

The background of the entire page is a photograph of ancient stone ruins in a desert landscape. The ruins are made of large, weathered, reddish-brown stone blocks. In the foreground, two large, partially broken columns or walls frame the central text. The sky is a clear, bright blue. In the distance, there are rolling hills or mountains under a hazy sky.

What Is the Gospel?

Uncovering the Good News of the
G-d of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

Brady C. Stephenson

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The Four Spiritual Laws

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For my beloved bride, Amy, who is the embodiment of the “unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to G-d” (1 Peter 3:4). Through you, G-d has enabled me to be a husband, a father, and a far better man than I would ever have been without you. Thank you for your unfailing love, support, and patience while I was writing this book.

*It is the glory of G-d to conceal a matter,
but the glory of kings is to search out a matter.
(Proverbs 25:2)*

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Preface

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. (Matthew 7:7-8)

Many who seek after the G-d¹ of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob find great personal fulfillment and joy when studying the Bible. Indeed, it is an honor to search out what the Most High has imparted to us through His Word.

When I set out to find answers to my question regarding the gospel, it was only to examine yet another facet of the precious jewel that is G-d’s Word and learn about this specific topic. I had no intention of writing a book, but after sharing a portion of my studies at a men’s retreat, I began receiving encouragement to do just that. After much soul searching and prayer, I started this work in the hope that others who shared this question might be guided to the answers I had found without the same investment of time and effort.

When I transitioned from a personal study to writing a book expounding upon G-d’s Holy Word, I found myself among the host of others who preceded me and felt the weight and burden that many of them have described far more eloquently than I am able.

With this task came an (oftentimes overwhelming) awareness of being utterly unworthy of the high calling of our Lord, the Master of all works and Lord of all souls. For me, writing this book exposed the frailty of humanity and the challenges we face in comprehending even the tiniest portion of our infinite Creator. Most of all, it revealed the limitations of language—especially in printed format—at conveying the fullness of the concepts and ideas the Spirit has revealed. Truly the things of G-d are spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:14).

The Messiah said to His disciples,

“All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.” (Luke 10:22 emphasis added)

If there is any revelation of the Person or character of the Almighty found in this book, credit must be given to the Son who has revealed Him. Thanks be to G-d for such grace.

¹ In my walk of faith, I have chosen to follow the ancient convention of not fully writing out G-o-d in any place where it may be discarded or erased and instead treat this particular label for the Most High with an abundance of reverence and respect (Exodus 20:7, Leviticus 22:32, etc). I honor the choices of others and use their convention when quoting their work.

I find comfort in the words of Paul: “In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words...” (Romans 8:26). My sincere desire is that the same Spirit who helps our weakness in *prayer* will help my weakness in *writing* for the benefit of the reader.

Oh, Lord, may your Holy Spirit, Who guided, strengthened, and corrected me through this journey also guide, strengthen, and protect the reader from any misperception or error but instead lead them only to the truth of Your precious and holy Word.

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only G-d, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.
(1 Timothy 1:17)

Introduction

When discussing what we believe, Christians often use the word “gospel”. For almost two decades, any conversation involving the word “gospel” left me with a feeling that can only be summed up in the words of that great scholar and swordsman, Inigo Montoya:

“You keep using that word. I don’t think it means what you think it means.”

I didn’t know why I felt that way, but I did. Although I had been a believer for over twenty years, a comfortable grasp of the meaning of this word had eluded me.

Gospel.

What does the word *mean* and where did we get that meaning?

Etymology is the study of the origins of words, so I initially turned to Harper’s Online Etymology Dictionary for some help.

gos·pel

Old English *godspel* "glad tidings announced by Jesus; one of the four gospels," literally "good spell," from god "good" (see good (adj.)) + spel "story, message" (see spell (n.1)).

A translation of Latin *bona adnuntiatio*, itself a translation of Greek *euangelion* "reward for bringing good news" (see evangel). The first element of the Old English word originally had a long "o," but it shifted under mistaken association with God, as if "God-story" (i.e. the history of Christ).

The mistake was very natural, as the resulting sense was much more obviously appropriate than that of 'good tidings' for a word which was chiefly known as the name of a sacred book or a portion of the liturgy. [OED]

The word passed early from English to continental Germanic languages in forms that clearly indicate the first element had shifted to "God," such as Old Saxon *godspell*, Old High German *gotspell*, Old Norse *goðspiall*.²

This answer—while scholarly and accurate—didn’t alleviate my Montoya-esque feelings. What were the “*glad tidings announced by Jesus*” and were those indeed the gospel?

About ten years into my walk of faith, I set the matter aside.

² (Harper, 2017)

A few years later, I spoke at a men's conference in South Texas and delivered a message entitled "They've Got the Wrong Gospel." A friend had prompted that particular topic when he had shared a shocking statistic: around 90% of children who grow up in evangelical homes make a decision to follow Christ, but only 22% of that group are still following Him by age 35.

Consider what those numbers mean.

Before they are 35 years old, 80% of kids raised in evangelical homes are not following Christ.

EIGHTY percent.

While investigating this claim and preparing for the conference, I discovered that Scot McKnight³ had quoted those same numbers based on research by the Barna Group. McKnight placed the blame for that 80% departure rate squarely on the fact that many churches today are preaching the wrong gospel.⁴ He asserts that Evangelicals have mistaken the plan of personal salvation for the gospel.

"This Plan of Salvation is not the gospel. The Plan of Salvation emerges from the Story of Israel/Bible and from the Story of Jesus, but the plan and the gospel are not the same big idea."⁵

In his book, *The King Jesus Gospel- Revisiting the Original Good News*, McKnight recounts a conversation with a fellow pastor:

At an airport, I bumped into a pastor I recognized... He asked me what I was writing, and I replied, "A book about the meaning of the gospel."

"That's easy," he said, "justification by faith." After hearing that quick-and-easy answer, I decided to push further, so I asked him [John] Piper's question: "Did Jesus preach the gospel?"

His answer made me gulp. "Nope," he said, "Jesus couldn't have. No one understood the gospel until Paul. No one could understand the gospel until after the cross and resurrection and Pentecost." "Not even Jesus?" I asked.

"Nope. Not possible," he affirmed. I wanted to add an old cheeky line I've often used: "Poor Jesus, born on the wrong side of the cross, didn't get to preach the gospel." My satire, if not sarcasm, would not have helped, so I held back.⁶

YES! This idea (the gospel is justification by faith) was the very thing I so often encountered! It is the predominant view among Protestants and especially among Evangelicals, but it was *this exact view* that, very much like cotton candy, seemed sweet but insubstantial, and left my hunger for the gospel

³ Author and professor of New Testament at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary

⁴ (McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel*, 2017)

⁵ (McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel*, 2011, p. 39)

⁶ (McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel*, 2011, p. 22)

unsatisfied. In the same way that the Protestant Reformation was incomplete in its return to the historical foundations of Christianity, this view of the gospel appeared to be incomplete as well.

Does this sound like the gospel?

- All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of G-d.
- The wages of sin is death.
- The gift of G-d is eternal life through Jesus.
- Believe in your heart that Jesus paid for your sin then you will be saved from hell.

How about this?

- God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life.
- Man is sinful and separated from God. Therefore, he cannot know and experience God's love and plan for his life.
- Jesus Christ is God's only provision for man's sin. Through Him, you can know and experience God's love and plan for your life.
- We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; then we can know and experience God's love and plan for our lives.⁷

These aren't the gospel. At least, not any gospel that Jesus or His disciples ever preached.

The first four are the key points in the message of personal salvation.

This particular message has been masquerading as the gospel since 1958 when Bill Bright (of Campus Crusade for Christ) came up with his tract entitled "The Four Spiritual Laws" (the second set of four bullets above). The efforts of Henrietta C. Mears and her book *What the Bible is All About* distributed this same "the gospel = salvation" concept throughout the world. Billy Sunday's creation of the "sinner's prayer" also occurred in the 1950s based on mass evangelism concepts introduced by Charles Finney and D.L Moody during the 1800s.⁸

McKnight makes the case that the reason 80% of children who grew up in evangelical homes are no longer following Messiah is because they lack the true gospel (which Paul declares is the power of G-d for salvation- Romans 1:16). They're merely reciting a formulaic prayer based on an incomplete gospel.

When we look back in time about 2,000 years, we find four men, all devoted disciples of the Messiah, who wrote entire **books** on the subject of the gospel. They were eyewitnesses (or spoke with eyewitnesses) to the life and work of the Christ. Believers refer to these books as the Gospel according to Matthew, the Gospel according to Mark, the Gospel according to Luke, and the Gospel according to John. These books have 16-28 chapters each, some of which contain 50+ verses and thousands upon thousands of words on this subject. As author D. Thomas Lancaster has observed, "All these presentations of the good news are fairly substantial and require a moderate degree of literacy."⁹

⁷ (Bright, 1965)

⁸ (Chitwood, 2001, pp. 35-38, 61)

⁹ (Lancaster, *Elementary Principles: Six Foundational Principles of Ancient Jewish Christianity*, 2014, p. 19)

Think about it.

The four bullet points of the "four spiritual laws" could fit on the back of a business card and we think **that** is the gospel? **That** is the power of G-d?

My message in 2014 did not answer the question of "What is the gospel?" It only presented the problem, shared some of the incomplete answers I had uncovered, and challenged the audience to pray and examine the matter for themselves.

In 2017, I felt compelled by the Spirit to begin researching the subject of "the gospel" further and put the matter to rest. Was the gospel something new that emerged, as German theologian Wilhelm Bousset phrased it, "on the first-century foundations of Late Judaism"¹⁰ or was it something much older?

After reading several books on the subject, I wanted to see what Scripture had to say for myself. After all, the Word is our ultimate authority on such matters. I began an extensive study and discovered something more powerful than I could have possibly imagined.

I hold a grammatical-historical hermeneutic¹¹ along with a few specific principles that should help the reader understand how I approached the text and arrived at my conclusions so I want to make them clear from the outset.

First, Scripture provides progressive revelation on any subject: The Bible first establishes the foundation of an idea and then builds upon it. The books or letters of Scripture written later *illuminate* and *expand upon*—but do not replace—that foundational understanding. For example, Scripture first mentions an explicit prohibition against murder after the Flood (Genesis 9:6). Millennia later, Messiah explained the commandment: we should even not harbor hatred towards others (Matthew 5:22). He illuminated and expanded humanity's understanding of the prohibition but did not replace it. Scripture does not contradict itself.

Second, determinations of whether a text should be interpreted literally or figuratively are evaluated first by the literary form of the text under consideration, the immediate context of the surrounding text, and historical use of the text or phrase as figurative language (or not). We cannot simply "explain away" difficult texts by claiming the writer used sarcasm or allegorical language.

Third, any proper subparts of a thing are not that thing (this is called linguistic quantization). For example, while the stem and seeds are part of an apple they don't count as "an apple" *by themselves* nor does a seat, steering wheel, or gear shift individually count as "a car". This principle enables us to examine and describe a topic independently from related subjects: we don't have to create an exhaustive, systematic theology of *everything* to understand one particular concept.

When studying a topic, I like to start at the beginning of the Bible, seek out every chapter and verse from Genesis through Revelation where I can find that topic and its related concepts, then develop an understanding from the collective meaning conveyed by those passages in its original, historical context.

By covering a subject exhaustively, I leave no stone unturned in the search for understanding.

So, I began at the beginning...

¹⁰ (Bousset, 1906, pp. 1, 475)

¹¹ Hermeneutics is the branch of knowledge that deals with interpretation, especially of the Bible or literary texts.

1- Begin at the Beginning

The Good News in Greek

Examining several English translations of the Bible, I only found the word “gospel” in the writings of the apostles—commonly called the “New Testament.” As far as we know, the Apostolic Scriptures were originally recorded in the Greek language, and the oldest and most abundant copies are in Greek.¹² Our English word “gospel” is translated from the Greek noun εὐαγγέλιον [*euaggelion*— pronounced *yoo-ang-ghel'-ee-on*— From the Greek εὖ (good) and ἄγγελος (messenger)] which means “glad tidings, good or joyful news.”¹³

However, the use of *euaggelion* in this manner is almost exclusively apostolic:

The Greek noun εὐαγγέλιον (neuter singular) is rarely found in the sense of “good tidings” outside of early Christian literature. We find εὐαγγέλιος (bringing good tidings) and the verb εὐαγγελίζεσθαι (to bring good tidings), but εὐαγγέλιον in classical Greek means a messenger’s reward (e.g. Odyssey xiv 152, 166). In the plural it means a sacrifice for good tidings (Xenophon, Aristophanes, Lucian, Plutarch, and inscriptions as early as the fourth century B.C.).¹⁴

Given that the English word “gospel” is found only in the Apostolic Scriptures, I wasn’t sure if I should begin my search in the book of Genesis or the book of Matthew. Was the gospel solely a “New Testament” concept? To find out, I had to examine **all** of Scripture but how could I connect the Greek *euaggelion* with the Hebrew Scriptures?

