
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is: **Does ignorance excuse us when we do wrong?**

In other words, if we don't know something is wrong when we do it, will it be held against us? Let's begin by reading our text:

Acts 3:11-16

11 Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's, greatly amazed.

12 So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?"

13 The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go.

14 But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you,

15 and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.

16 And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

First, notice what a true Bible miracle was. A true Bible miracle is instantaneous and violates natural law.

Notice in vv14-15, that Peter charges these Jews with having murdered Jesus. Jesus is called the "*Prince of Life*" in v15. This is very interesting. The word "*Prince*" comes from the Greek word ἀρχηγός and it means "*originator*." In other words, Jesus is the "*originator*" of life. This fits perfectly with what the apostle John wrote about Jesus:

John 1:1-3

- 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
- 2 He was in the beginning with God.
- 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

Peter then explained God raised Jesus up from the dead. What proof is there that this occurred? Peter says, "*We are witnesses.*" This is the only proof available – but it is proof that would stand in any court of law. Eyewitness testimony is the most solid and valid proof of any historical event. But the testimony of witnesses is only as valid as the character of the witnesses. In other words, if the eyewitnesses are known to be liars, their testimony is suspect. What kind of character do these witnesses have? They have the highest credentials possible.

- They were themselves at first skeptical and they had to see solid proof before they themselves would believe (Mk 16:14).
- They were men who condemned lying and who lived exemplary lives of honesty and integrity.
- They gained nothing from their testimony. They were not enriched. They were not made famous. In fact, each one suffered great loss and each one died a martyr's death, but they never recanted on their testimony.

We know for a fact that Jesus was resurrected because of eyewitness testimony from men and women who were of outstanding character.

IGNORANCE IS NO EXCUSE

After Peter described the situation – Jesus had been unjustly put to death and the Jews had asked for a murderer instead. Notice what Peter now says to these people:

Acts 3:17

17 "Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers.

The point is, ignorance is no excuse for sin. These people did not know Jesus was the *“Prince of Life.”* They ignorantly asked for a murderer to be released rather than asking for the release of the Son of God. But their ignorance did not excuse them. They were guilty and needed forgiveness.

My friend, the same thing is true today. We may have been ignorant in some of the things we have done, but that does not excuse us.

Today many people are members of churches and have never bothered to ask the question, *“Is this church teaching and practicing exactly what the Bible teaches?”* Many people think if their church is doing something that’s not quite right, their ignorance will excuse them on the Judgment Day. But Peter is telling us in this very passage that *“ignorance is not bliss.”* Ignorance can cause us to be lost. The OT taught this same lesson:

Leviticus 5:17

17 "If a person sins, and commits any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the LORD, **though he does not know it, yet he is guilty** and shall bear his iniquity.

Jesus said:

Matthew 15:14

14 Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch."

Each and every person is personally responsible to examine the scriptures and verify that they are believing and practicing the truth.

Galatians 1:8-9

8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

This passage teaches the fact that we are all personally responsible to examine what we have been taught and what we practice in our lives and in our religion. If the preacher is wrong and we ignorantly go along with him, we will suffer the fate of being *“accursed”* from God.

My friend, the best thing you can do is question your religion. Compare it to the NT scriptures. If there is any difference whatsoever, you need to do as the scriptures say:

2 Corinthians 6:17

17 Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you."