

SCRIPTURE RESEARCH
VOLUME 6 *NUMBER 1*

Scripture Research, Inc.
P.O. Box 51716
Riverside, CA 92517

(inside front cover)

THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD (COSMOS)

By

Timothy F. Conklin D.D.

He chose us in him before the creation of the world (*cosmos*) to be holy and blameless in his sight. (Ephesians 1:4)

All other callings in the Bible are related to a choice and purpose "from" or "since" the foundation of the world (*cosmos*). But this calling or choosing of God in Ephesians regarding the church of the one body is related to a choice and a purpose which goes back *before* the foundation of the world (*cosmos*). What is meant by such a startling turn of phrase?

"Before" (*pro*) is a preposition which indicates place, time and preference.

- a) Before in respect of *place* — "The Judge standeth before the door." (James 5:9)
- b) Before in respect of *time* — "Judge nothing before the time." (1 Corinthians 4:5)
- c) Before in respect of *preference* — "He is before all things." (Colossians 1:17)

"From" (*apo*) is a preposition which indicates separation or origin. The primary use of the word is with reference to place, but it can refer to the distance of time.

- a) "From that time Jesus began to preach ..." (Matthew 4:17)
- b) "From two years old and under ..." (Matthew 2:16)
- c) "From the beginning of the world ..." (Ephesians 3:9)

The specific expression "*from* the foundation of the world (*cosmos*)" occurs seven times in the New Testament.

- > With reference to the use of parables; Jesus Christ speaking of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 13:35)

CONTENTS

PAGE

WATER BAPTISM, A Closer Look Into New Testament Teaching by Timothy F. Conklin, D.D.	
Initial Comments	i
WATER BAPTISM	1
Introduction	1
The Baptism of Jesus	2
Baptism and Israel	3
Baptism and Gentiles	6
Baptism and the Apostle Paul	6
Baptism and the Church	9
<i>Postscript</i>	13
The Gospel of the Mystery/Secret by Charles W. Asbell	14
Foreword	14
Introduction	15

CONTENTS, CONTD.

	<u>PAGE</u>
The Word of God And The Mystery	19
Colossians Chapter Two	24
Colossians Chapter Three	29
The Epistle of Ephesians And The Preaching Of The Mystery/Secret	32
Conclusion	40
Bibliography,,,,	43
End Note One	44
End Note Two	48
End Note Three	57

WATER BAPTISM

A Closer Look into New Testament Teaching

by

Timothy F. Conklin, D.D.

BAPTISM

In this present age, according to Ephesians 4:5, the Holy Spirit places all believers into the Body of Christ by "one baptism." This divine baptism takes place at the moment of saving faith and identifies every believer with Christ in His death, burial, resurrection and ascension. Since this spiritual baptism promotes "the unity of the Spirit" (Ephesians 4:3), the practice of a water baptism rite is unnecessary because of the total sufficiency of the finished work of Jesus Christ. In Christ, all believers stand before God complete and blameless.

Romans 6:3-4

1 Corinthians 1:17,18; 12:13

Ephesians 4:3-6

Colossians 2:9-12

WATER BAPTISM

Introduction

This may be the most controversial of all the doctrines of the Christian church. Almost all Christian traditions practice some form of a water ritual, but what it means to each of them and how it ought to be accomplished are matters which lead to great differences and divisions. Sir Robert Anderson, a prominent Christian leader a few generations ago, wrote a book about baptism traditions entitled *The Buddha of Christendom*, boldly suggesting baptism had become a Christian idol.

Is baptism a sacrament imparting divine grace to the participant? Or is it a visible sign of an invisible work? Or is it merely a token or symbol of personal faith in Christ? Should one baptize infants or adults? Is it best to sprinkle or immerse or pour? Should it be done in a river or a lake or in a specially built tank? Can it be done in a swimming pool? If one is immersed, should it be backward or forward? Is it only in the name of Jesus Christ or must one call upon the entire Trinity? Can a lay person do it or must it only be done by an ordained clergyman? These are merely some of the more obvious queries.

Although not always well understood, it is imperative to acknowledge that water baptism is first and foremost a Jewish ritual. It is not a unique or especial Christian practice. This is most notable when we read in the Gospels of the New Testament about John the Baptist performing a water ceremony

Consequently, the New Testament letters of the apostle Paul amidst the people of Israel at the time of Jesus Christ's earthly ministry. John's action was not considered new or different but a common and accepted aspect of Jewish culture. Ritual washings were simply part and parcel of Old Testament heritage and Jewish ceremonialism.

Another important factor in understanding water baptism is that the New Testament speaks of twelve distinct kinds of baptism; seven are figurative or spiritual and five are ceremonial or ritual in nature. Charles Baker has an excellent discussion of these various baptisms in his booklet, *Real Baptism* (available from Grace Publications, Grand Rapids MI).

The Baptism of Jesus

The baptism of Jesus Christ by John the Baptist is often cited as a keynote or prime example for what every Christian believer ought to do, namely, "follow Christ in baptism." Christ's coming to John the Baptist in Matthew 3:13-17 gives the account of what actually happened when Christ was baptized.

John the Baptist was conducting his ministry of leading the people of Israel to repentance and readiness for the coming promised and prophesied Messiah. John's ministry of preaching and baptism was an integral part of his calling disobedient but penitent Jews to a radical change of lifestyle and mindset. He refused to baptize the hypocritical, insincere Pharisees and Sadducees because they were not ready to either acknowledge their sinfulness nor accept the consequent personal changes which follow true repentance.

When Jesus came to John to be baptized like all the others, at first John refused to baptize Jesus too—but for very different reasons. While the Pharisees and Sadducees were unworthy, Jesus was too worthy to submit to John's baptism. Jesus had no need to repent of his sins because Jesus was not disobedient or sinful; he was utterly without sin.

Jesus insisted nonetheless, saying he wanted to be baptized by John "to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). What Jesus was doing in submitting to John's baptism was authenticating his messianic office by affirming his solidarity with sinners. This is what the prophet Isaiah had proclaimed about the Messiah when he said, "He was numbered with the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:12).

In being baptized by John the Baptist, Jesus did something only he could do; he who had no sin took his place among those who had no righteousness. No one can "follow Jesus" along this path. Jesus' baptism is therefore unique and singular to him and him alone. It is unimaginable anyone else could do what Jesus did in this one-of-a-kind act of identifying himself in solidarity with the sinful nation of Israel.

Baptism and Israel

Another claim as a mandate for an on-going ceremony of water baptism is the post-resurrection statement of Jesus Christ in Matthew 28:19 —

Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

The setting of this passage is seldom considered. Throughout the Gospel records, Jesus is identified as the Messiah of Old

Testament prophecy. Over and over again he is said to fulfill the prophetic promises which affirmed his identify as Israel's promised One. In Mathew 28, after his resurrection, Jesus commissions the twelve apostles (minus Judas Iscariot, who is replaced by Matthias in Acts 1:26) to continue in the work Jesus himself had been doing.

The instruction Jesus gives the Twelve in Matthew 28:19 to "make disciples of all nations" must be understood in the greater context of Jesus teaching throughout the Gospels. This includes his command in Matthew 10:5,6 –

Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Unquestionably, the Bible presents the nation of Israel as God's chosen people. The Scriptures testify it was God's intention that through Israel he would reach the entire world. The expectation was that with Israel's obedience to God and the subsequent blessings of promised prosperity and notoriety, his chosen people would rise up and draw the other nations of the world to God through their godly example and witness.

Sadly, the Bible clearly records that Israel failed in her obedience to God and turned inward, selfward and lost interest in other nations around her. With the coming of Jesus, the Messiah, there was new hope the chosen nation would repent and turn toward God in full obedience. Even more sadly, this did not happen either. Israel rejected her Savior. Jesus was crucified.

But glorious wonder, Jesus Christ was raised from the dead!

After the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Jesus

Christ, Israel was given one more opportunity to rise up and become like a beacon on a hill to draw all other nations to God through her testimony. Clearly, God was still interested in a world-wide witness through His chosen nation (Acts 2:22-24, 36-39).

God's original plan expressed in the Old Testament had not been altered. The nation Israel needed to come together in repentance and obedience and allow God to work through her to proclaim his name among the Gentiles. This is exactly what is stated in Acts 1:6-9. There Jesus commands his apostles not to leave Jerusalem until the promised gift of the Holy Spirit had been manifested. And then he speaks even more specifically, saying:

When the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea, in Samaria and to the ends of the earth."

The point here is that at this time (through the Gospels and in early Acts) the vehicle for evangelism and the context for the gospel message is still covenant Israel and the Old Testament. The biblical plan was that before the Gentiles were to be evangelized, the nation Israel needed to become the witness God intended them to be.

Alas, Israel fails still again, for even the Holy Spirit empowered apostolic witness as exhibited in the Book of Acts is rejected. As a kind of last straw, Stephen, an apostolic evangelist specially described as "a man full of God's grace and power," is stoned to death by the Jewish supreme court (Acts 6:8; 7:57, 58). Shortly thereafter, James, one of the Twelve, is killed and Peter is banished from Jerusalem (Acts 12). The ministry of God to the Gentile world through the nation of Israel and the

twelve apostles becomes fragmented and terminated. This is what the apostle Paul speaks of in 1 Thessalonians 2:16 when he says regarding Israel, "The wrath of God has come upon them [Israel] fully (*to the uttermost*;" KJV).

Baptism and Gentiles

With the final fall of Israel, God unveiled a new plan through Saul of Tarsus, who is better recognized as the apostle Paul, "the apostle to the Gentiles" (Romans 11:13). God initiated a hitherto unrevealed program with Paul called "the mystery" (Romans 16:25,26), because Paul says it "was not made known to men in other generations" (Ephesians 3:2-6). He goes on to declare,

This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise of Christ Jesus.

This "new" truth is not that Gentiles were to be saved. God plainly had all the people of the world in mind when he first established Israel as his special, chosen nation (Genesis 12:5b). What Paul is commissioned to teach is that now God has purposed to make a wholly new thing—"the church, which is Christ's body" (1 Corinthians 12:12,13), wherein any earthly distinction between Jew and Gentiles is erased (Galatians 3:28).

