

Dear Steve,

In light of our recent discussions in our class concerning dispensations, I took it upon myself to do the following biblical study on the topic. I hope you and all will understand my heart is not to divide, but the exact opposite which is to bring us together on this most relevant subject. Especially since the Lord's return must be close, I hope this won't be a boring, but rather a dynamic distillation of prophecy...

Here the study begins...

Scripture is like a hologram. The relevant characteristic of a hologram is this - "If a hologram is cut into pieces, each piece projects the entire image, but as if viewed from a smaller subset of angles. (The American Heritage® Science Dictionary Copyright © 2005).

This is the way scripture acts. Every word of scripture (every piece) written by the prophets and the apostles contains the whole of scripture, and should not be singled out from the rest of scripture.

2 Peter 1:20 -

"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation."

Interpretation of scripture must take into consideration the whole of scripture. Each book is but a subset of a larger reality. This infers a unity in scripture - a scripture whose divisions are pieced together like a hologram.

2 Timothy 2:15

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Furthermore, every word of scripture is relevant to every age. Paul wrote to Timothy that ALL scripture is universal and relevant.

2 Timothy 3:15-16

"And that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

At the time of writing this, the scripture in use was mainly the Old Testament. Definitely, when Timothy was a child (as Paul points out), it was the Old Testament with which Timothy was familiar.

ALL scripture means the whole of everything written - including the Old Testament - is profitable, i.e. is relevant for every age, for every language, for every culture, for all time.

ALL scripture is therefore universal, possesses unity that is holographic, and is profitable for four things: (1) doctrine, (2) reproof, (3) correction, and (4) instruction in righteousness.

Paul does not make a distinction of which books are relevant for this age, and which books are relevant for that age. He describes them all as relevant for all people for all time.

In terms of the New Testament, which was written as letters and later called books, these were distributed to all the churches whether they were in Jewish congregations, Gentile congregations or mixed congregations. Even when a letter is addressed to a specific region or church, there is evidence that the letter was eventually copied and distributed to all the churches, implying UNIVERSAL APPLICATION. There is even internal evidence of this sort of distribution to churches within the letters themselves (cf. Col. 4:16, 2 Pet. 3:16).

Bible Study Method 1

In terms of interpretation of scripture, yes we should take into account the audience addressed and the context of the specific passage. There is a relevant bible study method that says that the primary interpretation of a passage is first for the audience addressed, then secondarily to the universal audience.

For example, if we're reading an Old Testament passage from Leviticus let's say. We should not interpret these sacrificial laws as still binding on the age of grace the church. However, that does not mean - and this is my main point- this does not mean the church should avoid studying and profiting from the sacrificial laws in Leviticus just because the primary audience is Israel. There are many shadows and types in Leviticus that are relevant to the church! In fact, the types, shadows and copies of Messiah should have been the primary interpretation for Israel all along, and not the blood of animals (cf. Heb. 9:23, Col. 2: 16-17).

Furthermore, the sacrificial laws in Leviticus were never meant as a means of salvation. People of all times and ages have always been saved by faith + nothing!

Isaiah 1:11

“What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?” Says the Lord. “I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fed cattle; And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs or goats.”

Hebrews 10:4

"For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins."

The Old Testament sacrifices looked forward to, anticipated, and are a copy and shadow of the Messiah.

Hebrews 10:5-7 (cf. Ps. 40:6)

"Therefore, when He [Christ] comes into the world, He says, ' Sacrifice and offering You have not desired, But a body You have prepared for Me; In whole burnt offerings and

sacrifices for sin You have taken no pleasure.' Then I said, 'Behold, I have come (In. the scroll of the book it is written of ME) to do Your will, O God.'"

From the very beginning, Eve's seed - the MESSIAH was and is the primary focus of all Scripture for all cultures and languages for all time!

Genesis 3:15

**"And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her seed;
He shall bruise you on the head,
And you shall bruise him on the heel."**

Abraham was given a more specific promise of the Messiah, and in Abraham we are told everyone is blessed.

