impostors as implied. Moreover, the emphasis on the concept in the New Testament makes it clear that knowing God is not simply an intellectual apprehension but a response to faith and an acceptance of Christ.<sup>20</sup>

At this point, the knowledge or awareness of the terms of the relationship on both ends (divine to humanity) is enacted or established. It is Christ that has made God known to us (John 1:18). To know Christ then is to know God (John 14:7). Failure to know Jesus Christ as Lord and messiah (Acts 2:36) lead to his rejection and crucifixion (1 Cor. 2:8), and he will also reject such people on the last day. To further buttress this concept, the critical biblical term would be to assume a personal familiarity, even an intimate involvement, with the known object. Similarly, knowing God entails acknowledging him as Lord in obedience, praise, and reverence.<sup>21</sup>

#### 4. EXEGETICAL STUDY OF THE CONCEPT OF GINŌSKŌ IN MATTHEW 7:21-23

According to Matthew, the author of the Gospel is anonymous, as in the case of other gospels. However, from the early 2nd century, the church generally ascribed it to Matthew, the Apostle of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 9:9; 10:3, Mark 3:18, Acts 1:13).<sup>22</sup> He is also called Levi (Mark 2:14, Luke 5:27) a tax collector by occupation.<sup>23</sup> The place of the writing is unknown, though most scholars believe it to be written in Palestine, perhaps in Judea or Antioch in Syria.<sup>24</sup>

The Gospel, according to Matthew, is most unlikely to be written after A.D. 70. Probably around A.D. 50, but certainly not later than A.D. 70.<sup>25</sup> One of the strongest sign-posts to this assertion can be found in Ayegboyin's documentation of how some scholars supposed that the reference to the "Jewish synagogues" (4:23, 9:35, 10:17, 12:9; 13:54) indicates a date after A.D. 85 well after the exclusion of Christians from Jewish synagogues,<sup>26</sup> as also supported by Guthrie et al.<sup>27</sup>; it is difficult however to fix a specific date, that is why some suggest a date after A.D. 50, but indeed around A.D. 70 or 70s.<sup>28</sup> However, the date assigned for this Gospel is generally around A.D. 85.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>18</sup>W.E Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1966), 297.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 49.

<sup>20</sup>Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House Company, 1996), 458.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Danny McCain, *Notes on New Testament Introduction* (Bunkum, Plateau: Africa Christian Textbooks, 2005), 127.

<sup>23</sup>Deji Ayegboyin, *The Synoptics* (Ibadan: Global Estida Publishers, 2015), 87.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid, 178.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ayegboyin, 92, Ayegboyin cited references of scholars who pointed to a date after 85 A.D after removal of Christians from Jewish synagogues, though added that this is however not very convincing.

<sup>27</sup>D. Guthrie et. al., *The New Bible Commentary* (Revised), Guthrie also supported the claim that the writing of Matthew was dated a time after A.D 85.

<sup>28</sup>Holman Illustrated Pocket Bible Handbook (Student Ref. Pocket Edn), (Nashville, Tennessee: Holman Bible Publishers, 2004), 246.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

The Gospel was written for Jewish Christians, perhaps living in Antioch of Syria, to strengthen their faith in Jesus as the promised Christ (messiah) in the Old Testament.<sup>30</sup> It is glaring that Matthew also had the converted and unconverted Gentiles in mind while writing his Gospel.<sup>31</sup> McCain emphasized that since Matthew was a transitional book from the Old Testament to the New Testament, it was written to Christians in Palestine- that is, to the Jews in Palestine, though the Greek-speaking Jews.<sup>32</sup>