Consequently, the New Testament letters of the apostle Paul contain the instruction for Gentiles about what to believe and how to behave.

In Paul's writings alone we find the doctrine, position, walk and destiny of the church (C. I. Scofield).

Baptism and the Apostle Paul

The teaching of the apostle Paul is by no means contradictory to the teaching of Jesus or any other Scripture. Paul's teaching does, however, often differ from earlier Scriptures, especially in relation to behavioral norms for Gentiles in contrast to the Jews.

Before looking more carefully at the teaching of the apostle Paul, consider another neglected aspect of the so-called Great Commission in Matthew 28, namely the counterpart passage in Mark 16:15-18. This too is a narrative of a post resurrection appearance of Christ to the Twelve, commissioning them to their evangelical work. If the commands in Matthew 28 are binding today, then the commands in Mark 16 are binding as well. In verses 15 and 16 Christ instructs His disciples to "preach the good news to all creation." But he goes on in verse 17 and 18 with further instruction and promise:

And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.

Why is it that these dramatic practices are said to have ceased or to no longer be necessary in the age of the Church, but water baptism is to continue? If the one is to continue because it is a command of Christ, should not the other commands also be kept and obeyed? On the other hand, if some of these practices are considered intermediate or applicable only for a certain time and under certain conditions, doesn't the same argument hold true for water baptism?

It is plain and evident Christ commanded the twelve apostles

to go and baptize all nations (Matthew 28:18; Mark 16:15). How strikingly different, then, to realize what the apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 1:17 – "Christ did not send me to baptize." Without question, we are being informed about two different and distinct commissions; one *with* and one *without* a water rite.

God instructed the apostle Paul to preach the gospel of the grace of God, a message of salvation void of all the ritual and ceremony associated with Israel; including the cessation of any water rites. Paul tells the church in Ephesians 4:5 there is only "one baptism" required for the church, the Body of Christ. That baptism is not material or ritualistic.

For we are all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free (1 Corinthians 12:13; see also Romans 6:3).

This baptism is the spiritual act performed by the Holy Spirit the moment a person believes in Jesus Christ as his or her Savior from sin. At that instant the believer is placed by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ church and sealed forever in that relationship as a child of God (Ephesians 1:13).

Members of the church, the Body of Christ, are not obligated to win God's favor or show some exhibition of obedience by participating in any ceremonial ritual. In this Dispensation of Grace, God has fulfilled in Christ all necessary "works." To be fully redeemed, God now only asks people to believe the gospel of his grace, trusting in his Son the Lord Jesus Christ for their salvation. Water baptism is simply not a faith factor nor even a matter of testimony.

For by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by

works, so that no one can boast (Ephesians 2:8,9).

The apostle Paul's charge was to bring the pure message of God's grace to Gentiles and Jews alike, announcing that the special dispensation of Israel and the law of Moses had been set aside, along with its ceremonies and rituals. Not only does the apostle to the

Gentiles disclaim the practice of baptism, but nowhere in the letters of Paul does he outline or instruct anyone about how to practice a water rite.

Baptism and the Church

Apart from the 1 Corinthians passage, Paul never refers elsewhere in any of his other letters to baptizing his converts upon their faith in Christ. When he writes to all the other churches about his founding activity with them, he never refers to any baptism performed by himself, his companions or local leaders. This biblical silence is very forceful regarding what is considered by tradition as so significant a practice. As Dr. Dale DeWitt has written:

This silence alone released the church from obligation to practice water baptism as a matter of scriptural faith and order, provided, of course, that Paul's instruction is recognized as the standard of church order. (*Essays in Ecclesiology*, available from Grace Publications, Grand Rapids, MI).

The conclusions of the Jerusalem council in Acts 15 are also critical in determining the place of a baptismal rite in the Gentile churches. At this meeting the Twelve and other leaders of the Jerusalem assembly met to hear testimony about Paul's ministry and what God was doing with the Gentiles through

him. They agreed, from a Jewish perspective, on a set of expectations to maintain harmonious relations with the Gentile churches being established through Paul.

There were four agreed-to features in this list set forth by the Jerusalem council which were to be required items for the Gentile mission. Dr. DeWitt carefully notes nothing was said about a water baptism ritual. DeWitt goes on to recognize that if baptism with water had been something essential to Paul's Gentile mission, it surely would have come up in this context. It does not. Paul's release of his converts from this—and the other Jewish ordinances—is therefore affirmed and made normative for the new work of God through Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles; namely, the church, the Body of Christ.

There is one question remaining; why did Paul baptize anyone at all? He clearly says in 1 Corinthians 1:17 that it was not part of his commission from the risen Christ to practice and teach a rite of baptism. Nonetheless, in addition to this mention of Paul baptizing some at Corinth, there are only two more places where Paul does baptize someone, both in the book of Acts.

Before looking at these two passages, there is another place where Paul and baptism are mentioned in Acts, but that passage can be explained in a manner which does not involve Paul in the rite. Acts 19:1-5 recounts an event when Paul while traveling met "some disciples;" Paul inquired about their baptism experience. In verse 3 they said they had submitted to the rite with John the Baptist. In verse 4 Paul rehearsed with them that John had "told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." The next verse goes on to say, "On hearing this, they were baptized," It is quite permissible (and I believe preferable) to understand that verse

4 is a continuation of verse 3, which would mean these disciples were baptized by John after hearing his message of repentance. Alternatively, and in my judgment wrongly, it is Paul who does the baptizing in verse 4.

In Acts 16:15 Paul baptizes Lydia and her household. Then in Acts 16:33 we have the dramatic account of the conversion of the Philippian jailor. Both of these events happen in the book of Acts and early in Paul's ministry. The book of Acts is a record of transition, a narrative tracing the final decline and fall of the nation of Israel and the beginning and rise of the church, the Body of Christ.

As in any transition period, everything about what is emerging is not immediately crystal clear. Inevitably there is some overlap and compromise until the new order is thoroughly established and the new norms are fully realized. So it is not surprising to find in Acts certain features associated with the long-standing Jewish prophetic or kingdom program. For example, Paul circumcised Timothy (Acts 16:1-5) and he submitted himself to a Jewish purification ceremony which culminated in his offering a sacrifice in the Jerusalem temple (Acts 21:26).

Water baptism is very much a part of the Old Testament Jewish ritual and ceremonial program. At the time of Jesus (and Paul), Gentile converts desiring to become full members of Israel were required to submit to a ritual bath, to be circumcised and to make an offering in the Jerusalem temple. What Paul is doing with Gentile converts in his early practices seems to mirror this custom for Jewish converts.

In each case where Paul baptizes, the people being baptized are either Jews or are closely associated with Jews who would have

expected baptism for converts. "Crispus" (Corinthians 1:14) is identified in Acts 18:8 as "the synagogue ruler." Paul had begun his ministry in Corinth in the synagogue (Acts 18:4) but when vigorous rejection was mounted against him he moved next door to the synagogue to the house of a local God-fearer—a first century term for a Gentile inquiring about Jewish monotheism (Acts 18:6-8). He remained in this close proximity to the synagogue for the entire eighteen months of his stay in Corinth (Acts 18:11).

Lydia, a Gentile name and therefore also a likely God-fearer, is encountered outside the city of Philippi beside a river at "a place of prayer." That phrase represents a technical term for a locale where Jews who did not have a synagogue would meet for religious services. The flowing river gave opportunity to practice traditional ritual washings.

The symbolic ritual of cleansing so closely associated with Israel and her converts explains Paul's early accommodation to this religious act, as well as occasional circumcision and temple sacrifice. That is why Paul is noted as having baptized at all; just a couple of accommodations to the Jewish culture in the early period of transition before the full-blown program of the dispensation of the Grace of God and the church, the body of Christ had more fully developed I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable [untraceable] riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. (Ephesians 3:7-9).

There is ... one baptism (Ephesians 4:4,5)

Ω

Postscript

Charles Baker has a most helpful comment on the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch by Phillip in Acts 8 that is worth noting ..

The fact that they both went down into the water and both came up out of the water does not in any way prove immersion. It would be very unusual to find a pool in the desert deep enough for immersion. Neither was the baptism done as a witness to the world, for they were alone in the desert, far from other people.

As we shall see in the case of Saul's conversion in the next chapter, baptism was a ceremonial washing away of sins. In the development of doctrine for the new Body of Christ under Paul's later ministry, the gospel of the grace of God was freed from all ceremonialism, so that the baptism and the circumcision for the believer are completely spiritual in nature, 'made without hands' (Colossians 2:11,12).

It should be noted that God always dealt with Israel through signs and miracles. Baptism was one of the ceremonial signs. There were many such baptisms or ceremonial washings in the Jewish religion as given through Moses (Hebrews 9:10), where the Greek word is *batismois*. It is our understanding that all such signs ceased when God suspended His covenant dealings with the nation of Israel. That is why we believe baptism was not a specific part of Paul's commission (1 Corinthians 1:17), as it was for the commission of the Twelve for Israel (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16). (*Understanding the Book of Acts*, Charles F. Baker; available through Grace Publications, Inc., Grand Rapids, MI, 1981; p.p. 50, 51).

THE GOSPEL OF THE MYSTERY/SECRET

by

Charles W. Asbell

FOREWORD

In March of 1978, the article, *THE MYSTERY MINISTRY OF PAUL* appeared in *Scripture Research* (Volume 3, Number 3, 1st ed.). Scripture Research, Inc. (SRI) has subsequently republished this same paper in 2005 (2nd edition). Russ Schaefer, former Director of SRI was the author of this very important study. This subject is rarely touched upon, or neglected by those who occupy today's pulpits. However, it must be emphasized. The preaching/teaching of those matters relating to the Mystery/Secret as found in the books of Colossians and Ephesians must be heard! Why? In reality, they constitute God's last written message to humankind (as you will soon see in the forthcoming study); not, the book of Revelation as most of Christendom accepts. Thus, to say it is important subject to study is a gross understatement.