Genesis 12:3

And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

The church is still blessed through Abraham today as we are his spiritual descendants.

Romans 4:13

"For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith."

Galatians 3:8-9

The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU. So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.

How was Abraham saved? The same way we are saved today - by FAITH.

Romans 4:2-3

"For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? " Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

Bible Study Method 2

There is another bible study method that is relevant. That is the distinguishing between Israel and the Church.

Paul says in Rom. 11:25-26 - "that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved."

Paul then quotes Isaiah 59:20 to proof text his point.

"Just as it is written, The Deliverer will come from Zion, HE will remove ungodliness from Jacob."

This is more evidence of Jesus in the Old Testament. All of the apostles proof text Christ from the Old Testament - especially Paul the Hebrew of Hebrews, who knew the Old Testament by heart.

In Rom. 9-11, we see Israel being distinguished from the church. This is the strongest evidence for seeing the two fundamental dispensations, which are Israel and the church.

Given this evidence, we should note the context of scripture whether the writer is speaking of the church or Israel. This is very important when dealing with passages concerning eschatology or future things - when national Israel will come back to prominence once again.

Division???

In light of Galatians 2:9 (see full text below), does this justify seeing the letters written by Peter, James and John as being addressed to Jewish believers and therefore irrelevant to Gentile believers? And/or are Paul's letters written to Gentile believers, and therefore irrelevant to Jewish believers?

Here is the passage quote:

Galatians 2:9

"And recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that WE might go to the Gentiles and THEY to the circumcised."

Paul's Methodologies

Lets note two methodologies that Paul employed. First, several times in scripture we see Paul's modus operandi when traveling on his missionary journeys: "To the Jew first, and also to the Gentile."

Whenever he visited a new place, Paul started by taking the gospel to the Jewish synagogues first (cf. Acts 13:14, 43; 14:1; 17:1,10, 17; 18:4, 7, 17, 19, 26, 19:8; 22:19). After the initial Jewish contact and ministry, Paul would then begin to establish Gentile ministry in the area.

Second, Paul contextualized the gospel. He described the truth in terms that the particular audience would understand. He in fact became - all things to all men, so that he might by all means win some. So to the Jew, he spoke in terms Jews would understand. To the Gentile, he spoke in terms Gentiles would understand - for the end result of winning both to the gospel.

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

"For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it."

We can observe Paul was teaching to both the Jewish communities and the Gentile communities, and he was changing the way he presents the gospel, but he was in NO way changing the essential meaning of the gospel.

Note this too by Paul in Romans 1:16-17:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by FAITH."

To both the Jews and Gentiles Paul is giving them the same way to God. It is only by FAITH, whether Jew or Gentile that any of us are saved. Sola fide! (By faith alone!)

So is Paul the apostle to the Gentile only? We can give a resounding NO answer to that question. However, we can say he did open doors to the Gentiles to the point that God used him uniquely in that regard. His uniqueness even got him into sharp debates at times with the Christian congregations in Jerusalem. However, and I want to emphasize this. **THE DEBATES BETWEEN THE JEWISH BELIEVERS AND GENTILE BELIEVERS WERE RESOLVED AS FAR AS THE APOSTLES AND SCRIPTURE ARE CONCERNED!**

*******Please read Acts 15:1-35*******

This is the VERY relevant passage to the question whether James and Peter believed and taught a distinction between Jewish believers and Gentile believers. This passage deals with the Jerusalem council that took up the question of the disagreements between Jewish believers and Gentile believers. The short answer and conclusion to the council is that **PETER AND JAMES (AND JOHN) DID NOT BELIEVE OR TEACH A DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS!!!**

Let's read one portion of this passage. This I believe puts to rest the notion that Jewish and Gentile believers should be viewed differently in scripture. Listen to Peter during the Jerusalem council.

Acts 15:7-11

After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, who knows the heart, testified to them

giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are.”

Did you catch it? God "made NO distinction between us and them." Furthermore, both are saved the same way - "cleansing their heart by FAITH." And if you missed it. Peter says more emphatically, "we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are."

