

**BIBLE STUDY GUIDES: SEEKING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT**

**A SERIES OF NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES**

**By Bob Young**

**TITUS**

<b>Introduction to the Bible Study Guides Series</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Titus 1</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Titus 2</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Titus 3</b>	<b>7</b>

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

These Bible study guides reflect how I organize and understand the text, taking into account various exegetical factors—syntax, grammar, vocabulary, etc. Along the way, I share some observations that may help clarify passages that are difficult to understand. I have not tried to write about every passage where potential problems or differences in understanding exist. At times my notes may seem to be unnecessary comments on clear passages; in other passages some may ask why I did not include a comment. Such is the individualized nature of Bible study. Some of my comments are designed to help maintain focus on the original author's purpose for writing.

These guides are not intended to take the place of your own reading but are intended to provide help and an opportunity to check your understanding. For each chapter there is a content outline followed by textual notes. The content sections of these guides (including how the text is divided and how subsections are described) are drawn from a comparison of several modern translations and reflect the majority. The textual notes at times provide a periphrastic summary, but as noted above they are not intended to be complete. I have tried to address matters that may not be included in other sources. Texts that are easily understood and matters usually explained in other writings are not treated in detail.

My primary purpose is to make it easier for you the reader or student to analyze and understand the text. Ultimately, you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible and you cannot simply follow what a favorite preacher or commentator says.

#### **INITIAL READING AND PARAGRAPHING**

In several previous writings, I have explained the importance of preparatory reading and personal study of the text. It is important that you learn to do this on your own. Once the text is familiar, I suggest you think about what themes you can identify and how you would mark the paragraph divisions, based on the subjects treated in the passage. Once you have completed this work, it is good to compare your paragraphing with that of several modern versions (or you can use the content section of these guides).

#### **A NOTE ABOUT PARAGRAPHING**

Paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Most modern translations are divided into paragraphs and provide a summary. Ideally, every paragraph has one central topic, truth, or thought. There will be several ways to describe the subject of the paragraph.

Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation can we truly understand the Bible. Only the original author is inspired—readers must take care not to change or modify the message. A first step toward integrity with the text is to develop the ability to analyze it and establish paragraphs.

Note that this introductory page is not repeated for each chapter. Many students will find it helpful to return to this introduction and reread it before beginning to read, analyze, and study a new chapter of the text.

## **BIBLE STUDY GUIDES: SEEKING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT**

### **Titus 1**

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[Note: it is suggested that the introductory materials on the previous page be read before beginning your own preparatory reading and analysis.]

### **CONTENT**

Paragraphing is fairly standard in this chapter.

1:1-4, greeting or salutation

1:5-9, the work of Titus on Crete

1:10-16, the work of elders, the importance of opposing false teachers

### **STUDY HELPS**

1:1-4. Writer (Paul, bond-servant, apostle) and recipient (Titus, child in the faith). Notice the focus on God in this paragraph. Bond-servant and apostle balance one another; one is menial servant, the other is one sent with authority. In the face of problems with false teachers, Paul thinks it necessary to establish his credentials or authority. The letter is addressed to Titus but was intended also to be read to the church (plural you in 3:15).

Paul writes to strengthen the faith, knowledge, and hope of God's elect. These are endangered by the false teachers who deny faith, distort knowledge, and eliminate hope. Knowledge of truth (see the same phrase in 2 Tim. 3:7) is according to godliness. The modern tendency would be to reverse the order, godliness according to truth. Truth is meaningless unless it results in godly living. Godliness is a common theme in the Pastorals.

Faith depends on God's promises. God is faithful because of his unchanging nature. He cannot lie, so the promise made long ago (before times eternal) remains. Promised is aorist middle, emphasizing the subject, God himself, and adding to the certainty of the promise. God's promises predate creation, but are now made known, in God's own time or proper time, through the proclamation (kerygma) entrusted to Paul.

Titus was a companion of Paul and was entrusted with several delicate tasks. The lack of a reference to him is striking (see my Introduction to the Pastorals for more on this.) For parallels to the descriptive phrase in 1:4, see 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2, and Philemon 10. Paul and Titus shared a common faith.

1:5-9. Paul names two tasks entrusted to Titus on Crete: correct the things lacking (left undone), and name leaders. In every town suggests there was only one elder group in each city. Does this mean that multiple house churches shared an eldership, or is it an indication that the church was not strong and that there was only one church (congregation) in each city? The text does not answer the question.

We do not have details concerning the church in Crete before the time of this letter. There were Cretans present on Pentecost in Acts 2.

