

## **Acts 28 – The Great N.T. dispensational divide**

Paul in Acts, Romans, promise, prophecy, mystery unvoiced.  
The Mystery of Romans 16. Concerning his Son.

Right division is one of the essential rules of sound Bible exegesis. This rule demands we separate things that differ, keep the context of things that differ and accompanying this is the necessary rule of context, context, context, and studying the words the Holy Spirit has used. In this way right division keeps similar things together, it avoids mixing things that differ.

These rules highlight the differences in the mystery kept silent found when Paul closes his letter to the Romans and the Mystery that was hidden in God. Comparing these two mysteries highlights the dispensational differences in Paul's ministry either side of Acts 28. Here is the mystery, the hidden dispensation of the grace of God revealed after Acts 28, compared to the mystery kept silent or unvoiced of Roms.16, written before Acts 28.

*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: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord Eph 3:8-11.*

*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; but now has been made plain, and by the prophetic Scriptures, 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 forever. Amen. Rom.16:25-27. MKJV,*

God revealed his hidden set of conditions to Paul alone after Acts 28, which was to manifest the unsearchable riches of Christ, not features of Christ made manifest by the prophets. The Ephesians mystery makes plain the dispensation that was hidden in God, not kept silent, and that the heavenly principalities and powers might know by this church which is his body the manifold wisdom of God.

The purpose of the mystery kept silent in Roms.16 written before Acts 28, was not revealed to disclose these objectives. It is noteworthy that Paul says nothing of this Romans mystery being revealed to him alone, only that it was now made manifest. Romans was written before Paul received the mystery kept hidden in God. The objective in Roms.16 is clear, it was to bring about the obedience of faith among all nations and says nothing of heavenly principalities and powers.

*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:* Rom 16:25-26.

It does not help to link these two mysteries because Paul used the word, or to link the two mysteries because Paul is the apostle of the Gentiles either side of Acts 28, The Word explains the Word and the context will guide us. We have very briefly compared Romans with Ephesians and noted differences. but when we compare Romans with Romans, we shall notice strong corresponding elements which must be kept together and further guide us in our considerations.

The Everlasting God.

The description of God as the everlasting God was reviewed last time and what a thrill it was to see how that title linked the close of Romans back to Gen.21 and Isa.40. The fact that this title is not found after Acts 28 is interesting, but what magnifies the divine oversight in the Bible is the linking of dispensational themes in Paul during Acts, by the places this title occurs.

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

Gen.21 contains the statement regarding Isaac which is repeated in Roms.9:7 and Hebs.11:18. Isaac is also featured in Galatians, also written during Acts.

*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.

The everlasting God is linked by usage to Gen.21, then Roms.9 and Hebs.11. The everlasting God is the one who commanded this unvoiced or kept silent mystery in Roms.16 to be made known and thus this mystery is linked by context backwards to Gen.21, Roms.9 and Hebs.11, and is not linked forwards to the Mystery of Ephesians and Colossians. The mystery of Roms.16 is linked to the previous content of Romans, not the later context of Ephesians or Colossians.

The everlasting God is also found in Isaiah 40:28 and Paul features that prophet in Roms.11:33-34 and 1Cor.2:16. Corinthians and Romans are both concerned with an earthly hope, a resurrection to the earth and the Deliverer coming out of Zion. The everlasting God is linked to this mystery unvoiced in Roms.16, and the mystery of the wisdom of God in 1Cor.2:6-9. Again, the context of the mystery kept silent in Roms.16 is linked back to the prophets, the restoration of the Kingdom and the previous doctrines Paul wrote in both Romans and Corinthians. It is not looking forward to the mystery hidden in God.

Now we examine other words and phrases in this doxology addition of Roms.16 and all glory to the divine author for the truths revealed by following the Bible study rules. With this comparison, I believe we will find the closing of Romans is linked with the opening and not with Ephesians or Colossians.

Stablish, established. (same original word in Roms.16 and Roms.1).

*For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;* Rom 1:11.

*So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.* Rom 1:15.

*Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel,.* Rom 16:25.

Paul writes in chapter one that the power to stablish them was in his gospel which was accompanied by supernatural gifts. The gift imparted was designed to establish them. Gifts are linked with Pentecost and confirmed the word received unto the end, 1Cor.1:4-8. Gifts are featured in Roms.12 at the close of which chapter Paul's advice is reminiscent of Matt.5. Roms.13 says the night is far spent, the day is at hand, the same imminence of the Lord's return as in Corinthians. These are contextual features are linked with the mystery kept silent and further demonstrate the differences in his gospel prior to Acts 28 and after, but importantly, link Roms.16 with Roms.1.

My Gospel.