Russ Schaefer's treatment of The Mystery Is marvelous. Yet, there is more, much more which can be added to his findings in this critically important subject. It is in the spirit of scriptural research with curiosity and a desire to further mine the Word of God for other nuggets of truth that I wish to add to the treasures which Russ has already uncovered, these additional thoughts and expand upon the work which he accomplished some 35 years ago.

In this paper there is a heavy emphasis on the study of

words (Greek and English) and their Holy Spirit inspired intended meanings as found in the Colossian and Ephesian letters. Also, there is a stress on the importance of the Mystery/Secret message and how it compares with or to other of God's messages to other people in other biblical periods. Further, I lay great stress on interpreting, understanding and the numerous parts of speech as they occur in the Greek text and how they impact on the preaching of the Mystery/Secret.

I hope you will enjoy this new take and biblical exploration into this Mystery/Secret. Hopefully the fruits of this additional research will help you broaden your understanding of what constitutes the Mystery (*Musterion*).

INTRODUCTION

As the Apostle Paul neared the end of his life and the completion of his ministry, imprisoned in Rome, he wrote by divine inspiration a letter to the saints in the city of Colossi stating and requesting the following:

(2) ... Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; (3) Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: (4) That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

(5) Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. (6) Let your speech *be* always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

(Colossians 4:2-6, AV)

Isn't it interesting the Apostle did not request personal items which or might help him in his imprisonment. Neither did he offer to send those who were reading this epistle, "handkerchiefs," or other thing(s) which may aid them in healing or recovering from a health/physical ailment. Neither did

he offer to send any object or thing which might help them in their approach or access to God. No, the Apostle's greatest desire was to make known and expound to everyone, to those near and far, to both Jew and Gentile alike what constitutes "the MYSTERY of the Christ" (v. 3) for this message/ministry is why he was initially imprisoned by God! (See also the Apostle's companion epistle – Ephesians, especially Ch. 3 for further commentary and insight on this same theme.)

As you begin to consider this "Mystery" matter, let me pose this question: it is now some 2000 years since the Apostle made known the "contents" of the mystery. Is the same desire or passion expressed by Paul here in Colossians 4 also shared by the stewards/ministers/preachers/exegetes of the Scriptures who currently occupy today's pulpits? On an even more personal level for you who realize the significance of the mystery message, do you share in the apostle Paul's enthusiasm and passion in making known the contents of this divine Mystery gospel? Please remember, the apostle Paul was nearing the completion of his earthly ministry so he prayed he might experience a freedom of expression regarding this gospel (good news) message (2:2-4). After reading and considering the next few pages I hope you might be challenged and "stirred" to worship the Christ of which the mystery gospel reveals and to unabashedly proclaim this same Mystery, which the apostle was heralding.

As a further note it may come as a surprise to believers today that in this Colossians 4 context Paul is not praying for the salvation of the entire world. No, he is praying for his readers to come to understand and embrace this magnificent truth relating to the mystery of the Christ.

(Let me pause for a moment in this INTRODUCTION to state that we at Scripture Research, Inc. are most definitely concerned about the evangelism of the lost. Making known The crucified, buried, risen ascended and seated Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ who died for the sins of mankind is para-

mount in our mission. By the same token, we are also concerned with the believer's obligation to come to know and grow in the knowledge of this One who bore our sin(s) on Calvary's cross. This is reason for this short study!

Some Background

The research and written text which follows arises after the completion of two other recently published titles found in *Scripture Research*, i.e., *Christ and the Kosmoses*² and *AIQN/AIQNON: Measuring Timelessness and Timeliness*³. The doctrinal/eschatological findings and content found in these two closely related papers compliment each another. Concomitantly, the take home message found in this manuscript, THE MYSTERY*, is a compliment to or with these two earlier papers.

Regarding the papers referred to in the former paragraph, if you have read them you will note a great deal of necessary redundancy and repetition. I make no apology for this for I humbly suggest that the thrust of the apostle Paul's expose' of the message which constitutes the MYSTERY/-SECRET speaks of the final hope and destiny of those in this dispensation of Grace who have accepted God the Father's offer of salvation to his human family.

In the matter of eschatology, I embrace and am convin-

* In the NT, the Gk. word mystery (*musterion* - [μυστηριον]) is defined by Vine⁴ (p. 97) as: "...it denotes(ing), not the mysterious (as with the Eng. Word), but that which, being outside the range of unassisted natural apprehension, can be made known only by Divine revelation, and is made known in a manner and at a time appointed by God, and to those only who are illuminated by His spirit. In the ordinary sense a mystery implies knowledge withheld; its Scriptural significance is truth revealed." In this paper I will use Vine's definition as its meaning.

ced the so-called world and human/angelic end events found in Matthew 23-25 and *The Apocalypse* (the Book of Revelation) are historical and occurred during the first century AD. I am a Preterist. Obviously, this position impacts the conclusions which I propose and am convinced of in this paper.

Another interpretive systematic which I employ in my personal studies and writings is the application of the Miles Coverdale/Erasmus postulates.

Myles Coverdale (c. 1488-1569) was a 16th century Bible translator who produced the first complete printed translation of the Bible into English⁹. We at Scripture Research, Inc. recognize at least two important contributions, which Mr. Coverdale made to us English speaking and reading people. First, for the translation and printing of the first English language Bible and putting it into every English Church in England. Second, for stressing to those who read the Scriptures of some important interpretation and translation principals. In the following quote, Coverdale closely formulates an earlier statement by Desiderius Erasmus (d. 1536).

It shall greatly helpe ye to understand Scripture if thou mark –

not only what is spoken, or written, but of whom and to whom,

- with what words,
- at what time,
- where,
- to what intent,
- with what circumstance,
- considering what goeth before, and what followeth.

Interspersed in this manuscript are areas and sections dealing with both English and Greek word meanings. Bear in

mind we are dealing with the very words which go to make up the entire written word of God itself. The author, the Holy Spirit, placed those words in the original, God-breathed manuscripts according to the dictates of God our Father. It is then our challenge and responsibility as students of the Scriptures to attempt to find out what God had in mind or intended when the Holy Spirit inspired authors first penned these words.

The Word of God and The Mystery

Turning to the latter verses of Colossians chapter 1, the text (AV) provides very relevant details dealing with those matters associated with the MYSTERY. The larger context of this chapter reveals the apostle's credentials and qualifications as a minister of the Mystery:

(24) ...Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church: (25) 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; (26) *Even* the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: (27) 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: (28) Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: (29) Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

In this section of scripture note the following -

Verse 24:

- The rejoicing of the apostle in the sufferings he was experiencing as it was “filling up” (*ανταναπληρω* - fill up, [completing that which fills, to accomplish, to perform fully [Green⁴]), those thing lacking of the afflictions of the Christ in the flesh of him (the apostle Paul) on behalf of His (Christ Jesus) body the church. Let me suggest at least two “things” which the Father charged the Apostle to complete/-fill up in his flesh:

- ⇒ 1. To complete/fill up the Word of God (i.e., the *logos* of God, [the written Word?], Paul, not John the Apostle was the Spirit filled steward who “filled”, “completed” the *logos* of God!).
- ⇒ 2. To declare to every creature which is under heaven (lit., proclaimed [past tense] in all creation under the heaven [vs. 23]) the hitherto gospel of mystery which had been hidden in the mind of God from ages and generations (*aionon* and *geneon*), v. 26. In short, the apostle Paul completed the Great Commission during the first century AD and in the process completed the word [*logos*] of God.

It is my conviction when the apostle Paul completed his preaching concerning the kingdom of God from his hired house in Rome (Acts 28:28-31), he filled (*pleroma*) up a portion of the “afflictions” of Christ” (Col. 1:24). The book of Romans ministry described in chapter eleven, was to the Jews and those Gentiles who were being grafted into Israel’s “olive tree” (metaphorically – Israel, her God, hopes, promises, worship system, the land and the site of the worship system – Jerusalem). It would appear with Paul completing the Great Commission (in Rome), taking and preaching the gospel of the kingdom out of the land – Israel, as a nation and Judaism the belief system rejected their

God, Jehovah.

Personally speaking, I have no doubt there might be other divine items which the apostle filled-up in his completing ministry which accompanied the two other areas of fulfillment mentioned in the paragraphs above. Perhaps imprisonment/incarceration itself with the accompanying conditions of Paul's mental/emotional angst were a part of this overall affliction.

Verse 25:

- **Of which (the Church his body [Christ's]) Paul became a minister according to the dispensation/stewardship of God given to me (Paul). Note and compare the very similar word-age and teaching found in the companion Ephesian epistle (chapter 3) which closely relates and adds commentary to the Colossian chapter one passage:**

(1) For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles. (2) If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: (3) How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, (4) Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), (5) Which in other ages (*aions*) was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; (6) That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: (7) 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. (8) 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, (9) And to make all *men* see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world (*aions*) hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: (10) To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, 11) According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: (12) In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. (AV, emphasis mine)

- Returning to the 25th verse of Colossians 1, the Holy Spirit through the pen of Paul makes a momentous, earth shaking statement. The Apostle's ministry with its content, filled up (πληρωσι - completed, to complete, filled to the brim, accomplished, perfected) the WORD (λογον) OF GOD! The Epistle of Colossians completed(s) the word of God (not the book of Revelation or 2nd Timothy.

Verse 26:

- How special and unique in the framework of the Bible and Bible history is the Mystery? To begin with it was hidden in the mind of God and not revealed to mankind until it was revealed to the apostle Paul and other "holy apostles and prophets" (Ephesians 3:1-3, 5, 8, 9).
- Who and what was this secret of God (the Mystery) hidden from?

⇒ Other ages (lit. other generations [γενεαις], i.e., to the sons of men [*anthropos*] in those other ages/generations). Col. 1:26, Eph. 3:5

⇒ From the beginning of the world (lit. hidden (in God

from the ages [απο των αιωνων - lit. from the ages].
(Col. 1:26, Eph. 3:9)

⇒ We (members of the Body of Christ [Eph. 4:12]) were
“chosen in Him before the foundation of the world”
(...προ [before] καταβολης [foundation] κοσμου [of
the world]).....

