

# A Redeemed Culture #2 – A Theology of Culture

**Introduction** – Everyone would agree that we are in the midst of a great culture war. But some would deny that there is to be a truly Christian culture. Others would warn us never to expect that a godly culture will supplant the ungodly culture during this age. Was there ever a godly culture? And if there was, is the work of Christ and the spread of His kingdom to include a restoration of this godly culture?

**Tending and Keeping** (Gen 2:15) – In this story of beginnings, God created man in His image and in communion with Himself, placed him in a garden and commanded him to have dominion over it. He was to obey the Lord in how he did so (v16-17) with attendant blessings and curses in view. “*Tending*” meant that man was to work the land, imaging his Father in creating new things. “*Keeping*” meant that man was to guard that which was good and right and eradicate the land of anything wrong or sinful.

**Culture: Some Definition** – The word “*culture*” has its roots in Latin and means cultivating or tending. Older dictionaries said that culture was “*the cultivation of the soil,*” or “*the raising, improvement, or development of some plant, animal, or product.*” There is a connection between this earthy definition and what we think of as culture. Henry Van Til defined culture as “*religion externalized and made explicit.*” We can think of culture as the ideas, customs, beliefs, skills, arts, etc. of a people that are transferred to succeeding generations in the public square. In other words, what God was commanding in Gen 2:15 was the development of a culture that brought glory to His name, displaying the glory of His image-bearer, man (Psalm 8:5).

**Multiculturalism in the Garden** – Another way to look at the story of Genesis 3 is as the first introduction of multiculturalism. The serpent led Eve to consider another worldview, another foundation of truth upon which to build a society. Should Truth ultimately be received from God or found from one’s own autonomous discovery, experience, and evaluation?

**Multiculturalism Today** – stands for the proposition that all cultures are more or less equal and should be tolerated together. But first, this proposition is trick. It is its own religiously informed proposition, a theology of culture that purports to be superior, and it is from the serpent. It presupposes a basic exhaustive knowledge of all cultures and man’s autonomous ability to determine what is right and what is wrong. It also presupposes that its worldview is the correct one. It quickly becomes intolerant of any worldview that demands exclusivity – like the Christian faith (John 14:6). This is why our culture is tolerant of defaming Christian symbols as works of art supported by government money, and intolerant of a manger scene at a public library.

**Should Christians Care About Culture?** – Really the question that should be asked is, “Does God care about culture?” and the answer is “...*whatever you do, do all to the glory of God*” (1 Cor 10:31). The fact of the matter is, on every level private and public, we are individually and as a society doing things to the glory of God or we are not.

**How Should We Then Live?** (Deut 6) – We cannot help but look at culture as a theology being practiced in the public arena. As Israel was being set up to go and take the land promised to them by God, He instructed them with regard to the real culture wars they would face. The pattern for the NT saints is the same – we are to learn from our fathers.

**Unapologetically Absolute** (vv1-3) – God promised us the land. We are to live in it having faith in those promises, displayed by an uncompromising submission to all of His decrees. We are to do this, not seeking God’s favor, but because we have His favor – He has called us His own and given us “*a land flowing with milk and honey,*” that is, an abundance of what we will need to build a godly culture.

**Single-Minded Devotion** (vv4-5) – David prayed, “*Unite my heart to fear Your name*”. We are to be as singular in our service and devotion to God as He is in His nature. Culture-building, disciple-making, Christendom, whatever you call it, it is a religion first of the heart, all of your heart.

**Generational Succession** (vv6-9) – Based upon the promises of God (7:9), and not upon our works, our culture is to be transferred to the next generation. In Christendom there is no such thing as a generation-gap, except one that is to be repented of. And this transfer is global and all-encompassing. I am to instruct my children how to see the world, how to “*tend and keep*” the land with my hands, and how to gather people in a society – and all according to the Word of God.

**Total Victory** (vv10-19) – In this land we have been given, we are to never forget that every good and perfect gift has come from God. We are to create a society which binds itself together in the name of God only. We are not to go after any other gods, that is, our worship must be right first, and we must not tempt Him. In doing these things we are granted permission to go and possess the good land and remove all of the enemies of this culture. In the New Covenant outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all nations, there are newer implications of these commands.

**Constant Remembrance and Thanksgiving** (vv20-25) – We are to instruct and live in such a way that regularly reminds us of what God has done for us and what He requires of us to do – as individuals and as the redeemed culture of God.

**The Culture of the Kingdom of God** – In fact, this superior culture was to have been a tool of bringing in the unbelieving aliens. Deut 4:6 says, “...*this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, ‘surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’*” In other words, when lived out faithfully, God’s covenant culture is to be observed as superior to all other cultures, and this culture’s God as superior to all other gods.

**Failures in the Types** - Adam failed to faithfully fulfill the cultural mandate, although he was a type of One who would come and faithfully do this. Israel also failed to take the land and develop a faithful culture that would be transferred to future generations, although Israel was also a type of One who would come and do this. Now, in Jesus Christ, His church is called to live out the same cultural mandate. But our Head was and is perfectly faithful in His tending and keeping. In Christ, the church becomes the center of cultural takeover.

**Culture Wars and Different Weapons** (2 Cor 10:3-6) – It is no accident that we still walk in the flesh, for God has called for a physical, truly earthy culture to be developed upon this world that He redeemed. Christ’s kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36) but it will have a heavenly impact upon this world. We are still called to eradicate the enemies of the land, but our weapons are not carnal. They are powerful for pulling down all the strongholds of an unbelieving culture. And they will, for Jesus promised that He has.

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