

The Crisis of Scriptural Ignorance: Part 1

Why We Don't Know What We Should Know

We think we understand the Bible because we have read it, studied it, memorized verses, and heard sermons from the best teachers we could find. But none of that guarantees true understanding. Too often, we assume our beliefs are correct simply because everyone around us agrees. But what if the pastors, Bible teachers, and leaders we trust don't realize that they themselves are missing foundational truths?

This was the condition of the religious leaders Jesus confronted. He told them plainly:

"You know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God." (Matthew 22:29)

"They are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit." (Matthew 15:14)

When Jesus declared, *"You have heard that it was said..."* (Matthew 5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43), He was not contradicting the Scriptures but exposing the gap between what was written and what was taught. He contrasted God's Word with the Pharisees' traditions, additions, and misapplications that distorted its meaning.

They knew the words but not the meaning. They recited tradition instead of revelation. And the result was generations misled by leaders who did not understand the Father's intent.

The same is true today—and in truth, it has been the condition of much of God's people throughout history. Whenever foundations are neglected, tradition takes the place of revelation, and blindness follows.

The Root of Scriptural Ignorance: Christianity and the Council of Nicaea

One of Emperor Constantine's goals at the Council of Nicaea (325 AD) was to permanently separate Christianity from its Jewish roots. In a follow-up letter to the bishops, he declared:

"It appeared an unworthy thing that in celebrating this most holy feast (Easter) we should follow the practice of the Jews, who have impiously defiled their hands with enormous sin, and are therefore justly afflicted with spiritual blindness... Let us then have nothing in common with that detestable mass of Jews, for we have received from our Savior a different way."

This deliberate separation became the foundation of institutional Christianity. It has influenced every denomination and every generation since. It created a worldview that often runs counter to the Father's perspective revealed in Scripture.

The same antisemitism reappeared in the leaders of the Reformation. Luther, Calvin, and others rejected certain Roman practices but retained replacement theology—the idea that the Church had permanently replaced Israel in God's purposes. This false teaching blinded Christians for centuries and prepared the ground for persecution of the Jewish people.

It was not until the rebirth of Israel in May 1948 that the cracks in replacement theology began to show clearly. Israel's restoration forced the church to reckon with the faithfulness of God to His covenant promises and reminded us that His Word cannot be broken.

These two events—the separation at Nicaea and the rebirth of Israel—frame a prophetic timeline. The first marked the beginning of a long era of Gentile dominance of the church and distortion of the faith. The second marks the beginning of its end: the countdown to the close of the "times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24) and the Father's work of bringing Jew and Gentile together into one new man in Messiah (Ephesians 2:15).

My Purpose For This Article

I want to highlight a few of the great misdirects that flow from our ignorance of both Scripture and history. Chief among them is the artificial division of the Bible into “Old Testament” and “New Testament.”

The Hebrew Scriptures—the Tanakh—formed the Bible of Jesus and the apostles. *Tanakh* is an acronym for the three sections of the Hebrew Scriptures: Torah (Law), Nevi'im (Prophets), and Ketuvim (Writings). Together they establish the foundation of God's covenant purposes with Israel and the nations. The arrangement of these books was different from the later Christian “Old Testament,” which followed the pattern of the Greek Septuagint. But the greater misdirect was not merely reordering—it was the invention of a false division.

The apostolic writings should have been received as the continuation and fulfillment of that same story, not as a replacement. In fact, the apostles never referred to their writings as a “New Testament.” They consistently used the language of covenant:

- Jesus: “*This cup is the new covenant in my blood*” (Luke 22:20).
- Paul: “[God] *has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant*” (2 Corinthians 3:6).
- Hebrews: “*Christ is the mediator of a new covenant*” (Hebrews 9:15).

Old versus New Covenant

When Jesus spoke these words at the Last Supper, the Gospel we have preserved them in Greek as *kainē diathēkē* — “new covenant.” The word *kainē* means “new in quality, fresh, renewed,” not simply brand new in time. But behind this stands the Hebrew promise of Jeremiah 31:31, where God says: “*Behold, the days are coming... when I will make a new covenant (berit ḥadashah) with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.*”

In Hebrew, *ḥadashah* can mean both “new” and “renewed.” To the disciples, steeped in the Scriptures, Jesus’ words did not sound like the announcement of an entirely different covenant, but the arrival of the renewed covenant God had foretold — the same covenant story, brought to fullness in Him.

Thus, the covenant sealed in His blood is both new in quality—a better covenant (Hebrews 8:6), with better promises, a perfect sacrifice, and an eternal High Priest—and renewed in continuity—the same God, the same people of Israel at the center, now expanded to include the Gentile believers in the nations.

In reality, the Bible should be read as Old Covenant and New (Renewed) Covenant, not Old versus New Testament.

The idea of two “Testaments” began to emerge in the second century, as church fathers like Tertullian contrasted the Hebrew Scriptures with the writings of the apostles. By the fourth century, at the Council of Nicaea and subsequent councils, the division of the Bible into an “Old Testament” and a “New Testament” was firmly codified as the foundation of institutional Christianity.

This single shift reshaped the church’s worldview. Instead of reading the Scriptures as the unfolding story of the Old and New (Renewed) Covenants—continuity fulfilled in Messiah—the church framed them as Old versus New, past versus present, obsolete versus superior. This distortion not only fueled replacement theology, severing Christianity from its Jewish roots, but it also blinded generations of Gentile believers to the Father’s true intent, leaving them unable to rightly discern the meaning of key Scriptures and doctrines.

Road to Emmaus

What we need today is what those first disciples experienced on the road to Emmaus. Two of them, despondent after Jesus’ crucifixion, walked with the risen Messiah without even recognizing Him. As

they poured out their confusion, He answered not with new revelation but by opening the Scriptures they already had: *“Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself”* (Luke 24:27).

It was only later, when they sat at the table, and Jesus blessed and broke the bread, that *“their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him”* (Luke 24:31). Their hearts burned within them as He opened the Tanakh to reveal who He truly was.

This is the experience the church desperately needs: to have our eyes opened again to see Messiah in all of Scripture, not through the lens of replacement or tradition, but through covenant truth that reveals the Father’s intent.

Stay tuned for Part 2: The Crisis of Scriptural Ignorance — Other Misunderstandings

In Part 2, I will highlight several key areas where scriptural misunderstandings have shaped the church and continue to cloud our foundations today.

The Gospels and the Old Covenant

Many assume that because the Gospels appear in the “New Testament,” they must belong to the New Covenant. But most of their events unfold under the Old Covenant, which did not end until the blood of Jesus was shed (Luke 22:20; Hebrews 9:16–17). Failing to see this distinction leads to confusion about discipleship, the operation of the Spirit’s gifts, and the post-ascension ministries Christ gave in Ephesians 4:11.

The Apostles

There is a crucial difference between the original Twelve—chosen before the cross under the Old Covenant—and the post-ascension apostles (such as Paul, Barnabas, and Silas), who were appointed by the risen Christ to equip His church. Blurring this distinction produces serious errors in questions of authority, calling, and ministry practice.

Church Structure

Since the Council of Nicaea, much of the church structure has followed a pastor-driven or hierarchical model that is foreign to the New Testament. In the apostolic pattern, local congregations were led by a plurality of elders and deacons, while apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers (Ephesians 4:11) functioned together as Christ’s gifts to His body. Ignoring this produces imbalance, weak foundations, and often authoritarian leadership.

Blessings,

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