Paul, previously referred to "my gospel" in Roms.2 where he reaffirms the Jew first position of Roms.1:16 not once but twice. In that chapter he writes that the Gentiles by nature could have the law written in their hearts which is totally not the dispensational feature of the post Acts 28 mystery of the one new man where the law contained in ordinances was abolished.

And as we have seen, my gospel is also linked with Pentecost and the supernatural gifts. My gospel in Roms.16 is linked back to Roms.2 & 1 where it is linked with Jew first and the Law in the heart. My gospel in these settings gives no invite to drag back into the Romans 16 mystery kept silent the dispensational elements of The Mystery of Ephesians simply because he uses the same phrase in 2Tim.2. Context in the Word explains the Word.

*Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord,* Roms.1:1,3.

*In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.* Rom\_2:16, see :9, :10.

*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.* Rom 16:25.

The mystery kept secret, age times.

*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,* Rom 16:25.

The original word translated secret is not found after Acts 28 and it is worthwhile reviewing the other occurrences of this original word. In Lk.9:36, 20:26 it is translated close and held their peace. In Acts12:17 & 15:12-13 it is hold their peace, kept silence and held their peace. In 1Cor.14:28, 30 & 34 it is keep silence, hold their peace and keep silence. Not once is this word translated hidden. It is interesting to note that the original words "since the world began" in Roms.16:25 do not include the word since, simply times eternal, but the original words for times eternal do occur after Acts 28 in 2Tim.1:9 where the word "before" is included in the original. Romans it is times of the ages, in 2Tim. It is before times of the ages.

I will make another suggestion as to what this mystery is about at the close of this lesson, but it is clearly about Christ Jesus the Lord as Paul mentions twice.

*Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord,* Rom 1:1-3.

*Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ,* Rom 16:25.

Made manifest, scriptures of the prophets.

Romans 16 follows the same thoughts as Romans 1 where Paul references the prophets.

*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.* Rom 16:26

*Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord,* Rom 1:1-3.

Some feel the scriptures of the prophets refer to Paul's writings, but Paul's use of this word doesn't support that idea, see 3:21 and 11:3, and the words, promised afore in 1:2 exclude that idea as well. In Romans, the scriptures of the prophets are those Paul referenced over 60 times from more than 12 O.T. books. The keen student might like to start with the phrase "as it is written" or similar. Romans is O.T. promise and prophecy from beginning to end, in fact Roms.15:3-4 [Psa.40] plainly states that the hope of Romans is prophetic, and Psa.40 is also found in Hebs.10. It is impossible to suggest that having stated the hope of Romans is O.T. in chapter 15, then hint at a completely different hope in the doxology of Roms.16:25-27.

This mystery kept unvoiced or silent regards the preaching of Christ Jesus but is now made manifest and by the scriptures of the prophets. This mystery was made manifest by the Scriptures exactly like the righteousness of God. In this verse manifest and prophets also occur together.

*But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;* Rom 3:21.

Obedience of faith.

This closing doxology contains two key features providing insight into this mystery kept silent. They are the words stablish/establish and the phrase obedience of faith. The preaching of Christ Jesus according to manifestation of this mystery was designed to establish the believers in order that they could be obedient to the faith. Nothing in these verses surrounding this mystery suggest a new dispensation, or anything that was previously hidden in God, but rather this mystery was promoted for strengthening and obedience. And like other features in this section, they have already appeared earlier in the letter. We looked at establish earlier, here is the repetition of obedience of faith.

*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.

*.. we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:* Rom 1:5.

The original phrase is identical, so others have translated the same phrasing in both passages.

*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.

*Through him we have received grace and our apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles on behalf of his name.* Rom 1:5. NET.

Once again, the context of Roms.16 looks back to the opening of Romans, not forward beyond Acts 28 to The Mystery not revealed when Romans was written. This phrase is found even earlier than Romans in the history of Acts. Please note Jewish Priests were obedient to the faith prior to Paul's "conversion."

*And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.* Act 6:7.

The word obedience appears previously in Romans and the link with righteousness suggest why this obedience of the faith is a very important theme in Romans, opening the letter and closing it.

*What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?* Rom 6:15-16.

There were two options before the believers during Acts when Romans was written. The first to walk after the flesh which would bring sickness and ultimately death, 1Cor.11:30, Roms.8:6, 8 & 13. On the other hand, they could walk in the Spirit for life and righteousness. See also Gals.5. The righteousness here is not the righteousness reckoned on those believing by the grace of God, but the righteous works that follow those who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Romans teaches vessels of honor for glory and vessels of wrath for perdition, destruction or waste.

Romans 8 is also reminding them, that those who endure, who suffer, will be joint heirs with Christ, those who walk according to the flesh have, as Galatians puts it, no inheritance in the kingdom of God. This is not the case today in our present calling of grace.

