

Acts 28 – The Great N.T. dispensational divide

Eph.3 – the mystery of Christ, as it is now revealed

Eph.3 – the mystery, hid in God

Update.

I have added some thoughts to the conclusion of the previous lesson about the out-resurrection, please check out the new PDF, 2026-04-07, I have replaced on Acts28.net/lessons.

Paul, two different programs by revelation, two mysteries.

The mystery of Christ in the Acts period, the mystery of Christ and The Mystery in the post Acts period.

Prior to Acts 28, Paul received his gospel directly from the Lord, Gals.1. After Acts 28, he received the present dispensation of the grace of God by revelation, Eph.3 and Col.1. In both of those ministries we find the mystery of Christ, but only in the post Acts ministry do we find the mystery, the present dispensation of the grace of God. In other words, features of the mystery of Christ are found in the Acts period, and previously unknown features of it are found after the Acts period and incorporated into the mystery revealed after the Acts period.

The fact that Paul received both ministries by revelation, and that the mystery of Christ is found in both ministries is not grounds for believing the mystery after Acts 28 can be found in the Acts period ministry of Paul. Paul did not have the mystery before Acts 28 and of equal importance, and he did not have the post Acts features of the mystery of Christ before Acts 28.

The mystery of Christ is about Christ, his person, ministry, offering, glory & office and is found in Paul before and after Acts 28, that is, in both programs given to Paul by revelation. However, the post Acts dispensational features of the mystery of Christ are unique to the mystery.

Features of the mystery of Christ relate to one or both of these programs, some features about Christ's offering and the redemption it brought are vital for both programs, but other features are dispensational in nature and not interchangeable. This is proven by Paul's words in Eph.3 as we shall see.

Ephesians 3, written after Israel was nationally put aside at Acts 28, contains references to both these mysteries. Paul blends them together in a section that has been problematic because within it we have a parenthesis within a parenthesis. Translators have given varying points of opening and closure of these but before considering them, here is the passage from the opening original theme to its closing with both parentheses highlighted by color. The various parenthetical sections are my current ideas, search and see.

For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery:

(as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. 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: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Eph 3:1-14.

At Eph.3:1, Paul begins his doxology and resumes at 3:14.

He breaks at 3:2-3a, resumes at 3:6 and concludes at 3:13.

He breaks again at 3:3b and concludes at 3:5.

Eph.3:1 resumed at 3:14 is the doxology closing the doctrinal portion of the epistle.

Eph.3:2-3a resumed at 3:6 to 3:13 is about his ministry in the dispensation of the grace of God, previously hid in God.

Eph.3:3b-3:5 is about his knowledge in the mystery of Christ which in other ages was not made known as it is now revealed and related to the mystery.

Here is the passage via the KJV and the LITV to make these parenthetical inserts as clear as possible.

Original theme

3:1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

Original theme break

parenthesis 1 begins

3:2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery;

parenthesis 1 break,

inner parenthesis 2 begins

3:3b-3:5...(as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit:

inner parenthesis 2 concludes,

parenthesis 1 resumes..

3:6-13 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: Whereof I was made a minister,...

[for the nations to be joint-heirs, and a joint-body and joint-sharers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I was made a minister LITV]

..... Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

parenthesis 1 concludes.

Original theme resumes

Eph.3:14-21. For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Original theme concludes.

Please note the critical statement of Paul here. The mystery of Christ as it was now, post Acts 28, revealed, was not made known previously, Eph.3:5. In other words, the mystery of Christ was revealed before Acts 28, but not like now. The mystery of Christ began before the foundation of the world, but these post Acts features of it had not been previously revealed. Because Paul wrote about features of the mystery of Christ before Acts 28 does not prove he had the Ephesians features of the mystery of Christ before Acts 28.

