

DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN PROPHECY AND MYSTERY

* * * A DISPENSATIONAL KEY TO UNDERSTANDING SCRIPTURE * * *

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Soli Deo Gloria!

"And to make all *men* see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hidden in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ."
(Ephesians 3:9)

Introduction. Much misunderstanding among students of the Bible results from a failure to make proper distinctions. Indeed, scripture commands the student to "rightly divide the word of truth" (2Tim2:15). C. I. Scofield, in his classic booklet *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*, highlighted ten important distinctions; the very first chapter addresses proper distinctions between the Jew, the Gentile, and the Church of God. This article explores a related, but absolutely vital, distinction between prophecy and the mystery, which is the key to seeing the proper distinctions between: 1) the nation of Israel, her Messiah, and His coming Kingdom, versus 2) the Church (which is the Body of Christ), its Head, and the present dispensation.

Prophecy vs. Mystery. The nation of Israel, her Messiah, His suffering/death, and His coming Kingdom are grand subjects of **prophecy** that run throughout the entire Bible (cf. Luk1:67-77; Act3:18-26). In stark contrast, the Church (which is the Body of Christ) and its relationship to Christ as Head of the Body (Eph1:22-23), which is being built only during the present Dispensation of the Grace of God (Eph3:2), was a **mystery** first revealed to the Apostle Paul (cf. Rom16:25; Eph3:3,9), even though it was part of the "eternal purpose" of God "from the beginning of the world" (1Cor2:7-8; Eph3:9,11). By "mystery" is not meant truth that cannot be known, but truth kept secret (thus, unknown) until revealed by God. There are good reasons God kept this aspect of His plan a secret, but a study of those reasons goes beyond the scope of this article.

This means that revelation concerning the Church as the Body of Christ and the Dispensation of Grace (i.e., the Church Age) is found only in the epistles of Paul (i.e., Romans through Philemon); stated from the opposing perspective, prophetic revelation given prior to the Apostle Paul (i.e., the Old Testament, the Gospels, and Acts 1-8) cannot pertain to the Church as the Body of Christ or the present dispensation. Unfortunately, this vital (Biblical) distinction between prophecy and mystery has gone completely unrecognized by non-dispensational students of the Bible; more concerning, however, is that it has been applied inconsistently even by those who would call themselves Dispensationalists.

Charts. The CHART, titled "Distinctions between Prophecy and Mystery", highlights some selected (but important) distinctions between prophecy as spoken by the prophets since the beginning of the world and the revelation of the mystery given exclusively to the Apostle Paul. The CHART, titled "Rightly Dividing the Kingdom of God", presents the

relationship between Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God, taking the distinctions between prophecy and mystery into account.