The Septuagint

The Tanakh¹⁵ (the Hebrew Scriptures often called the “Old Testament”) was translated into Greek around 200 to 300 BCE¹⁶. This ancient Greek translation is called the Septuagint—from the Latin *septuaginta*, “seventy,” referring to the seventy Jewish scholars who translated it.¹⁷ When searching this Greek translation of the Tanakh, I found the noun *euaggelion* in only one place: 2 Samuel chapter 4.

*David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and said to them, “As the LORD lives, who has redeemed my life from all distress, when one told me, saying, ‘Behold, Saul is dead,’ and thought he was bringing good news, I seized him and killed him in Ziklag, which was the reward I gave him for his **news** [euaggelion]. (2 Samuel 4:9-10)*

¹² (Snuffer, 2005, pp. 76-77)

¹³ (Mounce, 2011)

¹⁴ (Burrows, 1925, p. 21)

¹⁵ Tanakh (TNK) is the Hebrew acronym for the Torah (five books of Moses), Nevi'im (prophets), and Ketuvim (the psalms and other writings). Jesus described the Bible this way in Luke 24:44.

¹⁶ BCE: Before the Common Era- a term used for dating events before the first century.

¹⁷ (Septuagint, 2017)

I was surprised by this discovery and left with an initial conclusion that the gospel was, in fact, a “New Testament” concept. During my other research, however, I kept coming across the idea that Hebrew is a very active, verb-focused language. As Dr. Marvin Wilson¹⁸ notes in his book, *Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith-*

*The biblical writers often use vocabulary which is highly colorful, dynamic, and action-centered. They tell the story of a people on the move, a people who approached living with boldness, drive, and expectation.*¹⁹

For example, modern English Bibles translate Genesis 1:1 as “God created the heavens and the earth” using the common subject-verb-object sentence structure. The original Hebrew of this verse, however, has different sentence structure: $\text{וַיֵּצְרֵם אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ}$ directly translates as “created G-d the heavens and the land” with a verb-subject-object order. The verb comes *first*.

Perhaps I shouldn’t have been surprised by the single use of the noun *euaggelion* in the Tanakh. Maybe it should be *expected* given the nature of the original Hebrew language. Was there a verb form of “gospel” that I should be seeking instead?

Yes!

The Greek verb $\epsilon\upsilon\alpha\gamma\gamma\epsilon\lambda\acute{\iota}\zeta\omega$ [*euaggelizō*] corresponds to the noun *euaggelion* and means “to announce glad tidings”.²⁰ This verb form of “gospel” occurs 23 times in 20 verses of the Septuagint, and most of them are **enormously** rich with meaning.

When I began examining the first few instances of *euaggelizō*, however, they didn’t strike me as “good news.”

- 1 Samuel 31:9 (and the parallel passage in 1 Chronicles 10:9) is only “good news” for the Philistines: they had killed King Saul in battle.
- 2 Samuel 1:20 records King David’s lament over the “good news” of Saul’s death.
- 2 Samuel 4:10 contains King David’s recollection of the news of Saul’s death being delivered by a messenger who mistakenly thinks it is “good news”.
- 2 Samuel 18:19, 26, and 31 recount the death of Absalom after he rebelled against his father, King David.
- 1 Kings 1:42 records Adonijah’s attempted coup and his misperception that Jonathan, the son of Abiathar, the priest, was bringing good news.
- Jeremiah 20:15 includes Jeremiah’s lament of the “good news” of his birth given the dire circumstances of the time in which he lives.

These passages seem to use the verb *euaggelizō* in a darkly ironic manner.

¹⁸ Professor of Hebrew and Jewish Studies at Gordon College and OT translator and editor of the NIV Bible

¹⁹ (Wilson, 1989, p. 136)

²⁰ (Mounce, 2011)

This was not what I was expecting.

Once I reached the Psalms, however, I found truly **good** news.

2- The Good News in the Psalms

The Psalms were written between 1520 BCE and 420 BCE as prayers or hymns to be sung as praise to the Lord.²¹ The New Pilgrim Bible offers this:

A great many of the psalms were written by David; others were written by Asaph and the Sons of Korah; one was probably written by Moses (Psalm 90); and some believe that Solomon wrote two (Psalm 71; 127).²²

The first time *euaggelizō*²³ occurs in the Psalms is in chapter 40:

*Then I said, "Behold, I come;
In the scroll of the book it is written of me.
I delight to do Your will, O my God;
Your Law is within my heart."*

*I have **proclaimed glad tidings** [euaggelizō] of righteousness in the great congregation;
Behold, I will not restrain my lips,
O LORD, You know.
I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart;
I have spoken of Your faithfulness and Your salvation;
I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth from the great congregation.
(Psalm 40:7-10)*

The first truly *good* "good news" proclaimed in Scripture speaks of **G-d's righteousness, faithfulness, salvation, and lovingkindness.**

The next place I found *euaggelizō* was in Psalm 68.

*O God, when You went forth before Your people,
When You marched through the wilderness, Selah.*

*The earth quaked;
The heavens also dropped rain at the presence of God;
Sinai itself quaked at the presence of God, the God of Israel.
You shed abroad a plentiful rain, O God;
You confirmed Your inheritance when it was parched.
Your creatures settled in it;*

²¹ (Wallace, 2001, p. vi)

²² (Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 778)

²³ Since verbs must be conjugated to function properly in a sentence and will take many forms, I'll just use the base form, *euaggelizō*, as a reference. For example, in Psalm 40:9, the conjugated form of *euaggelizō* is εὐγγελισάμην- *euangelisámin*.

You provided in Your goodness for the poor, O God.
 The Lord gives the command;
 The women who **proclaim the good tidings** are a great host:
 "Kings of armies flee, they flee,
 And she who remains at home will divide the spoil!"
 When you lie down among the sheepfolds,
 You are like the wings of a dove covered with silver,
 And its pinions with glistening gold.
 When the Almighty scattered the kings there,
 It was snowing in Zalmon. (Psalm 68:7-14)

This use of *euaggelizō* records a great host of women proclaiming **G-d's victory** against Israel's enemies.

Psalm 96 provides the next instance:

Sing to the LORD a new song;
 Sing to the LORD, all the earth.
 Sing to the LORD, bless His name;
Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day.
 Tell of His glory among the nations,
 His wonderful deeds among all the peoples.
 For great is the LORD and greatly to be praised;
 He is to be feared above all gods.
 For all the gods of the peoples are idols,
 But the LORD made the heavens.
 Splendor and majesty are before Him,
 Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary. (Psalm 96:1-6)

The Psalms' third and final proclamation of good news speaks of **G-d's salvation, glory, and wonderful deeds**.

In all of these passages, the Greek *euaggelizō* is translated from the Hebrew verb בָּשַׂר (*basar*) which also means "to bring (good) news".²⁴ The corresponding Hebrew noun is בְּשָׂרָה (*b'sorah*) - good news.²⁵

In summary, the good news found in the Psalms speaks of:

- G-d's righteousness, faithfulness, salvation, and lovingkindness (Psalm 40:7-10)
- G-d's victory over Israel's enemies (Psalm 68:7-14)
- G-d's salvation, glory, and wonderful deeds (Psalm 96:1-6)

This was a *great* start! Now...what comes next?

²⁴ (Kohlenberger & Mounce, 2009)

²⁵ (Kohlenberger & Mounce, 2009)

3- The Good News in the Prophets

Isaiah

Around 680 BCE²⁶, roughly two hundred and fifty years after the Psalmists first declared the good news, the prophet Isaiah delivered this message to the southern kingdom of Judah:

*A voice is calling,
“Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness;
Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.
“Let every valley be lifted up,
And every mountain and hill be made low;
And let the rough ground become a plain,
And the rugged terrain a broad valley;
Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed,
And all flesh will see it together;
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”
A voice says, “Call out.”
Then he answered, “What shall I call out?”
All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field.
The grass withers, the flower fades,
When the breath of the LORD blows upon it;
Surely the people are grass.
The grass withers, the flower fades,
But the word of our God stands forever.*

*Get yourself up on a high mountain,
O Zion, **bearer of good news**,
Lift up your voice mightily,
O Jerusalem, **bearer of good news**;
Lift it up, do not fear.
Say to the cities of Judah,
“Here is your God!”
Behold, the Lord GOD will come with might,
With His arm ruling for Him.
Behold, His reward is with Him
And His recompense before Him.
Like a shepherd He will tend His flock,
In His arm He will gather the lambs
And carry them in His bosom;
He will gently lead the nursing ewes. (Isaiah 40:3-11)*

²⁶ (Zondervan, 1991, p. 1166)

Zion and Jerusalem are to bring the good news to Judah and proclaim “Here is your G-d!” coming as a shepherd to tend, protect, and gently lead the people of Israel.

Isaiah continues his proclamation of good news and again uses the imagery of mountains:

For thus says the LORD, “You were sold for nothing and you will be redeemed without money.” For thus says the Lord GOD, “My people went down at the first into Egypt to reside there; then the Assyrian oppressed them without cause. Now therefore, what do I have here,” declares the LORD, “seeing that My people have been taken away without cause?” Again the LORD declares, “Those who rule over them howl, and My name is continually blasphemed all day long. Therefore My people shall know My name; therefore in that day I am the one who is speaking, ‘Here I am.’”

*How lovely on the mountains
Are the feet of him who **brings good news**,
Who announces peace
And **brings good news** of happiness,
Who announces salvation,
And says to Zion, “Your God reigns!”*

*Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices,
They shout joyfully together;
For they will see with their own eyes
When the LORD restores Zion.
Break forth, shout joyfully together,
You waste places of Jerusalem;
For the LORD has comforted His people,
He has redeemed Jerusalem.*

*The LORD has bared His holy arm
In the sight of all the nations,
That all the ends of the earth may see
The salvation of our God. (Isaiah 52:3-10)*

This proclamation of good news is one of **peace, salvation, the redemption** and restoration of Israel (which had been taken into captivity in Assyria in the middle of Isaiah’s prophetic ministry), and G-d’s **reign** over His reunited kingdom.

This last point, G-d’s reign, caused me to pause. Hadn’t G-d promised David that **his** descendant would reign over Israel forever (2 Samuel 7:8-17)? How can G-d reign over the kingdom of Israel if the son of David is supposed to reign? Either a son of David would have to be G-d (which seems mind-bogglingly idolatrous) or G-d would have to become a son of David. This second option seems vaguely familiar. ;)

I set the question aside for later and pressed on.

In chapter 60, Isaiah records a third announcement of good news.

*“Arise, shine; for your light has come,
And the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.
For behold, darkness will cover the earth
And deep darkness the peoples;
But the LORD will rise upon you
And His glory will appear upon you.
Nations will come to your light,
And kings to the brightness of your rising.*

*Lift up your eyes round about and see;
They all gather together, they come to you.
Your sons will come from afar,
And your daughters will be carried in the arms.
Then you will see and be radiant,
And your heart will thrill and rejoice;
Because the abundance of the sea will be turned to you,
The wealth of the nations will come to you.
A multitude of camels will cover you,
The young camels of Midian and Ephah;
All those from Sheba will come;
They will bring gold and frankincense,
And will **bear good news** of the praises of the LORD.
All the flocks of Kedar will be gathered together to you,
The rams of Nebaioth will minister to you;
They will go up with acceptance on My altar,
And I shall glorify My glorious house.
Who are these who fly like a cloud
And like the doves to their lattices?
Surely the coastlands will wait for Me;
And the ships of Tarshish will come first,
To bring your sons from afar,
Their silver and their gold with them,
For the name of the LORD your God,
And for the Holy One of Israel because He has glorified you. (Isaiah 60:1-9)*

The light of Israel, the glory of G-d, has arisen upon them. The nations and their wealth will come to the Land and people of Israel because the Holy One of Israel has glorified them. The people of the nations will then take the good news of the praises of the LORD back to their countries.

