

Acts 28 – The Great N.T. dispensational divide

Romans – promise, prophecy, the earthy kingdom setting

Romans – not a foundation on which to build today's dispensation.

Romans, its dispensational setting. 01.

Many claim that Paul's letter to the Romans and other Acts period letters and events, provide a foundation for the post Acts letters of Ephesians and Colossians. These folks feel that hints of the post Acts dispensation can be found during Acts and further that Paul had a progressive revelation and Acts was a transition period. As Israel was diminishing, the truths of Ephesians and Colossians were gradually revealed. A dimming of one calling and a rising light towards another is the idea.

Some features that appear to enhance this idea are the following.

Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles before and after Acts 28, Roms.11:13, and Eph.3:1.

Paul's gospel was given by revelation as stated in Galatians, an Acts epistle and Ephesians, a post Acts epistle. Gal.1:12 & Eph.3:1-3

Grace is found before and After Acts 28. Roms.6:14 & Eph.3:2.

While they appear supportive of the idea, sincere students of the Word require a much more in-depth review before embracing this view.

In this series, we will search through Romans and look at some important features of it to confirm or deny this idea. Romans was written late in the Acts period and if there were any features of our present calling, the dispensation of Ephesians and Colossians, then they should be clear enough. We will test things differing.

It is essential that we define terms before we begin. We must not generalize and claim Romans provides a foundation for Ephesians without explaining what parts of Romans are necessary to prove that. Highlighting such things as grace, my gospel, justification and Paul an apostle without any examination of the context, do not provide evidence, they provide warning signals.

Continuing truth v dispensational truth.

Within every divine program we find continuing or redemptive truths such as God is gracious and merciful, and without faith it is impossible to please him. Redemption through our Lord's blood is a continuing truth, essential for all divine programs. Justification by grace through faith is another continuing truth, found in Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and King David, Hebs.11:4, 7, 8-19, Roms.4. Justification by faith through the grace of God is not a dispensational truth and is as deeply entrenched in the earthly kingdom program as it is in ours. If we wish to appeal to justification, then we need to see the context of it, justification by grace is not evidence Paul had a gradual revelation culminating in the mystery.

Continuing truths do not provide any basis for claiming Romans, Galatians or any letter written during Acts provide the foundations for the present dispensation after Acts 28.

A dispensational truth is a truth specific to a dispensation; a set of conditions God has set in operation. The Garden of Eden gives an example with its specific prohibition, don't eat of a certain tree. The Law given to Israel contains other examples of dispensational truths, all Israeli

males were required to meet with the Lord 3 times a year at the specific place he had appointed Ex.23:14-17, Deut.16:16..

Only dispensational truths clarify different divine programs so when the claim is made that Ephesians is built upon Romans, common dispensational truths need to be found in both letters to support such a claim. If Romans provides the foundations for Ephesians, then some dispensational truths in Romans must appear or be embellished in Ephesians and Colossians. This is exactly how we should be substantiating such a claim. If Romans does not provide any hint of the dispensational truths of Paul post Acts, then the claim is misleading and false and to be rejected entirely.

We believe Acts 28 is a dispensational boundary, that two different divine programs are in operation either side of it. We come to this conclusion because of the clear and obvious different dispensational truths found either side of it, especially in Paul.

We do not see any progression in Paul, any post Acts dispensational truths in any of Paul's letters written before Acts 28. This is a claim and to support it we begin a series examining the dispensational truths of Romans and other Pauline features during Acts. Comparing dispensational truths will determine if Paul had received any new or partial revelation of the mystery prior to Acts 28. We might also note some redemptive or continuing truths or Romans and their settings.

Paul's Gospel promised before by the Prophets in the holy Scriptures.

*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**,) Rom 1:1-2.*

Paul was separated unto the gospel of God, and the word gospel simply means a good proclamation, to bring good news. The word gospel is not a dispensational term, but the good news of that gospel can be very dispensational and here we are left in no doubt that Paul was separated unto a gospel which was promised before by God's prophets in the holy scriptures. This is not compatible with the dispensational truths of Ephesians which were hidden in God, Eph.3:8-10, Col.1:25-27.

Paul's gospel included continuing truths such as redemption through his blood, but it also included the hope of that time, two different types of truth; continuing and dispensational. Paul's gospel must be carefully examined for example, we cannot separate 1Cor.15:3-4, Christ's death for sins, a continuing truth, and the resurrection of 1Cor.15:51-55 to the earth, not heaven, a dispensational truth. This was Paul's gospel in Acts with fundamental truth we find after Acts 28, and dispensational truth we will not find after Acts 28. And this Acts period gospel was given to him by revelation. The fact this was given by revelation does not prove it had dispensational truths revealed after Acts 28.

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, 1Co 15:3.

Paul uses the term "my gospel" in Roms.2:16, 16:25 and after Acts 28 in 2Tim.2:8. The term is not a dispensational one. The phrase does not prove that Paul preached the same dispensational truths either side of Acts 28. Context will determine what "my gospel" entailed. The context of my gospel in Roms.2 & 16 is not the dispensational setting of the mystery, the dispensation of the grace of God. More on this shortly.

