

2 Peter and 2 Timothy

Last Will and Testament of the Apostles

Part 1 – Death of an Apostle

The books of the Bible are all authored by God (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Yet within each of the books we find a flavor that is distinct, and most certainly reflects the mind of the human author. We do not understand precisely how inspiration worked, but we know that *“no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God”* (2 Pet. 1:21). That flavor is particularly clear in the New Testament, where the limited number of authors (8-9) left their marks on the books. We tend to compartmentalize the books into genre categories; the Gospel accounts, the history of the church, letters to churches, letters to all Christians in general, letters to particular people, and the prophecy of Revelation. Yet we might add one more category to this distinction: Wills and Testaments.

A *“Last Will and Testament”* is a legal writing that becomes effective on the death of the testator, the one who wrote the will. It speaks to the disposition of the possessions of the deceased, and established those authorized to be heirs and those who will disperse these things. We use this type of language to describe the bible in general; the *“Old and New Testaments”* are a direct use of that language. In Hebrews 9:16 that language is used to specifically describe the work of Christ in the New Testament: *“for where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator”*. In fact, by simply understanding that this language is the basis of the covenants of God, we can clearly understand how the New *“Last Will and”* Testament of God necessarily entirely revoked the preceding Old *“Last Will and”* Testaments.

But we want to specifically focus on the idea that there are several books in the New Testament that are especially identified with the idea of being *“Last Wills and Testaments”* (for the sake of space let us just call them *“wills”*). These books are 2 Peter and 2 Timothy. Both are the final words of men who are about to die; they establish that they have one more gift to give, and they establish the executor of their estates. The men are Peter and Paul, apostles of Christ called by very different means, sent on very different paths (Gal. 2:7), and yet both arriving at the same moment and the same spiritual place.

Looking into both scripture and to a lesser extent some of the historical traditions of Christianity, we are able to put together the following ideas. Both Peter and Paul likely died in Rome in the reign of the Emperor Nero, who is the likely progenitor of the persecution against Christianity. Acts 28 sees Paul arriving in Rome, and while it may be the case he left afterwards, his final letter suggests that once more he is in prison and facing death in Rome (2 Tim. 1:17). Peter never tells us he is in Rome, but perhaps his mention of being in *“Babylon”* in 1 Peter 5:13 with Mark are strong clues that tell us that he too was in Rome. Peter’s mention of Paul in 2 Pet. 3 in the present tense could also be a clue that refers to their proximity; if so, when Paul writes his conclusion, it would seem that Peter has died (2 Tim. 4:11).

Peter and Paul both declare in their writings that they are about to die. Peter states in 2 Peter 1:14 that his departure is imminent. In 2 Timothy 4:6 Paul declares that he is being poured out, and the time of his departure had come too. Both men had some sense of their death long before. Jesus had prophesied in John 21 as to the type of death Peter would face (an execution), and Peter knew that this prophecy was about to be fulfilled. Paul also had been told by Jesus that he would suffer much for Christ (Acts 9:16).

But what is so truly remarkable is that here are two men who are about to face death at the hands of an executioner, a humiliating and painful death that might be avoided by merely renouncing what they had publically declared. If what they said was untrue, then they would certainly have felt a pull to make that

declaration. Yet both of their letters are clear and true on one point: Not only do they NOT repudiate the faith that they declared, but they took this last moment to declare once more that what they had seen and experienced were real, that they both did not fear death, but firmly believed that life was not over at Death, but another life awaited them.

2 Timothy 1:12 For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.

2 Peter 1:15-16 And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind. For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

These men had seen Jesus, and they wanted us to know with their dying words that it was real, and that they would give up their lives in a dreadful fashion to prove that truth. Their very death was the last witness testimony (consider the word “Martyr” which means “witness”), not of their lives, but of the reality of the life of Jesus Christ.

Such testimony is not unique to these two alone. Jesus promised all of his apostles that they might die for His message. In Matthew 24:9 Jesus promised His apostles that men would kill them. Paul declared in 1 Corinthians 4:9 that the apostles were men condemned to death. Historical tradition tells us that all of the apostles (except perhaps John, as in John 21:23) were murdered in their testimony; Jesus had said that their death WOULD BE their testimony (Mark 13:9).

This testimony is the most extraordinary in human history. No other movement could claim such testimony of the veracity of its founder that the followers willingly submitted to death because of what they had witnessed in their Messiah. Thus, this final testimony, as revealed in 2 Peter and 2 Timothy, is the most profound to be offered to the legitimacy of Jesus Christ as being the Son of God.