

Acts 28 – The Great N.T. dispensational divide

Paul in Acts, Romans, promise, prophecy, Paradise and Zion
The Mystery of Romans 16. Kept silent since the world began

After Israel was let go at Acts 28, the Lord revealed to Paul the present dispensation of the grace of God. We read about this in Ephesians and Colossians.

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: Eph 3:8-9.

.....body's sake, which is the church: Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: Col 1:24-26.

Some of the dispensational features of our present calling are listed below demonstrating that hidden in God, and away from ages and generations means exactly what it says. The following are not found in any Scriptures, that is Old and New Testaments, up until Acts 28.

1. Eph.1:3. Blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places.
2. Eph.1:4. Chosen in Christ before the foundation to be holy and without blame in the sight of God.
3. Eph.1:10. Christ to head up all things, both in heaven and on earth.
4. Eph.1:15-2:10. The power in us is the power which raised Christ from the dead to be seated at the Father's right in heavenly places. We have been raised and seated in heavenly places, in the sight of God. Christ is Head over the Church which is his body.
5. Eph.2:11-17. Jews and Gentiles created one new man, middle wall of partition abolished, the ordinances of Acts 15 abolished, and peace established between them.
6. Col.1:25. The present dispensation completes the Word of God.
7. Col.3:1-4. We set our affections on things above where Christ sits, when he appears we will appear with him there, in glory.

This is not a complete list, but sufficient to prepare us for a comparison of the mystery in Roms.16 with the mystery of Ephesians and Colossians.

It has been said that Roms.16:25-27 is a postscript, a later addition by Paul linking Romans to Ephesians and Colossians. The Amen doxology in 16:24 supposedly gives weight to this point of view, but as we know, amen means sure, truth and appears as verily elsewhere. Paul often inserts mini affirmations with the use of amen as we find in Roms.1:25, 9:5, 11:36, 15:33, 16:20, & 16:27. We shall put that argument aside as unsupportable.

If, as some suggest, Roms.16:25-27 is a postscript linking Romans with Ephesians dispensationally, then we should find one, or some of the post Acts dispensational

features we listed above in Romans, otherwise it would seem strange for Paul to add a postscript linking totally different dispensational letters.

Here is the conclusion of Romans, supposedly a later addition.

Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.
Rom 16:25-27

The Word of truth explains the Word of truth and to seek a conclusion on this matter we shall examine the words used in this passage, then we shall look at the context and structure of Romans and finally compare the themes of Romans to the dispensational features of The Mystery kept hidden in God revealed to Paul after Israel was set aside at Acts 28. The evidence thus discovered will assist students to draw their own conclusions.

Paul writes that this mystery was kept secret, while the mystery of Ephesians and Colossians was hidden in God and away from ages and generations, Col.1:25-28 & Eph.1:8-10.

The mystery of Romans was kept secret, and not once is this word secret used after Acts 28 in a context of the mystery, the present dispensation of the grace of God. The word secret in the KJV only occurs once after Acts 28, in Eph.5:12. This is crucial. The mystery of Romans was kept secret, the mystery of Ephesians and Colossians is never described as being kept secret, and there is a reason for this, they are not the same. Like the KJV word "secret", the original word translated kept secret in Roms.16:25 also does not occur after Acts 28 to describe the present dispensation, in fact, the original word does not occur once after Acts 28.

The word translated "secret" in Roms.16 is the word (sigao) which means to be silent, still, and keep silence. It is found 9 times up until Acts 28, but not once after, see Lk.9:36, 20:26, Acts12:17, 15:12,13, 1Cor.14:28, 30 & 34. The mystery of Romans 16 is identified as different by the KJV word "secret" and by the original word, (sigao) "kept secret". Here is secret/sigao translated by others.

Now to him that is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which **hath been kept in silence through times eternal**, Rom 16:25 ASV.

Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery, **having been unvoiced during eternal times**; Rom 16:25, MKJV.

The words used by Paul to describe this mystery are not the words he uses after Acts 28 to describe The Mystery hidden in God. The mystery of Roms.16 was not hidden in God, it was kept silent, unvoiced since the world began. This is not the criteria of the Mystery of Ephesians and Colossians.

This mystery kept silent since the world began is made manifest by the prophets, or the scriptures of the prophets. Some translate the word manifest with plain or disclosed and this harmonizes with kept silent. If this is the scriptures of the prophets making this unvoiced mystery plain or manifested, then it is found within their pages, but unspoken or kept silent, but never hidden. Even if it was hidden in the scriptures of the prophets, this is not the same as The present mystery which was hidden in God, not in prophetic scriptures.