Furthermore, Peter said, "by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe." Interesting that Peter, the apostle to the Jews, evidently talked to Gentiles too about the Lord.

Acts 15 reveals that Peter and James agreed that there is no distinction between Jewish believers and Gentile believers. Then it follows that the NT letters that Peter, James and John wrote, can show no partiality nor teach any distinction between the two groups lest there exists internal contradiction and disunity in scripture. In other words, there should be unity between what Paul wrote ("There is neither Jew nor Gentile!") and what Peter, James and John wrote in order for scripture to remain consistent and true.

Are Gentile believers to hold only to what Paul wrote? And/or are Jewish believers to hold only to what James, Peter and John wrote?

Again, the answer is a resounding NO to these questions! Please read what Paul wrote to a congregation that did attempt to divide groups in this way.

1 Corinthians 1:10-15

"Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ." Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one would say you were baptized in my name."

So even though the reality was then, and sadly the reality is now, that people try to latch on to emphases of one apostle to the exclusion of other apostles. This does not mean that the writings of these apostles represent a disunity in scripture. Paul is emphatic that there isn't a division with Christ, so too there is no division within the New Testament letters which is Christ's word.

Paul wrote exquisitely of the unity of the body, not only in how we are saved, but the unity of the body extends also to the manner in which we walk.

Ephesians 4:1-6

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

There is but one body called the church, not two. We are all of us saved by one way, that is by faith in Christ. Likewise, there is only one faith and one body of belief encapsulated in the Old and New Testaments - each inseparable from the other as a hologram is inseparable from the whole. Furthermore, all of the NT writers agree with one another that there should exist no doctrinal differences or any other essential differences between Jewish believers and Gentile believers.

Unity of Apostle John

It is fairly simple to see the apostle John as representative of this unity in scripture from his crystal clear encapsulation of the gospel to the cosmos in John 3:16 (for God so loved THE WORLD), and John addressing Revelation to the seven churches of Asia Minor.

We know quite a lot from scripture about the church of Ephesus, which is one of the seven churches of Asia Minor that John addressed the book of Revelation. Paul founded the church of Ephesus on his third missionary journey. He spent 3 years nurturing and ministering to the church in Ephesus (Acts 20:31). For two years Paul taught in the Ephesian school of Tyrannus - which was the Greek hall of lectures (Baker Encyclopedia, p. 2111).

Listen to the wide ranging influence that Paul's teaching had at the school of Tyrannus. He states that it extended into all of Asia Minor.

Acts 19:8-10

"And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the people, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks."

We should take note that Paul's powerful teaching influence reached all over the region of Asia Minor - including both Jews and Gentiles! That is an emphatic statement that shouldn't be overlooked! These are both Jews and Gentiles from the region where John addressed the book of Revelation. So that the entire circuit of seven churches in Asia Minor and beyond were influenced to a greater extent by Paul than any other apostle. In other words, the apostle John is addressing Revelation to congregations that are not strictly Jewish in nature, but congregations that were effected heavily by the ministry of Paul. To sum up, Revelation was written to all of the church, not just a certain segment of the church.

According to Irenaeus, the apostle John after his exile in Patmos, returned to live in Ephesus until the time of emperor Trajan (AD 98-117)(Baker Encyclopedia, p. 709). So John apparently went to live in Ephesus after he had written them to return to their "first love". What apostle brought Ephesus this first love for Christ? It was Paul and his associates who had given Ephesus the gospel, and taught the church in this region and all of Asia Minor.

For those who would still see any kind of division between Jews and Gentiles inside the church, one of the strongest statements that exists in the bible concerning unity between both groups can be found in Paul's letter to the church of Ephesus. Here follows the lengthy passage worth the reading.

Ephesians 2:11-22

Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called “Uncircumcision” by the so-called “Circumcision,” which is performed in the flesh by human hands — remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. And HE came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit."

