

3 Scriptural Warnings for the Biblically Illiterate in These End Times

I've been intrigued recently at the number of times the New Testament epistles speak of people being "ignorant."

The apostles' intent was not malicious nor mean spirited. The Greek word used is *agnoeo* and simply means "not knowing." One might say that these people were "uninformed," "unlearned," or "uninitiated." In each reference, they were "biblically illiterate" of the subject or issue.

Biblical illiteracy is a critical problem in our "post-Christian" era. Our modern world has produced a biblically "ignorant" generation, which does not know God nor His prophetic plans for the end of this age.

As such, they are culturally ignorant of His call to repentance and holiness. We must inform, enlighten and seek to save or rescue these ignorant ones, "snatching them from the fire" of hell itself (Jude 1:23, NIV). This is our mission "while it is day; *the night is coming when no one can work*" (John 9:4, MEV).

Scriptural instruction from the New Testament regarding the biblically "ignorant" can be divided into three areas.

1. Biblical illiteracy has produced a current generation which does not know God.

- In Romans 10:3, Paul taught that some were "ignorant of God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own righteousness, they did not submit to the righteousness of God."
- When he taught the Romans regarding the grafting in of

the Gentile church and the future restoration of Israel, Paul said, “For I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, lest you be wise in your own estimation, for a partial hardening has come upon Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in” (11:25).

- In teaching the Corinthians about spiritual gifts, Paul said: “I do not want you to be ignorant ... you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led. Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, ‘Jesus be cursed!’ And no one can say, ‘Jesus is the Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:1-3).
- Our natural, sinful inclinations find expression no matter how good we may think we are. Paul told young Timothy that he, previously, as a religious zealot, was “a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and an insolent man. But I was shown mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief” (1 Tim. 1:13).
- The writer to the Hebrews spoke of Jesus as our Great High Priest, who “is able to have compassion on the ignorant and on those who are wayward, for he himself is also subject to weakness” (Heb. 5:2).

America was built on the biblical principles held by its founders, and the Bible’s precepts were inculcated into our children by songs sung and Scriptures taught. Over the decades and generations, these “God and Country” foundations were reinforced in American schoolhouses and practiced in America’s homes.

From this historic heritage, the nation, as a whole, had a strong biblical literacy and respect for biblical principles for most of its nearly 250 years. The God of the Bible was referenced in public documents, carved into declarations on our public buildings/monuments, embraced as our national motto

and incorporated on our coins and currency.

Now, however, liberal biases, political correctness and liberal-leaning judicial decisions have dulled our Judeo-Christian values and patriotic expressions. We are left with a generation which does not know nor attempt to serve our great God.

2. Biblical illiteracy has produced a generation which does not know God's plan for the last days.

The apostle Paul praised the believers in Thessalonica, who had "turned to God from idols" and now waited for "His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead—Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. 1:9, 10). It was a glorious promise of eternal life. But, what if some of them died before the Lord's return?

Paul realized they were somewhat ignorant of God's plan for the last days. He gave them clearer revelation in Chapter four: "I would not have you ignorant, brothers, concerning those who are asleep," [a euphemism for having died], "that you may not grieve as others who have no hope" (1 Thess. 4:13).

Death, dying and grief can consume a lot of man's emotions and resources. Being ignorant of the hope of Christ's return for His own (1 Thess. 4:13-18) continues to leave many with profoundly messed-up lives. They find no comfort. They have no "blessed hope" to sustain them.

Having no hope themselves, unbelievers tend to scoff and scorn those who do. Peter explains that they "willingly ignore" (2 Pet. 3:5b) the fact that:

- God once destroyed the world that then existed with a flood and all, except righteous Noah and his family, perished (v. 6).

- The heaven and earth that now exist are being reserved for destruction by fire in the “Day of Judgment,” which will also destroy the ungodly inhabitants (v. 7).
- One day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day (v. 8). Those who think the Bible’s prophecies of mass destruction and eternal damnation are never going to be fulfilled are “ignorant” and watching the wrong timepiece.
- The Lord is not slow but patient! He does not want any to perish, but all to come to repentance” (v. 9).

3. Biblical illiteracy has produced a current generation that does not know God’s critical call to repentance and holy living.

Continuing to consider Peter’s instruction for these last days, we note that he not only speaks of our Lord wanting souls to come to repentance but also warns of future judgment, when the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, in the “day of the Lord,” and the elements of this earth will be destroyed with intense heat (2 Pet. 3:10-12).

- Accordingly, Peter questions “what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness” (v. 11b).
- He reminds us that according to God’s promise, “we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells” (v. 13).
- Finally, Peter urges us to “be diligent that you may be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless” (v. 14b). Holy living now (by the empowerment of the abiding Holy Spirit) prepares us for living before a holy God, “where righteousness dwells” (v. 13b).
- Peter even described the end-times teachings of the apostle Paul as being “hard to understand” (v. 16) but

warned that “unlearned and unstable” (v. 16) people distort this “wisdom given to him” (v. 15) “to their own destruction” (v. 16).

Biblical illiteracy about these last days’ truths needs to be individually owned and observed! We are all vulnerable, in these wicked times, lest we “also fall from your own firm footing, being led away by the deception of the wicked” (v. 17).

Deception can keep us from practicing continual confession, true repentance and holy living. The solution is Peter’s final verse: “Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (v. 18). Saturating ourselves in the Word of God is critical to biblical literacy, spiritual growth and victorious Christian living in these last days! {eoa}

*Ordained to the ministry in 1969, **Gary Curtis** is a graduate of LIFE Bible College at Los Angeles (soon to become Life Pacific University at San Dimas, California). He has taken graduate courses at Trinity College in Deerfield, Illinois and Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, California. Gary served as part of the pastoral staff of The Church on The Way, the First Foursquare Church of Van Nuys, California, for 27 years (1988-2015), the last 13 years as the vice president of Life on The Way Communications Inc., the church’s not-for-profit media outreach. Now retired, Gary and his wife have been married for 50 years and live in Southern California. They have two married daughters and five grandchildren.*