



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Joy!

Showcasing all humanity finished in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume 45
Issue 1124

There is still much light to break forth from the Scriptures. A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)

The Pauline Progression:

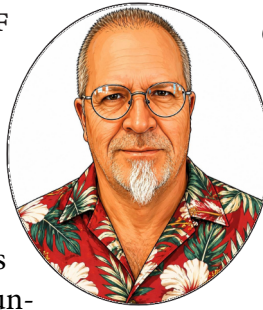
A Dispensational Analysis of the Apostle's Developing Ministry and the Revelation of the Secret

by — Steve Martin, Compiler¹

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INTRODUCTION: THE PRINCIPLE OF PAULINE PROGRESSION

The ministry and message of the Apostle Paul were not static but underwent a significant, divinely-orchestrated progression through distinct dispensational phases. This unfolding revelation is central to a correct understanding of God's purpose in the present administration. Recognizing this progression is of strategic importance for correctly interpreting Scripture, particularly for discerning the fundamental distinction between the prophetic truth concerning the nation of Israel and the previously hidden truth of "The Secret" (or "The Mystery").



Oikonomia, signifies a "home-law" – a specific divine economy or arrangement by which God manages His purpose for a given era. It is the divine framework for a given period, distinct from a simple measure of time or the specific truths dispensed within it.

Without acknowledging the developmental nature of Paul's ministry, the unique character of the present administration of joy (grace) is obscured, and doctrines specific to past or future economies are erroneously applied to the saints today. To facilitate a clear understanding, this analysis shall be grounded in the precise terms that provide the framework for understanding the divine program as it shifted over the course of Paul's apostolic work.

- **Dispensation (*Diakonia*):** This term refers to the specific truths or instructions that are *dispensed* by God for His people within a given administration. While an administration is the overarching divine arrangement, the dispensation is the substance of the revelation and instruction for that period.

- **The Secret (*Mustērion*):** This refers to a profound truth that was previously "*hid in God*" (Ephesians 3:9) and "*concealed from the eons and from the generations*" (Colossians 1:26). It is not a truth that was merely unrevealed or veiled in the Old Testament prophets but was a purpose kept entirely secret – unsearchable and untraceable in the prophetic record – until it was revealed exclusively to and through the Apostle Paul after the pivotal events of Acts 28. This

(see [REMEMBERING](#), page 9417)

- **Administration (*Oikonomia*):** This Greek term,

1. A compiling and condensing of the following books: *Ephesians & Colossians* (Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.); *Pastors* (Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.); *Administration of the Secret* (Compilation); *Paul the Apostle* (Compilation); *Paul's Priestly Ministry* (Compilation), Bible Student's Press, available at [StudyShelf](#).

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[Things Lost by Prayer \(quote: unknown\) 9422](#)

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Bible Student's Notebook™

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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Scripture education in a weekly format!

This free electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the absolute sovereignty and deity of God (Romans 11:36);
- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding joy (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3-4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the universality of death and resurrection (I Corinthians 15:21);
- the unique gospel of Paul – which he calls "my gospel" (Romans 2:16; 16:25; II Timothy 2:8; I Corinthians 15:1-4; Acts 13-28; Acts 20:24);
- the epistles of the present Secret Administration being Ephesians & Colossians (Ephesians 3:2, 9; Colossians 1:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the One Body (Ephesians 4:16);
- the Secret Administration, being the operational revelation for today (Ephesians 3:9);
- the unprophesied, Celestial hope and calling of the One Body (Colossians 3:4);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 3:1-3);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of the rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);

- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
 - union in His death, burial and resurrection and ascended seated position among the celestials (Ephesians 2:6);
 - adult sonship position (Ephesians 1:5).

This publication is the product of humble efforts of saints intended to stimulate the earnest study of Scripture. We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication; thus they are not meant to imply finality on any subject discussed, or that further research would not add further light from the Word of God. God's storehouse of truth is inexhaustible, so draw on its wealth by prayerful study. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

We're just presenters, not persuaders. – Steve Martin

We are always open for discussion, but never for disputation. – André Sneidar

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analysis shall irrefutably establish that the bedrock of this entire doctrinal progression is found in the unique and distinct nature of Paul's commission.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE PROGRESSION: PAUL'S DISTINCT COMMISSION

Understanding the progression in Paul's ministry begins with a firm appreciation for the unique nature of his calling. He was divinely severed from Israel's prophetic program to be the exclusive vessel for a new revelation. His commission was fundamentally different from that of the Twelve (Apostles) who followed Christ during His earthly ministry, and this distinction is the foundation upon which a new and previously unprophesied work would be built, transcending the prophetic program for Israel. A synthesis of the scriptural evidence reveals an irreconcilable demarcation between Paul's commission and that of the Twelve.

