

Study 1: Introduction to Titus

Introduction

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Homework and preparation for next week:

Read the whole book in a single sitting, and a few days later read chapter 1 again.

Read the notes as a review of the study

Review the introduction and conclusion, (page 6 of the notes) and find the key words & thoughts. Put these together into a "story" to find the key things that Paul wants to tell us about the letter.

Notes for study 1: Introduction to Titus

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Pastoral Epistles

The term "pastoral epistles" was first used in 1726 by Paul Anton of Halle, to describe the two letters to Timothy and Titus. The term has gained wide acceptance, although Paul was not a Pastor (Elder). The letters do describe the *nurturing* approach in these letters that is different than the other Pauline letters, and it is in this context that I will use the term.

The pastoral epistles are rich in their doctrine and their practical values. They provide great insight into dealing with contemporary problems such as heresy, divisiveness, and the difficulties in leadership. They provide great encouragement to the reader as we realise the circumstances of Paul as he wrote them.

Paul's Fourth Journey

We cannot fit the Paul's travels described in the pastoral epistles into the Acts narrative. It is evident that they fit into another journey that Paul had made (the 4th journey) after the close of his Roman imprisonment. There are some traditions and evidence (outside of scripture) that he travels back into Asia Minor, and then to Spain where he stays for a two-year period, and then visits Asia Minor, Macedonia again, and Crete. He is later arrested and sent to Rome where he is again imprisoned. He does not escape this time, and is put to death in Rome around AD 66 or 67.

We do not know for certain the places that Paul went to, or the order that he visited them. Conybeare & Howson¹ suggest that upon leaving Rome Paul went to Macedonia, and then to Ephesus. Whilst there he visited Colossae and Laodocaea. After that he went to Spain by ship to avoid the political upheavals of Rome, where he stayed for two years. From Spain he returned to Ephesus again where his predictions of Acts 20 of apostasy were coming to fruition. [We should note of course, that subsequent visits of Paul to Ephesus are at conflict with his inspired revelation that the elders "*would see his face no more*". However, the evidence from the Pastoral Epistles leads strongly to the conclusion that Paul in fact did visit Ephesus again on at least one occasion.] Whilst at Ephesus, Paul is thought (by Conybeare and Howson) to have made trips firstly to Macedonia, and then to Crete. After leaving Ephesus, he went to Corinth, and he then spent the winter at Nicopolos, where he was arrested and sent to Rome for execution.

From the Pastoral Epistles we learn that Paul had visited Crete, and left Titus there to set things in order (Tit 1:5). After leaving Crete, Paul went to Miletus by way of Corinth (2 Tim 4:20). It was most likely during this time that Paul visited Ephesus again. Timothy had been left there to try to straighten out some of the apostasy (1 Tim 1:3) that Paul had warned about (Acts 20), and Paul was still hoping that circumstances might allow another visit (1 Tim 3:14,15). Whilst Paul was in Ephesus, Onesiphorus ministered to him (2 Tim 1:16-18).

During the time in Ephesus, Paul wrote the letter to Titus, and then travelled to Troas where he left some things with Carpus (2 Tim 4:13). He then went to Nicopolos where he planned to spend the winter (Titus 3:12). Nicopolos was a Roman Colony, and Paul would be safe from Jewish persecution in the city as a Roman Citizen.

¹ Conybeare, WJ & Howson, JS "The Life and Epistles of St Paul" Eerdmans, Grand Rapids Mi. ISBN 0-8028-8086-X p.745

Place, date, and occasion of the letter

Because we don't know exactly where Paul went, and when he went there, it is impossible to pin down a time and place for the letter. Two things are evident. Firstly, Paul has not yet arrived in Nicopolos (Tit 3:12), which makes the likely places either Corinth or Ephesus. Secondly, there are strong similarities between Titus and 1st Timothy, which suggest that they were both written at (or around) the same time. Both letters discuss the qualifications of elders, however there are subtle differences in the circumstances. Titus was instructed to appoint elders (Tit 1:5) whilst Timothy was instructed to bring the disorderly elders at Ephesus into order (1 Tim 1:3). Consequently, Ephesus is a less likely place of writing the epistle to Titus, which makes Corinth the more likely location.

This makes the time of writing at around 64 or 65 AD before the winter in Nicopolos, after which Paul was taken to Rome, imprisoned, and executed.

