

**THE ESCHATOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF MATTHEW 25:31- 46 IN THE  
CONTEXT OF THE CHURCH AMONG THE OKUN-YORUBA OF KOGI STATE**

**BY**

**OLAREWAJU PAUL OJO  
B.A. (Hons.), M.A. (Rel./Studies)**

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## ABSTRACT

The study examined the periscope of Mathew 25:31-46 on the responsibilities of the Church to the communities. These provisions take care of the *basic* needs of man and serve as a pointer to the Christian response to saving faith in Jesus Christ and a preparation for eternal bliss in the kingdom of God. It is against the background of her experience as a community that has been fought against by the Jihadists (1840 — 1897), colonized by Europeans and neglected by even the present post-colonial governments, that the corporate efforts of the Churches in Okunland were examined. In particular, the thesis examined how each of the churches had responded corporately to the six practical demands of the periscope and drew appropriate implications and suggestions.

Information was gathered through questionnaire and interviews with church and community leaders. Nine purposively selected churches with widespread presence in Okunland as case studies. Three mainline protestant denominations (The Anglican, Roman Catholic Mission, Evangelical Church of West Africa); three African Independent Churches ( Christ Apostolic Church, The Apostolic Church, Cherubim and Seraphim) and three New Generation Churches (Deeper Life Bible Church, All Christian Fellowship Mission and Redeemed Christian Church of God) served as major representatives of Christianity in Okunland covering the period 1901 till date. The secondary sources included relevant textbooks magazines, bulletins, journals and newspapers from reputable

libraries and the Internet. The data was analysed using the hermeneutical approach approach.

The results showed that the Churches were generally aware of the periscope and its import as the revelation of Jesus Christ. The study also found out that there were variations in the responses of the various denominations. These include the following: the pioneer Mission Churches responded Corporately by digging 30 wells, built 2 hospitals, 7 dispensaries, 1 motherless babies home, established 3 farm projects, collect and gave out clothes 6 times in the year; visit the prison 24 times in the year. It was discovered that the African Independent Churches and most of the New Generation Churches did not do much as they could only meet the needs of the people at the interpersonal level. Furthermore, a re-interpretation of Matthew 25:31-46 among the Okun Yoruba of Kogi State showed that (a) the church existed for the spiritual and physical benefit of the society; (b) the mission churches still won more membership as a result of its corporate approach of meeting the needs of the people; (c) the Church existed for the transformation of the society; and (d) while the mission churches carried out the works of mercy corporately, the other churches stopped at the-individual level.

This study concluded that the Churches continuing relevance in Okunland depended on their promotion of the works of mercy particularly at the corporate level to a people already marginalized in the Nigerian State. It also concluded that the Church in "Nigeria still has important roles to play as it seeks to fulfil its eschatological and messianic missions to the poor and the oppressed.