

# Kingdom Economics

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## The Definition of Economy

The English word economy comes from the Greek word oikonomia, which means *administration* (of a household or estate); specifically a (religious) “economy”:—dispensation, stewardship. It is a combination of two words:

**Oikos** - Of uncertain affinity; a *dwelling* (more or less extensive, literally or figuratively); by implication a *family* (more or less related, literally or figuratively):—home, house (-hold), temple.

**Nomos** - From a primary word νέμω *nemō* (to *parcel out*, especially *food* or *grazing* to animals); *law* (through the idea of prescriptive *usage*), generally (*regulation*), specifically (of Moses [including the volume]; also of the Gospel), or figuratively (a *principle*):—law.

The word is translated **dispensation** four times in the New Testament:

1 Cor. 9:17 - ***For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.***

To better understand this verse, it is helpful to read the passage beginning at verse 16 and ending at verse 18. Paul is saying that preaching the gospel is nothing to glory in, because it is something that he must do, much like a slave taking no glory in carrying out his master's orders.

I was having lunch with brothers Norman Payne and LeRoy James. Norman shared something with us that really impacted us. In essence, he was sharing with us that the Lord revealed to him that there are things that he simply must do. And those things that he must do must take priority over everything else. This is the same urgency that Paul was stating. Another way of looking at verse 17 is that Paul is saying if he chooses to preach the gospel, then he could expect a reward; but if he does not do it by choice, then he is simply executing the charge that he has been entrusted with. He ends by saying that he preaches the gospel without charge, or at no cost, so that he does not abuse his power in the gospel. What gospel is Paul preaching? The same gospel of the kingdom that Jesus preached.

Eph. 1:10 - ***That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:***

Again, to appreciate the significance of this verse, it is helpful to begin at verse 9, where Paul explains that God has made known to us the mystery of his will. And what is his will? To establish his kingdom. Notice that Paul suggests in verse 10 that when things are complete, God is going to gather all things together, both in heaven and on earth, under the headship of King Jesus. This is a dispensation of the Spirit.

Eph. 3:2 - ***If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:***

Notice that the administration here is an administration of grace that was given to Paul for the benefit of others. In verse 3, Paul explains that it is a mystery that was made known to him by revelation. And the mystery is this as explained in verse 6 – that we as Gentiles are fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel. And what is that gospel? It is the good news of the kingdom of God.

Col. 1:25 - ***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;***

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Paul stated that God made him a minister according to God's household or family administration for our benefit. This administration is not an administration of material things, but of spiritual things. Paul also emphasizes that this dispensation is done to fulfill the word of God. This dispensation is done so that the gospel may be preached to every creature. Likewise, we are responsible for the dispensation that is given to each of us. We must be responsible managers of the gospel.

As previously stated, the word is also translated into various forms of steward or stewardship in the New Testament.

Luke 12:42 - **And the Lord said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?"**

Here, the Lord Jesus is speaking in parables to His disciples to explain that when He returns, He should find us doing what He has commissioned us to do. And what has He commissioned us to do? Preach the good news of the kingdom of God.

Luke 16:1 - **And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.**

We discussed this passage last week.

1 Cor. 4:1-2 - **Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.**

The Greek word for mystery is *mysterion*, which is from a derivative of *μύω* *muō* (to *shut* the mouth); a *secret* or "mystery" (through the idea of *silence* imposed by *initiation* into religious rites):—mystery.

The word *mum* is from the 1560s, from M.E. *mum*, *mom* "silent" (late 14c.), imitative of the sound made with closed lips, as indicative of unwillingness or inability to speak. Phrase *mum's the word* is first recorded 1704.

The irony of this Scripture is that we are to be ministers and stewards of this mystery, or this secret. We, then, are to reveal that which is hidden. This is what we have been called out of the world to do.

1 Pet. 4:10 - **As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.**

The word *steward* is translated *oikonomos*, which means a *house distributor* (that is, *manager*), or *overseer*, that is, an employee in that capacity; by extension a fiscal *agent* (*treasurer*); figuratively a *preacher* (of the Gospel):—chamberlain, governor, steward.

What do you notice about how the words *dispensation* and *stewardship* are used in these Scriptures?

Luke 16:2 - **And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.**

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The word steward in verse 2 is translated *oikonomeō*, which means to *manage* (a house, that is, an estate):—be steward. The word stewardship is translated *oikonomia*, which means *administration* (of a household or estate); specifically a (religious) “economy”:—dispensation, stewardship.

Luke 16:3 - ***Then the steward said within himself, “What shall I do?” “For my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.”***

Luke 16:4 - ***I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.***

Luke 16:8 - ***And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.***

Titus 1:7 - ***For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;***

The words steward and stewardship in these verses are translated *oikonomia*.