

Ignorant or Misguided?

The question of our title may indeed be politically incorrect in today's world, but then a good deal of what the Bible has to say could/would probably be considered so by much of the "enlightened" thinking today. Nonetheless, Hebrews 5:2 speaks of those who are "*ignorant and misguided*" (though it obviously uses "*and*" rather than *or*- more on that distinction later).

First, let's understand the words being used: "*ignorant*" is translated from the Greek term *agnoeo*, which means what you probably think it does: *not to know*, or *not to understand*. However, "*misguided*" (from *planao*) may surprise you a little. *Planao* actually includes the idea of being *led astray by deception*. Thus it is *to cause to hold a wrong view; to twist people's thoughts; to make a lie appear true; or to cover the eyes with lies* (Greek-English Lexicon of the N.T. based on Semantic Domains; by Louw-Nida). Thus it is not just one who has been *misinformed*, but one who has been *deliberately deceived*, and is therefore "*misguided*." However...

Whether simply *ignorant* or *deliberately deceived* (with lies), the result is much the same: **they think wrongly and therefore walk the wrong path of life**. Obviously, there is a correlation in both *cause* and *effect*. If one is *ignorant* (just doesn't know any better), he is more easily *deceived by lies*, and winds up pursuing a wrong path.

Now let's return to our passage in Hebrews 5:1-3 (to get the complete sentence), "*For every high priest taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; he can deal gently with the ignorant and misguided, since he himself also is beset with weakness; and because of it he is obligated to offer sacrifices for sins, as for the people, so also for himself.*" These verses are part of a larger context in which the Levitical High Priest of the Law of Moses is being compared to the High Priesthood of Jesus Christ under His covenant and law. The overall point of which is to demonstrate how that in every way, Christ's priesthood is supremely superior, cf. Hebrews 5:5-10.

So with that in mind, understand that our verses are emphasizing the inherent *weakness(es)* of the Levitical priesthood: that they, being "*from among men*," are themselves often "*ignorant and misguided*" (either simply *not knowing* any better, or having been *deliberately deceived* with false information). Obviously, Jesus was neither of those things... but men are sometimes either, and oftentimes both "*ignorant and misguided*." The specific point being made in v.2 is that because the Levitical priests were mere men, and therefore subject to being "*ignorant and misguided*," they could "**deal gently**" their compatriots who were similarly afflicted. My question, and the point of this article is: **Can we do likewise?** That is, are we able to "**deal gently**" with the "**ignorant**" and "**misguided**"? Or, considering ourselves as enlightened and (self?) righteous, do we instead denounce, deride, and dismiss them, cp. Matthew 9:10-13?

Regarding these things, please consider further:

- Chances are that if our families or friend had not helped us *know* and *do* better (spiritually), we would have likewise wound up either "*ignorant*" or "*misguided*" or both, cf. Ephesians 6:4 and cp. Ephesians 2:11-12. But just as importantly...

- God expects His “bond-servant” to “not be quarrelsome, but kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition; if God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will,” 2Timothy 2:24-26. Wow! Did you get all of that? If we are as enlightened and righteous as we presume, God requires that we are *amiable, kind, and patient* WHILE *teaching* and with *gentleness correcting* exactly the kind of people we’ve been referencing: the *ignorant and misguided*.

So, if you are indeed neither “*ignorant*” nor “*misguided*,” great! But that also means that God has work for you to do. Be sure you do it with the *attitude* and *means* and *methods* and for the *purpose* He prescribes in 2Timothy 2:24-26. Otherwise, you might well become what you despise: “*ignorant and misguided*!” (Philip C. Strong; Southport Church of Christ; 7202 Madison Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46227; online at southportcofc.org)