

Many of us might wish the Lord had placed a time stamp on those letters of Paul, then we would know for certain the date when Paul received the revelation of The Mystery, the dispensation of the grace of God. But sadly, no dates were recorded.

Perhaps the divine author determined that time stamps were unnecessary and in so omitting them, he directed us to a due and diligent study of the contents of the writings, rather than endless discussions about when they were written.

Take the gospel of Matthew. Many suppose it was written 80-110AD and we know that this was years after the destruction of the Temple. Yet Matthew was recording the events of the Lord's earthly ministry when the Temple stood, and if he did know about the destruction of the Temple, that feature was not relevant to that record and he was not inspired to include it. What Matthew wrote about, not when he wrote, is the critical issue.

Peter writes this of the apostle Paul;

Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. And account that the long suffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; 2Pe 3:14-16

What were "these things" Paul spoke about? Once we know those things, then we can identify the Pauline epistles Peter had read. The words of Peter about Paul, determine our understanding, not when Peter wrote the words.

These things listed below are taken from the immediate context of 2Peter3. These are the things that Paul wrote about "in all his epistles". The word "all" needs to be treated carefully, it rarely means absolutely everything, the all is determined by the context, see 1Cor.11:18, 15:3 and 1Tim.2:1. Even today we might ask are we all here, where all does not mean the entire world. Thus, when we look at these things carefully, we know which letters of Paul Peter means by all. Here are the things Peter wrote about;

"the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets and the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour". 2Pet.3:2.

"the promise of his coming". 2Pet.3:4.

"the heavens and the earth which are now". 2Pet.3:7.

"the Lord is not slack concerning his promise". 2Pet.3:9.

"the day of the Lord... as a thief", "the heavens shall pass away", "the elements shall melt" and "the earth...shall be burned up". 2Pet.3:10.

and

"according to his promise, (we) look for new heavens and a new earth". 2Pet.3:13.

When Peter writes all the epistles of Paul, he would mean all those in which "these things" are found. The "all" is qualified by the examination of Paul's letters, not according to when they were written, but by the content of them.

“These things” as listed above, are quite absent in the letters of Paul written after Acts 28, which are about The Mystery, the dispensation of the grace of God, but we can certainly find them in the letters of Paul written when Israel remained God’s people. During Acts Paul’s letters were full of the words spoken before by the holy prophets. During Acts, Paul wrote of the imminent coming of the Lord, when the day of the Lord was expected as a thief. In Paul’s Acts period letters, advice was given for those few short years preceding that coming of the Lord, but when that coming was postponed at Acts 28, his advice changed.

Here is the first thing Peter wrote about;

“the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets and the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour”. 2Pet.3:2.

We have been considering Paul’s letters and are discovering that the framework and foundation of his Acts period letters are “the words .. spoken before by the holy prophets”. Galatians, 1&2 Corinthians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Romans (and especially Hebrews if Paul did write it) contain overwhelming numbers of O.T. references. And Paul knew of the Lord and his words back in the gospels, Romans 12:20 looks back to Matt.5:44, and in Acts 20:35, Paul exhorts the Ephesians to support the weak by quoting the Lord.

Peter wrote about “the promise of his coming”. 2Pet.3:4, and we find this word “coming”, in Matthew 24:3, 27, 37 and 39. Paul writes of this wonderful hope in the following Acts period writings, 1Cor.15:23, 1Thess.2:19, 3:13, 4:15, 5:23, 2Thess.2:1, and 2:8. The “coming of the Lord” with Trumpets is totally absent in Paul’s mystery epistles written after Israel was nationally put aside for a season at Acts 28.

Peter wrote about “the day of the Lord... as a thief”, and the Lord himself used this figure in Matt.24:42-43, Lk.12:39, Rev.3:3, and 16:15. Paul, being very aware of the “words of the Lord” also uses this here;

But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. 1Th 5:1-3.

The reference to the pains of childbirth is often found in the prophets, see Ps.48:6; Is. 21:3; 43:6-9, Jer.4:31, 6:24, 13:21, 22:23; Hos.13:13 and Mic.4:9-10. The Lord’s reference to the woes of pregnancy in Matt.24:19 should have fallen on attentive Israeli ears. This is echoed by Paul in 1Cor.7 where he advises against “touching a woman”. The Day of the Lord coming as a thief in the night is unseen in Paul’s post Acts letters.

Paul did not specifically use these words in 2Pet.3:13 where Peter wrote that “according to his promise, (we) look for new heavens and a new earth”. However, when we compare Rev. 21:1-4 with Galatians 4:25-26 (and Hebrews 11:10, 12:22 and

13:14), we find that Paul in Acts, certainly anticipated the new heavens and new earth. I love comparing Rev.21:2 with 2Cor.11:2.

The new heavens and earth are found in prophecy where they are linked with Israel, see Is.65:17-19 and 66:22. I believe Is.66:15 is likely in the mind of Paul in 2Thess.1:6-9 where "everlasting destruction" might be linked to Is.66:24 and certain "lake of fire" passages in Revelation. The new Jerusalem, the new heavens and new earth and "everlasting destruction" are also unseen in Paul's post Acts 28 letters.

So, what were those letters in which Paul wrote about the same things as Peter? I suggest the evidence shows they were Paul's Acts period letters and certainly not the letters written to the world after Israel was set aside at Acts 28. Paul's Acts period letters contained the same things Peter wrote about. Peter did not write about the Mystery; the hidden things of God revealed to Paul alone.

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