Paul as an ex pharisee [separated ones] shares that he was separated from his mother's womb in Gals.1:15-16, separated to preach Christ among the Gentiles with the gospel given by revelation, Gals.1:12. Paul defines this gospel as being the faith of the very people he had been persecuting, Gals.1:23, and those before Paul knew nothing of the mystery. Paul's gospel in Galatians & Romans was the gospel promised afore by the prophets in the holy Scriptures and is incompatible with the Mystery of Ephesians which was hidden in God, again, Eph.3:8-10, Col.1:25-27.

The closing doxology in Roms.16 is a recapitulation of the opening, please don't miss the link which reaffirms the prophetic basis of Paul's gospel preached among the nations during Acts.

*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**,) Rom 1:1-2.*

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

*But now is made manifest, and by the **scriptures of the prophets**, Rom 16:26*

Paul's gospel given by revelation was promised afore in the prophets, and the word promise includes the idea of bringing word to, to announce, and the prophets brought word to the sonship of Christ Jesus as both the seed of David and the Son of God. The mystery kept secret or unvoiced in Roms.16 was made plain by the very same prophets who had held it close during eternal times. These points are linked again at end of this letter.

***Paul, ...separated unto the gospel of God .. promised afore** [announced] **by his prophets...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**,...according to the mystery kept close, or silent since the world began [times eternal] **But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets**, Rom 16:25-26.*

The original word for eternal used in the phrase since the world began occurs again to describe God in the very next verse.

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

The God of Paul's gospel during Acts, is the God of action since the world began; the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, see Acts 13:17-23. God in this role, in this relationship, commanded this preaching of Christ Jesus to be preached to all nations for the obedience of faith. This phrase ties the closing doxology to the opening of the letter. It is impossible to miss the recurring themes in the opening of Romans and the close.

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

To what were Paul and the Gentiles obedient during Acts?

And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. Act 16:4.

Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law. As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication. Act 21:24-25.

These were the things to which Paul and the Gentile believers were obedient, the Law and the ordinances of Acts 15.

In Roms.16, it was the everlasting God who commanded the preaching of Christ according to a mystery kept silent, but now made manifest by the scriptures of the prophets. This is totally consistent with Paul's gospel in Acts 13 where the God of Israel had raised the savior to Israel according to his **promise**, and had commanded Paul to preach to the Gentiles according to **prophecy**. A careful reading of this passage discovers many dispensational features of Paul during Acts which are incompatible with his post Acts ministry.

The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, ... Act 13:17

*..God [of Israel] according to his **promise** raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus:* Act 13:23

*Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord **commanded us**, saying **[prophecy]**, **I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.** [Isa.49:6]. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.* Act 13:46-48.

Paul turned to the Gentiles because Israel rejected the message, this is not post Acts 28, Israel was set aside at Acts 28 and a new purpose revealed.

Paul was commanded to preach to the Gentiles from Isa.49:6 which is a prophecy about Israel's restoration, not Israel's diminishing or casting aside.

The number of Gentiles included was limited to the number ordained, this is not Christ among all nations, this is a limited number of Gentiles that were included to provoke Israel as Paul in Romans will explain.

Paul was commanded by the everlasting God of Israel to proclaim the mystery kept silent made manifest by the prophets. Roms.1 & 16 are Paul's gospel promised in the prophets, the God of Israel's fathers, and obedience to the faith include Law observance as believers. These are not the dispensational features of Ephesians and Colossians.

The affirming links in Paul and his O.T. references are powerful, showing everything he wrote during Acts was promise and prophecy. Here are other dispensational links to Paul's gospel in Romans and Acts.

The everlasting God of Roms.16 is found in Gen.21 and Isa.40, [see also Deut.33:27, Psalms.90:2, & Jer.10:10.]

The first occurrence of the everlasting God is with Israel's father, Abraham in Gen.21 and Paul references Gen.21 in Roms.9, and Hebs.11. Look at the network of O.T. in Paul. Roms.16 goes back to Gen.21 which appears in Roms.9 and again in Galatians and Hebrews. If Paul looks back to Genesis in Roms.16, then looking forward to Ephesians is not following Paul. Follow Paul in these Scriptures. Paul links Gen.21 with himself and believers in his gospel during Acts.

*But now is made manifest,...according to the commandment of the **everlasting God**,* Rom 16:26.

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

*And God said unto Abraham..... **in Isaac shall thy seed be called.*** Gen 21:12.

*.....**In Isaac shall thy seed be called.*** Rom 9:7.

*Of whom it was said, That **in Isaac shall thy seed be called**: Heb 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.
Now **we, brethren**, as **Isaac** was, **are the children of promise**. Gal 4:28.
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. Gal 4:30.*

The everlasting God is found in Isaiah which is also found elsewhere in Paul during Acts.
*But now is made manifest,...according to the commandment of the **everlasting God**, Rom 16:26.
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.
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**, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ. 1Co 2:16.
For **who hath known the mind of the Lord?** or who hath been his counsellor? Rom 11:34.
[cp Roms.11:36 with Hebs.2:10]. See also Isa.40:3, Matt.3:1-3, Isa.40:4 & Lk.3:5.*

It is beautiful that the command for Paul to preach to the Gentiles in Acts 13 is from Isa.49, and the wonderful doxology of Roms.11 is from Isa.40. From the beginning of his ministry to the late Roman epistle of Acts, promise and prophecy are the framework of Paul's gospel. Likewise, from the beginning of Romans to the close, nothing can be dispensationally linked with the post Acts dispensation of the grace of God.

We search and see.

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