Isaiah provides a fourth declaration of good news in chapter 61.

*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
Because the LORD has anointed me
To **bring good news** to the afflicted;
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to captives
And freedom to prisoners;
To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD
And the day of vengeance of our God;
To comfort all who mourn,
To grant those who mourn in Zion,
Giving them a garland instead of ashes,
The oil of gladness instead of mourning,
The mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting.
So they will be called oaks of righteousness,
The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.*

*Then they will rebuild the ancient ruins,
They will raise up the former devastations;
And they will repair the ruined cities,
The desolations of many generations.
Strangers will stand and pasture your flocks,
And foreigners will be your farmers and your vinedressers.
But you will be called the priests of the LORD;
You will be spoken of as ministers of our God.
You will eat the wealth of nations,
And in their riches you will boast.
Instead of your shame you will have a double portion,
And instead of humiliation they will shout for joy over their portion.
Therefore they will possess a double portion in their land,
Everlasting joy will be theirs.
For I, the LORD, love justice,
I hate robbery in the burnt offering;
And I will faithfully give them their recompense
And make an everlasting covenant with them.
Then their offspring will be known among the nations,
And their descendants in the midst of the peoples.
All who see them will recognize them
Because they are the offspring whom the LORD has blessed. (Isaiah 61:1-9)*

Isaiah's last mention of good news is one of **liberty, freedom, comfort,** and **abundance** in the Promised Land with a blessing from the LORD.

To summarize, Isaiah's good news includes:

- Zion and Jerusalem bearing good news to Judah and proclaiming "Here is your G-d" coming as a shepherd to tend, protect, and gently lead the people of Israel. (Isaiah 40:3-11)
- Peace, salvation, the restoration of Israel, and G-d's reign over His reunited people. (Isaiah 52:3-10)
- The light of Israel, the glory of G-d, has arisen upon them. The nations and their wealth will come to the Land and people of Israel because the Holy One of Israel has glorified them. The nations will take back to their lands the good news of the praises of the LORD. (Isaiah 60:1-9)
- Liberty, freedom, comfort, and abundance in the Promised Land with a blessing from the LORD. (Isaiah 61:1-9)

Nahum

About fifty years after Isaiah²⁷, the prophet Nahum delivers the next proclamation of good news to the southern kingdom of Judah. Nahum uses the same type of "feet on the mountains" imagery as Isaiah chapter 52.

*Behold, on the mountains the feet of him who **brings good news**,
Who announces peace!
Celebrate your feasts, O Judah;
Pay your vows.
For never again will the wicked one pass through you;
He is cut off completely.
The one who scatters has come up against you.
Man the fortress, watch the road;
Strengthen your back, summon all your strength.
For the LORD will restore the splendor of Jacob
Like the splendor of Israel,
Even though devastators have devastated them
And destroyed their vine branches. (Nahum 1:15-2:2)*

Nahum's single reference to the gospel proclaims that Judah will celebrate her appointed feasts and pay her vows without "the wicked one" passing through her. She will have peace, and the feet of the one who brings the good news of peace will be upon the mountains.

Joel

There is not enough evidence from the writings of the prophet Joel to clearly identify *when* he wrote. Scholars place the date as early as the ninth century BCE or as late as the fifth century BCE. Whenever he wrote, the prophet Joel provides another declaration of good news.

²⁷ (Zondervan, 1991, p. 1580)

*“It will come about after this
 That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind;
 And your sons and daughters will prophesy,
 Your old men will dream dreams,
 Your young men will see visions.
 “Even on the male and female servants
 I will pour out My Spirit in those days.
 “I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth,
 Blood, fire and columns of smoke.
 “The sun will be turned into darkness
 And the moon into blood
 Before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.
 “And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD
 Will be delivered;
 For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem
 There will be those who escape,
 [here the Greek includes “and they that have **glad tidings preached** to them”]
 As the LORD has said,
 Even among the survivors whom the LORD calls.*

*“For behold, in those days and at that time,
 When I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem,
 I will gather all the nations
 And bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat.
 Then I will enter into judgment with them there
 On behalf of My people and My inheritance, Israel,
 Whom they have scattered among the nations;
 And they have divided up My land. (Joel 2:28-3:2)*

Once again, the declaration of good news focuses on the restoration of Israel (and certainly all who call upon the Name of the Lord) to the Promised Land.

For a thousand years before the arrival of the Messiah, the good news (the gospel) had been preached to G-d’s people and it declared:

- G-d’s righteousness, faithfulness, salvation, and lovingkindness (Psalm 40)
- G-d’s victory against Israel’s enemies (Psalm 68)
- G-d’s salvation, glory, and wondrous deeds (Psalm 96)
- G-d’s arrival as a shepherd to tend, protect, and lead the people of Israel (Isaiah 40)
- G-d’s peace, salvation, restoration of Israel, and G-d reigning over them (Isaiah 52)
- G-d bringing the nations and their wealth to Israel because He has glorified them (Isaiah 60)
- G-d providing liberty, freedom, comfort, and abundance in the Promised Land (Isaiah 61)
- G-d providing peace enabling Judah to celebrate her appointed feasts and pay her vows without “the wicked one” passing through her (Nahum 1 & 2)
- G-d’s restoration of Israel (and all who call upon the Name of the Lord) to the Promised Land (Joel 2)

Millar Burrows²⁸ offers a more pointed summary of the good news in the Septuagint:

*The verb [εὐαγγελίζω] occurs frequently in the LXX, rendering רָשַׁרְתִּי with meanings varying from the news of a victory to the glad tidings of Messianic restoration and glory. The books of Samuel and Kings have it nine times, Psalms three times, Joel and Nahum once each, and Isaiah six times. It also occurs once in 1 Chronicles in a parallel to one of the passages in 1 Sam. The six occurrences in Isaiah are the most important for us; they are all in the latter portion of the book and refer to the coming deliverance of God's people, the reign of God, and the future glory of Zion (Is. 40 9.9; 52 7.7; 60 6; 61 1). It is hardly too much to say that in this book εὐαγγελίζεσθαι (i.e. רָשַׁרְתִּי) is a Messianic term. At any rate we know that it was so understood by the early Christians. **We may be quite sure that in these four passages from the Second Isaiah is to be found the main source for the Christian use of the term "gospel".**²⁹*
[emphasis mine]

²⁸ Biblical scholar, leading authority on the Dead Sea Scrolls, and professor emeritus at Yale Divinity School

²⁹ (Burrows, 1925, p. 22)

4- The Good News in the Torah

The good-news promises found in the Psalms and the Prophets aren't something new. They directly connect to G-d's earlier promises and His vow of a restored people in the Land. Moses declared:

So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all nations where the LORD your God has banished you, and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back. The LORD your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers.

Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live. The LORD your God will inflict all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you. And you shall again obey the LORD, and observe all His commandments which I command you today. Then the LORD your God will prosper you abundantly in all the work of your hand, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your cattle and in the produce of your ground, for the LORD will again rejoice over you for good, just as He rejoiced over your fathers; if you obey the LORD your God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, if you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and soul. (Deuteronomy 30:1-10)

The “return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul” phrase (verse 2) is the simplest and purest definition of repentance found in Scripture. The Hebrew verb for “return” (*shavta*) even forms the root of the Hebrew word for repentance, *teshuvá*.

From the base meaning of turning back comes the fig. extension of restoration of relationship, as when one returns in repentance to God. → repent³⁰

G-d's promise of a regathering to the Land is preceded by repentance, a return to Him, and a related pledge that He will circumcise their heart. G-d's oath here in Deuteronomy, made to Israel as they are about to enter the Promised Land, directly connects to the promises He made to Abraham four hundred years earlier.

³⁰ (Kohlenberger & Mounce, 2009)

*After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying,
“Do not fear, Abram,
I am a shield to you;
Your reward shall be very great.”*

Abram said, “O Lord GOD, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” And Abram said, “Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir.” Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, “This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.” And He took him outside and said, “Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness. And He said to him, “I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it.” (Genesis 15:1-7)

Heirs and the Land promised to Abraham, the repentance and salvation of Israel, the fullness of the promised kingdom of David, and the Lord G-d reigning and ruling over them with righteousness. **This** message is the good news, the gospel, that G-d gave in His Word to His people Israel!

And they waited for a hundred years.

Five hundred...

A thousand...

5- The Good News According to Matthew

The next time I found the word “gospel” in Scripture is [*ahem*] in the Gospels. In Greek, the Biblical book of Matthew is often titled Τὸ κατὰ Ματθαῖον εὐαγγέλιον (The Gospel According to Matthew). The books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all follow this convention and are collectively called “The Gospels”. In the progressive revelation of Scripture, these books record the events of Messiah’s birth, death, and resurrection during the first three decades of the first century.

When sharing the “good news” with their audiences, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John required entire *books* containing chapter after chapter of details, events, and explanations expressed in thousands of words. Let’s see what they add to an understanding of the gospel from earlier Scriptures.

Matthew begins his account of the good news with Messiah’s birth and “the record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matthew 1:1). **Why?** Hank Hanegraaff's *The Complete Bible Answer Book* provides an answer:

Matthew, writing to a primarily Jewish audience, emphasizes that Jesus Christ is the seed of Abraham and the legal heir of David, the long-awaited King of Israel who would ultimate restore his people from exile.³¹

The heir of David (the coming King!) and restoration from exile are two elements of the good news proclaimed in the Tanakh.

As Matthew continues his account of the good news, he records John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness before Messiah begins His ministry.

“Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said “THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT!” (Matthew 3:2-3)

The New American Standard Bible (NASB) often has passages in the “New Testament” IN ALL CAPITAL LETTERS. They aren’t shouting: this is a convention to indicate the capitalized section is a quote from the “Old Testament”.

Matthew connects John the Baptist with the good news of Isaiah chapter 40, and here John is calling Israel to “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:2). John’s call to repentance connects with Deuteronomy 30, the promise of a circumcised heart, and a restoration of all Israel to the Land.

*ISAIAH 40
G-d’s arrival as a shepherd
to tend, protect, and lead
the people of Israel*

³¹ (Hanegraff, 2009, p. 62)

When the Messiah was about thirty years old³², He was tempted in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11) then began His ministry after John the Baptist had been imprisoned (Matthew 4:12).

What was Messiah's message?

From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 4:17)

Messiah proclaimed the same message of repentance as John! Remember that repentance is to "return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul" as described in Deuteronomy chapter 30.

He begins teaching in the synagogues throughout the Galilee, and as He goes, He proclaims the good news of the kingdom.

*DEUTERONOMY 30
Repentance, circumcision
of the heart, and a return
to the Land*

*Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the **gospel** [euaggelion] of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people. (Matthew 4:23)*

Soon after this, Christ³³ calls the twelve disciples to Himself and teaches them how to pray. G-d's coming kingdom is a crucial element:

*Pray, then, in this way:
'Our Father who is in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.'*
(Matthew 6:9-13)

Afterwards, Messiah takes His disciples throughout the Land of Israel proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom.

³² Luke 3:23

³³ Christ is not the Messiah's last name; it is His title. The English word Christ comes from the Late Latin *Christus* from the Greek word *christos* which means "the anointed". (Guralink, 1984, p. 253)

*Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the **gospel** [euaggelion] of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. (Matthew 9:35)*

What was this “gospel of the kingdom”? Did Messiah have some new gospel that He was sharing?

No, this was the good news is that the kingdom promised in the Psalms and the Prophets was coming to pass! It is near! It is so close that Israel could see their promised King, G-d’s righteousness, and His salvation (Messiah’s name in Hebrew, Yeshua, means “salvation”³⁴) in their midst! Everything Israel has been expecting for generations is about to arrive.

The next time I found the word gospel is in Matthew chapter 11.

*Now when John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to Him, “Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?” Jesus answered and said to them, “Go and report to John what you hear and see: the **BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT** and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the **POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED** [euaggelizō] **TO THEM**. “And blessed is he who does not take offense at Me.” (Matthew 11:2-6)*

John sends his disciples to inquire if Yeshua was the Expected One. Christ responds by quoting the Isaiah 61 good-news passage and affirming that He is, indeed, the One who will bring the good news to pass.

