

What is Acts 28?

Acts 28 is the great New Testament dispensational divide.

Romans through Philemon, mixing things that differ.

After Acts 28, prophesy and the Mystery of Christ.

There are some who oppose the Acts 28 dispensational boundary arguing that Paul uses the same phrases, and even quotes the Old Testament before and after Acts 28. They claim this is sufficient evidence for them to believe Paul was preaching the same message from the beginning, that he was given the present-day truths of the dispensation of the grace of God progressively, that Paul in the Acts period had increasing knowledge about the church which is his body, and Ephesians and Colossians are the ultimate disclosure of things previously hidden in God.

It is hasty and misinforming to conclude that simply because Paul uses similar language and references, that his messages either side of Acts 28 are the same. The closer we examine the contexts of Paul's O.T. usage and phrases, the clearer the differences in his messages before and after Acts 28 become.

It might appear that we labor the point, but when others refuse to acknowledge Acts 28 and throw such flimsy and biblically unsubstantiated refutations against it, then necessity demands we take the time to carefully compare any phrases and references in Paul that appear either side of the great N.T. dispensational divide.

We have already answered the argument regarding the "[seed of David](#)" found before and after Acts 28, but it will be helpful to examine more closely the Old Testament usage of Paul after Acts 28 and we start with Paul's first quote as found in Ephesians.

[he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet \(Psa.8:6\), Eph 1:20-22a.](#)

Paul turns to Psalm 8 after Acts 28 when writing about the ascended Christ, and he had referenced Psa.8 before Acts 28, but this does not prove his dispensational messages are the same or progressive. Other N.T. writers had used Psalm 8, Hebrews turns to the Psalm, and our Lord refers to Psalm 8 in Matt.21:16 (cf.Matt.11:25) and who would argue that the Lord's dispensational message in the Gospels, and the Hebrews' message are the same as Paul's after Acts 28?

When we examine the Psalm and its occurrences in the New Testament, we find much to verify the difference in Paul before and after Acts 28.

Here are the other occurrences of Psa.8:6 in the New Testament prior to Acts 28.

[For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest](#)

that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. 1Co 15:27.

What is man....little lower than the angels.... all things in subjection under his feet. Heb 2:6-8.

That Christ was raised and seated at the Father's right, and received glory there was known prior to Acts 28. Psalm 8:1 states the Lord had set his glory above the heavens, Peter knew of it, 1Pet.3:22, the writer of Hebrews knew of it, and Paul wrote of it in Corinthians. Will we now argue that because Peter and the writer of Hebrews knew and used Psalm 8 that their messages are the same as Paul's after Acts 28 because he also used Psalm 8 in Ephesians? If that is clearly not so, then the fact that Paul uses Psalm 8 either side of Acts 28 does not automatically mean his messages either side of Acts 28 are the same.

When we examine the context where Psalm 8 is used, we see common redemptive truths but clearly different dispensational truths. We shall compare, Corinthians, written prior to Acts 28, Hebrews, written prior to Acts 28 and Ephesians written after Acts 28.

Corinthians.

Here are three quotes from 1Co.15 to show the context of Psa.8. The first is a redemption gospel, the second is the glorification of Christ and a divine order, the third is a dispensational truth for those believers at that time. The redemptive truth is as true today, the divine order is unchanged, the dispensational truth is not true for us today, despite the fact it will remain the hope for those associated with it.

Redemption Truth.

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: 1Co 15:3-4.

Divine order Truth.

For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all. 1Co 15:27-28.

Dispensational Truth. The resurrection for Acts period believers was the resurrection of prophesy to the land of Israel.

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? 1Co 15:54-55. Isa.25:8, Hos.13:14.

Corinthians includes a reference to Psalm 8, declares the efficacy of Christ's suffering for salvation but points its readers at that time to a resurrection to the earth. Psalm 8 and Corinthians are on the same dispensational page; earthly.

Hebrews.

Here are three quotes from Hebrews showing the context of Psalm 8 in that epistle.

Redemption Truth.