The Mystery, the dispensation of the grace of God was hid in God, Eph.3:8-9, and revealed to Paul alone after Acts 28. Similarly, the Mystery of Christ was not revealed before Acts 28 as it is now revealed, after Acts 28. The Mystery was not revealed prior to Acts 28, and the post Acts features of the mystery of Christ had not been revealed before either. The previously unrevealed aspects of the mystery of Christ were revealed to the other post Acts apostles and prophets but it was Paul who united them with the mystery of Christ.

How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Eph 3:3-4.

The mystery of Christ as it is now revealed is essential within The Mystery, the dispensation of the grace of God which was previously hid in God. Those aspects of the mystery of Christ revealed after Acts 28 are essential elements of the mystery revealed after Acts 28.

Some features of the mystery of Christ were revealed in other ages regarding Christ in his function and office in the earthly program. The Mystery of Christ after Acts 28 also concerned Christ, his function and office but these now revealed features regarded the heavenly program. Paul's understanding of the mystery of Christ in Eph.3 relates to the heavenly program. Prior to Acts 28 Paul had understanding of the mystery of Christ as it related to the earthly program.

The Mystery of Christ and The Mystery are found back before the foundation of the world. The mystery of Christ unfolded from the garden and was still unfolding through the gospels and Acts as it related to Christ in redemption and the earthly sphere. It crossed the Acts 28 boundary, where the redemption features are found, but the dispensational features of it after Acts 28 related to Christ and his office and function in the heavenly places. While the mystery of Christ crossed the great N.T. dispensational divide, it does not unit the 2 programs either side of Acts 28.

Consider Psalm 8.

Originally, Psa.8 referred to Christ and his excellent name in all the earth, with dominion over the works of creation, all things under his feet in the earthly sphere; sheep and oxen. It included the acknowledgment that he had set his glory above the heavens, but the earth was the focus.

Prior to Acts 28, Paul had referenced Psa.8 in 1Cor.15:25-28 where he makes it clear the Father was excluded from the all things under Christ's feet. The context of Psa.8 originally and in 1Cor.15 remains earthly with the New Jerusalem now clearly written about at that time. Hebrews agrees with 1Cor.15 in that during Acts, not all things were under Christ's feet. I believe if the Ephesians revelations of Psa.8 were common knowledge during Acts,

then Hebrews and Corinthians would have included the heavenly places. This difference between those two letters and Ephesians adds further weight that the Ephesians truths of Psa.8 were not revealed before Acts 28. This Psa.8 aspect of the mystery of Christ prior to Acts 28 has nothing to do with the post Acts 28 use of the Psa.8 aspect of the mystery of Christ. The Psa.8 use in the mystery of Christ in Eph.1 was not made known in other ages as it is now revealed, including the Acts period and now reveals the "thy glory above the heavens". The but now of Eph.2:13 is not the but now of Roms.3:21.

Paul brings forth this Psa.8 aspect of the mystery of Christ and expands it so that Christ has dominion in heaven with all things under his feet now included the heavenly beings and the church which is his body, Eph.1:21-23. This is the mystery of Christ in Psa.8 not made known to the sons of men as it is now revealed as an essential part of the mystery. This is where the fusion of the post Acts features of the mystery of Christ are inseparable from the mystery.

When Paul writes that he had written afore in a few words about the mystery, this can only refer to Ephesians, since that letter and Colossians reveal it. It is wild imagination to take "wrote afore in a few words" regarding the mystery and insert it back into his entire Acts period ministry suggesting Paul had written about the mystery in the letters of that time. If Paul is referring to the mystery of Christ "as he wrote afore", then, yes, he had written about that prior to Acts 28, but not as it was now revealed. Test things differing.

This chart I pray gives insight into this fusion of the mystery of Christ as it is revealed post Acts 28 into the mystery, revealed post Acts 28.

We are all students of the Word.

Brian R Kelson
04-11-2026

Paul; 2 different programs by revelation - two mysteries

Earthly program
Mystery of Christ, Israel, paradise, the world

program Heavenly
the Body, the Mystery of Christ in The Mystery