Paul gives the occasion of the letter in 1:5. He had left Titus behind in Crete to set the church(es) in order, and he now writes to instruct the newly appointed elders on how to behave and to reject false teaching. Apparently Zenas and Apollos were sent with the letter, and their journey to Crete probably marked the occasion for Paul's writing. [This is evidenced, since Paul knew that they were there, and were going to travel away from Crete. The most likely explanation is that they had been with Paul in Corinth, and so he knew their travel plans.]

Paul's association with Titus

Titus first appears in scripture in Gal 2:1&3. This is the occasion where Paul went from Antioch to Jerusalem to discuss with the apostles whether circumcision was necessary for Gentile Christians. Paul had returned from the first journey after converting many Gentiles, and he takes Titus and Barnabas with him. It is clear that Paul had a strong association with Titus at that time, although we don't know whether that association was formed on the first journey, or during the ministry in Antioch (Acts 11:26; 14:28). This places the beginning of the association at around 43 or 44 AD. By the time of the letter, Paul had known and worked with Titus for around 20 years.

On the third journey Paul was in Ephesus for over 2 years (AD 54-56). During that time he wrote the 1st Corinthian letter, and then sent Titus off to Corinth some time later to follow up and to pick up the collection. Paul expected to meet up with Titus in Troas, but eventually finds him in Macedonia (most likely Philippi or Thessalonica) (2 Cor 2:12-13). Paul then wrote the 2nd Corinthian letter and sent it to Corinth with Titus (2 Cor 8:16-24). Paul subsequently comes to Corinth and spends three months there (Acts 20:2-3), and during that time he wrote the Roman letter. Titus is not mentioned in the greetings, which suggests that he has moved on by this time. [At a later time (ie some time after the letter to Titus) Paul sends him to Dalmatia (2 Tim 4:10)].

As we know that Titus was in Antioch with Paul between the first and second journeys, and he next appears in Ephesus during the time of Paul's third journey, it may be possible that Paul took him along with him on that journey. Luke is very scant in the details between Paul's reception in Ephesus on the close of the second journey (Acts 18:19-21) and the start of the third journey (Acts 18:23) when he returns to Ephesus (Acts 19:1). Luke wants to deal with the work in Ephesus, and it is possible that Paul took Titus along with him on the journey described in Acts 18:23.

We can piece together a long association that Paul has had with Titus, which is almost like his relationship with Timothy. Paul describes him as "...my true son in our common faith..." (1:4), which suggests that Paul may have converted him.

The references to Titus reveal that he was a trustworthy, efficient, and valued young co-worker of Paul with a forceful personality. He was resourceful, energetic, tactful, skilful in dealing with difficult situations, and effective in conciliating people.

The Cretan churches

The origin of the churches on Crete is unknown. We do know that there were many, since Titus had been instructed to "...appoint elders in every city..." (1:5). We do know that Paul stopped at the island of Crete during his journey to Rome in AD 60 (Acts 27:7-13), however Luke does not record any evangelism by Paul during that visit.

There were "...Cretans and Arabs..." present in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:11), so it is very likely that they took the gospel back to Crete during the dispersion (Acts 8:4).

The Cretan churches "...had evidently been in existence for some time when Paul visited Crete. Their condition was discouraging. They were inadequately organized, so Titus was directed to appoint morally and doctrinally qualified elders in the various churches (1:6-9). In view of the operation of false teachers (1:10-16), this was essential.

The prevailing moral conditions in the churches were far from what they might be. The Christians were adversely influenced by the prevailing low moral standards in Crete. Perhaps the Gospel of the grace of God had been misinterpreted to mean that salvation was unrelated to daily conduct. Titus was urged to insist on the need for sound doctrine and a high level of moral and social conduct (2:1-10; 3:1-3). Christian behavior must be grounded in the basic truths of the Gospel (2:11-14; 3:4-8)..." (NIVBC)

The culture of Crete

Crete is an island about 150 miles long and 7 to 30 miles wide in places. It has been inhabited since prehistoric times. There is evidence of organised habitation which dates back to 8000 BC, and the excavations of the 20th century have revealed a splendid civilisation which ruled the island and much of the Aegean during the Bronze Age. The Minoan civilisation, as it was named, is credited as the first civilisation of Europe. It lasted for about two millennia before it was replaced on the island by Mycenaean civilisation, and then by Classical and Hellenistic Greeks, which in turn were replaced by the Romans in 67 BC. The Byzantine empire and the Venetians controlled the island for a few hundred years before the Ottoman empire invaded the island.