#### 4.1 The Context of Matthew 7:21-23

Jesus Christ took off his teaching or sermon in chapter seven by first of all giving special attention to the character of the Jewish leaders on judging others without considering the weaknesses of the Jewish leaders, hence opened with the statement, warning his disciples “not to judge so that they will not be judged.” As a result, his first discourse in this chapter highlighted Judgment and Discernment (7:1-6).<sup>33</sup> More so taught on Asking, Seeking, and Knocking (v. 7-12), He also expressed philosophically the nature of the journey to eternity having two Gates, the wide and the narrow gates (v. 13-14), finally on the crux of the paper is Jesus’ doctrine on the likeliness of the future judgment which spotted out the true and false followers (v. 15-23).<sup>34</sup> Jesus revealed that the times are replete with so many false prophets and, of course, his faithful followers; he likened some to be good trees, others to be evil trees, and after that, proceeded to express the proper prerogatives of judgment on the last day (the day of accounting or reckoning); “not all that says Lord, Lord will enter the Kingdom of His Father, but those who do the will of His Father in heaven.” Here again, is the researcher’s desire to find out the reason for making such a statement on his followers who have painstakingly done so much in the visible church and may have received an earthly ovation and authentication. Jesus concluded the sermon (doctrine) with the parable of the two builders, one on the rock, the other on the sand differentiating the fate of those who heard and did precisely what is entailed in the instructions as well as the fate of those who heard but never acted on the principles neither abided on the instructions(7:24-27) thus, was giving opportunities for his listeners to make the choices.<sup>35</sup> Ultimately, the people were surprised and astonished because Jesus taught like no one else and obviously with authority, unlike the scribes.<sup>36</sup>

#### 4.2 Greek Text and Translation of the Specified Passage

##### 4.2.1 Greek Text of Matthew 7:21-23

<sup>21</sup>Οὐ πᾶς ὁ λέγων μοι · Κύριε κύριε εἰσελεύσεται εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν, ἀλλ’ ὁ ποιῶν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.

<sup>22</sup>πολλοὶ ἐροῦσίν μοι ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ · Κύριε κύριε, οὐ τῷ σῶ ὀνόματι ἐπροφητεύσαμεν, καὶ τῷ σῶ ὀνόματι δαιμόνια ἐξεβάλομεν, καὶ τῷ σῶ ὀνόματι δυνάμεις πολλὰς ἐποιήσαμεν;

<sup>23</sup>καὶ τότε ὁμολογήσω αὐτοῖς ὅτι Οὐδέποτε ἔγνων ὑμᾶς · ἀποχωρεῖτε ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ οἱ ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἀνομίαν.

##### 4.2.2 Smooth Translation

<sup>21</sup>Not all who says to me Lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heavens but (he) who does the will of my Father in heavens.

<sup>22</sup>Many shall say to me on that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out demons, and in thy name done many wonderful works.

<sup>23</sup>And then I will profess to them, because I never knew you; depart from me, you that work iniquity

<sup>30</sup>Holman Illustrated Pocket Bible Handbook, 246.

<sup>31</sup>Ayegboyin, 92.

<sup>32</sup>McCain, 178.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid, 45.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid, 46-47.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid, 48.

<sup>36</sup>Fox, 153.

#### 4.2.3 Exegetical Analysis of Matthew 7:21-23

##### I. The true identity of Jesus' Disciples.

Verse 21: Οὐ πᾶς ὁ λέγων μοι · Κύριε κύριε εἰσελεύσεται εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν, ἀλλ' ὁ ποιῶν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς. This translated to mean, *Not all who says to me Lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heavens but (he) who does the will of my Father in heavens.* This verse seems to agree with scriptural terms as everyone may have the liberty to call out or use the name as rendered in the Koine Greek (Κύριε), meaning Lord, which was used in the vocative case, thus signifying honor and reverence for the proper position of the one that is identified as Lord, Master, Sir, and ruler. The accentuation then is that; the usage of Lord, Lord would ordinarily indicate a show of humility and respect, but could this be the true disposition of these claimers?<sup>37</sup>

The words “οὐ” in verse 21, which is a particle that means (Not), agreeing with the adjective “πᾶς” signifies all, whole, and every kind of; this implies that not every kind of person who mentions the name Lord, Lord with identity to Jesus Christ will make it into the kingdom. Jesus has not stopped or interrupted any time from using or calling his name- just like everyone may be permitted to call another's name, but it becomes the prerogative of the person to either respond or not. Secondly, it is worthy of note that the dominant force of the power in the name of Jesus Christ has already been established and registered in the realms of the spirit, so a slight mentioning or calling of the name creates so many ripple effects in the supernatural realm or metaphysical world. The implication is that it does not matter who calls the name but the corollary of such effect. It is equally possible that some are in a bid to call the name but are never in the will of the Father, as Jesus likely said. In such instances, God only allows it probably for the furtherance of the Gospel. Still, in verse 21, another word to be underscored as used by Jesus Christ is the Greek verb “ποιῶν” which is a present, active participle that means “does”- that is, “continue to do” agreeing with the noun “θέλημα” = will wish, desire, etc., which by implication demands the true disciples of Jesus Christ to continue doing the desires and the will of the Father as has been revealed in His written word.<sup>38</sup>