- **Contrasting Commissions:** The Twelve were commissioned by Christ during His earthly ministry, with a primary focus on the "Circumcision," the nation of Israel. In

stark contrast, Paul was commissioned by the ascended, glorified Christ as the apostle to the "Uncircumcision," the Nations (Gentiles). As Paul himself testified, "the Gospel of the Uncircumcision was committed to me, as the Gospel of the Circumcision was to Peter" (Galatians 2:7-8). This established two parallel, yet distinct, spheres of operation during the Acts period.

- **Source of Revelation:** Paul's authority and message did not originate with the apostles in Jerusalem. He emphatically states that he did not receive his gospel from men but directly "by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:11-12). His post-conversion journey to Arabia, rather than immediately to Jerusalem to confer with the existing apostles, substantiates his claim of a direct, divine commission independent of the Jerusalem leadership.

- **Distinct Gospels:** The separate commissions and sources of revelation resulted in two distinct gospels being preached concurrently during the period covered by the Book of Acts. Peter and the rest of the Circumcision Apostles preached the "Gospel of the Circumcision," which was connected to Israel's covenants and prophetic prom-



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ises. Simultaneously, Paul preached the “*Gospel of the Uncircumcision*” to the Nations, a message of justification through faith that would eventually lay the groundwork for a greater revelation. Paul’s unique commission, therefore, made him the chosen vessel for a ministry that would transition in perfect alignment with God’s unfolding purpose, beginning with his foundational work during the transitional era recorded in the Book of Acts.

THE ACTS PERIOD MINISTRY: A TRANSITIONAL DISPENSATION (PRE-ACTS 28)

The entire period covered by the Book of Acts must be understood as a transitional era. It was a unique time in which God’s prophetic program with the nation of Israel, while winding down, remained active and held a position of priority. Concurrently, the foundations for a new and distinct work among the Nations were being laid through what Paul describes as his *priestly ministry*. During this pre-Acts 28 phase, Paul’s message and the status of believers were inextricably linked to Israel’s covenants, hopes and prophetic destiny.

The Priority of Israel

Throughout the Acts period, Paul’s practice consistently demonstrated Israel’s continued priority in the divine program.

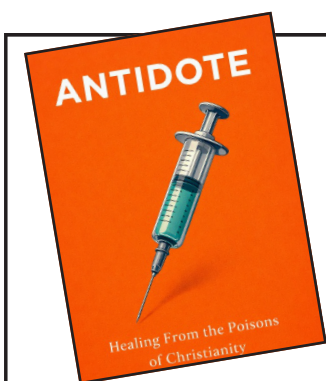
- His unwavering pattern was to go “*to the Jew first*” in every city he entered (Romans 1:16). His method was to en-

ter the local synagogue and reason with the Jewish people from their own Scriptures, persuading them “*concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets*” (Acts 28:23). This approach confirms that Israel was still the primary audience and the prophetic Scriptures were the operative context for his message.

- During this time, believers from among the Nations (Gentiles) occupied a subordinate, though blessed, position relative to Israel. They were characterized as “*wild olive*” branches grafted into Israel’s cultivated stock (Romans 11:17). As such, they were made “*partakers of their spiritual things*” (Romans 15:27) and were considered “*guests of the covenants of promise*” (Ephesians 2:12). Their blessing was mediated through Israel’s privileged position. As a *leitourgos* (priest), Paul was divinely raised up to take Israel’s place and carry the Abrahamic blessing in spiritual form to the Nations while Israel was in a state of national defection (Romans 15:16).

The Nature of the Acts-Period Gospel and Hope

The gospel that Paul preached and the hope that he offered to believers during this era were in full accord with prophecy and directly connected to Israel’s covenants. He identified himself as a “*minister of the New Covenant*” (II Corinthians 3:6), a covenant promised explicitly to the house of Israel and Judah (Jeremiah 31:31). The ultimate expectation for believers during this period was “*the hope of Israel*” (Acts 28:20). This hope centered on the eventual *Parousia* (the “*Coming*”) of Christ to the Earth to establish the prophesied Kingdom. This event



Antidote: Healing from the Poisons of Christianity

by — Steve Martin

Antidote is for anyone who has tasted the bitterness of fear-based faith and wondered why the cure never seemed to work.