The things deficient or lacking are not mentioned unless they are read into the remainder of the letter. The leaders Titus was to appoint are described both as overseers and elders, likely referring to one group. (Acts 20 shows that all three terms—overseer, elder, pastor—were

referring to one leadership group.) Appoint would include delegating authority. The qualifications or characteristics of the leaders on Crete are slightly different than those mentioned in Ephesus (1 Timothy 3). One can see two different purposes. In Ephesus there were elders as early as Acts 20, where the text also says that problems would arise from within the elders. When Paul wrote to Timothy in Ephesus about five years later, in view of the situation he himself had predicted, it is a corrective list. In the case of Titus on Crete, it is an instructive list because there is no indication that the church had elders.

Good studies of the various characteristics are available in numerous other Bible study tools. In light of the observations above, several cautions are valid. The modern church must avoid using these lists as proof texts. The modern church must avoid the tendency to merge the two lists into one super list, thus obscuring the original context and intent of the author. The modern church must recognize the ambiguity, flexibility, and lack of absoluteness in the lists. 1:9. Leaders are also defined by what they do or how they act. Leaders are well versed in the word of God, the verb means face to face with the word of God, focused on the faithful word so that they will be able to teach what is consistent with God's word. Leaders are able to exhort and refute the opponents. Verses 10-16 describe these opponents. The work of opposing false teaching is not solely the responsibility of the preacher or evangelistic. Spiritual leaders must be capable of explaining what the word says (exhorting) and refuting false teachings.

1:10-16. The opponents are described as rebellious (not willing to be in subjection), deceptive, and given to empty words or talking. The group may have been composed of both Gentiles and Jews, but Paul was especially concerned with the Jewish element. These were influencing entire families, seeking financial gain through their teachings, and disrupting the church. They were to be silenced by the work of the elders.

1:12-14. Paul cites a 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Cretan named Epimenides to show how widespread certain problems were on Crete. The accusation has special force with reference to the false teachers. The false teaching continued Jewish myths and human commandments. They were to be reprovved severely with the goal of returning them to sound teaching and truth. This could refer to the false teachers, with the hope of restoring them, or to those who were being influenced by them.

1:15-16. The first part of these verses is likely a reference to asceticism, not specifically mentioned here but clearly a factor in 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy. Such false teachings often profess to bring one closer to God, but the reality is the opposite. Paul calls this denying God, being disobedient, abominable, and unfit for doing good (see also 2:14; 3:1, 8).

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### **Titus 2**

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[Note: it is suggested that the introductory materials that precede Chapter 1 be read again before beginning your own preparatory reading and analysis.]

#### **CONTENT**

The chapter naturally divides itself into two major paragraphs. It may be helpful to identify smaller units of the text due to the length of the sections.

- 2:1-10, The responsibility of Titus to teach and model sound doctrine among various groups in the church
- 2:11-15, The gospel message summarized as motivation for Christian living

#### **STUDY HELPS**

2:1-10. This section contains references to different groups of people in the church: older men, older women, younger women, younger men (including Titus himself), and slaves. The focus is on sound doctrine (healthy teaching).

2:1-2. The phrase, older men, does not refer to church leaders; the usage in this text is parallel to 1 Timothy 5:1-2.

2:3-5. Paul gives instructions about what Titus should share with the older women, consistent with sound doctrine. One responsibility of the older women is to teach the younger women. The younger women need to learn how to love their husbands and to love their children. These two things are often considered automatic in today's world, and the need to receive such instruction should catch the attention. The need for such teaching may reflect the negative impact of the false teachers in the homes (see 2 Tim. 3:6-9). The young women are to seek certain characteristics or qualities, much as the young widows in 1 Timothy 5.

Subject to their own husbands reflects the same teaching in Ephesians 5:22-23. Failure to live godly lives consistent with the word of God dishonors God's word.

2:6-8. Instructions to Titus are included with the instructions about the young men. Titus is to be an example (1 Tim. 4:11). Godly living reinforces sound doctrine and combats false teaching since no accusations can be leveled.

2:9-10. Slaves are to be subject to master (parallel to Ephesians 6:5-9 and Colossians 3:22-24). In the context of the Pastorals, see also 1 Tim. 6:1-2. By godly living, Christians adorn (the Greek word, *cosmeo*, where we get our word cosmetics) the doctrine of God.

2:11-14. This is one sentence in Greek. Paul's purpose is to explain the reason and motivation for godly living. This may be an early creedal statement. The construction is built on a past-present-future progression. For connects these verses to the preceding commands for godly living.