##### II. Jesus Christ Underscoring Claims on the Judgment Day.

Verse 22. πολλοὶ ἐροῦσίν μοι ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ · Κύριε κύριε, οὐ τῷ σῷ ὀνόματι ἐπροφητεύσαμεν, καὶ τῷ σῷ ὀνόματι δαιμόνια ἐξεβάλομεν, καὶ τῷ σῷ ὀνόματι δυνάμεις πολλὰς ἐποιήσαμεν; translated to mean, *Many shall say to me on that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out demons, and in thy name done many wonderful works.* In this verse, the first thing to be noted is the usage of the adjective “πολλοί” at the very beginning of his statement; many- sometimes rendered as ‘much.’ It is dreadful because though the specific figure in the term was not mentioned, it suggests many people who belong to this group. It also reveals the enormity of people in this category to the very point of losing count. Next is the inclusion of the demonstrative pronoun “ἐκείνη” (that)- pointing to “ἡμέρα” (day); thus, it is rendered, “that day,” a specific day which is, of course, the day of judgment when the thought of every heart would be made bare in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ who has been entrusted with the authority to judge all souls.

Another critical common noun used by Jesus Christ in his statement is the word “ὀνοματι” which is ‘name.’ It was used in the instrumental, singular fashion, which stresses the name of Jesus Christ, no other name, as the means through which supernatural and miraculous deeds or signs are transmitted. The term, as used in Greek, could also mean ‘character’ and ‘reputation,’ which emphasizes the spiritual power of the name. This is to say in another stance that the name of Jesus Christ has so much reputation. Also, the researcher would want to add that it does not make any difference whatsoever; one can still call on the name of the Lord as mere lip service, whereas the same person is just using the name as a penumbra while in the real sense working or operating on the influence or power of another name or spirit.

To buttress this, it is necessary to point out that Jesus Christ himself was labeled by the Jewish leaders to have cast out demons by the power of the prince of the demons called Beelzebub (Matt. 12:24-28). Hence, people could perform some gimmicks in the name or power of certain demons. To drive this home, Acts 8:9-20 presented an instance of a certain Simon Magus who asked Peter for power, dumfounded by the working of the Holy Spirit-for he had prior used sorcery to influence the people of Samaria. More so, he was recorded to have posed himself as the great one, and the people knew him as the “great power of God” (v. 10), but he was very remote from the truth.

<sup>37</sup>Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Exposition Commentary* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1989), n.p

<sup>38</sup>Leslie F. Church ed., *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1961) 1237.

Not to be omitted still in verse 22 is the usage of the verb “προφηησαμεν” which is a first-person aorist, active indicative verb. It was used in a plural sense signifying that these disciples unanimously presented the same concern- “We prophesied.” Prophecy itself has been categorized into two aspects; “forth-telling” and “fore-telling.” In any sense that these disciples were driving, it does not change the fact that anyone can prophesy without a due relationship with the Lord and total submission to the will of God. As mentioned above in the researcher’s thought, it is also possible for people to begin with God but later miss the mark or operate by the influence of another power and spirit rather than God. After all, evil diviners are empowered by demons to see or peep into the future or even forth-tell; the same is true of those who operate with familiar spirits (1 Sam. 28:3ff).

Concluding on verse 22 is a highlight of the verb “ἐποιήσαμεν,” also a first-person, aorist, active, indicative verb, used in the first person plural sense, meaning “we do”- the statement alone goes to reveal the heart state of these claimers; not giving credence to Jesus Christ, the one who works all miracles. No one can perform a miracle without the supernatural working of God. We can do nothing without Him (John 15:1ff), and no man takes this honor to himself. Their statement to the researcher is questionable as it reveals their level of pride. It also observed the true nature of these impostors’ hearts, which only hinged on doing marvelous works while they persisted in disobedience. The same was with Simon Magus, who wondered at the miracles (Acts 8:13).