Verse 27:

-the recipients (to whom the Mystery was revealed) to
“the saints of him,” - the Gentiles:

“who is Christ in* you!”
“the hope of the glory”

(*Based upon the research and exegetical conclusions found and expounded upon by Russ Schaefer⁷ in his article *THE COMINGS OF THE LORD*, [Scripture Research, Vol. 3, No. 4, pp. 82-84], I am convinced that “in” is the proper meaning or English equivalent and translation of “in” (εν) in this verse/context. [See entire text, END NOTE ONE, p, 46]).

Verse 28:

- “Whom we announce:

⇒ ... warning every man (*anthropos*)” -

⇒ ... teaching every man in all wisdom (*Sophia*)

IN ORDER THAT WE MAY PRESENT EVERY MAN...

⇒ ... Perfect (*teleion* – [τελειον] - perfect in Christ)
= “to end, to finish, to fulfil, to accomplish, to go through, to pay off in full” (Green⁵)...

... IN CHRIST JESUS

COLOSSIANS CHAPTER TWO

Verses 1- 3:

- The apostle prays for those saints in Laodicea and for those who have not seen him (us also?) that they be knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance (full understanding/knowledge - επιγνωσιν) of the mystery of God -- Christ. For in Him (Christ) are hidden:

⇒ All (without restrictions, the sum totality of) the treasures of the *wisdom* and *knowledge*.

Verses 4-8:

- Paul the apostle warns the readers of/against: philosophy, vain deceit after the traditions of men (elements of the *kosmos*; the rudiments/teachings of Judaism – v. 8) and to ...
- ... “As (since) ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him” (vs. 6).

- “Being confirmed in the faith. Notice the beautiful translation which Wuest⁶ brings to these two verses:

...therefore, as you received the Christ, Jesus, the Lord, in Him be constantly ordering your behavior, having been rooted with the present result that you are firmly established, and constantly being built up in Him and constantly being established with reference to the Faith, even as you were instructed, abounding in it in the sphere of thanksgiving. (emphasis, mine)

⇒ the faith refers to the body of truth/doctrine which constitutes the core beliefs of our faith, not the act

of our volitional belief/acceptance into the core beliefs.

Verses 9-16:

- Whenever there arises a question or doubt as to the deity of Christ Jesus the Lord it may represent at least one or two scenarios. 1) Such a person denies all or parts of Holy Scripture as they pick and choose only those parts that fit or may be convenient with their personal belief system, 2) Such a person is no doubt ignorant of the meaning and teachings of this passage or similar passages in the Bible which witnesses the same truth as this Colossian's verse. Verse 9, stress the fact, residing unabashedly in the humanity of this Jew of the tribe of Judah, Jesus of Nazareth, is the God-head bodily (somaticos - σωματικως). In HIM!

But the apostle does not end his thought on an apologetic regarding the Lord's deity, he quickly declares to the "by faith believers" of their secure, provided for position with/in this Savior/God-man/Christ Jesus the Lord.

...and ye/(we) are in him are complete (having been made complete – *pleroma* [πεπληρωμενοι - perfect, passive, participle]).

Kenneth Wuest⁶ translates *pleroma* in this verse very eloquently...

...having been completely filled full (passively from an outside source [i.e. God himself, my emphasis]) with the result you are in a state of fullness [in perpetuity - force of the perfect tense]

The "for free" (on our part) divine transaction to secure our position and standing before the Just, Gracious and Benevolent God the Father was accomplished by his Son (the

Head of all rule and authority [vs. 10 b]) thusly:

- We were circumcised, not in the (our) flesh, but with (in/by - Gr. εν) the circumcision experienced by the Savior Jesus, the Lamb of God in his passion and death experience (plainly and to the point, passively, we as believers, by faith, shared in the/his bodily death experience on the cross of Calvary [v. 11]). Stating it another way, God the Father, because of his great love identified and put to our personal accounts this very same circumcision experience (death/crucifixion/burial/assencion/raising/seating) which our Lord and Savior endured 2000 years ago. (and, I might add, currently/today is still being experienced by those “by faith” individuals who place their faith in the finished work of Christ Jesus. Follow the apostle’s detail of these great truths...

⇒ ...Co-buried (συνταφεντες -- 2 aor*. passive (by no action of ourselves [passive]) but by the action of God, we spiritually experienced the burial of his Son. (vs. 12a)

⇒ ...in whom (the person of Christ Jesus) ye/we were co-raised (συνηγερθητε -- 1st aor*. passive) us from the dead when the Lord, via the divine energy of the Father raised him from the tomb we (by passive action) accompanied the resurrection of the Son of God!

* It is important to realize the force of the aorist verb tense in the NT Gk. language. From Green⁵ (pp. 303 and 305), “First and second Aorists have precisely the same meaning except in a few cases...” Further, “The Aorist tense denotes what is absolutely past...” Also, “The completeness of an act is occasionally marked by the Aorist.” (in short, completed action [emphasis mine])

Verse 13:

- Because of the of the Father’s forensic justice having been satisfied by his Son’s sacrifice on the cross, even us being dead and in a helpless condition, he forgave us. His love and grace exceeds even our lost and dismal state. Praise God!

⇒ After three days in the tomb, when by the power of God Christ Jesus was quickened/enlivened made alive again), we and our Colossian brothers/believers were co-enlivened with him (*sunezoopoiese* = συνεζωοποιησεν - 1st Aor. Mid. The middle voice voice implying that God the Father raised us with His Son for Himself.

⇒ The justice of God having been accomplished and satisfied, God forgave us (*charisamenos* = χαρισαμενος - 1st Aor. Mid. Ptc, [“having in grace forgiven you all your trespasses.” Wuest⁶]. This grace forgiveness is also in the middle voice implying the Father did this forgiveness for Himself (He wanted to [reflexive]). He exercised his divine intent because of his great love for us.

A closing note to this divine union between the work of Christ and those who shared with him in his (Christ Jesus) circumcision and his post circumcision activities.

In this identification with our Lord there is another element which needs to be identified as a part of this divine transaction. This can be observed in the Greek text by the presence of the prepositional prefix, co-, together with, (i.e., *su, sun, sug* = συ-). This truth adds another wonderful element and dimension in our identification in his death, burial, enlivening and resurrection. Please observe:

1. (v. 11) Circumcised with Christ (co-died)
2. (v. 12a) Buried with him (co-buried - συνταφεντες,)

3. (v. 13) Quickened together (co-enlivened – συνεζωοποίησεν)
4. (v. 12b, 3:1) Raised with him (co-raised - συνηγεροθητε)

The book of Ephesians adds to this co-identification with Christ:

- 5, (2:6) A raising and a seating (co-raising - συνηγειρεν + a co-seating - συνεκαθισεν) with Christ.

In view of this divine identification process as seen in this Colossians 2 passage (see Wuest's⁶ NT Translation below), vss. 1-17, which the Father, because of his great love of/to us, showers (passively) on us, he warns believers of those who would diminish (with/by their fleshly minds) and belittle his work in those receivers of this unspeakable gift (vs. 18). Further, the Father challenges and subsequently provides the mechanism for holding the Head (Christ) Who, in turn, through the joints and ligaments, causes godly increase in the believer (v. 19).

Completing this chapter (verses 20-23) Paul the Apostle states unequivocally “because we died with Christ from the rudimentary things (elements - στοιχειον of the world (*kosmos* – the Jew, her legal system [the Law], her animal sacrifices, her promises, her land, in short, her hope[s] and identity) and is summed up by the Holy Spirit:

- ... do not touch, taste, handle (vs. 21) – which are all to perish with the using after the commandments of men, according to the injunctions and...
- ...the teachings of men which things do show of wisdom in will worship and humility, and neglecting of the body. Note how Wuest⁶ translates this verse:

...which things as a class have a reputation for

wisdom in a self-made, self-imposed worship and (an affected, hypocritical) humility and an unsparing and severe treatment of the body, (ordinances which are) not of any value as a remedy against the indulgence of the flesh.

With the saints at Colossi's position (and in 2013 AD) secure as witnessed by the first two chapters of this letter, in the ensuing chapter Paul the apostle now expounds and projects on the events for the believers who co-share(d) in his circumcision and subsequent death, burial, enlivening and resurrection experiences. Succinctly, the Holy Spirit now (chapter 3) details and speaks of the co-events: the co-raising and co-seating of Lord and with those co-sharers past the resurrection.

COLOSSIANS CHAPTER THREE

I shall begin this section by quoting from *Wuest's Translation of the New Testament*⁶

(1-4) In view of the fact, therefore, that you were raised with Christ, the things above be constantly seeking, where Christ is, on the right hand of God, seated. The things above be constantly setting your mind upon, not the things on the earth; for you died, and your life has been hidden with Christ in God. Whenever the Christ is made visible, our life, then also you with Him shall be manifested in glory.

Let us analyze these powerful words.

Verse one:

• “If”- Gr. εἰ - has the force of “since,” Wuest⁶ has correctly translated “If” by “in view of the fact”- an accomplished act!

above
verb
with

⇒ ...we were co-raised (pl. aor. Passive [see 2:31, Eph. 2:6, p. 14]). The force of this states: “we were passively raised together Christ (pl) in the past (aor., 2000 years ago)

⇒ ...therefore live (seek the things above - ανω) accordingly

⇒ ...where Christ is sitting (present tense) i.e. at the the right (hand, speaks of the authority or rights of God himself)

THIS CO-RAISING IS AN ACCOMPLISHED FACT (passive, aorist tense) IN THE MIND AND EYES OF GOD

Verse two:

- The above things think on (mind ye – [*phroneite*] the mind the intellect, sentiments, inclinations⁸)
- ...not the things upon the earth – *ge* - γης

Verse three:

- For you died (*apethanete* - απεθανετε [2nd aor, act, ind]. Forensically, ye (pl) actively died (past tense, - aor) 2000 years ago in Christ Jesus. Consequently...
 - ⇒ ... we being identified with our Savior’s circumcision on Calvary 2000 years ago, our life (*zoe* - ζωη)...
 - ⇒ ...we have been hidden with Christ in God! Oh, What a place to be! Let us define and refine this verb and position ally determine what it means to us, (hath been hidden (Gr. *kekruptai*, (3rd per*,

perf**, pass, ind.)

