

Who Receive the Secret?

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The following excerpts come from an article by A. E. Knoch entitled "Who Receive the Secret?"

Only Paul proclaimed "the secret"

The Secret that, in spirit, the nations are to be *joint* allottees, and a *joint body*, and *joint* partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus, through the evangel of which Paul was the dispenser (Ephesians 3:6) was not made public until after he was a prisoner in Rome. (36)

Peter, in his epistles, is upholding the prior place of Israel over the other nations, in flesh, on the earth. Paul reveals the equality of the nations with them, in spirit, in the heavens. Not only Peter, but all of the Circumcision epistles, from Hebrews to Jude, and including Revelation, are saturated with Israel's superiority and base almost all blessing on a physical relationship to Messiah. Paul himself, in his earlier ministries, had "known Christ according to flesh" (2 Corinthians 5:16). (37)

The promise in Christ Jesus included such transcendent blessings as justification, reconciliation, and glorification, and all flow from unforced favor. It also includes a future salvation from coming indignation (Romans 5:9), and our assembling to Him before the day of indignation should set in (2 Thessalonians 2:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 4:13-18; 5:9). (39)

Thus the expectation set before those who receive Paul's evangel is to be fulfilled prior to that held by the Circumcision. (39) ... "who are pre-expectant [in a state of prior expectancy] in the Christ" (Ephesians 1:12). (40)

The gentiles among them were not to take a subordinate place to the holy nation on the earth. Instead, they were to be joint enjoyers of the celestial allotment with a few of the Circumcision who also had received Paul's evangel and who had the prior expectation. (40)

Paul, separated from the rest by the spirit (Acts 13:2), learning nothing from them (Galatians 1:12; 2:9), receiving added revelations (2 Corinthians 12:1-4, etc.), the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the nations (Ephesians 3:1), the fullest expositor of the secret of Christ (Ephesians 3:4), and the only one who can enlighten us as to the present secret administration (Ephesians 3:9). (42)

Early hints of "the secret"

Paul knew this secret when he wrote to the Corinthians. It seems that he even made it known in a private way to those who were mature (1 Corinthians 2:6-10). What else could he refer to when he says, "but we are speaking God's wisdom in a secret, which has been concealed, which God designates beforehand, before the eons, for our glory"? He plainly predicts its public revelation in the twelfth and fourteenth chapters, when not merely individuals would be mature, but the era of maturity should arrive.

It is more than probable that he had received the revelation of it fourteen years before (2 Corinthians 12:2), when he was snatched away to the third heaven. He knew this secret before he had penned any of his epistles. Hence, they were written with it in mind, and with the object of preparing the readers for its reception. God was ordering all of Paul's acts and words in view of the impending deluge of grace, which could not come until the full apostasy of Israel. Then, after the apostle warns the Jews that the salvation of God is dispatched to the nations, and that they will hear (Acts 28:28), he commits the secret to writing. (43)

"Adjustment" is needed

Teachers were specially given for the *adjusting* of the saints to the new revelation (Ephesians 4:12). ... They needed to be adjusted to these later disclosures. ... The same adjustment is needed today and should be the chief function of a teacher who knows the truth, for many believers have not only failed to understand the secret, but they cling to that which has been

discarded by it, and even to that which never had a place in any of Paul's writings or ministry. Indeed, the word "adjusting" seems quite inadequate for some, who are almost wholly occupied with matters pertaining to Israel and the twelve apostles. (44)

What about the gentiles in Acts?

The question is often asked, "If the Acts does not deal with the body of Christ, who are those of whom James speaks when the subject of the nations comes up at the apostolic counsel (Acts 15:14)? Is not God visiting the nations now, to take out of them a people for His name? James is speaking of the place accorded the nations in the prophets. He refers especially to the preaching of the Kingdom by Peter, who was the first to go beyond the Jewish pale in his proclamation. The passage that he quotes has a specific fulfillment at the time of the end, when the tabernacle of David is rebuilt. After the nations are almost destroyed by the judgments, the rest of them will seek the Lord. James and the other leaders of the Circumcision had then no inkling of the secret. (45)

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