Using clear language, lived experience, and a steady voice of hope, this book exposes the hidden toxins of modern Christianity – shame, performance, control and anxiety – and offers something better in their place. Not a new system. Not another set of rules. But a restoring vision of God rooted in love, grace and deep freedom.

If you’ve ever felt worn down by religion, afraid of getting it wrong, or exhausted from trying to please God, *Antidote* invites you to breathe again. Healing doesn’t come from trying harder. It comes from discovering what was true all along.

P.S.: Relax – there’s no hell inside this book. Turns out it was a religious rumor all along. 84 pages.

was to be accompanied by a trumpet sound and a gathering of believers to meet the Lord in the air as He descended, a sequence detailed in I Thessalonians 4.

The Function of Miraculous Sign-Gifts

Miraculous gifts, including healings, tongues, and prophecies, were prevalent throughout the Acts period and were a normative feature of the assemblies addressed in Paul's early epistles (I Corinthians 12-14). These supernatural manifestations served a specific purpose: they were a "sign" to the unbelieving nation of Israel (I Corinthians 1:22). The *Ascension Gifts* described in Ephesians 4 – commissioners (apostles), prophets, evangelists and shepherd-teachers – were temporary, gifted men given by the ascended Christ specifically for the Acts period to bring the Body of Christ to maturity *before* the full revelation of the Secret.

These gifts were divinely ordained to function "until ... the unity of the faith" (Ephesians 4:13) was reached. This goal was achieved with the completion of Scripture in the Epistles of Ephesians and Colossians, at which point these transitional tools ceased to function with the setting aside of Israel and the perfecting revelation of the Secret, which completed the Word of God. The Acts period was therefore a unique, transitional phase, defined by Israel's priority, a prophetic hope, and the presence of sign-gifts, characteristics that would be decisively concluded by the pivotal event recorded in Acts 28.

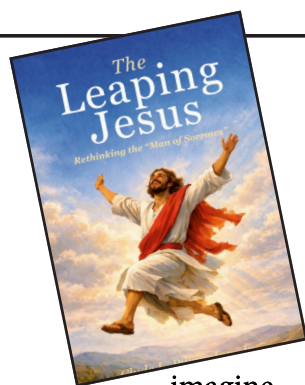
THE DISPENSATIONAL FRONTIER: THE THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF ACTS 28:28

The final chapter of the Book of Acts does not represent an abrupt or unfinished conclusion to Luke's narrative. Instead, it serves as a deliberate and profound dispensational boundary. Its doctrinal significance cannot be overstated, as it records the historical moment marking Israel's formal, albeit temporary, setting aside from its position as the primary channel of divine blessing. This event inaugurated a new and unprophesied divine program directed squarely at the Nations.

The Final Rejection and Judicial Blindness

Upon his arrival in Rome, Paul's first action was to summon the chief Jewish leaders. In his final appeal to his kinsmen as a corporate body, he once again reasoned with them from "the law of Moses and out of the prophets" (Acts 28:23), demonstrating his consistent, Israel-centric approach to the very end of the Acts period. When his testimony was rejected, Paul delivered a final, solemn pronouncement, quoting the prophecy of Isaiah:

Well spoke Holy Spirit by Esaias the prophet unto your fathers, saying, "Go unto this people, and say, 'Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their



The Leaping Jesus: Rethinking the "Man of Sorrows"

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr., / Steve Martin

If Jesus could leap for joy, then joy was never meant to be optional.

There is a moment in the Gospels where Jesus does something most of us never imagine – *He leaps for joy.*

Luke says He "exulted in the Holy Spirit" – overflowing with visible delight. A surprising picture ... especially if we've learned to see Him mainly as a "Man of sorrows."

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ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them” (Acts 28:25-27).

This was not merely a rebuke but the formal execution of judicial blindness upon the nation. A subtle but powerful shift in Paul’s language confirms this severance; where he had previously spoken to his kinsmen of “our fathers,” he now declares that the prophet spoke to “your fathers,” distinguishing himself from the nation in its state of rejection.

The Proclamation of a New Direction

Following this pronouncement of judgment, Paul makes a declaration that signals a complete reorientation of God’s saving purpose for the age:

Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is commissioned to the Nations, and that they will hear it (Acts 28:28).