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. Heb 2:9. (Psa.8:5). For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? Heb 9:13-14.

Divine Order Truth.

Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. Heb 2:7-8. Psa.8:5-6. Cf. 1Cor.15:27-28.

Dispensational Truth.

But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. Heb 12:22-24. Cf. Gals.4.

Hebrews is on the same dispensational page as Psalm 8, and Corinthians. While Hebrews does not mention Adam who is featured in 1Cor.15, it certainly goes back to the creation account in 1:10 where the words "works of thine hands" is nearly word for word with Psa.8:3. Hebrews revisits Mt. Sinai and looks forward to a greater trumpet descent of Christ, it compares the Old Covenant with the better things of the New and none of these dispensational things are compatible with Ephesians.

Prior to Acts 28, Psalm 8 is used by Paul (Corinthians) & Hebrews (Paul), to denote the glorification of Christ, but the dispensational context is totally earthly and the New Jerusalem.

Ephesians.

Here are three quotes showing the context of Psalm 8. The fact that redemption truth and divine order truth are the same either side of Acts 28, does not allow any claim that Paul was preaching the same dispensational message either side of Acts 28.

Redemption Truth. No change.

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Eph 1:7.

Divine Order Truth. New, previously unknown feature.

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, Eph 1:17.

Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, Eph 1:20-22a.

Dispensational Truth. New, previously unknown.

And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. Eph 1:22-23.

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: Eph 2:4-6.

Ephesians is not on the same dispensational page as Corinthians and Hebrews. The redemption truth is the same, but the order truth contains something new and the dispensational truth is also new. Psalm 8 in Ephesians has all things under his feet in the heavenly places where the Head and his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all are located.

Paul uses Psa.8:6 knowing full well that the Psalm is about the excellency of the Lord's name in all the earth so why would he use it in Ephesians which is about heavenly places? The answer lies in the mysteries in Ephesians.

The mystery of the Father's will, the mystery of Christ and the mystery.

In these three mysteries of Ephesians there is a harmony, even when Psalm 8 is used. The same purpose which he purposed in Christ is in view. They are aspects of the same dispensational focus, the heavenly places where our blessings and inheritance is located.

The mystery of the Father's will.

Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: Eph 1:8-10.

Early in Ephesians, Paul writes of the mystery of will of the God and Father of our Lord Christ Jesus. Here is an alternative translation for consideration.

...having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, for an administration of the fullness of times, to head up all things in Christ, both the things in Heaven, and the things on earth, even in Him, Eph 1:9-10. MKJV.

The mystery of the Father's will in Ephesians 1, is that in the dispensation of the fulness of the seasons, he will head up all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth. Christ's kingdom now extends to the heavenly places. Precisely when that fulness of opportunities expires is uncertain, but for now he is not Head over all in both spheres. When Christ was raised to the heavenly places to the Father's right, he was given to be Head over all things to the Church which is his body. This is one part of the Father's will. And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. Eph 1:22-23.

In this present dispensation of the grace of God, the Headship of Christ over all things both in Heaven and earth is anticipated in his headship over our calling in the heavenly places.

The mystery of Christ.

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; Eph 3:3b-5.

Paul writes that this mystery of Christ (believing the parenthesis bracket is misplaced), 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. This mystery of Christ was made known in other ages, and additional revelation was currently known among others, but Paul had knowledge regarding it and he wanted the Ephesians to understand it.

When Paul wrote "I wrote afore in a few words," some think this refers to the Acts period and Paul's use of Psalm 8 in Corinthians, or his progressive understanding of it, but that does not fit the context.

What was it that Paul wrote afore in Ephesians that would help them understand his knowledge in the mystery and the mystery of Christ? I believe Paul is referring to Eph.1:20-23 where he turns back to Psalm 8.

Psalm 8 is the first direct reference from the O.T. in Ephesians and Paul takes this earthly context scripture and extends its glorification of the Son of Man up into the heavenly places. Paul leads the believers from the earthly dominion of Christ that they knew in the Acts period, and extends that dominion to the heavenly sphere. Here is Psalm 8 and Ephesians again.

Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field Psa 8:6-7.

his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. Eph 1:19b-23. Psa.8:6.

Christ has been raised far above the heavenly beings, but his headship is over all things to the present called out company, the church which is his body. Our calling is the fulness of him who fills all in all. Colossians tells us that heavenly beings are also included in this newly revealed company.

And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: Col 2:10.

This present dispensation of grace features the headship of Christ in the heavenly places, the first place where his headship is established. The earthly headship is ratified, but to be established in the dispensation of the fulness of times.

Others knew of the mystery of Christ and his authority in the heavenly places, even before Acts 28:

.....resurrection of Jesus Christ; who is at the right hand of God, having gone into Heaven, where the angels and authorities and powers are being subjected to Him. 1Pe 3:22b-23.

However, compare the differences between Peter and Paul. Paul alone received the knowledge of the Headship of Christ over the church which is his body. No other apostle or prophet wrote of such truth, either before or after Acts 28, and since the Word of God is the only record, then this aspect of the mystery of Christ was unique to Paul and this is what he wanted the Ephesians to understand.

Paul received the ultimate, the final piece of the mystery of Christ. It is completely understandable that Paul turned to Psalm 8. That Psalm was about the mystery of Christ or the secret of the Son.

The secret of the Son, or the mystery of Christ in Psalm 8.

The Psalm is only 9 verses in length and we show most of it here.

What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! Psa 8:4-9.

Psalm 8 has both a Superscription and a Subscription, see, "In Heavenly Places," by C.H.Welch, on chapter 3 of Ephesians. Thus, the opening of Psalm 9 which can be rendered "the secrets of the son" could be the subscription of Psalm 8. King David wrote about the mystery of Christ and Paul in Ephesians wrote about the mystery of Christ, there is a link despite the dispensational differences.

Psalm 8 opens and closes with "O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! (who hast set thy glory above the heavens)." David knew of the Lord's glory above the heavens, but nothing more about that place, his focus is earthly. When David speaks of "dominion over the works of your hands" in verse 6 through 8, he looks back to Adam who was given dominion over the works of the Lord's hands on the earth, not in heavenly places.

This mystery of the Son started in the Garden, seen in Psalm 8, and ended with Paul.

Here are four things in the creation setting which begin the unfolding of the secret of the son or the mystery of Christ.

1. Adam was a figure of Christ regarding dominion over the works of God's hands, Psa.8:5-6. Roms.5:14. All things under his feet.
2. Adam was made in the image of God, Gen.1:26-27 and Christ is the image of the invisible God, 2Cor.4:4, Col.1:15.

3. Satan will be destroyed by the seed of the woman, the son of man. Gen.3:15, Psa.8:2 where the word "still" is the same original word translated "rested" in Gen.2:2. Roms.16:20. The Son will sabbath the enemy.
4. Adam and Eve were covered with coats of skins, Gen.3:21, Lev.1:6. Christ's suffering, his death, burial, and resurrection as the last Adam, was one of reconciliation and redemption. Hebs.2:7-9, 9:14, Psa.8:6, 1Cor.2:6-9, 15:22-27.

Psalm 8 concerns the secrets or mystery of the Son, but not everything about Christ was openly declared at the beginning, the secrets, or mysteries of him began in the Garden, continued up until, and after Acts 28 when a hidden aspect was revealed to Paul alone.

This ultimate feature of the mystery of the Son, was revealed to Paul alone at the revelation of the Mystery after Acts 28. The all things under his feet of Psalm 8, is now extended to the all things in the heavenly places. This is why Paul wrote this;

by revelation He made known to 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; Eph 3:3-5.

There is a circle here if we include verse 9 of Ephesians 3.

and to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which for ages hath been hid in God who created all things Eph 3:9. ASV.

Paul began with the mystery in verse 3, writes of the mystery of Christ in verse 4 and returns to the mystery in verse 9.

