

Q: When Did Satan Learn the Mystery? Tracing His Discovery Through Paul's Epistles |  
Rightly Dividing with David Reid

Q: Before we consider WHEN Satan learned the mystery, let's first consider HOW he learned the mystery?

Deu 29:29 KJV - The secret [things belong] unto the LORD our God: but those [things which are] revealed [belong] unto us and to our children for ever, that [we] may do all the words of this law.

The secret things belong unto God

God reveals them to whom He will when He chooses

1Pe 3:18 KJV - For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

1Pe 3:19 KJV - By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;

1Pe 3:20 KJV - Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

The LJC spoke to the spirits in prison b/c He wanted them to know of His victory

There is no verse in scripture where God tells Satan about the mystery

Scripture indicates that the heavenly principalities and powers learn of the mystery by observing the BOC

Eph 3:9 KJV - And to make all [men] see what [is] the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

Eph 3:10 KJV - To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly [places] might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

This is an ultimate power move by God

God completely defeats Satan's heavenly rebellion through the mystery and then doesn't even tell Satan about it

God lets Satan find out about it secondhand through Paul's ministry

Ephesians is one of the last letters that Paul writes

Q: How can it be that the principalities and powers are coming to know the mystery at such a late date?

The mystery is a massive defeat & humiliation for Satan

Col 2:13 KJV - And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

Col 2:14 KJV - Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

Col 2:15 KJV - [And] having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

Q: How can it be that the principalities and powers are coming to know the mystery at such a late date?

A: The logical conclusion is that Satan came to understand the mystery much earlier, but Satan did not share that information with the fallen angels at that time because it was an embarrassment to Satan

Satan doesn't tell his subordinates b/c it is his humiliation

Thus, the fallen angels have to come to this realization on their own

Satan learned the mystery from observation of the BOC, particularly the observation of Paul

Act 19:13 KJV - Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.

Act 19:14 KJV - And there were seven sons of [one] Sceva, a Jew, [and] chief of the priests, which did so.

Act 19:15 KJV - And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?  
While we all think ourselves to be super important, the reality is that evil angelic authorities do not take notice of the vast majority of humanity. But they did take notice of Paul

It would seem that Satan & his minions would take notice of Paul b/c of what occurred on the road to Damascus and Paul's subsequent ministry

Act 26:12 KJV - Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests,

Act 26:13 KJV - At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.

Act 26:14 KJV - And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? [it is] hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

Act 26:15 KJV - And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

Act 26:16 KJV - But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;

Act 26:17 KJV - Delivering thee from the people, and [from] the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,

Act 26:18 KJV - To open their eyes, [and] to turn [them] from darkness to light, and [from] the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

The LJC appears to Paul singularly and not the rest of humanity

This would indicate to Satan that Paul is going to play some important purpose in God's plans.

Q: Did Satan learn of the mystery on the road to Damascus?

Act 9:7 KJV - And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

Act 22:9 KJV - And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.

One verse says that they heard a voice

The other verse says that they did not hear the voice

Q: How do we reconcile these two verses?

A: Those around Paul hear a sound & understand that someone was speaking to Paul, but they did not comprehend what was being said

That is because God intended the revelation for Paul only

DW: I don't think Satan learns of the mystery by eavesdropping on the road to Damascus

Satan clearly took notice of Paul

1Th 2:18 KJV - Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.

2Co 12:7 KJV - And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

2Co 12:8 KJV - For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

2Co 12:9 KJV - And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Q: When did Satan learn the mystery?  
Let's approach this from both directions

Q: When is the earliest that Satan could have learned the mystery?  
A: Acts 9

Q: When is the latest that Satan could have learned the mystery?  
We will work backwards

1Co 2:7 KJV - But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, [even] the hidden [wisdom], which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

1Co 2:8 KJV - Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known [it], they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

1Cor is Paul's 4<sup>th</sup> letter in chronological order

1Cor is written in Acts 19

So Satan surely knew by Acts 19

Q: But did he know before then?

The epistle written right before 1Cor is 2Thess

2Th 2:7 KJV - For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth [will let], until he be taken out of the way.

The MOI is Satan's response to God's mystery of godliness

1Ti 3:16 KJV - And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

The mystery of godliness = the body of Christ

The MOI is a Satanic response to the MOG  
2Thess says that the MOI was already working  
So, Satan had to know the mystery before 2Thess  
2Thess is written in Acts 18

Next, consider 1Thessalonians

1Th 2:18 KJV - Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.