But now is **made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets**, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: Rom 16:26.

but now is **disclosed, and through the prophetic scriptures** has been made known to all the nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith Rom 16:26. NET.

Since Paul is the Apostle of the nations before and after Acts, then he is saying before Acts 28 the prophetic scriptures made plain this Roms.16 mystery and through those prophetic scriptures this mystery kept silent is made know to all the Gentiles. This is Paul's ministry during Acts, using promise and prophecy to preach "my gospel" to the Gentiles. This mystery kept silent was proclaimed to the Gentiles for the obedience of faith. Obedience of faith would fit as regards the things in Romans because if it were future things then Paul is basically adding a postscript to hint or inform the readers to disregard all the Romans letter instructed as who they were in Christ and what they had to do.

Some Mid-Acts folk believe that Paul was already writing to "body saints" in Romans, then why add a postscript about the mystery of Ephesians and Colossians if he was already writing to them about it?

After Acts 28, the mystery revealed to Paul was not kept silent and made plain by the prophets but was hidden in God and revealed to Paul alone. The current mystery was not specifically for the obedience of faith, but to reveal a new dispensation. Roms.16 says nothing of a new dispensation.

The next things to observe in the words used around this mystery kept silent is that it was manifested and preached according to a command of the everlasting God. This is significant; not to be overlooked. We saw in Acts 13 that Paul proclaimed it was the God of Israel who, according to his promise, raised Christ to the throne in Israel. This is not the God and father of our Lord Christ Jesus who raised his son to sit at his right hand as the head of the church which is his body. While there is only one God, the different divine names and titles relate to his relationships with the different families. Here in Roms.16, prior to Acts 28, the God of Israel is still the God of context.

The God who gave the commandment for this Romans mystery to be disclosed and preached among the Gentiles is the eternal or everlasting God. The word everlasting,

and the original word translated everlasting are not used to describe God after Acts 28. Once again, the words which the Holy Spirit uses are dividing this mystery from the mystery after Acts 28.

But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the **commandment of the everlasting God**, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith. Rom 16:26

but now is disclosed, and through the prophetic scriptures has been made known to all the nations, according to the **command of the eternal God**, to bring about the obedience of faith. Rom 16:26 NET

The phrase the everlasting God [KJV], is only found three times in the entire range of Scripture. If we change this to the eternal God, that phrase also only occurs three times in Scripture. Using the KJV references for the everlasting God, we find it occurs once in the N. T. in Romans 16 and in two O.T. references as follows,

And Abraham planted a grove in Beersheba, and called there on the name of the LORD, **the everlasting God**. Gen.21:33.

Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that **the everlasting God**, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. Isa.40:28.

The eternal God reference is Psa.90:2 NET, where the KJV has from everlasting o everlasting, thou art God.

The phrase the everlasting God occurs in Genesis 21, and Isaiah 40. This is not a coincidence, God is a God of structure and harmony, and those who love studying the Word with the words will know that these very references occur in Romans and Paul up to Acts 28. Here are some critical passages from Genesis 21 that appear in Romans and other Acts period letters of Paul. The Genesis reference first, then Paul's use of it.

And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for **in Isaac shall thy seed be called**. Gen 21:12.

Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, **In Isaac shall thy seed be called**. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but **the children of the promise are counted for the seed**. Rom 9:7-8.

See also Hebs.11:18.

Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for **the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac**. Gen 21:10.

Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: **for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman**. So then, **brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free**. Gal 4:30-31.

Now **we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise**. Gal 4:28.

Genesis 21 contains the first O.T. reference of the everlasting God which is the God who gave the commandment for the mystery kept silent to be proclaimed among the Gentiles. This is the same God Abraham worshipped after Isaac was born, who promised Abraham that in Isaac his seed would be called and who told Abraham to listen to Sarah and cast out the bondwoman with her son.

Paul during Acts, in both Romans and Galatians includes himself and all other believers, both Jews and Gentiles as children of promise, just like Isaac. Not only so, but Paul makes it clear, that Israel is the seed of Abraham in Isaac, and thus he and all believers were the true seed of Abraham.

Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is,

They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but **the children of the promise are counted for the seed.** Rom 9:6-8.

For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. **And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.** Gal 3:27-29.

No wonder Paul writes of the Israel of God in Gals.6.