The manner in which Christ responds to their question is very Jewish. Rather than declaring His *being* the Messiah, He points to His *doing* the things that the Messiah was prophesied to do:

- The blind receive sight
- The lame walk
- The lepers are cleansed
- The deaf hear
- The dead are raised up
- The poor have the good news preached to them

ISAIAH 52

G-d’s reign over His reunited kingdom

ISAIAH 61

G-d provides liberty, freedom, comfort, and abundance in the Promised Land

³⁴ (Kohlenberger & Mounce, 2009)

Blind, lame, deaf...these are easy enough to understand but why are individuals with little money included among those with physical impairments which can only be healed by the supernatural work of G-d? Strong's Exhaustive Concordance sheds some light on the meaning of the original Hebrew text:

אָנָּוּן 'ânâv; *depressed (figuratively), in mind (gentle) or circumstances (needy, especially saintly):—humble, lowly, meek, poor.*³⁵

Those who are humble, gentle, and saintly have good news proclaimed to them that will lift them up... much like the lame were lifted up from their infirmity.

Burrows examines Messiah's use of the term gospel:

Wellhausen, followed by Menzies and Montefiore, says that Jesus could not have used the term "gospel" at the beginning of his ministry, because it would have been incomprehensible to his hearers. But we are not told that went about saying nothing but "Believe in the gospel", using a term new-coined and undefined. Some word for good news was certainly in common use, and if Jesus announced the near approach of the Kingdom, and announced it as good news, there would be nothing hard to understand in an exhortation to believe the glad tidings. Nor is it unlikely that he would utter such an exhortation, for we know that he equated the acceptance or rejection of himself as a true prophet with the acceptance or rejection of God.

*The proclamation of the coming Kingdom was not one of doom but of comfort and joy.*³⁶

Wellhausen's position echoes McKnight's experience with his fellow pastor at the airport asserting that Jesus could not have preached the gospel during his lifetime. Burrows rejects this view and instead connects Christ's words with the Messianic prophecies of the Kingdom found in the Tanakh.

Later in His ministry, Messiah prophesies the destruction of the Temple, and He makes a specific prediction involving the gospel:

*This **gospel** [euaggelion] of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come. (Matthew 24:14)*

In his letter to the Romans (written around 57 CE³⁷), Paul tells his audience that the faith they have is already being proclaimed *throughout the whole world* (Romans 1:8). Indeed, it must have reached the "whole world" Messiah described by the time the Romans destroyed the Temple in 70 CE... just as He prophesied.

³⁵ (Strong, 2009, p. 1553)

³⁶ (Burrows, 1925, pp. 24-25)

³⁷ (Zondervan, 1991, p. 2023)

A few chapters later, Matthew records the events just before Messiah's execution and Mary of Bethany anointing Him with nard in preparation for His burial (Matthew 26:12), and He says:

*"Truly I say to you, wherever this **gospel** [euaggelion] is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her."
(Matthew 26:13)*

The Master informs us that this story of Mary's anointing will be included wherever the good news is proclaimed.

To summarize, Matthew's references to the good news:

- Connect John the Baptist with the good news of Isaiah chapter 40 and John's call for Israel to "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand". (Matthew 3:2-3)
- Record Messiah's declaration of the good news of the kingdom throughout the Land of Israel using the same message as John: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 4:17,23)
- Capture Messiah's response to John's disciples quoting the Isaiah 61 good news passage and affirming that He is, indeed, the One who will bring the good news to pass. (Matthew 11:2-6)
- Document Messiah's prophesy that the good news of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come. (Matthew 24:14)
- Recount Mary of Bethany's anointing which will be recalled wherever the good news is preached (Matthew 26:13)

Matthew's account of the gospel connects the dots of the good news as it was delivered by Isaiah the prophet, by John the Baptist, and by Messiah, Himself. Throughout his book, Matthew refers to the "good news" without defining it or explaining it. His Jewish audience already knew what the "good news" was and their understanding was firmly rooted in promises G-d gave to Israel in the Hebrew Scriptures.

6- The Good News According to Mark

Mark does not begin his account of the good news with a genealogy or even a narrative of Messiah's birth. He instead starts with Messiah's baptism and ministry. Why? *The Randall House Bible Commentary* offers this insight:

The most widely held view is that Mark wrote primarily for a Gentile audience, and that he did so in order to focus attention on Jesus as the Son of God.

As to the audience Mark intended, if Roman Christians were involved...then Mark's interest in a predominantly Gentile audience would be understandable. While there certainly were Jewish believers in the church at Rome, Gentile Christians were probably in the majority. Paul's epistle to the Romans tends to confirm this observation.³⁸

With a Gentile audience likely his focus, Mark begins with this:

*The beginning of the **gospel** [euaggelion] of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet:*

*"BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU,
WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY;
THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS,
'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD,
MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.'"*

John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 1:1-4)

Like Matthew, Mark connects John the Baptist with the good news of Isaiah chapter 40. But Mark calls this the beginning of the good news **of Jesus Christ**. Why was the person of Jesus good news?

As the Messiah, Jesus is the One who will bring about the good-news promises given to Abraham, Moses, David, and the prophets!

Mark recounts the start of Messiah's ministry and teaching:

*Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the **gospel** [euaggelion] of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:14-15)*

*ISAIAH 40
G-d's arrival as a shepherd
to tend, protect, and lead
the people of Israel*

³⁸ (Picirilli, 2003, p. 12)

Messiah, Himself, announces that the time has arrived for the good news to be fulfilled and that the kingdom of G-d is at hand!

Several chapters later in Mark 8:29, Messiah asks His disciples “who do you say that I am?” Peter responds that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah. Jesus goes on to teach them that He must suffer and be rejected, killed, and resurrected. Peter rebukes Messiah (!) and receives his own “get thee behind me Satan” rebuke in return. He gathers the crowd with the disciples and declares:

*“If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the **gospel’s** [euaggelion] will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? For what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.” (Mark 8:34b-38)*

And a bit later:

*Jesus said, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the **gospel’s** [euaggelion] sake, but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life. (Mark 10:29-30)*

While these two passages from Mark don’t help to define the gospel, they do inform us that it comes with at a price—potentially even the cost of our own lives!

Three chapters later, Mark 13:10 recounts Messiah’s statement that “The gospel must first be preached to all the nations” in a passage that parallels Matthew 24 (see the previous chapter on Matthew for details).

Mark 14 includes a parallel passage of Matthew 26 and Mary’s anointing:

*“Truly I say to you, wherever the **gospel** [euaggelion] is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her.” (Mark 14:9)*

Mark’s final mention of the good news is Messiah’s instruction to His disciples:

*And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the **gospel** [euaggelion] to all creation.” (Mark 16:15)*

Mark uses the noun *euaggelion* eight times but does not use the verb *euaggelizō* at all. His use of only the noun makes sense given his Greek audience since in the Western/Greek mindset “*being*” often carries more significance than “*doing*”.³⁹

In summary, Mark’s references to the gospel:

- Include the first reference to the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of G-d. (Mark 1:1)
- Connect John the Baptist with the good news of Isaiah chapter 40. (Mark 1:1-4)
- Messiah announces that the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of G-d is at hand. (Mark 1:14-15)
- “Whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it.” (Mark 8:35)
- A hundred-fold reward to those who lose family for the gospel’s sake (Mark 10:29-30)
- The gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world, and then the end will come. (Mark 13:10)
- Mary of Bethany’s anointing will be recalled when the good news is told (Mark 14:9)
- Messiah instructs His disciples to “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.” (Mark 16:15)

Throughout his account, Mark refers to the “good news” without defining it. He writes in the knowledge that his believing Gentile audience understands what the good news is. Since there was no other “New Testament” Scripture written at the time⁴⁰ (with the possible exception of the book of James which doesn’t mention the gospel), his Gentile audiences’ understanding could have only been based on existing Scriptures (the Tanakh) and the good-news promises G-d had given to Israel.

³⁹ (Boman, 1960)

⁴⁰ Mark was written around 55 CE (Zondervan, 1991, p. 1722)

7- The Good News According to Luke

Luke is tremendously helpful and begins his account of the good news with a brief note to his audience explaining *why* he is writing. John W. Drane⁴¹ offers this observation in *Introducing the New Testament*:

*Luke articulates his purpose in the prologue to the gospel (1:1-4), where he indicates that he was writing for a person called Theophilus, 'so that you will know the full truth about everything which you have been taught'. Moreover, he states that he undertook this work in a consciously literary manner, studying the accounts written by other people, and then on that basis compiling what he describes as 'an orderly account'. While Luke was not solely motivated by biographical concerns, he emphasizes his concern for historical record more clearly than any of the other evangelists.*⁴²

Luke starts with the angel Gabriel's announcement to Zacharias that he will have a son (John the Baptist).

But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John. You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

*Zacharias said to the angel, "How will I know this for certain? For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years." The angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you **this good news**. And behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time."*
(Luke 1:13-20)

All of this is personally good news for Zacharias, Elizabeth, and those who will be touched by John's ministry but is it related to the good news proclaimed elsewhere in Scripture?

⁴¹ Professor of Theological Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary, Visiting Scholar at Spurgeon's College in London, and Visiting Fellow of St John's College, Durham.

⁴² (Drane, 2001)

Yes! These verses provide details of the events preceding the birth of John the Baptist who Matthew and Mark have already connected to the good news of Isaiah chapter 40. John is to “go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

John’s job is to prepare the way for the Messiah!

Later in chapter 1, Luke also records Zacharias’ Spirit-filled prophesy:

And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:

*“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people,
And has raised up a horn of salvation for us
In the house of David His servant —
As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old —
Salvation FROM OUR ENEMIES,
And FROM THE HAND OF ALL WHO HATE US;
To show mercy toward our fathers,
And to remember His holy covenant,
The oath which He swore to Abraham our father,
To grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies,
Might serve Him without fear,
In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.
“And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
For you will go on BEFORE THE LORD TO PREPARE HIS WAYS;
To give to His people the knowledge of salvation
By the forgiveness of their sins,
Because of the tender mercy of our God,
With which the Sunrise from on high will visit us,
TO SHINE UPON THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS AND THE
SHADOW OF DEATH,
To guide our feet into the way of peace.” (Luke 1:67-79)*

Zacharias connects John’s ministry with the covenantal promises of salvation, forgiveness of sins, and peace G-d made to Abraham, David, and the people of Israel. He also quotes from the good news passage in Isaiah 40.

Luke chapter 2 includes the account of an angel announcing the birth of Christ:

*In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I **bring you good news** [euaggelizō] of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. “This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” (Luke 2:8-12)*

The good news of Luke chapter 2 is that the One who will bring about G-d's promises of salvation has been born.

Like Matthew and Mark, Luke connects the ministry of John the Baptist with Isaiah chapter 40:

Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness. And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins; as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT. 'EVERY RAVINE WILL BE FILLED, AND EVERY MOUNTAIN AND HILL WILL BE BROUGHT LOW; THE CROOKED WILL BECOME STRAIGHT, AND THE ROUGH ROADS SMOOTH; AND ALL FLESH WILL SEE THE SALVATION OF GOD.'" (Luke 3:1-6)

ISAIAH 40

G-d's arrival as a shepherd to tend, protect, and lead the people of Israel

Later in chapter 3, the people wonder if *John* is the Messiah.

*Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he was the Christ, John answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." So with many other exhortations he **preached the gospel** [euaggelizō] to the people. (Luke 3:15-18)*

John preaches the good news that the Promised One proclaimed by the prophets is coming!

After Messiah is tempted by in the wilderness, He returns to the Galilee in the power of the Spirit (Luke 4:14) and begins teaching in the synagogues. There He reads the good news account of the prophet Isaiah from chapter 61:

*"THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME,
BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO **PREACH THE GOSPEL** TO THE POOR.
HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES,
AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND,*

*TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED,
TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD.” (Luke 4:18-19)*

Then Messiah declares, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” (Luke 4:21)

The Isaiah 61 prophecy of the anointed One proclaiming the good news has been fulfilled. The good news itself, however, has not yet fully come to pass. Both Jews and Gentiles still await the time of G-d reigning and ruling from Jerusalem. (Oh, Lord, may you hasten that day!)

ISAIAH 61

*G-d provides liberty,
freedom, comfort, and
abundance in the
Promised Land*

The next time Luke mentions the “good news” is in chapter 4. As evening arrives, Messiah is healing many in a crowd and...

*When day came, Jesus left and went to a secluded place; and the crowds were searching for Him, and came to Him and tried to keep Him from going away from them. But He said to them, “I must **preach** [euaggelizō] the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose. So He kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea. (Luke 4:42-44)*

Messiah was sent for the purpose of proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of G-d throughout Judea. Psalm 96, one of the “good news” Psalms, speaks of “His wonderful deeds”. Healing was a significant part of Christ’s ministry and evidence of His authority.