Satan is hindering Paul – very likely b/c Satan is trying to hinder the proclamation of the mystery  
Satan seems to know the mystery by Acts 18 by the time of Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> epistle

1Th 3:2 KJV - And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:

Rom 16:25 KJV - Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,

During the DOG, believers are established by (1) Paul's gospel and (2) the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery

A believer cannot be established without understanding the mystery

If understanding the mystery is necessary to be established, then Timothy had to have known the mystery prior to 1Thess in order to establish the saints

Paul's first epistle is Galatians

Galatians never uses the word "body" in relation to the BOC, but it does clearly refer to the BOC

Gal 3:27 KJV - For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Gal 3:28 KJV - There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

1Co 12:13 KJV - For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether [we be] Jews or Gentiles, whether [we be] bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

Gal 3 seems to be referring to the BOC, and the BOC is the great mystery that Paul proclaims

Eph 3:3 KJV - How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,

Eph 3:5 KJV - Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

Eph 3:6 KJV - That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

Eph 5:32 KJV - This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Paul is referring to the BOC in Galatians

Paul was teaching the mystery by the time of Galatians

Galatians is written shortly after Acts 16:23

Act 16:5 KJV - And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

This is the first time in the book of Acts that the churches are said to be established

For the churches to be established in the faith, they have to know the mystery

Paul seems to be preaching the mystery in Acts 16

Paul thus preaches the mystery before he wrote his first epistle

Let's go back to the Acts 9 timeframe

Gal 1:15 KJV - But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called [me] by his grace,

Gal 1:16 KJV - To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

Gal 1:17 KJV - Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

Paul went into Arabia in Acts 9

Gal 4:25 KJV - For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

DW: my personal belief is that when Paul goes into Arabia in Acts 9, he goes to Mt. Sinai

Q: What is the significance of Mt. Sinai?

A: Moses went up to Mt. Sinai for 40 days to receive from God the revelation that he was then going to teach

Exo 24:12 KJV - And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them.

Exo 24:18 KJV - And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.

DW: Similar to Moses receiving the OT law on Mt. Sinai, Paul likely received extensive revelation of the mystery while on Mt. Sinai.

Col 1:25 KJV - 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;

Col 1:26 KJV - [Even] the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:

Notice that the mystery is made manifest “to his saints”

That does not include Satan

Col 1:27 KJV - 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:

“To whom God would make known”

God wants the mystery made known unto His people (not the satanic powers)

When Paul is on Mt. Sinai receiving the mystery, I don’t think God allowed Satan to observe what is going on. It was a private lesson for Paul.

#### Paul’s first missionary journey

Act 13:2 KJV - As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

Act 13:3 KJV - And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid [their] hands on them, they sent [them] away.

Act 13:4 KJV - So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

Act 13:5 KJV - And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to [their] minister.

Act 13:6 KJV - And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name [was] Barjesus:

Act 13:7 KJV - Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God.

Act 13:8 KJV - But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.

Act 13:9 KJV - Then Saul, (who also [is called] Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him,

Act 13:10 KJV - And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, [thou] child of the devil, [thou] enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

Act 13:11 KJV - And now, behold, the hand of the Lord [is] upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

Act 13:12 KJV - Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.

This miracle in Acts 13 is a Jew being blinded and a Gentile coming to faith

This is symbolic of the dispensation of grace

This is the mystery that Paul writes of in Romans 11

Rom 11:25 KJV - For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

Act 14:26 KJV - And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.

Act 14:27 KJV - And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

When Paul returns to Antioch at the end of his first missionary journey, the journey is considered to represent God opening the door of faith unto the Gentiles

DW: Paul is preaching the mystery during his first missionary journey in Acts 13-14

DW: Satan learns of the mystery during the first missionary journey if not earlier through Paul's preaching

### Conclusion

- Paul knows the mystery and is preaching the mystery before he writes his first epistle, Galatians
- Paul likely receives the revelation of the mystery in Acts 9 at Sinai
- Paul is preaching the mystery during his first missionary journey in Acts 13-14, if not earlier
- Satan learned of the mystery through Paul's preaching and thus learned of it by the time of the first missionary journey, if not earlier
- But Satan doesn't tell the rest of the evil principalities and powers b/c the mystery is his humiliation so they have to figure it out on their own over time