### III. Jesus’ Rejection of their Plea and Judgment.

Verse 23. καὶ τότε ὁμολογήσω αὐτοῖς ὅτι Οὐδέποτε ἔγνων ὑμᾶς · ἀποχωρεῖτε ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ οἱ ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἀνομίαν. Meaning, *And then I will profess to them, because I never knew you; depart from me, you that work iniquity.* Jesus is pictured in verse 23 to overrule their plea publicly, and so shall it be futuristically. A very strong word coordinate used by Jesus Christ in the Koine Greek was the usage of the definite article “τὴν” meaning ‘the’ and the common noun “ἀνομίαν” meaning iniquity or lawlessness. The definite article was not captured in the English version but included in the Greek. It thus implies that since their iniquity was given a definiteness, Jesus Christ, in his omniscience, actually knew their iniquity, so shall the thought of every heart be revealed on that Day of Judgment, even the things done in secret without impunity and repentance. As a result, the judgment of Christ will undoubtedly be justifiable and without partiality or favoritism.

Also, taking from “Οὐδέποτε” (never) and “ἔγνων” (knew) renders it “never know” – this means that relationships have a foundation (a beginning point of contraction). It simply implies, based on Christ’s assertion, that these impostors have never had the typical “new birth” experience demanded of everyone to sign up for Christ’s laid down salvific process; hence Christ emphatically affirmed that he never knew them from that point of confession of faith in him. Well, another might want to think the other way around. However, it is proven that many grew up in so-called Christian homes or had a religious background and, as such, grew up undertaking certain religious rituals and activities but cannot explain precisely at what point they had their salvation encounter with Christ. The *Interpreters Bible* added this, commenting on the dialogue in verses 21-23 and how the passage references those in the early church who used the name of the Lord as a magic formula.

Furthermore, incantation brought a brief serenity to slaves victimized by their masters and repeatedly attacked or troubled by belief in some demons. Such was the routine as they cast out demons but gave no new life. Worship was turned into a mere loud noise, momentarily appealing but ultimately condemned.<sup>39</sup> Still, to buttress the concept of salvation and the point of contraction of a divine love-lost relationship with the Lord, Erickson has underscored that while conversion is a life-long and eternal durable relationship, it has a finite or limited point of beginning, just like the Chinese philosopher Lao-tzu rightly puts it- “the journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.” Hence he calls the very first step of the Christian life “conversion”- turning from one’s sin in repentance to Christ in faith. This is what is called the new life.<sup>40</sup>

## 5. APOCALYPTIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY TO THE CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIANS

The primary considerations in this section would be to look into the fate of the contemporary Christians within the eyes of Jesus’ prerogatives of judgment in the last days when he shall stand to give a verdict of how all have worked in this life. This is the essence of the apocalypse as captured in the subheading- foreshadowing the end of times. It, therefore, behooves us to start making eternal adjustments, seeing that no one will be exonerated or alleviated from the judgment of our Lord

<sup>39</sup>The Interpreters Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1951), 333.

<sup>40</sup>Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2013), 864.; Teresa Okure, “Conversion, Commitment: An African Perspective,” *Mission Studies* 10, nos. 1 & 2 (1993), 110.

Jesus Christ's process. Furthermore, it is necessary to write extensively about the scope of this idea as applied to "Contemporary Christians." The Contemporary Christian as rendered here is used to imply the Christians of this current age before the second advent of Christ. Necessarily, the whole idea captured in the text of study could be applied to contemporary times in the following ways; physical, social, ethical, and spiritual implications, vis:

### 5.1 Physical Implications

We live in a generation that gives credence to rhetoric. People would take the time to gain expertise in the speaking formula. Hence, people are readily accepted and accredited well if they are oratorically sound. However, does the Lord also see it this way? Jesus Christ made a very striking statement: "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me... (Matt. 15:8-9). This indicates the possibility of people speaking or saying what they are not; hence, these claimers could have only succeeded in offering just but lips services to the Lord while, in the real sense, their hearts are very far from the Lord and his daring love.