So, when he wrote, "as I wrote afore in a few words," he is referring to the mystery, and what he wrote before about the mystery will help them understand his knowledge in the mystery of Christ. These are two different mysteries but so intertwined they are inseparable. But before exploring this exciting complexity, we need to examine the Mystery.

The mystery.

Two translations are given to highlight and clarify the mystery in Ephesians 3.

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 Eph 3:6-9. KJV.

the mystery, ... 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 according to the gift of the grace of God given to me, according to the working of His power. This grace was given to me, I being less than the least of all the saints, to preach the gospel of the unsearchable riches of Christ among the nations, and to bring to

light all, what is the fellowship of the mystery having been hidden from eternity in God, the One creating all things through Jesus Christ, Eph (3), 6-9 LITV.

The Mystery in Ephesians 3, when summarized, is that the Nations or Gentiles are joint-heirs in an inheritance, belong to a joint-body, being the church which is his body, and are joint-sharers of a promise in a gospel concerning the unsearchable riches of Christ.

The new inheritance was hidden in God, the new church his Body was hidden in God, and the promise in a gospel was unsearchable.

Nothing of the mystery was previously revealed to anyone, including Paul prior to Acts 28. Here are the mystery features mentioned afore in Ephesians.

Joint-heirs in a new inheritance.

That believers of all nations, Jews or Gentiles were to share equally in an inheritance in the heavenly places, this was not previously revealed. Eph.1:5, 11.

Joint-body, the church which is his body.

The mystery is that believers of all nations, Jews, and Gentiles were to be united in a new creation, the one Body, the church of today. This was not previously revealed. Eph.1:20-23, 2:11-17.

Joint-sharers in a promise found in a gospel of unsearchable riches.

That believers of all nations, Jews or Gentiles, were to share in a promise given in a gospel concerning these unsearchable riches of Christ and of his Body, the church, this was not previously revealed. (For promise, see Eph.1:13-14 were the words, earnest, inheritance, redemption and purchased possession, relate solely to the inheritance and blessings revealed in Ephesians.)

The mystery of the Father's will, the mystery of Christ and the mystery.

So what did Paul write afore in Ephesians about the mystery that enabled them, and us, to understand his knowledge in the mystery of Christ?

Where is the mystery, the mystery of Christ, and the mystery of the father's will found together in Ephesians?

We might consider that Paul was referring to Eph.1:20-23. In this portion of Ephesians we have a partial objective of the father's will achieved, we have an unknown feature of the mystery of Christ revealed, and we have an element of the mystery.

Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. Eph 1:21-23.

In this passage we have the mystery of the Son, where his Psalm 2 quote takes “all things under his feet” in the earthly sphere and extends his authority to heavenly places. Paul’s knowledge was regarding the headship of Christ. Remember, the father’s will? To head up things BOTH in heaven and on earth. This dispensational truth is not found in 1Cor.12. Psa.2 extended is in perfect harmony with that will. So, this section includes the mystery of the son, and the mystery of the father’s will. However, it also includes the opening statement regarding the church which is his Body, this is the joint-body of The Mystery. This one passage, which Paul wrote afore includes elements of each mystery mentioned in Ephesians.

The Father’s will.

Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: Eph 1:9-10.

The father’s good pleasure was that ultimately all things would be headed up in Christ in both spheres. This was first realized in the heavenly places when he raised Christ and seated him at his right, put heavenly beings under his feet, and gave him to be Head over all things to the church which is his body. The mystery of the fathers will is linked to the mystery of Christ. But the mystery of Christ includes Christ’s headship over our calling, the church his body which is part of the mystery in Ephesians 3.

These three mysteries in Ephesians are inseparable. The intent, the mechanism, and the resultant glory in heavenly places for Christ and believers today were all hidden in God until revealed to Paul after Acts 28.

It is impossible to link the dispensational setting of Psalm 8 in Ephesians with anything Paul wrote prior to Acts 28.

It is impossible to argue that simply because Paul used a Psalm, or any other O.T. passage either side of Acts 28, his messages were dispensationally the same.

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