

Christ & Culture

Discussion Guide for Titus 1:10-16

All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD.
And all the families of the nations shall worship before you.
For kingship belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations.”

– Psalm 22:27-28

One of the foundational truths of Jesus Christ is that his kingdom extends to the entire world.

This stands in contrast with every other deity throughout human history whose identity was to be the god for a particular tribe of people.

The religion of the Jewish elite at the time of Jesus made the mistake of believing God's intent was for the all of the world to become Jewish. They had fundamentally forgotten that God set the Hebrews apart in the Old Testament to point all of the peoples of the world to Himself.

Jesus didn't come to establish a religion, but the true worship of God.

Paul and the other apostles were commissioned by Jesus to authoritatively preach the pure Gospel. A Gospel free from cultural and nationalist trappings. A Gospel that would be heard by all of the nations, tongues, and tribes of the world.

This led to constant battles within the early church that continue to echo today.

Every Christian must answer this central question: Is Jesus only the Lord and savior for people who identify with a tribe of religious folks, or for every tribe of people including those who do not have a Judeo-Christian religion as part of their cultural heritage?

Read Titus 1:10-16

For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. 11 They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. 12 One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.” 13 This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, 14 not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth. 15 To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. 16 They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

The people in Crete and other places fell into two different traps in attempting to live out Christianity:

1. Believers were led astray by Judaizers insisted they had to also become circumcised keepers of the Jewish law to be full followers of God. They would forget that the Gospel is greater than the law of salvation by works.
 2. Believers returned to their old pagan cultural roots of sexual immorality, lying, debauchery, laziness, or general lack of Christian integrity. They would forget that the Gospel fundamentally transforms men and women from sinners into people who conduct lives that are pleasing to God.
- Do you continue to see these two follies among Christians today?
 - How are legalism and libertinism (disregard of morality) both perversions of the Gospel?
 - What do you make of the statement “to the pure all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled.”?
 - How does legalism often mask uncontrolled fleshly desires?

Titus is being instructed to contend with false teachers so they may be silenced and quit perverting the church’s understanding of the pure Gospel.

We don’t know exactly what these people were teaching, but we know that whatever they were teaching was rooted in a misunderstanding of the difference between Christianity and culture. People were instructed that their primary identity was either as a Jew or a Cretan.

The Gospel says that believers in Christ take on a new identity as the family of God.

Paul was not telling Titus that Jewish people completely ceased to be Jewish or that Cretans ceased to be Cretan. But he was telling Titus to teach people that to be in Christ means that we are Jewish in a new way, or Cretan in a new way.

Or American in a new way.

To make nationalism or tribalism more important than the Gospel is to deny the faith. This sort of false teaching must be rebuked.

Discussion Questions

- Does the church today struggle with separating our tribal, national, and cultural identity from our identity in Christ?
- How do we fail to make that distinction?
- Why is it important to place the Gospel ahead of our culture if we want to reach the world?
- Talk about a situation where you had to place your own cultural identity underneath your identity as a follower of Christ.