Believers today have an inheritance in heavenly places, but may or may not reign with Christ there, 2Tim.2:11-13. It is one thing to live with Christ, but reigning with him is the result of faithfulness to the end. Walking according to the flesh will not bring sickness and death today, as it did when Romans was written. Once again, the context of Romans forbids the idea that the mystery kept silent in Roms.16:25-27 hints at the present calling.

What is the mystery kept silent but now made manifest?

The answer might be found in the comparison of the opening and closing of Romans. The repeated features are too obvious to overlook. What is it about Christ Jesus that was kept silent but made manifest by the Scriptures of the prophets? Certainly, this mystery is not a revelation of a new dispensation, rather a feature of Christ.

Obedience of or to the faith immediately follows the opening declarations regarding Christ but it also follows the closing declaration regarding the preaching of Christ Jesus regarding a mystery kept silent in the Scriptures. This identical structure element is very suggestive. Here are the two passages together.

*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: Rom 16:25-26.*

*Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, Rom 1:1-5.*

A simple structure will help highlight these identical features.

# Romans 1:1-5 & 16:25-27

gospel of God - concerning his Son  
the mystery kept silent - my gospel

## Romans Opening

A. 1:1-1, 3. Paul - Gospel of God  
Concerning his Son

B. 1:2 promised, prophets, holy Scriptures  
Seed of David - flesh  
Son of God - resurrection from the dead.

C.1:5, [:11]. obedience of faith - all nations.  
spiritual gift - established.

## Romans Closing

A. 16:25. My gospel,  
preaching of Christ Jesus

B. 16:25-26, mystery kept silent  
manifested - scriptures of prophets

C.16:25-26 establish (power)  
obedience of faith - all nations

Romans 16:25-27 is not a later addition,  
it is part of the original letter

The mystery of Romans 16 was kept silent or unvoiced, the context shows clearly that it is not the mystery of Ephesians or contains any suggestion of it. This mystery was manifested by the scriptures of the prophets and the objective was the obedience of faith.



Paul's use of words and phrases in the immediate context of this mystery kept unvoiced or silent shows us that this doxology is inseparable from earlier passages in Romans and possibly give hints as to what this kept silent mystery might be. With this structure before us, here are two suggestions as to what this mystery kept silent or unvoiced during age times might be. I am not dogmatic here, just offering some thoughts for your consideration.

Option 1. The mystery unvoiced, Christ the obedient One.

I suggested previously that this mystery kept silent was the relationship of Christ as the last Adam to humanity as in Roms.5, and maybe this is a legitimate conclusion not to be excluded from deliberations. It is true the O.T. does not speak much about this doctrine. Mr. C.H.Welch, believed this, writing about it in his book *The Just and the Justifier* available on my website Acts28.net.

Option 2. The mystery unvoiced, Christ manifested as the Son of God by resurrection. If we use the structure as a guide which is exactly following Bible study rules; comparing Scripture with Scripture, then the mystery kept silent was given in the corresponding opening section. Here are the two portions.

*Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures.) Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.* Rom 1:1-4.

*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,* Rom 16:25-26.

Christ as the seed of David was not unvoiced or kept silent, but his resurrection, manifesting him as the Son of God might not be so clear and could be considered kept silent or unvoiced.

The fact that Messiah was to suffer was known to the prophets, and as Peter observed, 1Pet.1:9-12, they searched diligently regarding the time frame between his suffering and glory, but Messiah was mostly shown as the seed of David as I remember.

The disciples knew of the resurrection at the last day, Jn.11:24-27, and Martha acknowledged him as the Messiah and the Son of God, as did Peter and others, but this had not been yet declared or confirmed by his resurrection. When he told them about his resurrection out from among the dead, they did not understand.

*And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead. And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.* Mar 9:9-10.

Christ was raised out from among others who would be raised later. His death burial and resurrection were hidden from the disciples, Lk.18:34, and while we know of typical elements of the Law which typified death and resurrection, the scape goat, the two turtle doves, Lev.16 and 14, I don't believe these speak specifically about Christ as the Son of God, rather the sinner and his new life because of Christ's sacrifice. It's the resurrection out from the

other dead ones that manifested [declared] him the Son of God with power. The Centurion also proclaimed him the Son of God, others challenged him to prove he was, but the resurrection from among the dead was the manifestation of that truth.

The issue with this option could be the promise in prophetic writing compared to kept silent but manifested by the prophetic writings. Was the promise plainly written or unvoiced in age times? Certainly, the prophets feature in both parallel sections and both concern Christ Jesus and for now, these two options seem the most likely explanations.

One thing is certain, this postscript doxology is definitely not a later addition, penned by Paul after he received information regarding the mystery of Ephesians and Colossians. This postscript is inseparable from the Romans epistle and the earthly hope it proclaims.

Not once in Romans is Christ raised to heavenly places as Head of the Church which is his body.

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