

What is Acts 28?

Acts 28 is the Great New Testament Dispensational Divide

Romans through Philemon, fails to compare Paul.

After Acts 28, The Mystery of Christ and The Mystery.

Chapters, verse breaks, and punctuation in the books of the Bible make for easy reading and searches, but can be impediments to sound contextual Bible exegesis. When we see a capital, a comma, a period, a verse, or chapter break, we are seeing human insertions. The original manuscripts from which our Bibles come were either all lower case or uncials with little to no punctuation, chapters, or verse breaks.

Ephesians provides at least 2 examples of disruptive chapter inserts, namely, chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 2 interrupts an important parallel, that is, the glorious truth of the power in Christ and us which theme begins at 1:15 and concludes at 2:10. Imagine interrupting Paul at such a critical point if he was publicly speaking about this?

Ephesians 3 is another inconvenient break. It begins with “for this cause” or reason, which is repeated in verse 14.

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus in behalf of you Gentiles—Eph. 3:1. EMTV.

For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom every family in heaven and upon earth takes its name, Eph. 3:14-15. EMTV.

What cause or reason made Paul bow his knees, and obviously, the answer lies in what he had written before Eph. 3:1. It is a pity this chapter break disrupts this thread. As an exercise, try reading from chapter 2 skipping 3:1-13 and beginning chapter 3 at verse 14. In other words, Eph. 3:2-13 is a parenthesis as many expositors have noted.

Herein lies a difficulty because in this large parenthesis of Eph. 3:2-13, lies another parenthesis the opening and closing of which has caused some discussion. Here is the KJV with the brackets they considered marked the opening and closing of this inner parenthesis. We have tabbed the parenthesis to highlight the issue.

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 [joint-heirs], and of the same body [joint-body], and partakers [joint-partakers] of his promise in Christ by the gospel: Eph. 3:1-6.

This bracketing creates some conflict because there are two mysteries featured in this greater parenthesis. These are the mystery of Christ, and The Mystery. The conflict arises

by the statement of Paul in Eph. 3:8-9 that The Mystery was unique to his ministry among the Gentiles, and concerned unsearchable riches of Christ and things previously hidden in God. Col.1 is added to confirm this.

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. 3:7-9.

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. 1:25-26.

However, the bracketing of the inner parenthesis at the end of Eph.3:3 and :4 links verse 3 with verse 5 which suggests the mystery was made known in other ages and was not unique to Paul. We omit the KJV bracketing to show this contradictory link.

How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery;
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.

Since Paul's clear statement in Ephesians 3:7-9 & Col.1 says The Mystery was hid in God, and away from ages and generations, many have moved the closing inner parenthesis bracket to the end of verse 5 as follows. By doing so, we now have the mystery in verse 3 linked to verse 6, not verse 5.

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, [joint heirs] and of the same body [joint body], and partakers [joint sharers] of his promise in Christ by the gospel: Eph. 3:3-6.

Please do your own study, I am not a Greek scholar or textual critic, but the bracket at the close of verse 5 seems more in harmony with the context.

Now we have some consistency in the Word of truth, and we can summarize these two mysteries while noting differences, similarities, and the dynamic connection.

The Mystery is unique to Paul and was hidden away from ages and generations, this means it was also hidden from Paul in the Acts period, which is proven by comparing his writings. The Mystery was given to Paul alone after Israel was set aside at Acts 28.

The Mystery of Christ had been unfolding from the beginning, but at the time of Ephesians, certain unique features of it had been revealed to Christ's holy apostles and prophets, and

this included Paul. The previously unknown features of the mystery of Christ found in Paul's post Acts letters are the capstone of it and inseparable from The Mystery.

Certain aspects of the mystery of Christ were revealed to other holy apostles and prophets at the time of writing Ephesians, but since no other post Acts 28 accounts exist save the writings of Paul, who is after all the only apostle to the Nations, then discussing who they were and what they understood is unprofitable. The Bible we have is all we have and it is enough. Paul's post Acts 28 writings are sufficient.

