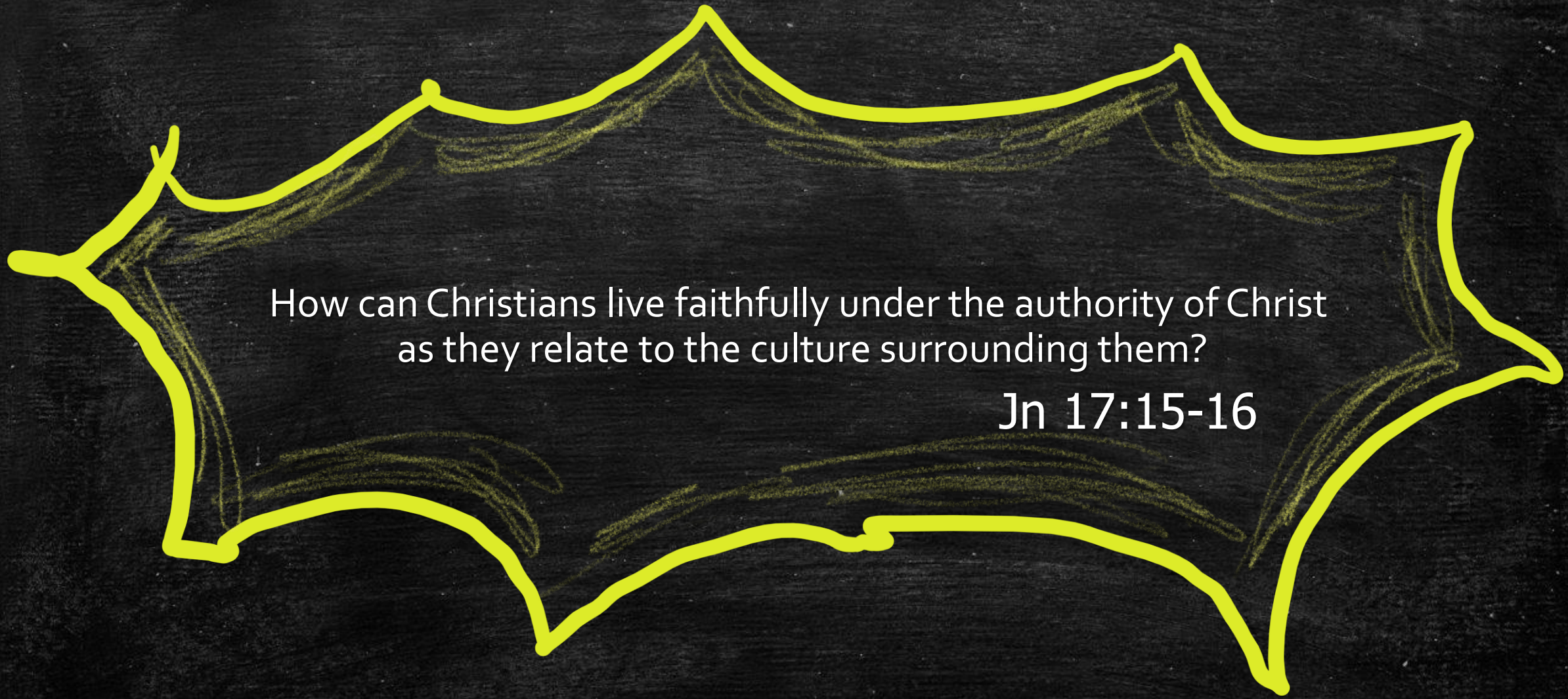
Christianity and Culture

Christianity has become background noise in British culture


How can Christians live faithfully under the authority of Christ
as they relate to the culture surrounding them?
Jn 17:15-16

In England a man was struck twice by a lightning – he survived it both times. Why?

a) God spared him for some reasons

b) Lucky him – good karma 😊

c) The likelihood to survive twice a struck by a lightning is absolutely little, put that story into the Guinness book for records!

d) A careful scientific examination will surely explain why this man was struck twice and the lightning was not fatal.

The answer depends on my WORLDVIEW!

WORLDVIEW

The way I see, understand and interpret the world.

