

# Ignorance

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## Introduction

Scripture places a premium on knowledge (John 8:31-32; 2 Tim. 2:15-17). Ignorance is a distinct spiritual danger (Hos. 4:6; Rom. 1:18-23, 28).

## Ignorance Defined

The Greek word for knowledge, *gnōsis*, comes from the root *gnō*. This root is embedded in the Greek words for ignorance, *agnoeō*, *agnoēma* and *agnoia* though in the negative form. If Gnosticism represents a prideful overemphasis on knowledge, ignorance signifies an equally erroneous under emphasis on understanding.

Biblically speaking, an ignorant person is uninformed. Lack of knowledge may be the result of inattention. Sin is often rooted in moral blindness. Lacking spiritual discernment, individuals engage in reprehensible behavior, transgressing the will of God, yet unaware of their offense.

In this lesson, we shall consider Scriptures that discuss the problem of ignorance, in which the aforementioned Greek words may be found. Ignorance is not bliss. Rather, it is characteristic of sinful humanity, bringing mankind under divine judgment. Let us, therefore, strive for a proper understanding of God's Word, acknowledging the authority of the apostolic office. Moreover, let us not be ignorant of Satan's devices, but recognize the cunning craftiness of our adversary.

### **Verb Agnoeō**

Thomas defines the verb ἀγνοέω [agnoeō], a compound of the negative prefix and the same as *ginōskō* [from a primitive root *gnō*-; to come to know, recognize, perceive], as "to be ignorant, not to know" [50]. BDAG say it means "(1) to be uninformed about, not to know, be ignorant (of); (2) to pay little or no attention to, not to recognize, disregard, ignore; (3) to fail to understand, with implication of lack of capacity or ability, not to understand; (4) to be unaware about one's wrongdoing, lapse/do wrong/sin unintentionally." This word occurs 22x in the NT (Mark 9:32; Luke 9:45; Acts 13:27; 17:23; Rom. 1:13; 2:4; 6:3; 7:1; 10:3; 11:25; 1 Cor. 10:1; 12:1; 14:38 [2x]; 2 Cor. 1:8; 2:11; 6:9; Gal. 1:22; 1 Thess. 4:13; 1 Tim. 1:13; Heb. 5:2; 2 Pet. 2:12).

### **Noun Agnoēma**

Thomas defines ἀγνόημα [agnoēma], derived from agnoeō [to be ignorant, not to know], as "a sin of ignorance" [51]. BDAG say it refers to "sin committed in ignorance/unintentionally." This word occurs once in the NT (Heb. 9:7).

### **Noun Agnoia**

Thomas defines the noun ἄγνοια [agnoia], derived from agnoeō [to be ignorant, not to know], as “ignorance” [52]. BDAG say it refers to “(1) in a general sense lack of information about something, ignorance; (2) specifically, lack of information that may result in reprehensible conduct, ignorance, unawareness, lack of discernment. In our literature, of unawareness in relation to deity or of unintentional or involuntary (as opposed to deliberate) moral lapses; (a) of those who condemned Jesus acted in ignorance = you were unaware of what you were doing; (b) almost = sin.” This word occurs 4x in the NT (Acts 3:17; 17:30; Eph. 4:18; 1 Pet. 1:14).

## **Ignorance Discussed**

### **Regarding God’s Creatures**

- The Example of Sinful Humanity (1 Pet. 1:14-16; cf. also 2:1-3).
- The Example of the Gentiles (Acts 17:22-23, 30-31; Eph. 4:17-19).
- The Example of the Jews (Acts 3:17; cf. also Luke 23:34; Acts 13:27).

### **Regarding God’s Truth**

- The Death, Burial and Resurrection of Jesus (Mark 9:32; Luke 9:45).
- The Kindness and Righteousness of God (Rom. 2:4-11; 10:1-3).
- The Nature of Conversion (Rom. 6:1-4).
- The Jurisdiction of Law (Rom. 7:1-4).
- The Hardening of Israel (Rom. 11:25-32).
- The Nature of Biblical Symbolism (1 Cor. 10:1-12).
- The Nature of Spiritual Gifts (1 Cor. 12:1-7).
- The Nature of Christian Hope (1 Thess. 4:13-18).
- The Nature of Priestly Service (Heb. 5:1-6; 9:6-14).

### **Regarding God’s Apostles**

- Apostolic Ministry (Rom. 1:13-15; 2 Cor. 1:8-9; 6:4-10; Gal. 1:21-24).
- Apostolic Authority (1 Cor. 14:37-38; cf. also 2:12-13; 2 Pet. 3:1-2; 1 John 4:6).

### **Regarding God’s Opponent**

- Satan’s Devices (2 Cor. 2:5-11; cf. also 4:3-4; 11:2-3, 13-15; Eph. 4:26-27; 1 Pet. 5:8).

## **Conclusion**

Before learning the truth, a person may be ignorant and honest, sincere but mistaken. After hearing the gospel, ignorance is removed and honesty is tested. When confronted with the truth, Saul of Tarsus believed and obeyed (1 Tim. 1:12-16; Acts 23:1; 26:9-20). Like false teachers of old, one may reject the truth, persisting in ignorance and dishonesty (2 Pet. 2:9-16; Jude 10-11). Will we accept the truth, and thus remain honest? Will we reject the truth, and thus forfeit our integrity?