

Introduction to Titus

Where is it in the Bible?

Titus is the seventeenth book in the New Testament and the last of the Pastoral Epistles. It is found between 2 Timothy and Philemon.

Who wrote it?

The salutation (1:1) and church tradition identify Paul as the author of this epistle. However, like the other Pastoral Epistles, this letter is thought by many to have been written by an unknown author after Paul's death. One fact often cited to support this view is that there is no evidence in the rest of the New Testament that Paul visited Crete, but 1:5 says that he left Titus there.

When was it written?

As with the two epistles addressed to Timothy, dating Titus is very complicated due to the questions about who wrote it. The same three possible scenarios exist for this book¹:

- There are gaps in our knowledge of Paul's career that account for the situations covered in this letter. According to this theory, Paul wrote Titus on Crete, perhaps from Ephesus, sometime between 52 and 56.
- Paul had a "second career" after everything that is described in Acts. This presupposes that Paul was released from prison. The place and occasion of writing would be the same as above, but the letter would have been later, sometime between 63 and 66.
- Paul did not write Titus. It was written by an anonymous author to Christians in general in the late first or possibly the early second century.

What is it about?

Titus is concerned with the link between faith and practice. It provides advice on qualifications for leaders in the church, dealing with false teachers, and dealing with various groups in the church.

¹ This discussion is adapted from Mark Allen Powell, *Introducing the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 402-404.

How is it structured?

- I. Salutation (1:1-4)
- II. Appointing Leaders in the Church (1:5-9)
- III. False Teachers (1:10-16)
- IV. Ordering Life in the Community (2:1-3:11)
 - a. Instructions for Various Groups (2:1-10)
 - b. Reason for Christian Living (2:11-14)
 - c. Titus' Duty (2:15)
 - d. Behavior of Believers (3:1-11)
- V. Closing (3:12-15)
 - a. Personal Instructions (3:12-14)
 - b. Final Greetings and Benediction (3:15)

What are some things to look for?

- **Baptismal Regeneration:** One of the most important passages on baptism found in the New Testament is Titus 3:5. Here the author speaks of baptism as “the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit” (NIV). This passage is cited by Luther in his teaching on baptism in both the Large and Small Catechisms.
- **Christology:** In Titus 2:13, Jesus is clearly identified as “God”, one of only two places where this occurs in the New Testament. The other is in John 20:28.
- **Titus:** “Titus was a Gentile Christian, possibly from Antioch, who was brought to Jerusalem by Paul and Barnabas as a sort of test case for the church in deciding whether Gentile converts to Christianity needed to be circumcised (Gal. 2:1–3). The extent of his involvement with Paul’s subsequent missionary work is unknown, but Paul did come to regard him as a “partner and co-worker” (2 Cor. 8:23), and he appears to have been with Paul during portions of what is called the third missionary journey. In the mid-50s, Paul sent him from Ephesus to Corinth, carrying a painful letter that Paul had written to that church. He was successful in mediating a reconciliation between Paul and the congregation, and he brought Paul news of this in Macedonia (see 2 Cor. 2:4, 13; 7:6–8, 13–15). Later, Titus returned to the Corinthian church as one of the agents responsible for administering the offering that Paul was collecting for Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8:6, 16–18, 23; 9:5; cf. 12:18). We know nothing else for certain, though there are references in the Pastoral Letters to Titus conducting ministry in Dalmatia (2 Tim. 4:10) and in Crete (Titus 1:4–5)”²

² Powell, 401.