



Blackfoot Church of Christ

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The Dispensation of the Grace of God

By Joe R. Price

The word translated “dispensation” in our English Bibles (oikinomia) means the management of a stewardship (Strong’s Greek Dictionary, #3622, BDAG, 697). Vine’s Dictionary says the word oikinomia “primarily signifies ‘the management of a household or of household affairs’ (oikos, ‘a house,’ nomos, ‘a law’); then the management or administration of the property of others, and so ‘a stewardship,’ Luke 16:2–4” (Vine, II:174). So, a dispensation is a stewardship, the management and dispensing of the goods of the householder.

Dispensation is frequently (yet incorrectly) used to mean an age or a period time. W. E. Vine notes: “A ‘dispensation’ is not a period or epoch (a common, but erroneous, use of the word), but a mode of dealing, an arrangement or administration of affairs” (Ibid). As brother Raymond Harris observed, “The words dispensation and age have very different meanings” (“The Patriarchal Age,” Truth Magazine, XLVIII:11:1, June 3, 2004). Let us be careful not to confuse the two (1 Pet. 4:11).

Paul had a dispensation or stewardship given to him, namely his work of preaching (and thus dispensing the blessings of) the gospel (1 Cor. 9:17, 16-18). He amplified the nature of this dispensation in Ephesians 3:1-2: “For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you...” Paul’s charge as a “chosen vessel” of Christ (an apostle) was to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; 26:17-20). The apostolic gospel is how God dispenses His grace to the lost (Acts 22:14-15). Any attempt to separate God’s grace from the new covenant that came through the apostles is false, futile and doomed to fail (Gal. 1:6-9).

In Ephesians 3:3-7, Paul explained the dispensation of the grace of God he had been given. Since we require God's grace to be saved, it is essential that we understand how God dispenses His grace. Christians are the beneficiaries of this dispensation (Eph. 2:5, 8-9).

The dispensation of the grace of God was given by God to the apostles through divine revelation: "How that by revelation He made known to me the mystery" (Eph. 3:3). The gospel they preached provides grace and is from God, not men (Gal. 1:11-12). Any message that fails to conform to God's revelation given them, is not the gospel they preached (Gal. 1:6-7).

The dispensation of the grace of God involved apostolic preaching (1 Cor. 2:10-13; Heb. 2:3-4). From Pentecost, when they were baptized with the Holy Spirit, the apostles spoke "all the words of this life" (Acts 2:1-4, 14, 22, 40; 5:20).

The dispensation of the grace of God preserved the inspired writings of the apostles: "as I have briefly written already" (Eph. 3:3). The writings of Paul in Ephesians 1 and 2, along with the writings of Christ's apostles and prophets, are the word of God and constitute "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3; 1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Pet. 3:16; 2 Thess. 2:15; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). Without their inspired writings, God's grace would not be available today.

The benefit of dispensing the grace of God through a written revelation (inspired Scripture) is explained: "by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ" (Eph. 3:4). The Scriptures are to be read, understood and followed for our growth "in grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:16-18). Only by the Scriptures do we learn of God's grace that saves sinners. Only by the Scriptures are we instructed by God's grace in holy living (Titus 2:11-15). Only by knowing the Scriptures do we understand the apostles' knowledge in the mystery of Christ (Eph. 3:4).

The dispensation of the grace of God explains the mystery of Christ (Eph. 3:5-6). The "mystery of Christ" is God's plan to redeem sinners according to "His promise in Christ through the gospel" (Eph. 3:5-6). More to Paul's point, it contains God's plan to save Gentiles by the grace that is in Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:10-11; 3:5-6; Rom. 1:15-17).

As ministers of the gospel, the apostles fulfilled their dispensation of the grace of God. Their dispensation was to preach the gospel of God's grace (Eph. 3:8; Acts 20:24). Through their gospel, the powerful work of God saves the lost (Eph. 3:6-7; Rom. 1:16-17).

And so, the apostles were given the dispensation of the grace of God to preach the gospel to the world (Mk. 16:15; Acts 1:8). Their stewardship, to reveal the mystery of Christ to the world, has been fulfilled (Col. 1:25). Through the gospel, the apostles faithfully administered the distribution of God's grace to the world. In this gospel age, the dispensation of God's grace is provided through their teachings, the New Testament. As we believe and follow the apostles' teachings, we receive Christ, and stand in the grace of God (Jno. 13:20; Rom. 5:1-2).

Our First Allegiance

By Joe R. Price

He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. (Matthew 10:37, NKJV)

Jesus demands our first allegiance. The closest relationships we have are not to be given greater importance and priority than our faithfulness to Jesus Christ. In this matter, Jesus does not ask of us what He did not also do. Jesus did the Father's will, even when His brothers did not believe in Him (John 7:5). Jesus gave preference to those who follow the will of God instead of His own mother and brothers by saying, "whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother" (Matthew 12:49-50). We cannot choose family over God's truth, because truth sanctifies us, not family (John 17:17). Jesus was very clear about what discipleship requires. It requires loving Him more than we love our parents, our children, our siblings and everyone else. Otherwise, we are not worthy of Him and cannot be His disciple (Luke 14:26). The general religious community does not know this Jesus. The world certainly does not know this Jesus. Not a few Christians have trouble knowing this Jesus, too. But, this is the true Jesus. Family does not define faithfulness and fellowship with God in the Lord's church – the word of Christ does (1 John 1:5-7; 2 John 9-11). When you choose to follow Jesus, you are choosing to love Him more than your earthly family.

Prayer Requests & Announcements

- Tom & Kate are planning to travel to Alabama this week
- Ross & Debbie are visiting family in AR and will return back next Sunday
- Brenda and April are traveling to Twin Falls, then Boise for Dr Appointments.
- Keep April in your prayers as she deals with health issues
- The Christians in the Philippines.
- Monday night Bible class on Evangelism postponed till July

For prayer requests, call or text

Chad @ (208) 221-2587 or Ross @ (208) 680-6590

Assignments

<u>Today</u> Bible Study – David Porter Song Leader – Chad Mitchell Lord's Table – David Porter Sermon – Tom Mitchell	<u>Wednesday</u> Bible Study – Tom Mitchell Song Leader – David Porter Invitation –
<u>Next Sunday</u> Bible Study – Ross Ward Song Leader – Chad Mitchell Lord's Table – David Porter Sermon – Ross Ward	<u>Next Wednesday</u> Bible Study – Ross Ward Song Leader – David Porter Invitation – Ross Ward

Blackfoot Church of Christ
370 North Shilling Ave.
Blackfoot, Idaho 83221

Meeting Times:

Sunday Morning Classes 10:00AM
Sunday Morning Worship 11:00AM
Wednesday Evening 7:30PM



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