All these truths of Genesis, Romans and Galatians regarding the seed of Abraham in Isaac, were given by the everlasting God, the same God of the mystery kept silent in Romans 16. This is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, see Matt.22:32, Acts 3:13, 5:30, & 7:32. The inheritance in place during Acts given by this everlasting God of Israel is the hope of Israel, and this is confirmed in Romans 15:1-13, the last but one chapter of the book. Is it consistent with passionate Paul to add a postscript of a few words looking to a completely different hope immediately following an extensive description of the one he had assured the Romans was theirs by faith?

The everlasting God of Abraham Isaac & Jacob commanded this mystery, which was never hidden in God, be proclaimed among the Gentiles. If Roms.16 is, as supposed, a later postscript in which Paul hinted at a future dispensation, then, by using the divine title the everlasting God he looked back to some key doctrines he had already written during Acts. This title looked back, all the way back to Genesis and certainly does not look forward to something not yet revealed to Paul. The God who revealed the Mystery of Ephesians and Colossians was not the God of Israel, but the God and Father of our Lord Christ Jesus. This also should make us reconsider that this closing portion is a later addition by Paul to the Romans.

The second occurrence of the everlasting God in the O.T. is in Isaiah.

Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. Isa.40:28.

Since we believe the words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times, then we do not find it a coincidence that that very chapter of Isaiah which speaks of the everlasting God is the same Isaiah chapter featured in Roms.11 where Paul concludes that all Israel will be saved when the Deliverer comes out of Zion.

Here is Isaiah 40 in Romans with other parallels between Isaiah 40 and Romans.

Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him? Isa 40:13.

For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Rom.11:34.

The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever. Isa 40:8.

What then? If some did not believe, does their unbelief nullify the faithfulness of God? Absolutely not! Rom 3:3-4.

O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and

carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young. Isa.40:9-11.

And so **all Israel shall be saved**: as it is written, **There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer**, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: Rom.11:26.

Let us be clear, the title the everlasting God is written in Roms.16 but, it has already indirectly appeared twice already in Romans 9 & 11 where the very O.T. passages which speak of the everlasting God are quoted by Paul. Three times is the everlasting God used or referenced in Romans. Thus Roms.16 looks back to those occurrences, not forward to a Mystery which never uses that title.

If the everlasting God is the God who assured Abraham he would have a seed in Isaac, and the same everlasting God is featured in Isa.40 about the comfort of Jerusalem and Israel's Lord and God coming with a strong arm, then when we read of the everlasting God in Roms.16, it seems out of context to suggest that Roms.16 is a later postscript looking forward when the title looks all the way back through Roms.11, 9, and Isa.40 to Gen.21.

Paul's reference to the everlasting God in Roms.16 goes much deeper than a passing reference as we have found. Each O.T. context of the everlasting God is brought forward into and embellished in Romans & Galatians providing a dispensational theme total earthly as opposed to those above heavenly elements we listed previously.

The very use of that divine title is in the immediate context for the mystery kept silent of Roms.16. These divinely inspired words are evidence determining whether this concluding passage is either part of the original letter or, as is supposed, a later addition, a postscript added by Paul after he knew of the mystery of Ephesians and Colossians.

Would Paul use an O.T. divine title of God in the postscript IF he was adding that postscript looking forward to something never found in the O.T.? Questions like these help us to think carefully before embracing ideas that at constant repeating sound probable.

Repeating an idea about a passage does not prove the passage fits the idea.

Summing up.

1. The Roms.16 mystery was kept secret or silent, never hidden in God. The word secret both KJV English and original Greek sigao are not used after Acts 28 to describe The Mystery hidden in God.

2. The Roms.16 mystery kept secret or silenced was manifested by the scriptures of the prophets, plural, not Paul singular. The mystery of Ephesians and Colossians is not made manifest by the Prophets.

3. The Roms.16 mystery kept silent was made manifest for obedience of faith, not to disclose a previously hidden dispensation. Coupled with the everlasting God looking back, then the obedience of faith is regarding those things taught by Paul up to Acts 28.

4. The Roms.16 mystery kept silenced was proclaimed by a command of the everlasting God, not by the descended Christ as Head who revealed it to Paul alone.

5. The Roms.16 mystery kept unvoiced, was commanded by the everlasting God, a title which goes back to Gen.21 and Isa.40, passages use by Paul in Romans and Galatians. The title the everlasting God of Roms.16 looks back to Roms.11, 9, Isa. 40 and Genesis 21, not forward to the present Mystery hidden in God.

Thus far I believe the limited evidence we have found is certainly leaning towards the view that it is part of the original letter, but there is more to come.

Brian R Kelson

brian@acts28.net

www.acts28.net

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