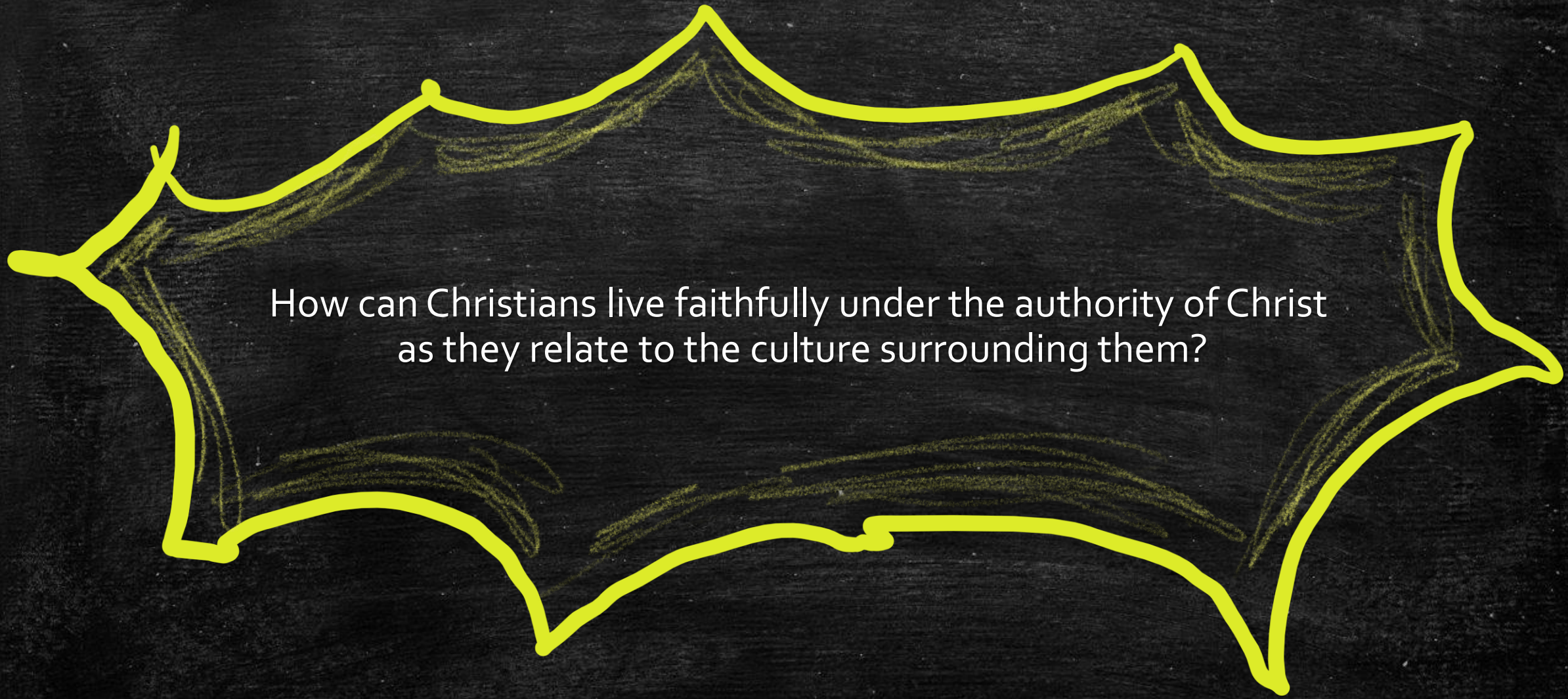
What influences my values, perceptions, mindset?

Culture and Society

- Culture … describes the way of life of us humans with everything that goes with it: education, language, behavior, ethics, science, art, religion, etc

- Society … describes how people live together, their behavior and how they organize their lives from the family to the form of government

- Culture forms society and mindset!


How can Christians live faithfully under the authority of Christ
as they relate to the culture surrounding them?

Three Major Choices

- In OPPOSITION to culture or against culture
- AGREEMENT between Christ and culture
  (Christ of culture / assimilation)
- INCORPORATE / TRANSFORM – Christ into culture

Christ in opposition to culture

- Rom 12:2
- 2Cor 6:14-17
- 1Jn 2:15-17
-
-

Christ in opposition to culture

- we must separate us from this world because we belong to Christ
- Loyalty to Christ and the church entails a rejection of culture and society

- Examples:
  - Desert fathers (spirituality out of the wilderness)
  - Monks and monasticism
  - The anabaptist
    - Amish / Bretheren / Hutterites
    - Mennonites
    - Brüdergemeinden / Russland-Deutsche…

