

The Epistle to Titus: New Covenant to Israel is the Doctrine

By Jan Lilleby

We notice already in Paul's greeting in Tit 1:1, 2 that his teaching is based upon the type of ministry he had when it was written, namely the New Covenant to Israel, the promise given their forefathers. We read:

"Paul, a bond servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ to stimulate and promote the faith of God's chosen ones and to lead them on to accurate discernment and recognition of and acquaintance with the Truth which belongs to and harmonizes with and tends to godliness. 2: in the hope of eternal life (Greek: Aion, the millennial hope), which the ever truthful God Who cannot deceive promised before the world or the ages of time began." (Amplified Bible).

Who was the chosen ones throughout the entire Old Testament from Abraham in Deut 12, if not Israel? So Paul tells Titus here that his ministry was to lead Israel on to the faith accordingly, in hope of the millennial kingdom on earth. Also pointing to the promise. It was still 'Jews first, then Greek' (Rom 1:16).

If now Paul confessed to Titus that his ministry was to lead Israel into faith in Christ, it was but one doctrine at that time in history: The New Covenant to Israel in the blood of Jesus (Hebr 8-9; Jer 31:31-34).

Based upon what God had promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Confirmed to Moses at Sinai Ex 19:5, 6.

This was the very same 'Gospel reference' as Paul and

Barnabas preached in Galatia in 43 AD, Acts 13:32:

“So now we are bringing you the Gospel that what God promised to our forefathers.”

Anyhow, I have to say that much of what I have written of 2 Tim can also be said of the Titus epistle – in that Paul’s exhortations and warnings against false teaching etc. has its full validity in a general sense, since the Word of God must in all dispensations be defended and held in high regard, thus going against false gospel-preaching and ecumenism.

The Gospel doctrine must be kept pure and unaltered and not allowing this to be compromised. This is not God’s job, but it is our job as believers to defend the ONE FAITH of Eph 4:5.

This, in spite of the obvious lack of apostles and prophets in our dispensation.

In Tit 2:14 we meet the demand of the believer’s faith to be openly demonstrated through works, a commandment that originates from Moses onward, and which was adopted into the New Covenant – only with the difference that in case a believer fell in sin, he could come to the elders and confess it (see James 5:13-16) – and then his sin would not be able to hinder his eventual illness to be healed by God by the laying on of hands.

There is no doubt that Paul wrote of Israel in the following passage:

“Who gave Himself on our behalf that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for Himself a people eager and enthusiastic about beneficial deeds.”

Compare this with the Grace Doctrine of no deeds/works in Eph 2:8, 9:

“For it is by free grace that you are saved through faith, and this is not of yourselves, but it is the gift of God. 9: NOT BECAUSE OF WORKS, lest any man should boast.”

The thing with the Jews – having to show forth their faith through deeds/works, has followed them at all times. It came already as God called Abram, later Abraham, and even more so when Moses received the covenant at Sinai. Works are arch-typical to classical Jewry.

Tit 3:4-7 could at first sight look like a controversy to this, but not if we take a closer look:

“But when the goodness and loving-kindness of God our Savior to man appeared, 5: He saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but because of His own pity and mercy, by the cleansing of the new birth and renewing of the Holy spirit, 6: which He poured out richly upon us through Jesus Christ, our Savior. 7: That we might be justified by His grace, and that we might become heirs of eternal life (Greek: Aion, millennial life) according to our hope.”

But no sooner that Paul wrote this, – that the works themselves had no saving-power – he re-gains the idea of and the importance of the ordinance of showing forth good deeds/works, as in verse 8:

“..to honorable occupations and to doing good...”.

The reference above in verses 4-7 is not the free grace as we now have it – but it was the New Covenant to Israel. If we read through all the Acts-epistles, we will meet this type of grace again and again, the grace that justified the believing Jew from the Law of Moses. But we, the church of the ‘One New Man’ are not justified from the Law, but from the sin inherited from Adam.

In these few verses we also find the baptism by the Holy

Spirit as for instance demonstrated at Pentecost in Acts 2, and later we find this baptism granted them through the laying on of hands by the apostles. And their spiritual status was not as with us – ‘A New Creation’ – but they had what Jesus called ‘New Birth’. These are not the same. Adam and Eve were created, but their children were born. Angels are not born; they were created each and every one of them.

And the dispensation of the free grace of God, has in it that the believers are considered not born again, but as a group we are the New Creation. You see the difference?

The conclusion will therefore have to be – all things considered – that the epistle to Titus does not belong under the church dispensation, but was written to Titus in the era when Paul was ministering to Israel in the Empire by preaching the New Covenant to Israel and proselytes. The promise given to the Jewish forefathers (Acts 13:32).

It seems now to me that only three epistles remain ‘Church epistles’, Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon. The Mystery revealed is mentioned only in the two first and not in Philemon. But Philemon represents to us an example of how we are supposed to act between believers, by kindness and forgiveness. Even if it is so that the entire Bible can be held as Scripture from which we can draw edification, if we only know which Scripture is written to the present dispensation.

For instance in the question of eternity and ‘Heaven and Hell’ – we cannot allow ourselves to dwell only in the New Testament, let alone the three church epistles. We have to check out the Old Testament also – and as a sum of these we find that there is absolutely no ‘Hell’ for the unbeliever in the meaning of ‘Eternal torment in fire’. Just as much, we find that the Old Testament displays the nature and mind of God Almighty, His power to create and maintain His creation, and so on and so forth. It gives us a solid

background for evaluating our own spiritual status and whereabouts and to appreciate our wonderful standing with God in Christ.

The time aspect of the epistle to Titus will then have to be before the end of Acts, and not after. Also in this matter my thanks will go to Irene M. Walther for her fine research which she shared with me. It made clear to me how this time aspect must have ran its course as it happened.

The time in which Titus must be placed, is the unspecified part of Paul's travels, not made known through the pen of Luke. Namely Paul's travel up to Illyricum, mentioned in Rom 15:19. It has to have happened before Paul went onboard the ship to start his journey to Jerusalem in about 58-59 AD. And it is worth mentioning that we cannot find Titus mentioned in the Acts.

Acts 27: 7, 8 tells of Paul entering the harbor of Fair Havens nearby Lasea at Crete on his journey to Rome as prisoner, due to harsh winds, and they barely rounded Cape Salmone because of it. But he could not do any form of ministry at that time, for he was in chains.

His journey to Illyricum and finally to Crete with Titus, must have been two, maybe three years earlier.

Illyricum was a nation just North-West of Macedonia, nearby Dalmatia in the upper Adriatic Sea region. We know for sure that Titus went to Dalmatia for a while, and Paul definitely travelled to and through Macedonia (Acts 20:1, 2).

It is my personal opinion that this unspecified non-descript journey to Crete with Titus, via Illyricum, may have lasted 6 months to one year, and I think we can place the event in 57 AD more or less. I think this is credible. Titus is definitely an Acts epistle, no question about that.

I agree much with Irene M. Walther, in that it may seem like

this travel to Illyricum may not have been any great concern to the Lord, so it is not in the Acts. Neither is the travel to Crete for evangelization...but that event is taken care of by the epistle to Titus.