Paul taught the church in Asia Minor to see both the Jewish and Gentile believers as one undivided body "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets." Note, the body of Christ is NOT built either on Paul's foundation or on Peter, James and John's foundation. The church is built on the foundation of ALL the apostles and ALL the prophets. Paul uses the plural form for apostles and prophets. The doctrinal foundation of the church includes all the Old Testament prophets, and all the New Testament apostles. God's word is whole like a hologram. Every piece includes the whole. The teaching that there is any kind of division between Jewish and Gentile believers in Christ is simply not a biblical concept.

Mystery

Was the apostle Paul unique?

Galatians: 1:11-12

For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Was the apostle Peter unique?

2 Peter 1:16-21

For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased "- and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

Was the apostle John unique?

Revelation 1:1-2

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.

Was James the brother of Jesus and writer of the book of James unique?

James was one of the select individuals Christ appeared to after his resurrection.

I Cor. 15:7

then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

Paul called James a "pillar" of the church

Gal. 2:9

and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we might go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

James was a leader in the important council of Jerusalem.

Acts 15:13

After they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying, "Brethren , listen to me."

Paul, Peter, John and James were all unique! Welcome to the world of the apostles and NT writers where the "signs of a true apostle" were evident before all (1 Cor. 12:12).

Yes, but is Paul unique because he was given revelation that none of the others were given? We

could reverse the question and ask, did the other apostles receive revelation that Paul did not receive? This brings us to the final subject in this paper known as special revelation, or to be more specific, we are going to look at a subset of special revelation called the "mystery".

Let's begin with the biblical definition of "mystery". Paul defines a mystery this way.

I Co. 2:7

but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory

The first thing we note is that a mystery is wisdom that has been hidden. Paul calls it "the hidden wisdom".

Rom. 16:25-26

Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith.

The next thing we see is that the mystery was "kept secret" from the past, but "now is manifested." Paul tells us that it is "by the Scriptures of the prophets" that the mystery is being now revealed, and that it is being "made known to all the nations."

Eph. 3:1-9

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles - if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you; that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power. To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things.

Then Paul said that "by revelation there was made known to me the mystery." He tells us that the insight he was given concerned "the mystery of Christ." He continues that this revelation was that "which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed." Who was this fuller revelation being made to now? Paul said it is being "revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit." Note, the revelation of the mystery goes not exclusively to Paul, but to all the New Testament "apostles and prophets in the Spirit." Paul uses the plural of apostles and prophets. He then becomes more specific, and tells us the content of the mystery, in other words gives us what the mystery is all about. He said the mystery is "that

the Gentiles are fellow heirs, and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel." Paul concluded by saying, he was made a minister to and was to "preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ." Furthermore, Paul was "to bring to light" that which "is the administration of the mystery" which was "hidden in God" from other past ages.

Note too within this passage that Paul said that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, fellow members, fellow partakers of the body. With whom are the Gentiles fellows? They are fellows with the Jewish believers in Christ, which again make up one body of Christ, not two separate bodies with irreconcilable differences in doctrine and practice.

That Paul is given a special ministry to the Gentiles should not confuse us into thinking that this somehow sets up two divisions or two groups of believers in Christ. We have already seen that Paul ministered to both Jews and Gentiles; that both are saved by faith the same way; and both live the Christian life the same way.

Peter was given a special ministry too, and his ministry was to the Jewish believers. This again should not cause us concern either that there are somehow to be two separate groups of believers. Peter's vision of the sheet coming down from heaven containing unclean food was revealed to him specifically to show him the exact opposite. That is that he "should not call any man unholy or unclean." This revelation was revealed to Peter (which is similar to Paul's revelation that he called the mystery). Following his vision, Peter preached to the Gentile house of Cornelius that "God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him" (cf. Acts 10).

So we see that Paul and Peter were both of the same mind concerning the Jewish and Gentile issues. However, by the time of the Jerusalem council when these issues were really stirring, Paul had to get in Peter's face so to speak to remind him about the big picture.

Gal. 2:11-14

"But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, 'If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?'"