Paul writes two things about himself in these opening verses of chapter 3. The mystery given to him by revelation, and his knowledge in the mystery of Christ. These two mysteries are vitally linked as we hope to show. Here is Paul.

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; Eph. 3:3-5.

Before we examine Paul and these two mysteries, a comment regarding Paul's ministries either side of Acts 28 is helpful.

Paul is the only apostle commissioned to the Gentiles and we notice the difference in his commissions. Up to Acts 28 his ministry included Kings, Israelites inside and outside the Land, and God-fearing Gentiles outside the Land, Acts 9:15. It was Jew first in Paul's ministry as the Acts records show. Prior to Acts 28, Paul's gospel stated emphatically that Christ was raised to Israel, Acts 13:23, and all his writings at that time focused on the hope of Israel which hope was embedded in promise and prophesy. He pointed all believers to this hope as his Acts letters of Galatians, 1&2 Corinthians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Romans (and Hebrews) clearly show.

After Acts 28 Paul was sent to all people, all nations with these important differences. Now there are no subdivisions of his ministry, like as previously Kings, Jew first and then the Gentiles. Christ was raised to a heavenly aspect of his kingdom and was available to all nations and the new hope was never previously revealed. The differences in Christ's ascension before and after Acts 28 are important dispensational features that must be understood, but for now, please note the words, riches of the glory, the mystery, Christ, riches of glory, and among the Gentiles.

Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Col. 1:26-28.

Christ is now among all nations, and Paul, after Acts 28, is the only apostle through whom we understand the mystery of Christ and the mystery which together compile the dispensational truths for today. Christianity has become a kaleidoscope of colorful confusion because Paul's post Acts period ministry is not seen for the uniqueness it is.

The mystery of Christ and the mystery as found in Eph. 3:1-6, are not identical but are inseparable. The mystery of Christ elements revealed after Acts 28 are the very basis of the mystery. Many features of the mystery of Christ were made known in other ages, but the ultimate revelation regarding it is found in Ephesians and Colossians. These two epistles provide the pinnacle, the final pieces that are the basis of our calling. These features of the mystery of Christ were not revealed before Acts 28 since the divine purpose was earthly.

Here are some of the features of the mystery of Christ in creation, repeated but not repetitious. These will help us to understand why the features of the mystery of Christ were revealed when they were and particularly by Paul after Acts 28. They will also provide insights as to how the mystery of Christ fits with the mystery.

The mystery of the Christ started in the Garden.

Here are four things in the creation setting which begin the unfolding of the secret of the son or the mystery of Christ. These are only the beginnings of 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. The headship of Christ on the earth and new earth seen.
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. Satan in the presence of God, evicted. 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.

The mystery of Christ unfolds as Scriptures of promise and prophesy reveal more about Him, for this mystery is about Him, the Christ, the anointed One. When promise and prophesy was postponed at Acts 28 when Israel was set aside nationally, the mystery of Christ was not postponed, more of it was revealed to apostles and prophets, but the post Acts 28 features of the mystery of Christ can only be found in Paul since only his post Acts records are found in Scripture.

The mystery of Christ is not the present dispensation of the grace of God, even the mystery, but the two mysteries are inseparable because our present calling is built upon and around the final features of the mystery of Christ.

Here is something to consider. The mystery of Christ unfolded from the first pages of Holy Writ; the Bible is Christocentric. Basically, the Word of truth is all about Christ for of whom are all things and by whom are all things and by Him all things subsist, or are held together. Thus, it is not impossible to consider that when Paul writes about the mystery of Christ in the post Acts letters, he will take some O.T. scriptures which previously revealed more about the Christ, and then add to or bring forth new features which are befitting to the mystery, the present dispensation of the grace of God. This is the interplay between the mystery of Christ and the mystery. It also shows the knowledge of Paul in the mystery of Christ. When we see O.T. references in Paul's post Acts, we could be looking at the mystery of Christ, not the mystery, but again, without these post Acts features of the mystery of Christ, there would be no mystery, no present dispensation.