This statement marks the pivotal dispensational shift. Salvation is no longer “to the Jew first,” with the Nations blessed as guests through Israel’s covenants. Instead, salvation is now dispatched *directly* to the Nations, entirely apart from Israel as the mediating channel. This dramatic shift at the close of the Acts period created the necessary conditions for God to unveil a truth that, until this point, had been kept entirely secret.

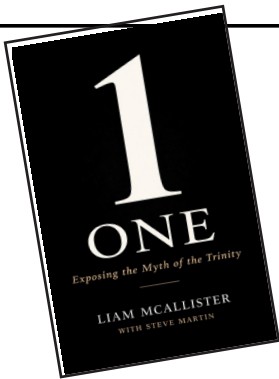
THE POST-ACTS MINISTRY: THE REVELATION OF THE SECRET ADMINISTRATION

Paul’s imprisonment in Rome, which followed the climactic events of Acts 28, did not mark the end of his usefulness but rather the beginning of his final and most profound ministry. It was from prison that he penned the epistles that contain the revelation of “*The Secret*.” This body of truth, previously unprophesied and unknown, represents the pinnacle of divine revelation for the present, defining the unique character of the current Administration of Grace.

Defining “The Secret”

The Secret is not a truth that can be traced back to the Old Testament prophets. It was a purpose “*hid in God*” (Ephesians 3:9) and “*concealed from the eons and from the generations*” (Colossians 1:26). Its unveiling was a completely new act of revelation, committed solely to Paul. According to Ephesians 3:6, this secret is composed of three interconnected realities, each highlighted by the Greek prefix *sun-*, meaning “*joint*” or “*together*,” emphasizing a new level of unity and parity between believers from among Israel and Nations:

- **Joint-Enjoyers of an Allotment (Fellow-heirs):** This refers to a shared, co-equal super-heavenly inheritance in Christ, a destiny never before revealed.



ONE: Exposing the Myth of the Trinity

by — Liam McAllister with Steve Martin

The Trinity: Truth or Tradition?

For centuries, one idea has stood at the center of Christian theology:

The Trinity.

But what if it isn’t actually found in Scripture?

In ONE: Exposing the Myth of the Trinity, Liam McAllister – presented with Steve Martin – cuts through tradition and theological complexity to return to a simple question: What does the Bible actually say?

What emerges is clear and consistent – God is one. Not a mystery to be explained away, but a truth plainly revealed.

This is not an attack on faith. It’s a call back to it.

If you’ve ever felt the tension between tradition and the text, if you’ve longed for clarity instead of confusion, this book will challenge what you’ve been taught and invite you into something simpler, clearer, and more freeing. 88 pages.

- **A Joint-Body:** This describes a “One New Humanity” (Ephesians 2:15), with the “middle wall of partition” – the legal and spiritual barrier that separated Jew and Gentile – abolished. They are no longer in a relationship of “stock” and “graft,” but are co-equal peers in the One Body.
- **Joint-Partakers of the Promise:** This is a new promise, distinct from Israel’s “covenants of promise.” It is the promise of life in Christ Jesus, a purpose established by God “before the foundation of the world” (Ephesians 1:4; II Timothy 1:1, 9), placing its origin outside the stream of prophetic history that began with Abraham. The calling of the “One New Man” is utterly unique, unrelated to Abraham, the New Covenant, or the prophetic hope of the New Jerusalem. Its origin (“before the foundation of the world”) and its destiny (“far up above all”) place it entirely outside of the prophetic stream associated with Israel’s earthly program.

The Celestial Sphere of Blessing

Associated with this Secret is a unique calling and sphere of blessing that is entirely super-celestial. The epistle to the Ephesians repeatedly uses the phrase *en tois epouranios* or “in the super-Heavens” to describe the position and blessings of the One Body (Ephesians 1:3, 2:6). This is not a reference to the “heavenly Jerusalem” of prophecy but to a destiny “far above all principality, and power” (Ephesians 1:21), where the One Body is already positionally seated

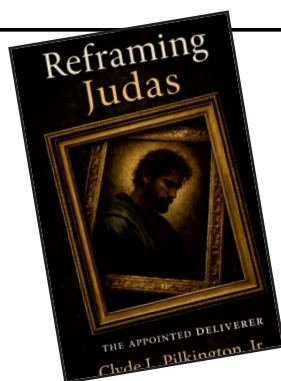
together with the ascended Christ. This transcendent position was never revealed in any prior administration. Having defined this new and glorious revelation, it is now necessary to conduct a direct comparison between its doctrines and those that characterized the preceding administration.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: DOCTRINAL DISTINCTIONS BEFORE AND AFTER ACTS 28