Are you starting to understand how important the Jerusalem council was to the early church? How important it is for the modern church? In the subsequent verses, Paul continued to rebuke the Jewish believers by reminding them through talking to Peter that "a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus." If we didn't get it, he said again, "if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."

Powerful stuff that still rings down the corridors of time into our ears that there can be no

divisions whatsoever between Jew and Gentile in Christ! Peter is rebuked for trying to be one thing when he is with the Jews, and another thing when he is with the Gentiles. Paul said this is hypocrisy and categorically wrong! If there does exist one way for the Jew, and another way for the Gentile, then Christ died in vain and Christianity is vacuous!

Go Live Israel!

It remains interesting, however, that Paul does seem to be unique among the apostles in being able to see and uphold the big picture of the church with crystal clarity. Which brings me to the aspect of the mystery that has caused the most controversy and confusion.

Israel still yet has a future, but when does Israel go live so to speak? Listen to Paul.

Romans 11:25-27

For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery -so that you will not be wise in your own estimation -that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved ; just as it is written, "THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB." "THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS."

Paul said the nation of Israel becomes operative once again when "the fullness of the Gentiles has come in." This big transition occurs when the last Gentile on earth has received Christ. When will the last Gentile be saved and come into the church? This moment has to be placed at the twinkling of an eye right before the rapture of the church.

1 Co. 15:51-52

Behold, I tell you a mystery ; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet ; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

Note that another mystery is introduced by Paul. It is the promise that not everyone is destined to physically die, but some are promised that they will be the terminal generation that ends the fullness of the Gentile age, and they will meet the Lord in the air.

1 Thes. 4:17

Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

Seen in this light, the mystery of the rapture is tied closely to the mystery of the big transition from the completion of the fullness of the Gentiles to the nation Israel. Do you see it?

The nation Israel is today being called back into the land. We see evidence of this on the news almost every day, and more importantly, this was predicted by Ezekiel. "Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people ; and I will bring you into the land of Israel" (Ez. 37:12).

Again, this bringing into the land of Israel of the Jewish people is still happening today. It is unprecedented historically speaking for a nation to be dead for so long, and to live again. "Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones, 'Behold, I will cause breath to enter you that you may come to life" (Ez. 37:5).

But the church has not yet raptured! Therefore, the church - the ONE body of Christ - is still operative. We are still in the age of the church of which Paul said - "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

Israel has not quite gone live! There is a sense though that Israel is being brought to the center stage in incremental stages. From Ezekiel 37 - Stage 1: The bones come alive. Stage 2: Sinew grows over the bones. Stage 3: God breathes breath into the body (cf. Ez. 37: 1-14).

This calling going out to all non-Christian Jewish occupants of earth to go to the nation Israel is a prophetic God-calling. God said, "I will bring you into the land of Israel."

I believe it is this God-calling to ready the Jewish people for the big transition that has caused much confusion to some perhaps many modern Christian Jews and Gentiles that are mistaking this call as a return for them personally to return to Judaism (e.g., Hebrew Roots movement etc). In NO way is the New Testament calling Christians to return to Judaism and the Law. We have already seen that fact unequivocally clear above.

Furthermore, I believe this big transition has also caused other groups of people to misinterpret the scripture, and to believe there are more than one body of Christ, i.e., a Jewish body of Christ and a Gentile body of Christ. They are believing falsely in the concept that the Old Testament, the Gospels, and the New Testament letters of Peter, James and John are for Jewish believers, and Paul's letters are for the Gentile believers. This interpretation has been called hyper-dispensationalism. This teaching too is clearly not according to scripture, and Paul's rebuke of Peter for the very same hypocrisy is a warning to avoid this false teaching.

Not only does this doctrine setup divisions in the church. It fractures the scripture, so that scripture is no longer whole, and rightly dividing and interpreting scripture becomes impossible. All of the prophets and all of the apostles must be taken together like a hologram as a whole. Each part of scripture is an indivisible facet of the whole. Only when scriptures are taken as a whole can scripture be interpreted correctly.

John's Mystery

There are other mysteries that Paul uncovers (e.g. God's Plan, Jew/Gentile One Body, Bride of Christ, Indwelling of Christ, God Even Christ, Lawlessness, Faith, Godliness).