AGREEMENT between Christ and culture

- Jn 1:14
- Phil 2:5-7
- Heb 2:17
- 1Cor 9:20-23
- Jer 29:4-7
-

AGREEMENT between Christ and culture

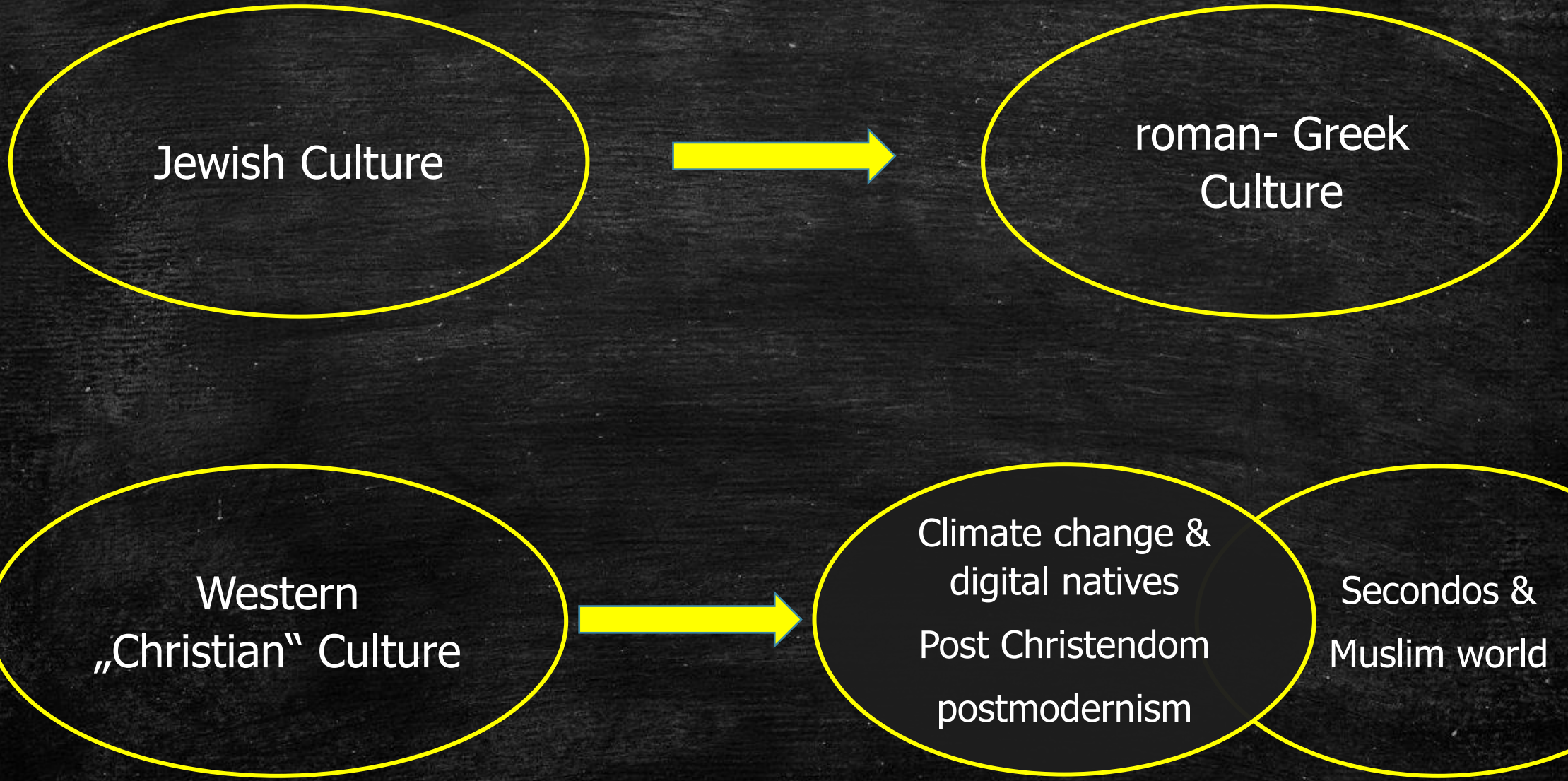
- Jesus became fully human and assimilated in the culture – we too have to do so
- To be understood we have to assimilate
- Examples:
  - Ancient Gnostics
  - Kulturprotestantismus / protestant liberalism
  - Jesus People
    - All sorts of celebrities

INCORPORATE / TRANSFORM – Christ into culture

- Gen 12:2-3
- Isa 49:6
- Mt 28:10-20
- Acts 1:8
- Col 3:5-25
-
-

INCORPORATE / TRANSFORM – Christ into culture

- Jesus was completely part of the Jewish society, lived in that culture and still was different
- Jesus also talked to Roman gentiles, a Phoenician woman and so on. But he didn't erase their culture
- Examples:
  - Jesus
  - Acts / Paul / Antioch
  - Daniel
  - Hiberno-Scottish Monks / Mission


Jewish Culture
roman- Greek Culture
Western „Christian“ Culture
Climate change & digital natives
Post Christendom
postmodernism
Secondos & Muslim world

The 7 Mountains of culture

- Business / economics
- Politics
- Media
- Entertainment / Art
- Education
- Family
- Religion (or faith)

🔁 Combination of perspectives:

1. Learning from Luther:
    i. Realism & Humility: World is fallen, Christians live in the tension between faith and world
    ii. Avoidance of a totalitarian Christianity by separation of Spiritual ministry and secular powers
2. Learning from the Reformed:
    i. Commitment and responsibility: Faith affects all areas of life – including politics, business, culture
    ii. transformation of society out of love for one's neighbor and creation
3. Reflecting with Reinhold Niebuhr:
    I. Conscious choice of posture depending on the context:
        i. sometimes "against culture" (in case of injustice),
        ii. sometimes "renewing" (in the field of education),
        iii. sometimes "in agreement"

CONCLUSION

- Christians live in a tension between
  - adapting,
  - resisting and
  - changing the culture –

depending on the context!

PRAYER:

"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can,
And wisdom to know the difference."

„Gott, gib mir die Gelassenheit, Dinge hinzunehmen,
die ich nicht ändern kann,
den Mut, Dinge zu ändern, die ich ändern kann,
und die Weisheit, das eine vom anderen zu unterscheiden."

(Reinhold Niebuhr)