The researcher would also want to reveal that some impostors alike in contemporary times could talk with a large mouth of attempting great things but are only a twinkling-sounding cymbal without any connection with the Lord. Some false prophets could also say things that are not true to reality. The truth is that these persons are easily spotted by their fruits, including their confessions and what proceeds from their mouths (Matt. 7:16, 20). The devil is the originator of sin, who sins from the beginning, and sin introduces lying tongues, which destroys the unity of the heart and speech (John 8:44).<sup>41</sup> To contemporary Christians; must be watchful of the mere outward profession of religion with the mouth without real union with Christ- this does not give anyone a pass to heaven, but a corresponding dialogue does. Christians must be faithful to their confessions as it is the will of the Father that one believes in Christ, repent from sins, and live a holy life unto the Lord.<sup>42</sup>

### 5.2 Social Implications

God, in his Omnipresence, has his attribute revealed to man as a relational social being. He exhibits both anthropomorphic and anthropopathic qualities. Charles F. Baker adds that God has actual, substantive existence. The first requisite of faith then is that one must believe "that God is" (Hebrews 11:6).<sup>43</sup> For the fact that God, in his discretion, decided to share part of his divine nature with the man he created discloses he derives pleasure in his relationship with him. On the other hand, man has been granted the ability to know God, his creator, and relate or communicate perfectly well with God. A typical example is God's relationship with Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:1ff). It was very cordial until they were deceived, then their relationship with the Father was distorted because it is never in God to follow man, but man is to follow God who directs him.

Emphasis has been made on the fact that the relationship with Christ has a foundation- at the very point of confessing his name as Lord to save the soul. Through this name, the saving grace is conveyed (Acts 4:12). Hence one must make a U-turn from sin and the world to focus on Christ through repentance and confession, and then salvation is enacted, which begins a regenerative process. It is, therefore, essential for one to be sure of his salvation in the first place. It is not enough to claim one knows the Lord while far from the fundamental reality (e.g., Judas Iscariot, cf. Heb. 3:14; 1 John 2:1).<sup>44</sup>

### 5.3 Spiritual Implication

There is so much relativism between man's spiritual aspect and its reflection on his moral or ethical life or dispositions. God indeed is a Spirit (John 4:24) and does not possess any of the properties of matter.<sup>45</sup> The necessary attributes of spirit are our mind, will, and feeling. Hence, God has shared this essence with the man by making man in his image and likeness (Gen. 1:26-27). This same spirit in man differentiates him from the rest of the animal creation, known as the lower animals.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>41</sup>Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 595.

<sup>42</sup>Leslie F. Church ed., *Matthew Henry's Commentary* (London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, Ltd., 1960), 35.

<sup>43</sup>Baker, 134.

<sup>44</sup>Kenneth L. Barker & John R. Kohlenberger 111 ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Corporation, 1994), 37.

<sup>45</sup>Charles F. Baker, 134.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid, 135.

As a result, it can be said that man, as a spirit being- has a mind, will, and feeling. So whatever happens to man's spirit affects him morally, mentally, and sometimes bodily.

It is pertinent for contemporary Christians to discern appropriately what disposition a person is, as a man can be easily controlled and ruled by spiritual forces either of God or the devil. In his famous essay "Of Miracles," Humes defined a miracle as a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity or by the interposition of some invisible agents. By this, he sensibly suggests that miracles could be performed by any supernatural agent- angels or demons.<sup>47</sup>

To reiterate, as a spiritual being, man is morally responsible for every choice and action he undertakes while operating this life. Again, Baker has asserted that right actions spring from a righteous character; hence those in virtue ethics hold character and conduct in high esteem. Good trees produce good fruits, and bad trees produce evil fruit (Matt. 7:17-19; 12:33).<sup>48</sup> As has been accentuated previously that Jesus Christ spotted the claimers, and immediately he picked up their bad fruits of iniquity. There is no need to claim to be righteous and spiritually sound while one continues to loom in the ocean of iniquity. In essence, contemporary Christians are admonished to take cognizance of the types of fruits they bear daily. Hypocritical attitudes must be halted now, and adjustments towards internal change must be made and should pursue godliness rather than deception and unnecessary glorification of spiritual gifts and talents. More so, there is the need to watch out for righteousness and righteous loving rather than to practice religious services. Finally, efforts must be made to distinguish gimmicks from real heaven-sponsored miracles not to be deceived and miss the mark because false prophets have gone into the world to deceive many (1 John 4:1-3).