I believe this is clear in the way Paul writes in those opening verses of Ephesians 3. Note the connection between the mystery of Christ and the mystery. Here they are without verse breaks, and punctuation.

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 [joint heirs] and of the same body [joint body], and partakers [joint sharers] of his promise in Christ by the gospel

Without the final features of the mystery of Christ being revealed to his holy apostles and prophets, including Paul, then the mystery is non-existent.

I believe we can deduce that both the final features of the mystery of Christ, and the mystery were hidden away from ages and generations, and the only records we have of a holy apostle and prophet who wrote about them are the records of Paul.

Here is a chart to consider, also available on my website in the charts page.

Acts 28 The dispensation of the grace of God was not revealed prior to Acts 28. Is not found in O.T type, or prophesy, not found in the Gospels or Acts.

Ephesians (Colossians) – new calling & hope

church his body every spiritual blessing, raised to heavenly places inheritance
the appearing in glory – Col.3:1-4.
a new purpose, previously hidden in God, revealed to Paul alone after Acts28

the Mystery of Christ
the final feature of the mystery of Christ
▲ head of church his body in heavenly place ▲

Gospels/Acts Jesus, raised to Father's right
Israel, angels subjected, until. Lk. 1:32,
Acts 3:13-21, 13:23, 1Pet.3:22
Prophets death, burial, resurrection.
Kingdom restored, gifts promised. Psa.16,
Joel 2, Hos.2, Zeph.
David a Son 2Sam.7:12-13, Psa.89
Exodus deliverer Deut.18:15.
Abraham's seed
all families of the earth. Gen.12:3, 15:3-4.
Job redeemer lives Job.19:25.
Eden Adam, image, skins, son of man
Gen.1:26, 3:21.

the mystery of Christ in other ages

the Mystery
revealed to Paul after Acts 28

▲ both hid ▲ the Mystery-present dispensation ▲

Paul, prisoner of Christ Jesus
for the nations,
dispensation of the grace of God,
given me for you, the mystery
known to Paul by revelation Eph.3:1-3
the nations, joint-heirs, joint-body,
joint-sharers. Eph.3:6
among nations, unsearchable riches
the mystery hid in God. Eph.3:8-9
All things created by Christ Jesus. Eph.3:9
Every family in heaven and earth. Eph.3:15
One body, Spirit, hope, Lord, faith,
baptism, One God and Father Eph.4:4-6

Eph.1:3. blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ. Eph.1:4. Chosen in him before the foundation of the world, holy, without blame before him. Eph.1:5. Predestined to adoption of sons/heirs. Eph.1:6. Highly graced in the beloved. Eph.1:8-10. Mystery of his will, dispensation of fullness of seasons, head up in Christ all things, heaven, earth. Eph.1:11. will, have and are an inheritance. Eph.1:12-14. Previously hoped, sealed, Holy Spirit pledge of inheritance. Eph.1:18-19. Hope, inheritance, power in us. Eph.1:20-23. Power in Christ, raised, seated, Head. Eph.2:1-10. Power in us, made alive, raised, seated, His Body. Eph.2:21-22. Every building fitly framed, a temple, the body a dwelling place of God. Eph.3:18. 4 dimensions. Eph.3:21. All generations of age of age. Col.1:18. Head, beginning, firstborn, preeminence. Col.1:20. Reconcile things in earth & things in heaven. Col.1:25-27. The mystery completes the Word, hid away, but now, riches of glory among the nations, Christ among the nations.

hidden in God – away from ages and generations

Passover
1st step in Israel's deliverance

UnLeavened Bread
1st fruit of rean.

Weeks – Pentecost
Zion
Israel aside at Acts28

there is no such thing as one true church

The heavenly aspect of the Kingdom revealed to Paul alone, after Acts 28

totally separate from the Feasts of Israel

← present dispensation not found before Acts 28 →

the appearing Israel resumed

Trumpets
the end? Harvest rean. We shall not all die postponed Acts28

Atonement
National cleansing new covenant

Tabernacles
Booths

Ephesians & Colossians = calling revealed, heavenly sphere of Christ's kingdom

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