

# Known or Unknown

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I HAVE been told by sons or daughters how painful it is to be in the presence of an elderly parent and not be recognized. What an unpleasant experience to have your parent, spouse or close friend treat you as a stranger.

There are people and facts I do not remember. At times there are people I have met years ago whose names I cannot recall. This is true for most of us. It is not intentional--just poor memory. But this is not the same as claiming you never knew someone with whom you thought you had had a meaningful relationship.

The gospel of Matthew informs us that Christ will communicate to certain people that He has never known them, although not from lack of memory.

**"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive**

**out demons and perform many miracles?'**

**23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' -- Matt.7:21-23**

These words spoken by Christ cause most who are interested in heaven to think twice about their lives and futures. Within these three verses we are reminded of many spiritual truths. Christ seems to imply that people who have been impacted by the gospel can be placed in one of two categories. **You either belong to Jesus Christ and are known by Him, or you think you belong to Him, but are not known by Him.** To be known by Him is to belong to Him.

Those who are known by Christ will spend eternity with Him in heaven. Those who are not will spend eternity without Him in a place called Hell. Many people have told me that they do not believe that any such place exists. They reject the teaching of Jesus who speaks about the place where He is going as the Kingdom of Heaven: "I go away to prepare a place for you" (John 14). Jesus is not speaking here about a fairy tale; He is speaking about reality.

Many folks believe in universalism; that is, a loving God will save everyone who has lived, is living and will live on this earth. This passage, and many others, does not confirm such thinking.

Revelation 21:11, and following verses, speaks about the great white throne and the day of God's judgment. Some will spend eternity with God; others will spend eternity separated from Him. It is

absolutely imperative to be aware that the possibility exists that at death you could be the recipient of Christ's words, "I never knew you; away from me you evildoers."

Christ gives a clear warning to all. His words of condemnation will be heard by the following:

## The Spiritually-Minded

It is indeed a popular thing for people to be spiritually-minded. There are many kinds of religions in the world. There are some 6 billion people who cover the globe. Many are Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, New Age and other faiths. Many acknowledge Christ as a historical figure, but do not agree with His claims. These people are spiritual, but they do not believe in or trust Him. They do not desire His rule over their lives **now**. Why would they want to be under His rule after death? What can they expect to hear from Christ at some point in the future?

There is another group who are part of the visible church. These also are "spiritual." They are members of a local congregation. They have said to the world that they are Christian. They are religious. Yet there are some in this group who do not belong to Christ. Jesus refers to them in the gospel of Matthew:

"Jesus told them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field.  
25 But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away.

26 When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

27 The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?'

28 'An enemy did this,' he replied. The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'

29 'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them.

30 Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn'." –Mathew 13:24-30

To the spiritual weeds that are a part of the church, Christ will say, **"I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!"**

## Workers for God

Those who receive Christ's words of rejection claim the work of God.

Some may take this passage to refer to those who will stand before God and lie to Him. I don't doubt that there will be those. We know that there have been people who have been involved in God's work, and yet not for His pleasure.

It is interesting to note the type of work the "unknown" have been involved in.

## Word Ministry

The first on the list is that of word ministry or prophecy. Those who have

the gift of prophecy are used of God to reveal His truth. The particular focus may be upon the sin of the people or upon what God is going to do in the near or distant future. A prophet has the authority to say, "This is the Word of the Lord." In the Old Testament there were many who claimed to have the gift of prophecy who were false prophets (see Is 44:25 and Jer. 50:36).

Paul experienced the consequences of those who engaged in the ministry of the word for wrong reasons. Philippians 1 says:

"12 Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.  
 13 As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ.  
 14 Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.  
 15 *It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill.*  
 16 The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel.  
 17 *The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains.*  
 18 But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached."

Paul warns the Ephesian elders in Acts 20 that savage wolves will come in and distort the truth.

God's purposes will not be altered; yet, woe to the person who attempts to stand in the way of God's work by proclaiming the word for selfish motives.

We find Satan also engaged in word ministry for selfish purposes as seen in the wilderness temptations of Christ.

## Spiritual Battlers

We can expect there to be some who although not known by Christ will engage in the spiritual struggle as seen in Acts 19:

"13 Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, "In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out."  
 14 Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this.  
 15 One day the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?"  
 16 Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding."

Yes, they did not claim to be Christians, but they worked in the name of Jesus Christ.

## Miracle Workers

It is interesting that the world's major religions, including Islam, Hinduism,

Judaism and Christianity, include miracles. According to Wikipedia Encyclopedia, a miracle is defined as follows:

“According to many religions, a **miracle**, derived from the old Latin word *miraculum* meaning 'something wonderful', is a striking interposition of divine intervention by God in the universe by which the operations of the ordinary course of Nature are overruled, suspended, or modified. People in different faiths have substantially different definitions of the word *miracle*. Even within a specific religion there is often more than one usage of the term.

Sometimes the term *miracle* may refer to the action of a supernatural being that is not a god. Thus, the term **divine intervention** refers specifically to the direct involvement of a deity.”

There are some who believe that miracles are not for all ages or eras.

The apostle Paul refers to some who performed miracles yet were not known by God:

“The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds **of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders,** 10 and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.”

2 Thessalonians 2:9-10

These three categories are just samples of the works that will be presented to Christ in order to convince Him that they

are known by Him. We will probably hear others say, " Didn't I...

Teach Sunday School  
 Serve as a deacon or elder  
 Work with the youth  
 Tithe my gross income  
 Pastor for 40 years  
 Serve as a missionary  
 Worship  
 Sing in the choir  
 Do acts of mercy

You can tell the “unknown” person because he is so unfamiliar with the gospel. He tends to note what he does, how much he gives, and compare himself to others. In fact, in the back of his mind is the argument that he will use to justify himself before God: "Look what I did!" He has no concept of the gospel.

Yet the Words of Christ will be the same 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

## God's Will

The person who Christ knows does His will. This person's focus, in every area of life, is Christ. This person's response to standing in Christ's presence will be more like what we find in Isaiah 6:

5 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."

The writer of Hebrews reminds his readers of the importance of seeking the will of God even when circumstances are difficult.

“So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded.

You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.” – Hebrews 10:35,36

To those who are slaves, the apostle Paul writes in a similar fashion:

“Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.” – Ephesians 6:6-8

The apostles write to Christians in Rome instructing them to be concerned with living out their lives in ways that will please God.

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.” --Romans 12:1,2

Matthew 7 challenges us. One might assume that those who make some profession of faith and enter the work of God must be known and empowered

by Him. But the real test is not the public ministry, but a life that demonstrates a passion for God's will.

It is impossible to find God on our own. Some may be enamored with religious activity in its many forms; but a portion of it all will be worthless. It is through Christ alone that we desire and accomplish His will. This will not be for our glory, but His.

### *-Reflections -*

1. How does this Matthew 7 passage relate to you?
2. How is it possible that religious work being done is not in concert with God?
3. Is there any evidence of religious work taking place in Washington that may be contrary to God's will?
4. What does it mean for you to do the will of God?
5. What means do you employ to do God's will?