3rd person*, I believe this implies we (and the limitless numbers of other believers along with the Colossian saints), by the action of the Father (passive voice) are united with Christ the Son into a divine family relationship and shelter to/with God the Father.

**How long and secure are we being hidden in God the Father? According to Green⁵, the perfect tense implies “an action or event as now complete; its point of view is, therefore, in the present. It denotes also a past act whose consequences remain. In today’s terms our “hiddenness” is secured in the Father in/into perpetuity!)

Verse four

- Whenever the Christ appears (is manifested - φανερωθη (1st aor. pass.). Vine⁴ (p. 36) defines this verb as: to make visible, clear, manifest. Further, to uncover, lay bare, reveal ...
- ...The Christ the life (*zoe*), ye (the Colossians and the co-sharers with Christ in his circumcision, [Col. 2:11]) will be manifested (2nd per. future, pass. ind.).

Speaking only for myself, and not for those fellow believers who serve on the Board of Directors of Scripture Research, Inc., I put forth the thought that this manifestation event “in glory” may mark the close of this present dispensation of the grace of God and our long awaited entry into the presence of our enthroned Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ..

⇒ It is important to remember the Mystery/Secret gospel (and the details which constitute the content

of this gospel [see p. 8]) had been hidden (not known) from the ages (*aions*) and from (the) generations. Hence, this *manifestation* appears to occur in the “above” heavenly realms where Christ is seated.

It is now time to integrate into this manuscript the Holy Spirit’s divine thoughts as they concern or relate to the *Mystery/Secret* which the apostle Paul recorded in the letter which he sent to the Ephesian saints.

THE EPISTLE OF EPHESIANS AND THE PREACHING OF THE MYSTERY/SECRET

It is important that we establish the matter which the apostle Paul spoke about several times in this (Ephesian) epistle, namely, the *Mystery/Secret*. Is this the same *Mystery/Secret* which he addressed in the book of Colossians? So that there is no misunderstanding, I challenge those readers of this article to please read the following verses (from the AV) and their immediate context(s).

- Ephesians 1:9 – Having known unto us the *mystery* of his will,
- 3:3 – ... He made known unto me the *mystery* of his will...
- 3:4 – ... ye may understand my knowledge in the *mystery* of Christ
- 3:9 – And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the *mystery*...
- 6:19 – ... and for me...I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the *mystery*...

Question: “Are there other related matters present in the Ephesian letter which would further clarify or expand our understanding of the awesomeness and magnitude of this *Mystery/Secret* gospel which were not included in the Colossian letter?” This requires that we examine in detail the

references listed in the former paragraph. Due to the nature or content of the five references I choose not address them in the sequence which, they appear.

Ephesians 3:4

The apostle Paul prefaces verse 4 in chapter three by stating his divinely given title as:

- Prisoner of Christ for you Gentiles (vs. 1)
(Compare with Colossians 4:3 and 2:27)
- God's impartation to Paul of the dispensation of the grace given to him for the Gentiles (vs. 2)
(Compare with Colossians 1:23-27)
- God made known to Paul by special revelation the (contents/message/details) of the mystery as he had previously written in brief (the earlier chapters of Ephesians or, perhaps the book of Colossians?), (vs. 3)
(Compare with Colossians 1:25-28)
- The Apostle stresses to the Ephesians believers that after they read this letter they ought to realize and understand the extent of Paul's grasp and understanding of this message of the Mystery/Secret (vs. 4)
(Compare with Colossians 2:1-2)
- Paul the Apostle states this Mystery/Secret was...

... not made known in other generations (*geneais*) and sons of men as it is now revealed to the holy apostles and prophets (vs. 5)

AND

... hidden from the ages (*aionon*) in God (vs. 9)
(Compare with Colossians 1:25-27)

- The Gentiles to be joint heirs and joint body and joint sharers of the promise in Christ (vs. 6)
- Paul was given the commission to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ to the Gentiles (vs. 8)

Ephesians 1:9

In the Scripture context immediately preceding verse 9 the inspired apostle Paul provides the believer with a brief review of the facts, truths, and absolutes which relate and/or concern this (the) *mystery*:

- (Vs. 3) He, the Father has blessed us (the believer) with all (every) spiritual blessing in the heavenlies (επουρανιους - upon the heavenlies [pl.]) in Christ. (Please, in your thinking this site of blessing is not an earthly kingdom (see Appendix Note Two, The Mystery, The Millennium and Millennial Matters, [p. 49]) located at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea.
- (Vs. 4) We (the Ephesians and us who by faith accepted Christ the Lord's work on Calvary 2000 years ago), in the mind of God were chosen in Him (Christ, vs. 3) before the foundation of the world (καταβολης κοσμου - before the beginnings of Israel, its people, their land, their hopes and their worship system (see *Scripture Research*, Vol. 4, No. 14, pp, 29-45)
- (Vs. 5) Because of the "acceptance by the Father of the work of His son on Calvary" and we (of humankind) currently by faith accepting this same sacrificial work of the the Son to forgive our sins, the Father predestinated (set the bounds of our inheritance) us by adopting us as sons (mature - full grown) in/with His Son
- (Vs. 6) To/for the praise of the grace of him which he engrafted (favoured) us in the One having been loved

(Christ)...

- (Vs. 7)... in whom (Christ) we have redemption through His blood the forgiveness of the trespasses (*paraptomaton*) according to the riches (wealth) of his (the Father grace (*charitos*)).
- (Vs. 8) He made to abound to us in all (all without restriction) wisdom (*sophia*) and prudence (intelligence). This wisdom and intelligence finds its object in...
- (Vs. 9) ...making known to the Ephesians and to us some 2000 years hence, the Mystery/Secret of His will according to His good pleasure a He purposed in Him-self (mid. voice – for Himself): ...

...FOR (εις - to, into, unto, for)...

- (Vs. 10) ... a stewardship (dispensation) of the fulness (*pleroma* – to fulfill, fill up complete, sum up) the times (*kairon*) seasons) “he might gather together in one (ανακεφαλαιωσασθαι) = to sum up, lit. head up(Bullinger⁹)”:

⇒ ...the all things (τα παντα) in the Christ (not every or all things without restriction or reservation, but those things as stated to be in the Christ) i.e., the things:

... upon (επι) the heavens

AND

... upon (επι) the earth (*ge*)

IN HIM

The Holy Spirit begins this verse (10) with a preposition (εις - *eis*) which the AV translates as “That in ...” I personally believe the translators, for one reason or another, did not give

the proper meaning to this word. Consider, “That in...” may connote something in the future or “distant” future rather than something that is currently in process. The thought or force behind: “to,” “for,” or “unto,” brings to the table the suggestion of (a) purpose or motive, not the idea of something to happen down the line (Of note, Ephesians 2:13 and 3:10 stresses the point regarding the purposes of God; they are not being “put off” but are currently/now [now - νυν, 2013, AD] being carried out.)

However, pausing for a moment, let us try to wrap our minds around what the Holy Spirit has just revealed. I believe this is a very powerful purpose statement which speaks of the ultimate intent of God for His Son and for those adoptees who are co-sharers with our Lord in his baptism which he experienced on Calvary’s cross at Passover some +/- 2000 years ago. I perceive this verse also has some very important (even, perhaps, uncomfortable collateral challenges to some of the prophetic convictions currently held by many of today’s believers) eschatological implications.

Does the phrase “the all things in Christ” refer to the all things in Christ in both the OT and NT? (“The all things” [*ta panta*] in the Greek text is a noun, neuter in gender and plural in person. Since it is a noun it could refer to persons, places or things). The question then arises, does *ta panta* refer to the persons/beings in Christ and/on the things on the two geographical sites i.e., the things on the earth and the things upon the heavens? Further, if “persons/people/angelic beings” are what the noun is referring to, does this phrase only apply to all of the believing elect beings at that time and to/for those believers in the dispensation in which the apostle Paul had just penned this phrase? If this is the case, what of those elect in Christ before this dispensation and/or ages spoken of in the NT books of Ephesians and Colossians? Does it refer to all those in Christ, those “by faith” OT Saints from Abel to the very last person of today’s dispensation or age who by faith accept the sacrifice of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ?

Another important element just previously mentioned, God the Father in this dispensation is “heading up”(anakephalaiosasthai – to head up, to sum up, bring to a head) the all things in Christ in this fulness (completion) of the times (kairon - seasons [pl,]). Did you note the plurality of the word seasons? This I believe argues the case, for there is more than a single age, period of time or a single season to which this passage applies.

As Ephesians, chapter 3, verses 10 and 11 declare, this “good news” (gospel [the manifold wisdom of God]) now being sent to the nations (Gentiles) is (apparently) being observed by the rulers and authorities in the heavenlies by God, using the instrumentality of the church to display His divine plan (vs. 10). All of this is in accordance with the purpose of the ages. Look at the actual text as it concerns the “purpose of the ages:

according to	the purpose	of the ages	which
κατα	προθεσιν	των αιωνων	ην
he made	in the Christ	Jesus the	Lord of us
εποιησεν	τω Χριστω	Ιησου τω	κυριω ημων

Please keep in mind, this summing/heading up in chapter 1, cannot be divorced from the “eternal purpose” for this operation of God the Father represents a grand expansion and the culmination of his overall/ultimate program(s) for the elect Jew and Gentile. Bringing this up to date, our manifestation into heaven (Colossians 3:1-5) is also a part of the overall heading up process.

In this heading up/completion of the *aions*, isn’t there a common unifying principal which puts all believers of all ages (*aions*), seasons (*kairos*), and God-ordained worship systems on an equal/equivalent plane before the Father, I believe Ephesians 4:1-6 speaks to and answers that query. The apostle indicates there is but one Hope in this heading up operation peculiar to this ultimate “purpose of the ages” (ONE, not two or more hopes. ONE Baptism, not two or more baptisms.