Luke 7:22 contains the next use of the verb *euaggelizō* and parallels Matthew 11:2-6 when John sends his disciples to inquire if Yeshua is truly the Expected One.

*And He answered and said to them, “Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the POOR HAVE THE **GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM.** (Luke 7:22)*

The poor and downtrodden are often in need of good news. Messiah responds by quoting the Isaiah 61 good news passage and affirming that He is, indeed, the One who is bringing the good news to pass.

The next instance of the good news is in chapter 8

*Soon afterwards, He began going around from one city and village to another, proclaiming and **preaching** [euaggelizō] the kingdom of God. The twelve were with Him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses: Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward, and Susanna, and many others who were contributing to their support out of their private means. (Luke 8:1-3)*

Messiah continues His journeys throughout the Land of Israel proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of G-d.

After teaching His disciples for a time, Messiah sends them out with a mission:

*And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases. And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing. And He said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, neither a staff, nor a bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not even have two tunics apiece. "Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that city. And as for those who do not receive you, as you go out from that city, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them." Departing, they began going throughout the villages, **preaching the gospel** and healing everywhere. (Luke 9:1-6)*

Throughout His ministry, the Master has been preaching the good news of the kingdom. At this point, He sends out the disciples to follow in His footsteps proclaiming the good news throughout the Land of Israel.

[Luke 16- The Shrewd Steward and Those Who Love Money](#)

Several chapters later in Luke 16, Messiah relates the parable of the shrewd steward. The steward is dismissed from his high-powered "white collar" job and despises his remaining prospects of either manual labor or begging so he goes to his master's creditors and "cooks the books" to curry favor with them. Messiah concludes His parable with the declaration "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth." (Luke 16:13)

*Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things and were scoffing at Him. And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God. The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since that time the **gospel** of the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it. But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail." (Luke 16:14-17)*

Messiah's words seem disconnected from the context of the parable that preceded it, so I dug further into the text.

There are some words italicized in verse 16:

The Law and the Prophets *were proclaimed* until John; since that time the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it.

The translators of the NASB italicize words that they have added but are not in the original Greek text.

So, what does the original Greek say?

ὁ	νόμος	καὶ	οἱ	προφῆται	ἕως	Ἰωάννου·
the	Law	and	the	Prophets	up through/ until	John

ἀπὸ	τότε	ἡ	βασιλεία	τοῦ	Θεοῦ	εὐαγγελίζεται
since	then	the	kingdom	of	G-d	is preached

καὶ	πᾶς	εἰς	αὐτήν	βιάζεται
and	all	to enter	it	hurry/rush

There is no verb in the phrase “the Law and the Prophets until John”. What if this phrase was not the *beginning* of a new (incomplete) sentence but the *ending* of the prior one?

You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God, the Law, and the Prophets up through John.

It fits.

Messiah relates the parable of the shrewd steward and declares “you cannot serve G-d and wealth”. The Pharisees (who loved money) listen and scoff. They reject the idea that you cannot serve G-d and wealth. The Master tells them “you justify yourselves in the sight of men”—they justify their disobedience to G-d by using flawed principles. Those “highly esteemed”, man-made standards are detestable in the sight of G-d, the Law, and the Prophets. Indeed, the Scriptures repeatedly refute limited and flawed human standards and extol G-d’s standards.

“Since then the kingdom of G-d is preached” [*euaggelizō*]. Since the time of the Law, the Prophets, and up until John the kingdom of G-d has been proclaimed as good news.

And then what?

These Pharisees aren’t entering the kingdom humbly by the “narrow gate” (Matthew 7:13-14) and living according to the standards of G-d as recorded in the Law and the Prophets. They are attempting to enter the kingdom while justifying their disobedience to the King and forcing *their ways* upon it (“...and everyone is forcing his way into it.”) This isn’t about individuals trying to get into the kingdom... it’s about individuals forcing their ways, their beliefs, their manner of doing things into the kingdom and declaring, “*This is the way G-d wants things done.*”

Messiah concludes with this:

But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail. (Luke 16:17)

These lovers of money justify their disobedience to the King by using sinful human standards. It is easier for all of Creation to pass away than for the smallest letter of G-d's Law to fail to convict them of their misdeeds. The Law of G-d's Kingdom will prevail against them.

Luke's penned his last reference to the good news in chapter 20.

*On one of the days while He was teaching the people in the temple and **preaching the gospel**, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders confronted Him, and they spoke, saying to Him, "Tell us by what authority You are doing these things, or who is the one who gave You this authority?" (Luke 20:1-2)*

Messiah is teaching in the temple and proclaiming the gospel. His habit and pattern are to "preach the gospel of the kingdom". The chief priests and scribes confront Him and challenge Him to identify the source of His authority.

In summary, Luke's references to the gospel include:

- Gabriel's announcement of the good news of John's birth (Luke 1:19)
- The connection of John's ministry with the good news passage in Isaiah 40 (Luke 1:67-79)
- Shepherds receiving the good news that the promised Savior has been born (Luke 2:8-11)
- Connects the ministry of John the Baptist with the good news of Isaiah 40 (Luke 3:1-6)
- John proclaims the good news that the Promised One is coming (Luke 3:15-18)
- Messiah reads the Isaiah 61 declaration of the good news (Luke 4:18-19)
- Messiah was sent for the purpose of proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of G-d throughout Judea. (Luke 4:42-44)
- Messiah affirms He is the Promised One by quoting the good news of Isaiah 61 (Luke 7:22)
- Messiah travels through the Land proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of G-d (Luke 8:1-3)
- Messiah sends his disciples into the Land to proclaim the good news of the kingdom (Luke 9:1-6)
- The good news of the kingdom is preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it (Luke 16:16)
- Messiah is preaching the gospel and some challenge His authority to do so (Luke 20:1-2)

Throughout Luke's letter, Messiah and His disciples proclaim the "good news of the kingdom".

Matthew, Mark, and Luke—the synoptic gospels⁴³—*all* refer to the "good news" without defining or explaining it. These three books, written over a period of about seven years (c 55-61 CE), assume an understanding in both Jewish and Gentile audiences of what the good news is.

⁴³ The Synoptic Gospels are the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke in the New Testament. Since the 1780s the first three books of the New Testament have been called the Synoptic Gospels because they are so similar in structure, content, and wording that they can easily be set side by side to provide a synoptic [synopsis or summary] comparison of their content. (The Gospel of John has a different arrangement and offers a somewhat different perspective on Christ.) (Britannica, 1998)

Their understanding of the “good news” could have only originated from the already existing “good news” promises G-d had given to Israel in the Tanakh: it was the only Scripture available to humanity during the lifetime of the Messiah and the events recorded in the gospel accounts.

I found it interesting and significant that the “Gospel” of John does not actually contain the word gospel: the Greek text of his letter contains neither the noun *euaggelion* nor the verb *euaggelizō*. The Synoptics provide a historical account of the events surrounding Messiah’s birth, ministry, death, burial, and resurrection. While it recounts many of the same circumstances, John’s book serves a different purpose: to head off specific doctrinal errors already appearing among believers (such as Gnosticism).⁴⁴ As such, it does not need to cover the same topics or accomplish the same purposes as the Synoptics.

After the Gospel of Luke, the next time I found “good news” in Scripture was in Luke’s second letter called “Acts”.

⁴⁴ (Deffinbaugh, 2002, p. 648)

8- The Good News in the Acts of the Apostles

Luke's account of the Acts of the Apostles begins with this:

The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up to heaven, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen. To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. (Acts 1:1-3)

In Luke's account of post-resurrection events, we see Messiah's priority before His ascension is to continue to teach the disciples about the kingdom of G-d. The book of Acts does not mention the "good news" until chapter 5, well after the Ascension and the events of Pentecost.

*And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and **preaching** [euaggelizō] Jesus as the Christ. (Acts 5:42)*

Luke records the disciples' continuing work to proclaim the good news that the Promised One had arrived in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

Months later⁴⁵, after the death of Stephen, "a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem," and the believers were "scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria" (Acts 8:1).

*Therefore, those who had been scattered went about **preaching** [euaggelizō] the word. (Acts 8:4)*

"The word" could either be the Word of G-d (Scripture) or Word made flesh (Messiah). If they were proclaiming the good news of *Scripture*, it must have been the message from the Tanakh—none of the Apostolic Scriptures had been written yet. If they were announcing the good news of the *Messiah*, it is yet another declaration of the good news that the Promised One had arrived. Either view aligns with everything we've seen in Scripture up to this point. It also lines up with what comes later in the chapter:

*But when they believed Philip **preaching the good news** [euaggelizō] about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike. (Acts 8:12)*

⁴⁵ New Testament scholar James Dunn estimates that Stephen rose to prominence within no more than eighteen months from Messiah's death. (Dunn, 2009, p. 257)

Consistent with the pattern already shown in the Apostolic Scriptures, Philip is preaching the good news of the Kingdom of G-d as well as the name (authority, renown, and reputation) of the Messiah, the King.

*So, when they had solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they started back to Jerusalem, and were **preaching the gospel** [euaggelizō] to many villages of the Samaritans. (Acts 8:25)*

Why is this “preaching the gospel” to the Samaritans important? As I have already noted, the Psalms and the Prophets provide the earliest references to “the good news”. The Samaritans, however, do not accept these books as Holy Writ. They only accept the Torah (the five books of Moses) as Scripture⁴⁶ and, as a result, the Samaritans had almost certainly *never heard the gospel!* This event was an important first step to sharing the good news with the whole world as the Lord had commanded, “You shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

As the young Pharisee Saul begins his persecution of the believing Jews (Acts 8:1-3), they scatter and preach the word (Acts 8:4). An angel sends Philip to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza where he encounters an Ethiopian eunuch reading the words of Isaiah chapter 53.

*Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he **preached** [announced the good news of- euaggelizō] Jesus to him. (Acts 8:35)*

Philip connects the words of Isaiah to the suffering servant and the promised King. After the eunuch is baptized, the Spirit takes Philip away:

*But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he kept **preaching the gospel** [euaggelizō] to all the cities until he came to Caesarea. (Acts 8:40)*

Philip travels the coastline of Israel from Azotus⁴⁷ to Caesarea (about 100 km/60 miles) declaring the good news in all of the cities along the way.

Acts chapter 10 provides the next mention of the good news. Cornelius has a vision and is commanded to send for Peter (Acts 10:3-6). G-d also gives Peter a vision (Acts 10:9-16) which he later interprets (in verse 28) as “God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean.” Peter’s vision permits him to interact with the Gentiles who the Jews viewed as spiritually unclean. He reminds Cornelius and his household of the events that had happened years before:

“I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him.

⁴⁶ (Russell, 2014, p. 166)

⁴⁷ modern-day Ashdod

*The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, **preaching** [euaggelizō] peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)—you yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed. You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.” (Acts 10:34-38)*

What is the “word which He [G-d] sent to the sons of Israel”? It is the message of the good news given in the Tanakh and affirmed by the disciples in their gospel accounts. This word announces the good news of peace through Jesus Christ: reconciliation between G-d and humanity accomplished by the work of Messiah (Romans 5:1, 10, Colossians 1:20-22, etc.).

A critical concept in Judeo-Christian theology is that humanity is separated from G-d by our sin.

But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear. (Isaiah 59:2)

How can G-d bring about the promises of the good news if humanity is separated from Him, we are His enemies (Romans 5:10, Colossians 1:21, etc.), and we are without hope and without G-d (Ephesians 2:11-12)? G-d must first redeem us and reconcile us to Himself. Only once we are restored to Him can He pour out the blessings found in the good news. In fact, one of those promised blessings is salvation itself (Psalm 40:7-10)!

*PSALM 40
G-d's righteousness,
faithfulness, salvation,
and lovingkindness*

As I found in the next mention of the good news, these promises are not only for Israelites—they are for Gentiles as well:

*But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, **preaching** [proclaiming the good news of- euaggelizō] the Lord Jesus. (Acts 11:20)*

The work of sharing the good news with the Gentiles (beginning with Peter in Acts 10) continues in Acts chapter 11 and 12. In Acts 13, Saul (who was also called Paul) becomes the apostle⁴⁸ to the Gentiles.

