

2 Tim is an Epistle Written in Light of the New Covenant to Israel

By Jan Lilleby

In spite of 2 Tim being an Acts epistle, I will continue in regarding Paul's exhortations there especially when he warns of false teachers/false doctrine; this because such warnings are absolutely inter-dispensational. It is obvious, isn't it? We can by no means escape the responsibility in going forward with the one true faith, the one true gospel – thus we must resist any attempt to ecumenism.

I can only say (and I guess many other believers suffer from this at times) that I had gotten into a habitual thinking, in that most scholars hold to 2 Tim as a farewell epistle as the apostle was heading for his execution under Nero. But this is not so. Many translations are into grave error regarding such a concept. I'll come to this shortly.

The main contents of the epistle shows us that it was written with the New Covenant to Israel in mind, in which the Kingdom of God on earth was included as their hope of salvation. *(Check also Irene M. Walther's article here in my site, as she goes through the same topic, but with many detailed references and quotes).*

In the Norwegian translation of 1988 (Norsk Bibel), 2 Tim 4:6 speaking of Paul as a person anticipating his execution, the word 'bortgang' is used. This is ONLY used in Norwegian language when a soon expected death is in view, for instance an execution, or if a man is on his death-bed to die from illness. But in English Bibles we find the word 'departure' (a word-sign which we see inside all airports) – and also

'release'. The latter used for instance when an inmate is released from Sing-Sing after doing time there. These words in English are far better than the blunt 'bortgang' in Norwegian, which can only mean a forthcoming death.

2 Tim 4:6 also has another key word, saying "*..For jeg blir alt ofret..*" in Norwegian (I am already sacrificed, in English) – and it could very well point to a forthcoming Death.

But in English we find the two words '*poured out*' – which rather points us to the image of a drink offer. Not a slaughtered sacrifice, but only a drink offer. Such a drink offer points to Paul as a servant poured out for the ministry under God's New Covenant to Israel. His whole life was an offer before God and before Israel. He would be such an offer whether in jail or not.

2 Tim 4:13 say a lot, because here we find Paul making arrangements for his immediate future existence. Arrangements he would not have cared for should he head for an execution:

"When you come, bring the cloak (winter coat!) that I left in Troas with Carpus, also the books, especially the parchments (Torah)."

Now, does this sound like a man who has no future life/ministry on earth? Of course not. You would not be asking for your winter coat if you expected to die shortly. You will have no use for a coat like that 'in heaven' if you catch my drift.

In Roman jailing-and executional practice it always went down real quick. If the sentence was death by the sword, then he was taken to the Executioner right away, no time for appeal and expensive super-lawyers...like often seen in the TV-series of our time. His head would be rolling only a few minutes after the sentence was read. Brutal and very

effective. I am glad that I am not a 'customer' of Roman justice!

Need I remind us of the Salome intrigue and the beheading of John the Baptist? (Matt 14:1-11).

Or of the brutal (sometimes merciful to a wounded Gladiator) custom of the Emperor turning his thumb down in the Roman Arenas with its violent Gladiator tournaments? If the emperor wanted the Gladiator to live, he turned his thumb up, but if he was to die by the sword, the thumb went down. Most often it went down.

It is still very important for us to keep separated those epistles written to Israel and their proselytes, from those written to our dispensation with the 'One New Man' (Eph 2:15). The church has nothing to do with the promises given solely to Israel, the Kingdom on earth with Christ as their King.

I would like to go through a few good examples which go to show us that 2 Tim really is an Acts epistle, and that it has no connection with the promise of heaven up above, but only the promise given the forefathers of Jewry.

The entire traditional idea of Paul heading for his execution, after he wrote 2 Tim, is without proof in the Bible.

There has been the tradition of Paul arrested shortly after the fire in Rome in 64 AD, but this is only a human legend and not a sure Scripture. We cannot and must not rely on human legends and anticipations picked up outside of the Bible canon. No one knows for sure when and how Paul died, no one. We are forced to let that issue remain unanswered. But we can say that he was not beheaded shortly after 2 Tim. This is for sure.

PAUL AND THE PROMISE TO THE FOREFATHERS

Already in 2 Tim 1:3 we learn that Paul pointed to the forefathers of Israel:

"I thank God Whom I worship with a pure conscience, in the spirit of my fathers, when without ceasing I remember you night and day in my prayers."