Minoan Crete maintained an extensive network of trading links that brought influences drawn from Egypt and Mesopotamia to Crete. The Minoans exported pottery, grains, wines, and oils, and tended to import luxury materials such as precious metals, jewels, and ivory. Minoan culture gave rise to several great cities that featured stone buildings and provision for a water supply and drainage. The city adjacent to the great Palace of Knossos was home, at its peak, to almost one hundred thousand people, becoming one of the first major cities in human history.

The trade routes between other places and Crete increased, with Minoan trading stations in various Aegean Islands such as Kythera, Milos, Kea, Thira, Karpathos, Rhodes as well as in Asia Minor (Miletos), in Syria, and in Egypt (Faros). As the "crossroads" for several trading routes, culture of Crete became blended with those from empires of all directions. This contributed significantly to the cosmopolitan nature of contemporary Crete.

Cretans were famously known for being proverbial liars and shameless dishonest people. It was a place of shams and scams. False doctrine was a virtual cottage industry, circulated by men who wanted to make a fast buck. It was a land immersed in the Greek Mythology culture. They believed that it was the birthplace of the Greek god Zeus. We can derive from the superstition of the place that it was probably a lot like the Athens in which Paul preached. All sorts of false heresies abounded on the island, with people welcoming more heresy as fast as they could imagine it.

For a few hundred years, the region was known for its piracy. First the Greeks and then the Romans, had to suppress the piracy. The Cretans had an earned, deserved bad reputation. Paul stated the prevailing opinion of Cretans in his day when he quoted one of their own poets, Epimenides, who lived about 600 BC, who wrote, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy

gluttons." Cicero wrote: "Indeed, moral principles are so divergent that the Cretans consider highway robbery to be honourable" (The Republic, 3.4.15). Polybius wrote: "Their laws go as far as possible in letting them acquire land to the extent of their power...and money is held in such high honour among them that its acquisition is not only regarded as necessary, but as most honourable. So much in fact do sordid love of gain and lust for wealth prevail among them that (the Cretans) are the only people in the world in whose eyes no gain is disgraceful (Histories 6.46.1-3.). Diodorus of Sicily related the story of a Cretan soldier who betrayed his army to the Romans. He scorned Roman citizenship; he wanted money Histories 6.47.5).

Paul was very concerned that the people living in the pagan culture of Crete not get engaged in trying to moralise cultural behaviour by trying through the political avenues to create some kind of Christian culture. He was concerned that they be able to demonstrate to their society that God saves people from sin. We do not attempt to change culture externally, we preach the gospel and it changes men internally. We don't even belong to this culture, we are simply aliens, our land is heaven.

The style of the letter

The style of the Pastoral Epistles are very different to the other writings of Paul. The letters are personal (in that they are written to specific individuals), and are full of practical instruction. Some of the differences are explained by the time differences, which gives both a different set of problems to be addressed, and a greater maturity in the writer.

The differences in style have caused much discussion over the genuineness of the authorship, although Paul's authorship was not seriously challenged until recent times.

Outline of the letter

The following outline is taken from Fee & Stuart²

- 1:1- 4 *Salutation*
- 1:5- 9 *Appointing Elders*
- 1:10-16 *Opposing False Teachers*
- 2:1 - 10 *Godly Living for Various Social Groups*
- 2:11- 15 *The Basis for Godly Living*
- 3:1 - 8 *The People of God in the World*
- 3:9 - 11 *Final Indictment of the False Teachers*
- 3:12 - 15 *Concluding Personal Notes and Greetings*

² Fee, Gordon D & Stuart, Douglas "How to Read the Bible Book by Book" Zondervan ISBN 0-310-211118-2

Key points – Introduction & Conclusion

By looking at the introduction and conclusion to the letter, we can derive some of the key thoughts that Paul wants to bring out to the readers – especially when they appear in both the introduction and the conclusion.

Take some time to circle the key thoughts in each section, and then link the common ones together. The keys to the introduction are Paul's use of *For this reason, brethren...* (where I have underlined it), and his beginning of the conclusion with a discussion of his "travel plans" – in this case his sending of Artemas or Tychicus ... Quotation is taken from the NIV.

TIT 1:1 Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness--² a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time,³ and at his appointed season he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior,

TIT 1:4 To Titus, my true son in our common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

TIT 1:5 The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you...

TIT 3:12 As soon as I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, because I have decided to winter there.¹³ Do everything you can to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way and see that they have everything they need.¹⁴ Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives.

TIT 3:15 Everyone with me sends you greetings. Greet those who love us in the faith.

Grace be with you all.