While in Antioch, Paul and Barnabas are called by the Holy Spirit to be apostles. They sail to the Island of Cyprus (Acts 13:4) and, beginning on the eastern side of the Island in Salamis, proclaim the word of G-d in the synagogues of the Jews (Acts 13:5). They travel through the whole island to the western town of Paphos (Acts 13:6) sharing the good news. From there they journey to Pisidian Antioch and continue to preach in the synagogues. During his visit, Paul delivers a sermon:

⁴⁸ Apostle- one sent as a messenger or agent, the bearer of a commission, messenger (Mounce, 2011)
An “ambassador of the Kingdom” so to speak.

“Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen: The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He led them out from it. For a period of about forty years He put up with them in the wilderness. When He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land as an inheritance—all of which took about four hundred and fifty years. After these things He gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. After He had removed him, He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, ‘I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My heart, who will do all My will.’ From the descendants of this man, according to promise, God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, after John had proclaimed before His coming a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And while John was completing his course, he kept saying, ‘What do you suppose that I am? I am not He. But behold, one is coming after me the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.’

*“Brethren, sons of Abraham’s family, and those among you who fear God, to us the message of this salvation has been sent. For those who live in Jerusalem, and their rulers, recognizing neither Him nor the utterances of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled these by condemning Him. And though they found no ground for putting Him to death, they asked Pilate that He be executed. When they had carried out all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a tomb. But God raised Him from the dead; and for many days He appeared to those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, the very ones who are now His witnesses to the people. And we **preach to you the good news** [euaggelizō] of the promise made to the fathers, that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, ‘You are My Son; today I have begotten You.’ As for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no longer to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: ‘I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.’ Therefore He also says in another Psalm, ‘You will not allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.’ For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay; but He whom God raised did not undergo decay. Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses. Therefore take heed, so that the thing spoken of in the Prophets may not come upon you:*

*‘Behold, you scoffers, and marvel, and perish;
For I am accomplishing a work in your days,
A work which you will never believe, though someone should describe it to you.’” (Acts 13:16-41)*

Paul preaches “the good news of the promise made to the fathers”. What is this promise? Notice that “the promise” is *singular* but “fathers” is *plural*. When the Jewish authors of Scripture speak of “the

fathers,” they are usually referring to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. What was the promise given to Abraham that was inherited by Isaac and Jacob?

Genesis chapters 15 and 17 inform us that G-d’s promise to Abraham included three things:

- heirs (Genesis 15:4, 17:6)
- the Land (Genesis 15:7, 17:8)
- G-d’s presence (Genesis 17:8)

Stephen’s testimony in Acts 7 validates these:

*And he said, “Hear me, brethren and fathers! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, and said to him, ‘Leave your country and your relatives, and come into the land that I will show you.’ Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. From there, after his father died, God had him move to this country in which you are now living. But He gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot of ground, and yet, even when he had no child, **He promised that He would give it to him as a possession, and to his descendants after him.** (Acts 7:2-5)*

Paul confirms this in his letters as well:

*For this is the **word of promise**: “AT THIS TIME I WILL COME, AND SARAH SHALL HAVE A SON.” (Romans 9:9)*

*And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, **heirs according to promise.** (Galatians 3:29)*

In his sermon at Pisidian Antioch, Paul declares that **his** good news is **the** good news found in the *Torah*: G-d’s promise to Abraham of the Land and heirs to inherit it.

The next Sabbath, some prominent women and leading men of the city drive out Paul and Barnabas, so they travel to Iconium where they continue preaching.

*But the people of the city were divided; and some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles. 5 And when an attempt was made by both the Gentiles and the Jews with their rulers, to mistreat and to stone them, they became aware of it and fled to the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe, and the surrounding region; and there they continued to **preach the gospel** [euaggelizō]. (Acts 14:4-7).*

In Lystra, Paul heals a man who had been “lame from his mother’s womb” (Acts 14:8-10). When the crowd saw this, they mistook Paul and Barnabas for Zeus and Hermes (Acts 14:11-12). Paul and Barnabas grieve at the crowd’s mistake:

*and saying, “Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and **preach the gospel** [euaggelizō] to you that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, WHO MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM. (Acts 14:15)*

As in the Synoptic Gospels, we find repentance (turning away from vain things) to be deeply connected with the good news.

The men who had opposed Paul in Antioch and Iconium followed him to Lystra and convinced the crowd to stone him. Afterward, Paul and Barnabas leave and travel to Derbe and

*After they had **preached the gospel** [euaggelizō] to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.” (Acts 14:21-22)*

Paul and Barnabas traveled throughout Asia Minor sharing the good news with Jews **and** Gentiles. Acts 15 records a significant debate that erupted among believers regarding whether or not Gentiles must convert and become Jewish (“circumcised according to the custom of Moses”) in order to be saved. Some men from Judea are in the “yes they do!” group while Paul and Barnabas are in the “no they don’t!” crowd. Paul and Barnabas take their case before the Apostles in Jerusalem to have them settle the matter.

*After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the **gospel** [euaggelion] and believe. (Acts 15:7)*

The Apostles rule on the side of the “Gentiles do not have to convert to be saved” group and establish a basic set of rules to allow table fellowship between Jews and Gentiles (Acts 15:19-21). Paul, Barnabas, Judas, and Silas travel to Antioch to deliver the ruling after which Judas returns to Jerusalem.

*But Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and **preaching** [euaggelizō] with many others also, the word of the Lord. (Acts 15:35)*

Paul and Barnabas preached the word of the Lord to Jews and Gentiles in Antioch. Since no “New Testament” Scripture existed at the time (with the possible exception of the book of James), the good news Word they were preaching must have been the Tanakh and potentially Messiah’s message about the Kingdom.

Along with Silas, Paul returns to Derbe and Lystra where he takes Timothy as a student. Together the three of them journey to Troas.

*A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to **preach the gospel** [euaggelizō] to them. (Acts 16:9-10)*

The trio travels to the district of Macedonia where they are imprisoned after casting out a “spirit of divination” from a slave-girl. G-d frees them from prison and, afterward, their jailer comes to faith and is baptized. From there the three travel to Thessalonica where some of the local unbelievers get into an uproar. The believers in town send Paul and Silas away by night to Berea (Acts 17:10). The unbelievers from Thessalonica discover Paul is in Berea and agitate and stir up the crowds (Acts 17:13) so the believers in Berea send Paul away to Athens. Silas and Timothy are told to come to him as soon as possible (Acts 17:15)

*Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols. So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present. And also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. Some were saying, “What would this idle babbler wish to say?” Others, “He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,”—because he was **preaching** [euaggelizō] Jesus and the resurrection. And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming? For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; so we want to know what these things mean.” (Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.) Acts (17:16-21)*

Paul preached the good news of “Jesus and the resurrection”: the arrival of the King and His resurrection as prophesied in the Tanakh and fulfilled in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

Afterward, Paul continued his travels and visited Corinth, Syria, Cenchrea, and Caesarea before returning to Antioch. He later journeyed back to Ephesus where G-d performed extraordinary miracles by his hands (Acts 19:11).

He trekked throughout Asia Minor once again and strengthened the believers there. While in Miletus, Paul sent for the elders in Ephesus (Acts 20:17), and he spoke with them once they arrived:

*“You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, bound by the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the **gospel** [euaggelion] of the grace of God. (Acts 20:18-24)*

Unless Paul had invented something other than the millennia-old good news found in the Tanakh, he shared the good news of G-d’s grace found in the Hebrew Scriptures with both Jews and Greeks while in Asia and called them to repentance (*away* from sin and *toward* G-d) and to trust in the work of Messiah.

Here is a summary of all the gospel references in Acts:

- The disciples teach and preach the good news of Jesus as the Messiah (Acts 5:42)
- After they are scattered they continued preaching the word (Acts 8:4)
- Philip preaches the good news of the kingdom of G-d and the reputation of Christ (Acts 8:12)
- Peter and John preach the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans (Acts 8:25)
- Philip preaches the good news of Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:35)
- Philip preaches the good news in cities from Azotus to Caesarea (Acts 8:40)
- Peter recounts his preaching the good news of peace through Christ to the Judeans (Acts 10:36)
- Some of the disciples proclaim the good news of the Lord Jesus to the Greeks also (Acts 11:20)
- Paul preaches the good news of the promise (heirs, the land, and G-d’s presence) made to the fathers (Acts 13:32)
- Paul travels throughout Asia Minor and continues to preach the good news (Acts 14:7)
- Paul and Barnabas declare they are “men of the same nature as you and preach the gospel to you that you should turn from” idolatry to the living G-d. (Acts 14:15)
- Paul travels to Derbe, preached the good news to the city and made many disciples (Acts 14:21)
- During the Jerusalem council, Peter says that by his mouth “the Gentiles would hear the word of the Gospel and believe” (Acts 15:7)
- Paul shared the ruling of the Jerusalem council with believers in Antioch and taught and preached the good news of the word of the Lord (Acts 15:35)
- Paul interprets a vision as G-d calling him to preach the good news in Macedonia (Acts 16:10)
- Epicurean and Stoic philosophers think Paul is proclaiming “strange deities” because he was preaching the good news of Jesus and the resurrection (Acts 17:18)
- Paul says his ministry is to testify solemnly of the good news of the grace of G-d (Acts 20:24)

Like his original letter, Luke's second letter to Theophilus regarding the Acts of the Apostles frequently refers to the good news without defining or explaining it. His letter, written three or four decades after the death burial and resurrection of the Messiah⁴⁹, also assumes an understanding of what the good news is.

The centuries-old good-news promises G-d had given to Israel in the Tanakh were the source of that understanding. Thus far into my examination of Scripture, none of the Apostolic texts have offered a different definition or explanation of the good news.

⁴⁹ The Acts of the Apostles were recorded to give an accurate account of the early work of the apostles. It was authored by Luke and written to Theophilus and believers in general between 63-70 CE. (Zondervan, 1991, p. 1940)

9- The Good News in Paul's Letter to the Romans

Faith in the Messiah had spread throughout the land of Israel, Samaria, Asia Minor, and the rest of the Roman Empire including the city of Rome, itself. Although he had not yet visited the believers there, Paul writes a letter to introduce himself and provide a sample of his teaching before he arrives.⁵⁰ Paul immediately refers to the good news as he begins his letter.

*Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the **gospel** [euaggelion] of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 1:1-7)*

In this passage, Paul directly validates everything I've found so far in my studies: the gospel—the good news—was promised beforehand through the prophets in the Scriptures. Jesus the Messiah is the person at the center of that good news and He will bring G-d's promises to fruition.

Paul eagerly desires to visit the Roman believers and has repeatedly planned to travel to them but has thus far been prevented from doing so:

*For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the **gospel** [euaggelion] of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you, always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you. For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established; that is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine. I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far) so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles. I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So, for my part, I am eager to **preach the gospel** [euaggelizō] to you also who are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the **gospel** [euaggelion], for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith." (Romans 1:9-17)*

⁵⁰ (Zondervan, 1991, p. 2023)

The good news of G-d's Son is that He is the One who will bring about the promises made to Israel through the prophets. Paul is neither ashamed of these good-news promises nor the work of Messiah (crucifixion at the hands of the Romans, the resurrection, and promised return) although it may seem like complete and utter craziness from the world's perspective.

Paul continues in chapter 2.

*For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law; for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified. For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, on the day when, according to my **gospel** [euaggelion], God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus. (Romans 2:12-16)*

Paul described a day when G-d will judge the secrets of every individual through the Messiah. On that day of judgment, the thoughts of the Gentiles will either accuse them or defend them by reflecting the work of the Law written in their hearts (one of the promises of the New Covenant- see Jeremiah 31:31-33). This is Paul's take on the good news: as a result of being grafted into Israel (Romans 11:13-26), adopted into the family of G-d (Romans 8:23), and being brought into the commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:11-16), Gentiles share in the good-news promises G-d gave to Israel!

Later in the letter, Paul reiterates his desire for his unbelieving Jewish brethren to be saved (Romans 10:1). They have a zeal for G-d (verse 2), but by rejecting the Messiah, they have rejected G-d's righteousness and sought to establish their own (verse 3). Christ is the end goal [Greek: τέλος- *telos*] of the law for righteousness for everyone who believes (verse 4).

He explains his point:

For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness. But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down), or 'Who will descend into the abyss?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)." But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart"—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; for "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Romans 10:5-13)

To explain the righteousness based on faith, Paul quotes Deuteronomy 30:12-14 where Moses called Israel to choose between life and death: life if they are obedient to G-d, walk in His ways, and guard His commandments; death if they do not.