ONE Faith, not two or more faiths). Further, I find it difficult to entertain the thought that in the future there will be separate “by faith” redeemed groups realizing their future hope at different sites/places (i.e. earth, the above heavens). I believe God the Father will assemble all of his families in the above heavens (επουουρανιοις [Ephesians 1:1-5, esp. v,3]) from Abel to now, down before His throne “down before his eyes” (Ephesians 1:4), where he will declare to all of his elect that they are

“holy and without blame”

Putting It Another Way

Found in these two references (Ephesians 3 and Colos-sians 1) are momentous truths. They are not OT and NT covenant add on's. They stand alone. Yes, they are built upon “the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone” (Eph. 2:20). However, this “mystery gospel” is, as stated earlier, to be the “purpose of the ages.” All of the Jewish/Levitical types and ceremonies with their Messianic calling and hope to the apostle Paul as he wrote these two epistles are historically passed and eschatologically fulfilled and completed in AD 70. Chapter 1 of Ephesians provides us with an index of the position of the believer now that he has been joined with the Jew, forming a new humanity, a “new man.” Not a Gentile nor a Jew, but an entirely new man (ανθρωπος).

(13) But now in Christ Jesus He made nigh those far off (Gentiles) by the blood of Christ. (14) For He is our peace who made both one and broke down the middle wall of partition between us. (15) As he abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace.

Ephesians 2

Chapter 1 of Ephesians provides some further depth, content and commentary of this “purpose of the ages:”

- In whom (the Christ, the beloved Son) we were chosen (as his inheritance) being predestinated according to the purpose of him (the Father) who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. (vs. 11)
- Verse 12 makes a remarkable statement: “That we should be,” in the Greek text is εἰς - for, to into, literally, “for the to be us to (εἰς - for) the praise of the glory of him the ones (believing Jews) previously hoped in Christ.” Is this teaching us that we are trophies of God because of what the Son did for us some 2000 years ago? I believe it does! (How great is this?) “in whom ye also (believing Gentiles) trusted after hearing the word (logos) of the truth the gospel of the salvation of you ye also believed ye were sealed (*esphragisthete* - to seal, stamp with a seal, to set a mark upon, distinguish by a mark, to mark distinctly, [aor., pass.]) with the Holy Spirit (not power from on high but the person of the Spirit, the Holy) of Promise, (i.e.) the down payment (vs. 13)...
- ...Who is (the person of the Holy Spirit) the pledge, earnest, down payment of the inheritance which is:
 - ⇒ Being co-raised us up and co-seated us in the heavens in Christ Jesus (2:5) and we become...
 - ⇒ ...Co-heirs with Christ in all (without restriction) the Father has given Him (1:5)
 - ⇒ We have all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (1:3)
 - ⇒ We should be to the praise of His glory (1:12)

Little wonder the Apostle exhorts believers in verse 1:18 -

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints:

⇒ We should know the hope of his calling (Christ Jesus) for we co-share in this/his hope (1:18)

⇒ Perhaps a little under-emphasized truth lies in this verse, namely, because of the Father's total satisfaction with the work of His Son we are elevated to the status of the Father's inheritance. Considering the state of the believing humanity (even at its best), this engracement to his believing human family should cause a weakness in our knees and make us bow before him in thanksgiving and praise (in a very few words, A.T. Robertson¹⁰ so well sums up the thought of this weighty phrase*, "Our riches is in God, God's is in His saints."). What a gift, what a position, what a loving, forgiving and justifying God!

CONCLUSIONS

I begin these concluding remarks by asking the reader, "What is a secret?" To the open minded person, is this a complicated question? Yet, in the area of biblical studies relating to eschatological and doctrinal matters this question of the gospel of the secret/mystery still remains a secret to many as it is largely ignored or, perhaps, even glossed-over, week after week, year after year by the clergy. It is relatively easy to teach or preach on those things which relate to the earthly ministry of our Lord Jesus, including his death, burial, resurrection and ascension. However, the fascinating and wonderful events relating to matters or events associated with the unveiling of the secret/mystery (found only in the epistles of Ephesians and Colossians), which include the Father's Son being seated and showered with magnificent and speechless glory and honor by God the Father, are very seldom touched upon. But it doesn't stop there. For reasons known only to

him, God our Father also blesses us co-heirs (believing mankind) with his Son, with all/every spiritual blessing where the Son-heir is seated, in the heavenly places.

As you read the pages of the NT the word “mystery”, according to *The Englishman’s Greek Concordance*¹¹, p. 511, occurs twenty seven times. In reading and evaluating each of these NT references listed (see END NOTE THREE, p. 46) you will note the varied passages where *musteeron* (μυστηριον) occurs. With the exceptions of the apostle Paul’s epistles of Ephesians and Colossians (ten occurrences in all), the other citations (including Paul’s earlier writings of Romans, 1st Corinthians, 2nd Thessalonians, and 1st Timothy), are primarily associated with Old and New Covenant matters. Thus, when the term *mystery* is found in those earlier epistles of Paul those “secret matters” (which are not concerned with joining the Jew and the Gen-tile in/to a new and unique and special familial union with God the Father) are related to and concern covenant (New and Old)/*kosmos*-matters, (refer to *AION-AIONON: Measuring Timeliness and Timelessness* [Scripture Research, Vol. 4. No. 17, pp. 45-68³] and *Christ and The Kosmoses* [Scripture Research, Vol. 4, No. 14, pp. 22-62²]).

Succinctly then, it can be stated that the Mystery (*musterion*) gospel which completes/fills to the full (*pleroma*) the Word of God (*logos*) and is addressed to the Jew and Gen-tile describing their special relationship with God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ as found in the Ephesian and Colossian letters is absolutely unique in the canon of the New Testament.

An interesting caveat to this unique and secret message is the following. In the former two paragraphs and confirmed in the Scriptures, the mystery was hidden from ages (*aeons* [see Colossians 1:26 and Ephesians 3:9]). Also, all of the generations (*geneais*) of mankind were not privy to the hidden agenda of God’s secret plan (Colossians 1:26, Ephesians 3:5) which he had hidden in his mind. It would appear all of his divine plans, designs, ultimate purpose(s) were being carried out “under wraps”, weaving and fitting together portions

found in the past *aeons* for his ultimate creation, for it states in Ephesians 2:10...

...For we are His workmanship (*poieema* - ποιημα*) created in Christ Jesus unto (επι -- on, upon, unto) good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them;

* That which is made or done; a work. Workmanship, creation⁸

And the ultimate and secret purpose of the *aeons*, (“HIS MANIFOLD WISDOM” [Ephesians 3:10], if you will!) is verified and validated in the following verse:

According to the eternal purpose (i.e., Gr. purpose of the ages [αιωνων] which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord... (AV)

... so that

WE (Jew and Gentile alike) SHOULD BE HOLY AND WITHOUT BLAME BEFORE HIM IN LOVE. HAVING PREDESTINATED US UNTO THE ADOPTION OF CHILDREN BY JESUS CHRIST TO HIMSELF, ACCORDING TO THE GOOD PLEASURE OF HIS WILL. (3:4, 5, AV)

What else is there to say?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Random House Webster's College Dictionary, Random House, New York, 1995
2. Asbell, Charles W, *Christ and the Kosmoses*. *Scripture Research, Vol 4, N0. 14*, Wilkins Printing, Atascadero, CA 2011
3. Charles W. Asbell & Timothy F. Conklin, *AIΩNAIΩNON: Measuring Timeliness and Timelessness*, *Scripture Research Vol. 4. No. 18*, Wilkins Printing, Atascadero, CA, 2012
4. Vine, W.E. *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words Vol. III*, Oliphants Ltd, London, 1946
5. Green, Samuel G., *Handbook To The Grammar of the Greek Testament*, Fleming H. Revell Co, New York
6. Wuest, Kenneth, *The New Testament, An Expanded Translation*, Wm. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1972
7. Schaefer, Russell, *THE Comings of The Lord*, *Scripture Research, Vol. 3, No. 4*. pp. 82-84.
8. *The Analytical Greek Lexicon*, Samuel Bagster & Sons, London
9. *The Companion Bible*, ed. E.W. Bullinger, side note, p. 1760 Kregel, Grand Rapids, MI, orig. pub. 1922
10. Robertson, A.T., *Word Pictures in The New Testament, Vol. 4, The Epistles of Paul*, p. 521 Broadman Press, Nashville, Tenn. 1931
11. *The Englishman's Greek Concordance To The New Testament*, Samuel Bagster and Sons, London, Orig. 1860, 1903, 9th ed.
12. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Vol. III*, p. 2053 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI, 1955
13. *The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament* (The Nestle Greek Text with a Literal English Translation by Alfred Marshall), Samuel Bagster and Sons, London, 1958

END NOTE ONE

Following is a direct quotation of Russ Schaefer's article found in *Scripture Research* (Vol. 3, No. 4, pp. 82-84) titled, *THE COMINGS OF THE LORD*. This is a lengthy but wonderful treatise on the subject of "in" or "among" as seen in Colossians 1:27.

"Christ in you the hope of glory." This, says Paul, is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles.

Whether the expression as given above, "Christ in you" gives the correct meaning to this passage or "Christ among you," as some prefer, is correct, cannot, as we have seen, be decided by others. Only we can decide which is correct. Context alone must decide the matter, for as we have seen, Biblical scholars have come down on both sides of the matter. Since it is context alone which must decide this matter, great care must be exercised in searching out the purpose of the Colossian Letter and its general intent.

If we assume that the expression, "Christ among You" is the correct translation and meaning, we must pause to ask ourselves how it fits in with the near and more remote context.