#### 5.4 Ethical Implication

"Those that do the will of the Father." The emphasis here is "Doing the Will," which speaks basically of conduct. The Christian's conduct (doing behavior) is born out of character (being behavior); these are all lived out (integrity), which is one's disposition, but ultimately, these stem from the formation of belief from preconceived knowledge or idea. The technicality there is that it is easier to do or perform the will of God where so ever, when the proper knowledge has been received, beliefs are formed and cemented around it, which determines one's character and conduct, so then integrity or the act of living well becomes natural with an individual in pursuance of virtuosity. This accounts for the virtue ethics emphasis and focuses on character. Yes, they prophesied and did wonders in the name of the Lord but had never done the will of the Father; as a result, they lacked character, which suggests to anyone technically that they have not at any time formed a belief system on the proper knowledge- and by this the knowledge of the saving grace in the Lord Jesus Christ; hence, they were not known by the Lord himself which directly implies that the claimers been ignorant of the knowledge of the Lord only used his name as a way of covering up for their unbelief.

To reiterate, the researcher would like to conclude on this note; that one using the authoritative name of another in gaining favor and profits in a specific office or environment does not mean he knows the person. This is precisely why the impostors and claimers could be described as liars: McQuilkin asserted to this effect that God hates lying to the degree that he would not allow any liar to enter into heaven (Rev. 21:27).<sup>49</sup> And indeed, all liars will have a part in the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8).<sup>50</sup> This is why the admonition to the contemporary Christians is to be more authentic in their dealing with the Lord as the prerogative of judgment by the Lord in that day will undoubtedly be designed by him and not how anybody feels it should be.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher has made efforts to demystify the true implications of Jesus Christ's argument with the claimers as rendered in Matthew 7:21-23 bordering on the issue of familiarization or knowledge (*ginōskō*) and its implications for contemporary Christians, dealing basically with the physical, social, spiritual and ethical implications for the contemporary Christians. Special attention and consideration were given to the faithful rendition of the passage in the original language, Koine Greek, so insights were delineated from it.

<sup>47</sup>Stephen C. Evans & Zachary R. Manis, *Philosophy of Religion* 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2009) 126.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid, 240.

<sup>49</sup>Robertson McQuilkin. *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1989) 424-425.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

The researcher concerns the need for Christians to become born again and enter into a formal relationship with the Lord through confessing sins and repentance. Therefore, this acquaintance is necessary for a loving and lasting relationship with the Lord (John 3:1ff); it all begins with believing in what and who He is. Believers must submit themselves to daily appraisal or self-check. Salvation experience indeed can be once, but regeneration and spiritual maturation are life-long processes that one must submit to. It is often called regeneration and then culminates in glorification.

There is a need to daily prune their characters and conducts with the scissors of the word of God. Indeed, surgical operations may be harrowing but, at last, relieves the sufferer from a particular disease that may have been targeted towards annihilating the life of the unfortunate victim. The same is with total adherence to the painful instructions of the word of God. Indeed it is proven that whatever gift it is that the church enjoys or manifests today, it will cease or fail one of these days at the Lord's return (1 Cor. 13:8). The church, advisedly, should at this point, give attention to discipleship and maturation of the believers as the second advent of the Lord draws nigh, rather than giving more emphasis on power and revelation gifts as observed in contemporary times- one must be a miracle worker or have the ability to forth-tell and fore-tell to have members because it seems as if the whole of humanity is problem-driven and needed some solution.

The writer recommends total adherence to the will of the Father; by so doing, there is the need to take cognizance of the word of God and pay keen attention to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Knowing that all of these manifestations of the gifts of God in his church presently will one day pave the way for the reality of the Lord's judgment, it then means that gifts are not the real essence but just God's motivation to his true church which strengthens trust for her Lord and Maker. The researcher further recommends pursuing the spiritual alignment of contemporary Christians to the will of the Father rather than interest in prophecy, the working of miracles, and casting demons. Today, the statistics of miracle seekers have increased, showing the shallowness of contemporary undisciplined Christians. Had they known and walked in the light of what Jesus has said concerning his followers, they would not have fallen victim to circumstances in the hands of false prophets and so-called miracle workers who manipulate them with some magical and mystical powers other than God that seek to better people's lives; these signs shall follow those who believe in him (Mark 16:17-18).

Knowing that the Lord will sit on the judgment throne to give his verdict on all, we should know that the time is short and the sovereign Lord will not lie. He would not have given his church all of these pictures for nothing. These instructions are in a bit to make contemporary Christians aware of his impending judgment and prepare adequately for it. It will undoubtedly surprise many that the little things taken for granted are the things the Lord holds in high esteem. One repeatedly emphasized is Doing of the Father's Will (Matt. 7:21).

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