There is the "mystery of the kingdom of God" that Peter's close associate John Mark points out when quoting Jesus (Mk. 4:10-12).

Finally, we come to the last of the mysteries that the apostle John foresaw.

Rev. 1:20

"As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches."

We have already seen that John addressed the book of Revelation to the seven churches of Asia Minor, and that these churches were not exclusively Jewish congregations. Here, the seven churches are associated with the mystery that John saw. John is in heaven, and sees the glorified Jesus arrayed as high priest over the order of Melchizedek. Jesus is walking among the seven golden lampstands, which are revealed to be the seven churches. In Christ's right hand are the seven stars, which are revealed to be the seven angels over the seven churches. The seven angels are dressed like Christ in similar linens and golden sashes, likely indicating they too are part of the Melchizedek order (cf. Rev. 1: 13; 15:6).

Rev. 10:7

"But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets."

The mystery of God is the culmination of the Great Tribulation when Christ delays no longer to take His rightful place as King over all the earth. When the seventh angel blows his trumpet, this transitions the world into the series of the seven bowls of the wrath of God, which are the greatest calamities earth will ever witness since its creation. The goal of such global devastation is this:

"Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven saying, 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.' And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, 'We give You thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who are and who were, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign. And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth.'" (Rev. 11:15-18)

In a sense, this mystery of God is the key to all the other mysteries in the New Testament, as this mystery is the purpose and end result of all the mysteries. In fact, this mystery can be said to be the summation of the entire scripture from the seed of woman in Gen. 3:15, to the very last words in Revelation 22:20-12, "He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming quickly.' Amen. Come Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen."

Without doubt, this mystery is not just for the Jew or Gentile. It is universal in scope in the most widest sense possible! Even the extradimensional realm is effected by this mystery including the four living creatures, the 24 elders, angels, demons and Satan are affected by this mystery.

Rev. 17:5

"And on her forehead a name was written, a mystery, 'BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.' And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. When I saw her, I wondered greatly . And the angel said to me, 'Why do you wonder ? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns.'"

One of the seven angels that stands before God has been John's guide in heaven. He transports John to the desert scene where there is a woman riding a blasphemous scarlet beast that has seven heads and ten horns. The woman was drunk with the martyred blood of the saints and witnesses of Jesus. John sees "the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed acts of immorality, and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality" (cf. Rev. 17:1-6).

John wonders at the vision, but the angel gives John the interpretation of the mystery. The beast is the antichrist. The seven heads are seven mountains which indicate Rome, and they are seven kings. Five of the kings have fallen; one is and the other is yet to come lasting a little while. The antichrist is himself an eighth king that has died and been brought back to life; and the world wonders at this marvelous miracle. The ten horns are ten kings who don't possess a kingdom, and yet are given authority by the antichrist. The kings exist for one purpose - to give their power to the antichrist. The waters are the nations. The beast and the ten horns come to hate the woman - which is the great city that reigns over the rulers of the earth. They completely destroy this great city with fire (cf. Rev. 17:7-18).

Conclusion

That concludes the paper. I hope you saw clearly that there should be no divisions between groups in the church. Of course, in reality there are differences. However, this doesn't mean that the differences are a design of Christ. Peter, James and John agreed completely with Paul and Paul with them especially after the significant Jewish council. Thank the Lord for Dr. Luke who wrote the book of Acts to give us a profound history of the fledgling church, and those significant words concerning the Jewish council. Paul wrote in Galatians 1 & 2 about the Jewish council too. Between both sources we can piece together unequivocally that God intends that both Jews and Gentiles live together in harmony, and share their strengths with each other not as separate entities, but as one body in Christ. The word of Christ from Genesis to Revelation form a unit that cannot be broken into pieces just as a hologram cannot be broken apart without being able to see the whole. Keep reading and avoid none of the books of the Bible for any reason especially not because of the false Jewish and Gentile schism. Amen.

Thanks!

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