Jesus came to bring salvation to all men (note the universal reference). Grace of God is a reference to the Incarnation. Appearing is *epiphaino*, where we get our word epiphany. This is in past tense. The present tense section of the sequence begins with the phrase instructing us, which signifies training, not only change in knowledge but change in action. Jesus' life, death,

and resurrection change our way of living away from ungodliness toward sensible, righteous, and godly living. The instruction to deny ungodliness includes denying worldly desires, in this present age.

Looking for is a present tense verb form but anticipates the future. Appearing is from the same Greek root as above. The reference is to the second coming. The Greek construction means either “glorious appearing” or “appearing of glory,” possibly referring to Jesus as the glory. There is no major doctrinal or theological point at stake. Jesus is identified with God in this text, not meaning that he is God the Father but that he is divine, having all of the characteristics and nature of God.

2:14. He gave himself to redeem us and purify us. The phrase, people for his own possession, reflects Exodus 19:5-7 where Israel is identified with the same phrase, God’s treasure. This reflects Old Testament covenant between God and his people. God’s people are zealous of good works (a phrase often used in Titus).

2:15. The three verbs in this verse are repeated from earlier in the text: reprove from 1:13, speak from 2:1, exhort from 2:9. These are three active imperatives—keep on doing these things. This verse serves as summary of what has preceded.

One of Paul’s purposes in writing is to give Titus authority. The last phrase reflected 1 Tim. 4:12. In the context it may apply to the false teachers, or to believers who question Titus’s authority to do the things mentioned in 1:5.

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### **Titus 3**

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[Note: it is suggested that the introductory material that precedes Chapter 1 be read again before beginning your own preparatory reading and analysis.]

### **CONTENT**

This relatively brief chapter naturally falls into three primary parts or paragraphs.

- 3:1-8, instructions for Christian conduct
- 3:9-11, personal instructions for Titus
- 3:12-15, final instructions

The reasons for this division are explained in the study helps below.

### **STUDY HELPS**

3:1-8. This chapter brings together various themes from the letter. Remind is continuous, keep on reminding them. Remind is a frequent theme in the Pastorals. The text in 2:15 and 3:1 is connected in thought. (Remember that the original letter did not have chapter divisions.) Titus is to continue to remind them of what they already knew.

Why Paul inserted the references to rulers and authorities is not clear. The references can be to both civil and spiritual authorities. Ready for every good deed reflects a common theme in Titus. Verse 2 refers to non-believers in light of the repeated “all men” (see 2:11). Such actions toward outsiders is a positive influence for the gospel.

3:3. The actions listed are characteristic of unredeemed humanity.

3:4-7. This is one long sentence in Greek, possibly another early creedal statement (compare 2:11-14). These two sections in Titus provide interesting alternative definitions of the gospel. In 2:11 grace appeared, here kindness appears. In the main verb of the extended sentence, salvation is completed (aorist tense), not based on human actions but on God’s mercy. That mercy is evident in the washing of regeneration (baptism) and the renewal that comes through the Holy Spirit. (The parallel to Acts 2:38 is easily seen.) Much has been written with the intent of denying the plain meaning of the words Paul uses here. Justification is not by human merit and so justification is by his grace.

3:8. The trustworthy statement seems to refer to vv. 4-7, thus connecting this verse with what goes before. This verse seems to summarize 3:1-7 and thus is included in the first paragraph of the chapter (rather than making the chapter division between v. 7 and v. 8. Titus is to teach these things so that believers will see opportunities and do good works, which is good and profitable for all. The reference to all also suggests a connection with vv. 1-7 instead of a connection with the instructions that follow that seem to apply primarily to Titus with the singular verb forms: avoid, reject.

3:9-11. The reference to disputes about the Law reflects problems with Jewish opponents and false teachers. Some people are naturally factious or divisive, a Greek word related to our word heretic. Such are to be warned and rejected if they do not return. Many factious people are turning away (ek-strepho) rather than turning to (epistrepho) Christ. A similar form is in 1:14 where false teachers turn from (apo-strepho) the truth. Such are sinners and self-condemned.

3:12-14. Artemas is mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament. Tychicus is mentioned frequently (Acts 20:4; Eph. 6:21-22, Col. 4:7-8, 2 Tim. 4:12). He was the carrier of the letters Paul wrote from prison. Paul wants Titus to leave Crete for the winter and spend the time with him at Nicopolis. In light of Titus's pending departure, it is even more obvious that the letter was intended not only as a personal letter to Titus, but also to inform the church (see 3:15, and comment below). The situation described in v. 13 is unknown in other New Testament books. One final reference to good works caps this concluding section.

3:15. Paul's custom of sending greetings, his own and those from those around him, is well known. The you in the final phrase is plural, suggesting the reading of the letter to the entire church (or house churches). See 1 Tim. 6:21, 2 Tim. 4:22 for parallels.