The doctrinal chasm separating the Acts period from the present Secret Administration is nowhere more evident than in a direct comparative analysis of their core doctrines. The following exposes the irreconcilable dichotomies that demand a dispensational division of the Pauline epistles and provide irrefutable evidence of a profound doctrinal progression and a change in administration. These clear and irreconcilable contrasts irrefutably demonstrate a major dispensational shift, underscoring the necessity of a careful and discerning approach to the application of Pauline Scripture. Here we will see doctrinal points of the Acts Period (Pre-Acts 28) contrasted with those of the Secret Administration (Post-Acts 28).

STATUS OF THE NATIONS

Pre-Acts 28: Grafted into Israel’s “olive tree” (Romans



Reframing Judas: The Appointed Deliverer

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr. with Steve Martin

What if Judas didn't ruin the story ... but fulfilled it?

For centuries, Judas Iscariot has been remembered as the ultimate traitor – the disciple who betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. His name has become synonymous with failure, deception, and regret.

But what if we've misunderstood his role?

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This thought-provoking booklet explores the possibility that Judas' actions were not random, but part of a divine story unfolding exactly as written.

A fresh, bold perspective that will challenge you to rethink one of the most misunderstood figures in the Bible – and the story you thought you knew. 72 pages.

11:17). Partakers of Israel's "spiritual things" (Romans 15:27). "Guests of the promise covenants" (Ephesians 2:12).

Post-Acts 28: The "middle wall" is broken down (Ephesians 2:14), resulting in the "Joint-Body" ("One Body") and "One New Humanity" (Ephesians 2:15; 3:6).

SPHERE OF BLESSING

Pre-Acts 28: Earthly, connected to the coming "Kingdom of Heaven" and Israel's inheritance (Matthew 8:11).

Post-Acts 28: Celestial, "blessed with all spiritual blessings in the Super-Heavens in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3) and "seated together" with Him there (Ephesians 2:6).

MIRACULOUS GIFTS

Pre-Acts 28: Present and normative as signs for Israel. Includes healings, tongues and prophecies (I Corinthians 12-14). Paul healed the sick via handkerchiefs (ceased with the setting aside of Israel, I Corinthians 13:8).

Post-Acts 28: Paul could not heal Epaphroditus or Trophimus (Philippians 2:25-30).

BAPTISM

Pre-Acts 28: More than one baptism ("the doctrine of baptisms" – Hebrews 6:2), was practiced, including both Spirit and water baptism (Acts 10:41-48).

Post-Acts 28: There is now only "one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5), identified as the spiritual baptism.

PAUL'S TITLE

Pre-Acts 28: Prisoner for "the Hope of Israel" (Acts 28:20).

Post-Acts 28: Prisoner of Christ Jesus "for you, the nations" (Ephesians 3:1).

CONCLUSION: THE IMPERATIVE OF DISPENSATIONAL DISTINCTIONS

This analysis has demonstrated that Paul's ministry was *not* a monolithic whole but reveals a clear and intentional progression. His work transitioned *from* a ministry linked to the prophetic program for Israel – characterized by its

signs, earthly hope and provisional inclusion of the Nations – to the full and final revelation of the Secret Administration of Joy for the One Body.

The pronouncement of Acts 28:28 stands as the definitive historical and doctrinal frontier marking this crucial shift in God's purpose for the ages. The primary implication of this Pauline progression is profound. A failure to recognize the dispensational boundary at Acts 28 and the unique, perfecting nature of Paul's final Epistles inevitably leads to doctrinal confusion. This confusion manifests when believers mistakenly appropriate Israel's prophetic promises, earthly hopes, and religious practices for today, thereby degrading the unique character of the present administration into what one dispensational writer has termed "a sort of bastard Judaism."²

Therefore, it is imperative for the saints to embrace the "present truth" found in Paul's later epistles. It is in these final revelations of Ephesians and Colossians that we discover our transcendent super-celestial calling, our secure position seated with Christ "far up above all," and the hope of our appearing with Him in glory – a destiny kept secret in the heart of God until it was revealed for our encouragement and enlightenment in this present administration. **ESN**

2. Richard Holden (1828-1886), "The Mystery of Ephesians 3," [Bible Student's Notebook 625](#).

TOPICS:

Major: Acts 28; Ephesians; One Body; Paul; Right Division; Secret Administration
Minor: Covenants; Israel