See also verse 1 saying *"..according to the promise of life.."*.

The clear reference here is that which God PROMISED PAUL'S FOREFATHERS: The Kingdom of God on earth, with Christ on the royal throne.

This was the very same reference that Paul also pointed to early in his ministry to Israel in the Empire, in the year 43 AD, we read from Acts 13:32:

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

Ergo, Paul had not yet gotten the revelation of the Mystery church dispensation referred to in Eph 3:1-9. He was still doing his sacrificial ministry to Jews and proselytes only.

PAUL MAKING DOCTRINAL UNITY WITH THE LORD'S EARTHLY MINISTRY

2 Tim 1:8 is pretty disarming for those who would oppose my ideas here:

"Do not blush or be ashamed then, to testify to and for our Lord, nor of me, a prisoner for His sake, but take your share of the suffering of the Gospel in the power of God."

Here the Norwegian 1988 translation is better, and truer: *"..skam deg derfor ikke ved vår Herres vitnesbyrd, eller ved meg, hans fange..."*

Translated directly, it says: *"Be not ashamed of our Lord's*

testimony (the doctrine Jesus preached in His time of ministry) or of me, His prisoner...".

In other words, Paul held forth the New Covenant to Israel, – the testimony of Christ. A covenant including the Kingdom on earth at the Lord's Second Advent.

PAUL EXPECTED THE IMMINENT RETURN OF JESUS

Paul's reference to a future expected day and event as seen in 2 Tim 1:12 is a passage which only applies to the Second Advent:

"..which I has committed to Him until that day."

And even describing his rulership together with Jesus after His coming:

2 Tim 2:12: *"If we endure, we shall also reign with Him, we shall also live with Him."*

This is entirely in line with Christ's doctrine from His earthly ministry, when He promised His disciples rulership together with Him on thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt 19:28). But we, the church according to the revealed Mystery of Eph 1-3 chapters are not to be seated on ruler thrones with Jesus in Jerusalem; we are seated together with Him and in Him, in the heaven up above the heavens – epiouranos (Eph 2:6-8; Col 3:1-4).

JUDGING THE LIVING AND THE DEAD, AND BY HIS COMING AND HIS KINGDOM

This is a good passage. It points solely to the parousia-coming – the Lord's Second Advent to rule as King in Jerusalem. It is the millennial kingdom promised by Moses and the prophets.

2 Tim 4:1: *"I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, Who is to judge the living and the dead, and*

by His coming and His kingdom..."

He is coming down to earth for His kingdom. It is not the kingdom up there in heaven, for sure.

Furthermore, but shortly, all the exhortations found in chapter 3 and 4 regarding a coming apostasy and decadence, has to do not with the church but with the turmoil within the Great Tribulation for Israel. Paul has more of that in 2 Thess 2.

HOW ABOUT THE WELL KNOWN ISSUE OF RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH?

Let me quickly answer this right on: We shall maintain the very same principle of right division, in spite of 2 Tim 2:15 as written originally to Israel and proselytes.

Why?

You already know the answer to that. Because of the fact that this is a principle of God and is so during any dispensation!

When Paul wrote this, the Jewish assemblies with their proselytes had to make right division between the old Law of Moses and the New Covenant. The Law called by Paul in Hebr 8-9 as a doctrine which was defected. Hebr 8:7 says:

"For if that first covenant (Law of Moses) had been without defect, there would have been no room for another one, or an attempt to institute another one."

And yet, the old Law of Moses was not taken off the roster at that time, but it was combined together with the New Covenant – and the latter had the high priority. (See also Rom. 3:31)

But they would have to learn to make right division still. The New Covenant was different in several ways.

The only persons on earth in history not having to make right division, were Adam and Eve. They had the Lord Himself as companion and teacher and shepherd, and no doctrines to separate. And yet, they fell in sin.

I will encourage all Acts-28 believers in seeing that the faith doctrine for the church dispensation is found in Ephesians and Colossians only, supported maybe by Philemon as we learn how to be compassionate and forgiving, like Paul.

See also my fresh article on Titus epistle as an Acts epistle....