First, the near or immediate context: here we find that Paul states in verse 25 (Ch. 1) that he — for the sake of the church, His Body ~ has been made a minister of God to fulfill the Word of God in accordance with the stewardship that God had given to him on behalf of the Church. Paul goes on to state that it is the Mystery (the Secret) which has been hid from ages and gener-

ations that fills full the Word of God. He leaves no doubt that the Mystery that completes the Word of God is the very Mystery of which he has spoken and written of in Ephesians. It starts with God's secret desire of Eph, 1:9,10 and takes in God's engracing of the Church to make it His own special inheritance (Eph. 1:14), revealing the oneness of relationship between the Head and His Body and between each member — then goes on to speak of many other things which were all kept hidden and secret from all past generations until revealed to and through Paul. To this Church, Paul goes on to state:

God would make known what is the RICHES OF THE GLORY OF THIS MYSTERY among the Gentiles; which is Christ in/among (?) you, the Hope of Glory.

Is Paul saying that the "riches of the glory of this mystery" is Christ among you — the Gentiles?

Christ being preached among the Gentiles apart from the hope of Abraham or Israel is certainly a part of what is involved in the Mystery, but the Mystery involves much more than simply Christ being preached among the Gentiles apart from Israel and the Covenants. If we insist that it must be translated, "Christ among you" then we have redundancy in Paul's words. He would then be stating:

To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this MYSTERY AMONG THE GENTILES: which is ... CHRIST AMONG THE GENTILES.

The MYSTERY itself must be something less than the RICHES OF THE GLORY of the Mystery otherwise the words have no meaning. If the RICHES OF THE GLORY is nothing more than the Mystery, what then is the Mystery?

What about the remote context of this passage? What is the purpose of Paul in writing the Epistle? Is it not to reveal to us how God, in engracing His inheritance beyond what man ever dared to dream, has made us complete in all the perfections of Christ? Note, the expression "Riches of the Glory" follows after Paul has dealt with the perfections and superiority of Christ. In Col. 1:15 Christ is presented to us as the Image (*Ikon*) of the Invisible God, the Firstborn of all Creation. He is presented as the reason for creation. He is the Preeminent One (Before all things), He is the Sustainer of all things, He is the Head of the Body, the Church, He is the Beginning, He is the Firstborn from the dead, in Him ALL FULNESS DWELLS. What was Paul's point in laying before us his Christology at the time he does in this letter?

Was it done so that we would find it convenient to build a systematic theology and base our Christology on these very points? Or, was it because the total argument of the Epistle required that he first establish the perfections and superiority of Christ as a basis for what was to follow? The riches of the glory of the mystery depend on the superiority and perfections of Christ. It was necessary that this be fully established before what was to follow could be understood and appreciated. It is this Christ, the One in Whom all Fullness dwells, Who indwells

the believer and constitutes what is the "riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles."

Paul goes on in the second chapter of the letter to deal with the practical outworking of this inworked reality. He deals there with what it means to be "Complete in Christ" based upon the reality of the indwelling Christ.

The expression, "Christ among the Gentiles," tells us nothing more than we had already learned from Ephesians. Worse, however, is the fact that it ignores the context of Colossians and denies the thrust of Paul's argument. "CHRIST IN YOU" not only follows the natural progression of Paul's thought but makes the words:

RICHES OF THE GLORY

meaningful.

END NOTE TWO

The Mystery, The Millennium and Millennial Matters

In *The International Standard Bible Encyclopeida*¹² (page 2053 [published 1955]) we are provided with a brief and abridged comment on what constitutes the millennium:

The great majority of evangelical Christians believe that the kingdom of God shall have universal sway over the earth, and that righteousness and peace and the knowledge of the Lord shall everywhere prevail. This happy time is commonly called the Millennium, or the thousand years' reign. Divergent views are entertained as to how it is to be brought about. Many honest and faithful men hold that it will be introduced by the agencies now at work, mainly by the preaching of the gospel of Christ and the extension of the church over the world. An increasing number of men equally honest teach that the Millennium will be established by the visible advent of the Lord Jesus Christ. The aim of this brief article is to set forth some of the Scriptural grounds on which this latter view rests. No reference will be made to objections, to counter-objections and interpretations; the single point, namely, that the Millennium succeeds the second coming of Jesus Christ, that it does not precede it, will be rigidly adhered to. Those who hold this view believe that neither Christ nor His apostles taught, on fair principles of interpretation, that the Millennium must come before His advent.

There are a two or three items in this definition I wish to

parse using some widely respected and accepted linguistic views in this matter.

Referring to line six in the quotation the statement is made “... the millennium or thousand years’ reign.” This term (thousand years) is found in the following NT references:

2nd Peter 3:8

Revelation 20: 2 without article “a” thousand years

3 with def. article “the” thousand years

4 without article “a” thousand years

5 with def. article “the” thousand years

6 with def. article (?) “the thousand years

7 with def. article “the” thousand years

The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament¹³ renders verses 20:2 and 20: 3 accordingly –

(2) και εκρατησεν τον δρακοντα, ο οοφισ ο
and he laid hold [of] the dragon, the serpent the

αρχαιος, ος εστιν Διαβολος και ο Σατανας,
old, who is devil and the Satan,

και εδησεν αυτον χιλια ετη,
and bound him [a] thousand years,

(3) και εβαλεν αυτον εις την αβυσσον και εκλεισεν
and cast him into the abyss and shut

και εσφραγισεν επαω αυτου ινα μη πλανηση
and sealed over him in order he should not deceive

ετι τα εθνη αχρι τελεσθη τα χιλια
longer the nations until are finished the thousand

ετη μετα αυτα δει λυθηναι αυτον
years; after these things it behoves to be loosed him

μικρον χρονον
[a] little time

These two Book of Revelation verses represent the “one thousand year” occurrences where the definite article is used (vs. 2) and one where it is not used (vs. 3). Whether this is an important matter or difference is not clear. There is however, a very important “chronological/time issue” which the translators of the NT overlooked or failed to convey to the reader of Scriptures as it bears heavily on the correct meaning of the term “the thousand years.” This term, in the Greek text is as follows.

With the article = τα χιλια ετη
the thousand years

Without the article = χιλια ετη
[a] thousand years

Checking The Analytical Greek Lexicon⁸ it is interesting to note the following:

τα = in the Greek language “τα”, is stated to be a plural, feminine, definite article.

χιλια (chilia - thousand(s)) = a nominative or accusative, plural, neuter noun

ετη (etee - year(s)) = nominative or accusative, plural noun

Therefore, the phrase, the or a thousand years should be translated, “the” or “[a]” thousand(s) years (plural). Nor should it be rendered “the” or “[a]” thousand years (singular). What does this change in “singularity” to “plurality” mean or imply? In translating this phrase literally, a period of 1000 years is implied but the cold reality in this matter argues for a period of at least two 2000 years. While some/many Bible

commentaries and expositors take this phrase to be a literal 1000 years (composed of 365 days/year), others consider it to be figurative or allegorical in intent. It must be remembered the entire Book of Revelation is rich in figures and signs. Further, it was written by a human author who was inspired by the Holy Spirit, yet he possessed an “eastern mind-set”, not a “western” one. I believe it is safe to say, *chilia* (χιλία) as found in the book of Revelation is not a period of a literal 1000 years composed of 365 days/year! Further, I am convinced *chilia* refers to a unique and special period of time associated with the binding (the) Devil who is the Satan (Revelation 20:2, 3) for a special, short in length time and then released after a little season (*micron chronon*).

Perhaps, 2nd Peter 3:5-13 will shed some light on the term and usage of *chilia* as it is used in the eschatological contexts of this book and the Book of Revelation...

...(5) For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: (6) Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: (7) But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

(8) But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day *is* with the Lord as a thousand years (*chilia*), and a thousand years (*chilia*) as one day. (9) The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

(10) But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements

shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

(11) *Seeing then that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness, (12) Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? (13) Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

In this context there is no question this *chiliad* of years (*etee*) cannot be referring to a literal 1000 year period (each year consisting of 365 literal days). No, it no doubt symbolically signifies a special or unique single/one (*mia* [vs. 8]) “day”. Not a literal 24 hours day (whatever is implied or the circumstances associated with this unusual [?] “day”). It should be noted with interest that the “*chiliad etee*” judgment scenes found in 2nd Peter 3 are (I suggest) no doubt descriptive of similar events and provide further commentary on those divine judgments found in Revelation 20. Thus, there is a biblical precedent for “the thousand years” as being symbolic when found in the NT.

The Opening of The Bottomless Pit and The *Chilia*

The phrase, “The Bottomless Pit” (*abyss*) as found in the 20th chapter is not exclusively found in this section of the Book of Revelation. What are the circumstances or events associated with the other occurrences of the abyss in this same book? Follow me:

Revelation 9:1-

The event is associated with fifth trumpet judgment. Here the bottomless pit (Gr. *abussou*, [abyss]) is opened, allowing for the release of the “scorpions” including their lea-

der-king (vs. 11). Note, these judgmental events apparently occur sometime during the middle of the *Apocalypse*, not its end (see vs. 5). Also, verse 12 indicates these events are all part of the fifth trumpet judgment (comp. vs. 9:1 with 9:12 and 13).

Revelation 11-

With the ending of the ministry of the two witnesses (vs. 3-7) which occurs after 1,260 days (3½ years [vs. 3]). The beast is released from the bottomless pit, *abussou* (abyss [vs. 7]) and proceeds to kill the two witnesses, leaving their bodies on display in the “great city”— Jerusalem. This release of the beast out of the abyss in this context does not occur at the end of *Apocalypse* since these events constitute only the end of the Second Woe (vs. 14).

Let me suggest or propose the following. When the three “bottomless pit, (abyss)” contexts are carefully analyzed and compared with each other it would appear the Devil/Satan/the Beast prior to the events of the *Apocalypse* was bound and incarcerated in the abyss/bottomless pit (αβυσσου) and subsequently released only once during the judgmental events found in the book of *Revelation*! Should this suggestion be adopted it will go a long way in helping to interpret (and help with the establishment of its chronological events) and explain the *Book of Revelation* as a whole.

When was the Devil/Satan/The Beast incarcerated? Good question! As a given, the Devil and his minions were active prior to the Lord’s crucifixion. Hence, sometime after the events of Calvary the imprisonment occurred. In reading the *Book of Acts* and several of the epistles of Paul, there are also statements which indicate his activities prior to his incarceration. Examples:

Acts 5:3 Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost...?