Paul heads off a question from his readers by rhetorically asking:

*How then will they [unbelievers] call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who **bring good news** [euaggelizō] of good things!" However, they did not all heed the **good news** [euaggelion]; for Isaiah says, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?" (Romans 10:14-16)*

Anticipating their next likely thought (Surely the *unbelievers* have never heard?), he responds, "Indeed they have," and quotes from Psalm 19:4 (The heavens tell of the glory of G-d and their expanse declares the work of His hands) to prove his point.

Paul preempts the next objection also (Surely Israel, the Chosen People, did not know, did they?) and quotes Moses and Isaiah (Isaiah 52 and Isaiah 53) to affirm, yes, the Jewish people knew. He continues in chapter 11 to state that G-d has not rejected His people but has given them a spirit of stupor (Romans 11:8) and a partial hardening (Romans 11:25) for a time so that G-d can bring in the "fullness of the Gentiles".

ISAIAH 52
G-d's reign over His
reunited kingdom

*From the standpoint of the **gospel** [euaggelion] they [unbelieving Jews] are enemies for your [believers'] sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; (Romans 11:28)*

Although the Gentile believers were at one time disobedient to G-d but have now been shown mercy (v 30), so the unbelieving Jews will be shown mercy because of the mercy shown to the Gentiles (v 31). G-d has shut up both Jew and Gentile in disobedience that He may show mercy to them both (v 32).

In chapter 15, Paul exhorts the Jewish believers and reminds them of his ministry to the Gentiles:

*And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another. But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God, to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the **gospel** [euaggelion] of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God. For I will not presume to speak*

*of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully **preached the gospel** [euaggelizō] of Christ. And thus I aspired to **preach the gospel** [euaggelizō], not where Christ was already named, so that I would not build on another man's foundation; but as it is written,
"They who had no news of Him shall see,
And they who have not heard shall understand." (Romans 15:14-21)*

He encourages the believers in Rome and describes his work of preaching the gospel to bring about "the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed."

Paul closes his letter with words of praise and honor for G-d:

*Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my **gospel** [euaggelion] and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith; to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen. (Romans 16:25-27)*

Amen, Paul! Amen!

Let's summarize Paul's use of "gospel" in Romans:

- Paul is an apostle set apart for the good news of G-d (Rom 1:1)
- He serves G-d in the preaching of the good news of His Son (Rom 1:9)
- Paul is eager to preach the good news to those also who are in Rome (Rom 1:15)
- He is not ashamed of the good news, for it is the power of G-d for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek (Rom 1:16)
- According to Paul's good news, G-d will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus (Rom 2:12-16)
- Paul quotes Isaiah 52: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!" to prove that Israel *has* heard the good news (Rom 10:15)
- The unbelievers did not all heed the good news (Rom 10:16)
- From the standpoint of the good news the unbelieving Jews are enemies for the sake of the believers, but from the standpoint of G-d's choice they are all still loved for the sake of the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Rom 11:28)
- Paul ministers as a [metaphorical] "priest" of the good news of G-d so that his "offering" of the Gentiles may become acceptable and sanctified by G-d's Holy Spirit (Rom 15:16)

- From Jerusalem to Illyricum, Paul has fully preached the good news of Christ (Rom 15:19)
- Paul aspired to preach the gospel where Christ had not yet been named so that he would not build on another man's foundation (Rom 15:20)
- Paul closes his letter with a prayer to G-d who can establish the Romans according to his gospel (Rom 16:25)

Like all of the Apostolic Scriptures that preceded it, Paul's message to the Romans refers to the "good news" without defining it. Most of his references to the gospel simply mention that he is a "messenger of the gospel," he "serves G-d in preaching the gospel," or that he is "not ashamed of the gospel" (Romans 1). His letter, written about thirty or more years after the death burial and resurrection of the Messiah,⁵¹ leverages his audiences' existing understanding of the good news.

That existing understanding was communicated in the centuries-old good-news promises G-d had given to Israel in the Tanakh. Paul refers to "my gospel" with the meaning that he was the (initial?) predominant teacher of the view that included Gentile believers as co-beneficiaries of Israel's promised blessings.

⁵¹ The letter to the Romans was written to introduce Paul (the author) to the believers in Rome and give a sample of his message before he arrived there. It was written by the Apostle Paul to Jewish and Gentile believers around 57 CE while Paul was in Corinth. (Zondervan, 1991, p. 2023)

10- The Good News in First Corinthians

Along with Silas and Timothy, Paul had established an assembly of believers in Corinth around 51-52 CE.⁵² According to Luke, “many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized” (Acts 18:8). The believers included the Jewish leader of the *Jewish* synagogue, Crispus (Acts 18:8) and the Jewish leader of the *believers’* synagogue, Sosthenes (Acts 18:17, 1 Cor 1:1).

Historians describe Corinth as a combination of “New York, Los Angeles, and Las Vegas of the ancient world”⁵³ in which “vice and religion flourished side by side.”⁵⁴ The diversity of thought, religion, and philosophy reflected the diversity of Corinth’s population. Based on Paul’s letters to the believers there, it appears that some (many?) of them had yielded to the negative influences of the unbelieving community around them.

Although Christians refer to this letter as “first Corinthians,” it is actually Paul’s *second* letter to the believers in Corinth. Here is an excellent description of Paul’s letters from the *Open Your Bible New Testament Commentary*:

- Corinthians A (now lost) written because Paul heard of serious problems. See 1 Corinthians 5:9.
- Corinthians B (our 1 Corinthians) written partly in response to questions sent to Paul by the church (1 Corinthians 7:1).
- Corinthians C (now lost), which was a sharp telling-off because the church hadn’t changed (see 2 Corinthians 7:5-12).
- Corinthians D (our 2 Corinthians) written to encourage them after news came that the church had reformed.⁵⁵

After a brief introduction, Paul confronts the divisions (1 Cor 1:10) and quarrels (1 Cor 1:11) that had erupted between believers. Their discord is focused on the person whose teaching and authority each group claimed. Some were saying “I am of Paul,” “I am of Apollos,” or “I am of Cephas [Peter]” (1 Cor 1:12).

*For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to **preach the gospel** [euaggelizō], not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void. For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (1 Corinthians 1:17-18)*

Paul makes the point that it isn’t his own “cleverness of speech” that was benefitting the Corinthians, it was the power of G-d, Himself. Their faith isn’t about Paul or Apollos: it’s about G-d!

⁵² (Blomberg, 2009, p. 21)

⁵³ (Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1987, p. 3)

⁵⁴ (Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1987, p. 2)

⁵⁵ (Bruce, et al., 2013, p. 1139)

Remember G-d's good-news promises of salvation and redemption (Psalm 40:7-10, Isaiah 52:3-10, Joel 2:28-3:2)? In this passage, Paul connects those promises with the work of Christ on the cross. Messiah has paid the price for those promises to be fulfilled.

In chapter 4, Paul admonishes his audience neither to pass judgment against one another nor to esteem themselves. He describes how he and the other apostles have become a spectacle (v9), "fools for Christ's sake", "weak", and "without honor" (v 10) in the eyes of the world while the Corinthian believers are viewed as "prudent", "strong", and "distinguished".

*I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the **gospel** [euaggelion]. Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me. (1 Corinthians 4:14-16)*

Paul demonstrates fatherly concern toward those who came to faith under his instruction and proclamation of the good news.

Later, in chapter 9, Paul responds to those who are judging him and questioning whether or not he is an apostle (a theme shared in several of his letters). He defends his apostleship because the Corinthians are "the seal of my apostleship in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 9:2). Paul argues he has the same rights as the other apostles—perhaps even more since many came to faith under his proclamation of the gospel.

*If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the **gospel** [euaggelion] of Christ. Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar? So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the **gospel** [euaggelion] to get their living from the **gospel** [euaggelion].*

*But I have used none of these things. And I am not writing these things so that it will be done so in my case; for it would be better for me to die than have any man make my boast an empty one. For if I **preach the gospel** [euaggelizō], I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not **preach the gospel** [euaggelizō]. For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me. What then is my reward? That, when I **preach the gospel** [euaggelizō], I may offer the **gospel** [euaggelion] without charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the **gospel** [euaggelion]. (1 Corinthians 9:11-18)*

While this passage provides the most frequent use of "gospel" in the whole of Scripture (eight times in seven verses!), it does nothing to illuminate what the gospel actually is. Instead, it simply serves to demonstrate Paul's example in sharing the gospel "without charge" although he and the other apostles

have the “right in the gospel” to “reap material things” (food and shelter for themselves and their wives- see verses 4 & 5) from those they are instructing in Corinth.

He concludes his point that he becomes “all things to all men” (v 22) with this:

*I do all things for the sake of the **gospel** [euaggelion], so that I may become a fellow partaker of it. (1 Corinthians 9:23)*

Several chapters later, Paul reminds the Corinthians that he delivered to them the good news of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Messiah as “of first importance”.

*Now I make known to you, brethren, the **gospel** [euaggelion] which I **preached** [euaggelizō] to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I **preached** [euaggelizō] to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. (1 Corinthians 15:1-5)*

Why is Messiah’s death, burial, and resurrection “good news” and why is it preeminently important? Jesus’ death in our place demonstrates that He is the prophesied Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53) and His resurrection offers proof of our own resurrection that is yet to come. These speak to His pending return and the establishment of the kingdom, righteousness, and other elements that are at the core of G-d’s good-news promises. If we stand condemned and expelled from His kingdom, we cannot enjoy the blessings of His promises. Salvation is simply the first step toward receiving them.

Let’s summarize all of the good news verses in 1 Corinthians:

- Paul was sent to proclaim the good news, not in cleverness of speech, so that the work of Christ would not be made empty (1 Cor 1:17)
- Paul exhorts the Corinthians believers to imitate him because, in Christ Jesus, he is their father through the good news (1 Cor 1:15)
- Paul and his companions endure all things so they will cause no hindrance to the good news of Christ (1 Cor 9:12)
- The Lord directed those who proclaim the good news to get their living [necessities like food, clothing, and shelter] from the good news (1 Cor 9:14)
- Paul has nothing to boast of because, if he preaches the good news, he does so under compulsion and woe to him if he does not do so (1 Cor 9:16)
- Paul’s reward is that, when he preaches the good news, he can do so without charge (1 Cor 9:18)
- Paul does all things for the sake of the good news so that he can become a fellow partaker of it (1 Cor 9:23)

- Paul preached the good news to the believers in Corinth (by which they are saved), and the part of first importance is that Messiah died for our sins, was buried, and raised on the third day (1 Cor 15:1-5)

Like the other Apostolic Scriptures I had examined so far, Paul's letter to the believers in Corinth referred to the good news without defining it. His epistle, written about twenty years after the death burial and resurrection of the Messiah⁵⁶, relied upon his audience's existing understanding of what the good news is...an understanding that Paul, himself, had impressed upon them when he had first visited Corinth.

The centuries-old good-news promises G-d had given to Israel in the Tanakh remained the same.

⁵⁶ Paul's first letter to the believers in Corinth was written to identify problems in the congregation there, offer solutions, and teach the believers how to live for Messiah in the midst of a corrupt society. Paul wrote this letter to them around 55 CE during his three-year ministry in Ephesus as part of his third missionary journey. (Zondervan, 1991, p. 2059)

11- The Good News in Second Corinthians

Paul's previous letter admonishing the believers in Corinth had resulted in little or no change. As a result, Paul wrote another letter (sometimes called the "severe letter" or "Corinthians C") telling them off.

After writing the severe letter, Paul had second thoughts. He was deeply concerned about how the Corinthians might react to it. So after the riot caused by Demetrius and his fellow silversmiths (see Ac 19:23–41), he left Ephesus and set out for Macedonia by way of Troas. He expected to meet Titus in Troas to get news of the effect of his severe letter on the Corinthian church, but Titus was not there (see 2Co 2:12–13). Still deeply concerned and despite the fact that the Lord had opened up an opportunity to preach the gospel at Troas, Paul said good-bye to the believers there and moved on to Macedonia, where he met Titus. To his relief, the news from the Corinthian church was basically good. The severe letter had brought its intended results (7:5–16). The encouraging report of Titus of the improved situation at Corinth is the immediate occasion of the writing of 2 Corinthians.⁵⁷

The severe letter resulted in the Corinthians "made sorrowful to the point of repentance" (2 Cor 7:9), and they corrected their wicked behavior. The first time Paul mentions the good news is in chapter 2.