- Acts 26:18 To open their (Gentiles) eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan...
- 1st Cor. 5:5 To deliver such an one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh... (written by Paul the Apostle, circa 57 AD⁹)
- 2nd Cor. 12:7 ...there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan... (written by Paul the Apostle, circa 58 AD⁹)
- Eph. 4:27 Neither give place to the devil... (Written by the Apostle circa 61 AD⁹)
- 2nd Thess. 2:9 Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan ... (written by Paul the Apostle Paul, circa 53 AD⁹)
- Rev. 20:7 (last occurrence in the Scriptures) And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be released. (Written by John the Apostle [?] after his banishment to the isle of Patmos, perhaps between AD 33 and AD 50)

Significantly absent (and I believe important) from the above list of occurrences of the Devil/Satan in the NT is its total absence from the Apostle Paul's letter to the Colossians. Let us digress for a moment, let us also be intellectually honest and open to the leading of the Holy Spirit in this matter as to when the books of the NT were written.

Certain things are obvious! For instance, the Scriptures indicate the disciples' ministry was directed solely to the covenant people and concerned their prophesied Messiah and consisted of the messianic message/gospel which also included a personal salvation provision for the Jew's themselves. In the early years of apostle Paul's ministry he directed his message/gospel to those of the Jewish *diaspora* (the apostle Peter also ministered to some of the *diaspora* early in his ministry [1st Peter 1:1]). It was also extended to those Gentiles who desired to accept the Jewish faith and hope and become prosel-

ytes. As the book of Acts reveals, the New Covenant message was preached and extended by the disciples in the land (including those in Jerusalem and the Jewish leaders) and to those outside the confines of Canaan, the promised land. As a whole, in the “land”, the children of the Covenant emphatically rejected the preaching of the twelve apostles culminating in a major crisis in the land and in Jerusalem particularly, consisting in part of the leaders (political and religious) rejecting the message of the Twelve and resulting in part of the true believers having to flee or be persecuted by the Jewish hierarchy (perhaps some of the people of the *diaspora* ?) [see Acts 8 and 9]). No doubt one of the major players in the persecution of the true believers by the Jew’s hierarchy was Saul of Tarsus. Yet, Acts chapter nine reveals some of the mind of Jehovah God by humbling this tyrant and raising him up to serve God in a special way, namely, to become the apostle to the Gentiles and commissioned him to preach the gospel (the so-called Great Commission) to those outside the land. A mission he accomplished (see Colossians 1:25-29).

Clearly Paul’s early ministry was that of preaching a New Covenant (NC) message only. As time passed and the events found in the Book of Acts unfolded, I believe it is safe to say most of the Jews outside the land also rejected this NC gospel. In Acts 28:20-31 Luke the physician, inspired by the Holy Spirit, records Paul’s declaration to those Jews and Gentiles in Rome, the capital city of the known inhabited world. Note the following:

- For the hope of Israel (not the Church of the secret) Paul was bound (vs. 20)
- Paul expounded on the Kingdom of God, the law of Moses and the prophets (vs. 23)
- Verses 25-27 summarizes the reception of those Jews he had preached to during his Acts ministry
- Because of the negative reception by the Jews, as recor-

ded in the book of Acts, Paul, in vs. 28, states his future ministry would be directed primarily to the Gentiles rather than the former mode, “to the Jews and then to the Gentiles.”

- Paul preached for two whole years in his hired house proclaiming (*keerusso*) the kingdom of God, not the gospel of the Secret. (vss. 30, 31)

Clearly the Devil/Satan was active during the first part of the Acts period. It should also be noted that his activities were primarily directed to negating the NC gospel ministries of the Twelve Apostles. According to the Apostle Peter the message by these heralds consisted of fulfilling the predictions of the OT Prophet Joel calling for the repentance of the children of Israel/covenant people (Acts 2:14-21, cp. Joel 3:27-3:18) to accept both their prophesied Messiah, Jesus Christ, and his atoning sacrificial death for their sins, and to anticipate a time of great blessings in the land should they embrace and accept the gospel preached by the apostles.

The NT clearly reveals the apostles attempted to reach the Jews within the land of Canaan and those of the diaspora outside the land. The apostles including Paul, Barnabas and Silas, to name a few, preached and taught a NC message to those in Asia Minor, Greece, Rome and various cities and the provinces of: Macedonia, Thrace, Achaia, Dalmatia, etc.

Let us not forget, the matter before us relates to the incarceration of the Devil/Satan. I suggest the following (which reflects a preterist eschatological conviction on my part): the imprisonment of the Devil occurred at least two years after the close of the book of Acts. Further, it possibly occurred just prior to or as the apostle Paul was writing the epistle of Ephesians (for some the activities of the Devil/Satan are stated in chapters five and six; and as a further refinement, before the writing of the epistle of Colossians.

END NOTE THREE

The following is an unabridged listing of verses as found in *The Englishman's Greek Concordance*¹¹, page 511, representing every reference found in the NT.

μυστηριον, musteerion,

- Mat.13:11. to know the *mysteries* of the kingdom Mar
4:11. the *mystery* of the kingdom of God:
Lu. 8:10. the *mysteries* of the kingdom of God
Ro. 11:25. should be ignorant of this *mystery*,
16:25. of the *mystery*, which was kept secret
Co. 2: 7. the wisdom of God in a *mystery*,
4:1. stewards of the *mysteries* of God.
13: 2. and understand all *mysteries*,
14: 2. in the spirit he speaketh *mysteries*.
15:51. Behold, I shew you a *mystery*; We
Eph 1:9. unto us the *mystery* of his will,
3: 3. made known unto me the *mystery*;
:4. knowledge in the *mystery* of Christ
:9. the fellowship of the *mystery*,
5:32. This is a great *mystery*: but I speak
6:19. to make known the *mystery* of the gospel,
Col 1:26. the *mystery* which hath been hid
:27. this *mystery* among the Gentiles ;
2:2. *mystery* of God, and of the Father,
4:3. to speak the *mystery* of Christ,
1Th.2:7. For the *mystery* of iniquity doth already
Ti. 3: 9. Holding the *mystery* of the faith
:16. great is the *mystery* of godliness:
Rev.1:20. The *mystery* of the seven stars
10:7. the *mystery* of God should be finished,
17:5. MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT,
:7. the *mystery* of the woman

(inside of back cover)

- > With reference to the separation of the nations at the second coming of Christ. (Matthew 25:34)
- > With reference to the character of those who killed the prophets sent to them. (Luke 11:50)
- > With reference to the typical character of the Sabbath. (Hebrews 4:3)
- > With reference to the character of the sacrifice of Christ. (Hebrews 9:25-26)
- > With reference to the names written in the Book of Life. (Revelation 13:8; 17:8)

"*Before*" the foundation of the world (*cosmos*) occurs three times in the New Testament.

- > With reference to Jesus Christ alone. (John 17:24 and 1 Peter 1:19,20)
- > With reference to the Church, the Body of Christ. (Ephesians 1:4)

The Meaning of Foundation

This biblical array of these two words and phrases (*from* and *before* the foundation of the world (*cosmos*)) allows us to establish a conclusion: The New Testament clearly speaks about two distinct era's or time periods associated with the "foundation" of the world (*cosmos*). There are two Greek words used in the NT for "foundation."

* *themelios* (noun) - Luke 6:48; 14:29; Romans 15:20; Corinthians 3:10,11,12; Ephesians 2:20; 1 Timothy 6:19; 2 Timothy 2:19; Hebrews 6:1; 11:10; Revelation 21:14,19. This word form is never used of the world or earth.

themiloo (verb) — Matthew 7:25; Luke 6:48; Ephesians 3:17; Colossians 1:23; Hebrews 1:10; 1 Peter 5:10. This word form is used only once of the earth.

* *katabole* (noun) - Matthew 13:35; 25:34; Luke 11:50; John 17:24; Ephesians 1:4; Hebrews 4:3; 9:36; 11:11; 1 Peter 1:20; Revelation 13:8; 17:8.

(continued on backside of cover) →
(outside of back cover)

katabollo (verb) — 2 Corinthians 4:9; Hebrews 6:1; Revelation 12:10. With two exceptions, this word is always connected with the cosmos. It literally means to cast down, overthrow and speaks of disruption and ruin.

The second form of the Greek word (*katabollo*) has entered the English language as a biological term in reference to metabolism. Metabolism is the process in an organism or a living cell by which nutritive materials are turned into living matter. This process is actually divided into two aspects. First, constructive metabolism (called "anabolism") is when protoplasm is broken down into simpler substances to perform special functions. Secondly, when the metabolic process turns destructive, pernicious and disruptive, it is called "catabolism" (note: *katabole/katabollo*.)

Katabollo occurs thirty-one times in the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Hebrew Old Testament). In every instance, the meaning of the word is shown to be destructive, not constructive. When the Septuagint translators wanted to speak of a constructive building process, they consistently used *themelioo*.

Additionally, the context of each occurrence of *katabollo* in the Septuagint is that of battle, siege, devastation and judgment. Nine different Hebrew words are represented in the choice of the Septuagint translator's Greek *katabollo*, and each one of these Hebrews terms also means destruction, spoiling or causing to fall.

Consequently it would appear the "foundation" of Ephesians 1:4 is not a founding at all, but rather an overthrow. And the overthrow or disruption of the world (*cosmos*) spoken of in that passage is an event forming a great diving line in the dispensations of the ages. Only the Church of the one body is called according to the Divine purpose made prior this peculiar and distinctive event.

While the issue is heavily debated among Bible students, could this *destruction* ("foundation") of the world referred to in Ephesians 1:4 be a reference to the so-called "gap" between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2—when the earth became "without form and void?" One defender of the discontinuity between these two verses is Arthur Custance. He translates Genesis 1: 2 like this:

But the earth had become a ruin and a desolation.
(*Without Form and Void*,

Arthur C. Custance, Doorway Publications, Brockville, Canada, 1989).