*Now when I came to Troas for the **gospel** [euaggelion] of Christ and when a door was opened for me in the Lord, I had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went on to Macedonia. (2 Corinthians 2:12-13)*

Paul had gone to Troas to share the good news of Messiah, and although he was given the opportunity to preach, he was greatly concerned ("had no rest for his spirit") about his severe letter to the Corinthians, could not find Titus to find out how they were doing, and so moved on to Macedonia.

In chapter 4, Paul relates that he and others with him are manifesting (demonstrating) the truth commending themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of G-d.

*And even if our **gospel** [euaggelion] is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the **gospel** [euaggelion] of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (2 Corinthians 4:3-4)*

⁵⁷ (Zondervan, 2017)

Those to whom the good news is veiled are perishing: their minds are blinded to the light of the good news of the glory of the Messiah, the resurrected and returning King.

Later, in chapter 8, Paul tells the Corinthians that G-d had put great earnestness on their behalf in the heart of Titus.

*We have sent along with him the brother whose fame in the things of the **gospel** [euaggelion] has spread through all the churches; and not only this, but he has also been appointed by the churches to travel with us in this gracious work, which is being administered by us for the glory of the Lord Himself, and to show our readiness, taking precaution so that no one will discredit us in our administration of this generous gift; for we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. (2 Corinthians 8:18-21)*

Timothy was likely that “brother whose fame in the things of the gospel has spread through all the churches” although some have suggested it was Luke.

In chapter 8, Paul notes the generosity of the believers throughout Macedonia. Although they were in “great ordeal of affliction” and “deep poverty,” they “overflowed in the wealth of their liberality” (2 Cor 8:1-2) in donating to other believers throughout the empire (who were suffering from famine as prophesied by Agabus in Acts 11:28).

In chapter 9, Paul urges the Corinthians to “arrange beforehand your previously promised bountiful gift, so that the same would be ready as a bountiful gift and not affected by covetousness.” (2 Cor 9:5)

*Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the **gospel** [euaggelion] of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all, while they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you. (2 Corinthians 9:13-14)*

Paul commends them for their confession of the good news that Jesus is the Messiah and their generous donations to other believers.

In chapter 10, Paul describes himself (he is meek when face to face, but bold when absent from them-verse 1).

*For we are not overextending ourselves, as if we did not reach to you, for we were the first to come even as far as you in the **gospel** [euaggelion] of Christ; not boasting beyond our measure, that is, in other men’s labors, but with the hope that as your faith grows, we will be, within our sphere, enlarged even more by you, so as to **preach the gospel** [euaggelizō] even to the regions beyond you, and not to boast in what has been accomplished in the sphere of another. (2 Corinthians 10:14-16)*

Paul was the first to travel as far as Corinth to bring the good news of the Messiah and he hopes to preach that same good news in the regions beyond them.

In chapter 11, Paul again defends his apostleship and expresses concern that the Corinthians will be deceived like Eve and led astray from the Messiah.

*For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different **gospel** [euaggelion] which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully. (2 Corinthians 11:4)*

They “bear this beautifully” (they are *overly* gracious and accommodating) toward those who bring false teachings.

*Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I **preached** [euaggelizō] **the gospel** [euaggelion] of God to you without charge? (2 Corinthians 11:7)*

Paul is concerned that he had been a little *too* kind and gracious towards them, hadn’t expected them to “pay it forward” regarding ministry support, and that his behavior had left open a door for the “false apostles” and “deceitful workers” (verse 13).

The summary of references to the good news in Paul’s letter to Corinth:

- Paul had gone to Troas to share the good news of Christ but was restless and left there to go to Macedonia (2 Cor 2:12-13)
- If Paul’s gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing (2 Cor 4:3)
- The god of this world has blinded the minds of those who don’t believe so they might not see the light of the good news of the glory of Messiah (2 Cor 4:4)
- Paul sent Titus and Timothy “the brother whose fame in the things of the gospel has spread through all the churches” to the Corinthian believers (2 Cor 8:18)
- Other believers will glorify G-d for the Corinthians’ obedience to their confession of the good news of Christ and the liberality of their contribution to others (2 Cor 9:13-14)
- Paul and his companions were the first to travel as far as Corinth to share the good news of Christ (2 Cor 10:14)
- Paul hopes that as the Corinthians’ faith grows, Paul’s ministry will be enlarged, and they will preach the good news even to the regions beyond them (2 Cor 10:16)
- The Corinthians had been a little too gracious and accommodating toward those who shared a “Jesus” or a “gospel” that Paul had not preached (2 Cor 11:4)
- Paul preached the good news to the Corinthians without charge (2 Cor 11:7)

Like his previous letters, this epistle to the Corinthians made reference to the good news without defining or explaining it. Paul wrote this message about twenty-three years after the death burial and resurrection of the Messiah⁵⁸, and he leverages the Corinthians' existing understanding of what the good news is: the good news that he and other apostles spread throughout the Roman Empire—the centuries-old promises of the good news G-d had given to Israel and that Jesus was the One to bring about those promises.

⁵⁸ He wrote this letter around 55-57 CE from Ephesus as the fourth in a series of letters to Corinth (the first two are lost and we know the third letter as 1 Corinthians) [an alternative view of the sequence of Paul's four letters]. Paul used strong words to correct and teach them because of some who denied Paul's authority. (Zondervan, 1991, p. 2091)

12- The Good News in Galatians

Galatia isn't a town or village. Acts 16:6 records that Paul and Timothy passed through the "Phrygian and Galatian region." Where is this region?

Galatia is an ancient district in central Anatolia [modern-day Turkey] that was occupied early in the 3rd century BC by Celtic tribes, whose bands of marauders created havoc among neighbouring Hellenistic states. Invited from Europe to participate in a Bithynian civil war (278 BC), the Gallic horde plagued western Anatolia until checked by the Seleucid king Antiochus I at the so-called Elephant Battle (275 BC). At that point the Celts, called Galatae (Galatians) by 3rd-century writers, settled in the territory to which they gave their name.⁵⁹

This region included the cities of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe which Paul and Barnabas had visited and where many came to faith (Acts 13:14-14:22). A problem arose among these believers, and since Skype wouldn't arrive for almost two millennia, Paul wrote a letter to them in order to correct the issue:

Paul wrote this epistle after he received word that some Galatian God-Fearers, under the influence of others, were undergoing or planning to undergo, legal conversion to become [Jewish] proselytes... From Paul's perspective, the Galatian God-Fearers were looking forward toward conversion in order to merit God's favor and salvation. Paul saw this as a problem. He wrote his epistle to the Galatians to correct the underlying theology and to dissuade the Galatian Gentile believers from going through with their plan to become full proselytes.⁶⁰

Paul's begins his letter by expressing his shock, anger, and disappointment.

*I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different **gospel** [euaggelion]; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the **gospel** [euaggelion] of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should **preach to you a gospel** [euaggelizō] contrary to what **we have preached** [euaggelizō] to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is **preaching to you a gospel** [euaggelizō] contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed! For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ. For I would have you know, brethren, that the **gospel** [euaggelion] which was **preached** [euaggelizō] by me is not according to man.*

⁵⁹ (Britannica, 1998)

⁶⁰ (Lancaster, The Holy Epistle to the Galatians, 2011, p. 22)

For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. (Galatians 1:6-12)

This passage contains the second-most frequent use of the Greek words for “gospel” in the Bible (seven instances in six verses!) but, once again, Paul used the term without defining it. The believers in Galatia already *knew* the gospel he had proclaimed; he didn’t need to explain it to them again. He was angry that they are “deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ for a different gospel.”

What is the controversy between Paul’s gospel and this other “different” gospel? We’ve already encountered it: it’s the issue the apostles discussed and debated in Acts 15. Paul also addressed the issue in his letter to the Romans (I covered this previously in Chapter 9).

A significant dispute had erupted among believers regarding whether or not Gentiles must convert and become Jewish (“circumcised according to the custom of Moses”) in order to be saved. Some men from Judea were in the “yes they do!” group while Paul and Barnabas were in the “no they don’t!” crowd. Paul and Barnabas took their case to the apostles in Jerusalem to have the matter settled, and the apostles ruled on the side of the “Gentiles do not have to convert to be saved” group.

The primary issue is whether or not the promises of the good news are exclusively for the Jewish people. Paul and the apostles agreed that the Gentiles were beneficiaries of those promises *without having to go through ritual conversion to become Jewish*.

Paul describes his early days of faith in Messiah:

*But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might **preach** [euaggelizō] Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus. (Galatians 1:15-17)*

*I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ; but only, they kept hearing, “He who once persecuted us is now **preaching** [euaggelizō] the faith which he once tried to destroy.” And they were glorifying God because of me. (Galatians 1:22-24)*

Here Paul is simply describing his work to preach (proclaim the good news) of the Messiah and to trust that He is the Promised One.

He continues in chapter 2 to describe the events of Acts 15:

*Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. It was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the **gospel** [euaggelion] which I preach among the*

*Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain. But not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. But it was because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage. But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the **gospel** [euaggelion] would remain with you. But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me. But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the **gospel** [euaggelion] to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised (for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles), and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we might go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. (Galatians 2:1-9)*

Paul submitted the good news that he had been preaching (the message that the promised good-news blessings were for both Jews and Gentiles without requiring the Gentiles to become Jewish) to the apostles in Jerusalem and they affirmed it. Paul desired that the truth of the gospel remain in the Galatian believers (verse 5) since Paul had been entrusted with delivering the good news to the Gentiles just as Peter had been entrusted with carrying it to the Jewish people (verses 7 & 8).

But everything wasn't all fine and dandy... there were still some major issues.

Peter, Barnabas, and many of the Jewish believers had been influenced by this "non-gospel" message and were beginning to think that the Gentiles still needed to convert, that somehow they weren't yet saved or even worthy of table fellowship:

For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he [Peter] used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. (Galatians 2:12)

The "party of the circumcision" was the group teaching that Gentiles could only inherit the promises of the good news by becoming Jewish through circumcision as part of ritual conversion. This was an error and Paul "opposed Peter to his face" to correct it.

*But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the **gospel** [euaggelion], I said to Cephas [Peter]⁶¹ in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews? (Galatians 2:14)*

⁶¹ See John 1:42

At one point, Peter had been eating with Gentiles but later was compelling the Gentiles to live like Jews (i.e., take on Jewish customs as if they were converting to be Jewish). His behavior was wrong and hypocritical and Paul wasn't having any of it!

In chapter 4, Paul appeals to the Galatians' former attitude of compassion, generosity, and kindness towards him when he first visited them and reminds them that he was preaching to them even though he was sick and infirm:

*I beg of you, brethren, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You have done me no wrong; but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I **preached the gospel** [euaggelizō] to you the first time; and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself. (Galatians 4:12-14)*

"Illness"? Paul has a knack for understatement. He came to them after he had been beaten almost to death by a mob of unbelievers! (See Acts 14:19-23)

Let's summarize Paul use of "gospel" in this letter:

- Paul is amazed that the Galatians are deserting Messiah for a different gospel (Gal 1:6)
- Some people want to distort the good news of Messiah (Gal 1:7)
- Anyone preaching a gospel other than the one Paul preached should be accursed (Gal 1:8-9)
- Paul's gospel is not according to man nor from man but received via revelation (Gal 1:11-12)
- Paul was called to preach the good news of Messiah to the Gentiles (Gal 1:16)
- The believers in Judea were glorifying G-d because Paul was now preaching the faith (Gal 1:23)
- Paul recounts the submission of his "good news" (Acts 15) to the leaders in Jerusalem (Gal 2:1)
- Paul did not yield to his opponents for even an hour so that the good news would remain with the Gentiles (Gal 2:5)
- Seeing that he had been entrusted with the gospel, James, Peter, and John affirmed Paul's ministry to the Gentiles (Gal 2:7-9)
- Paul opposes Peter's hypocrisy and failure to be straightforward about the truth of the gospel (Gal 2:14)
- Paul reminded the Galatians of the grace and kindness they showed to him the first time he preached the gospel to them (Gal 4:12-14) and called them back to that original attitude.

As in his other letters, Paul's epistle to the first-century believers in the region of Galatia relies upon the "good news" he had delivered to them in person. Paul wrote more than a decade or two after the death burial and resurrection of the Messiah,⁶² and he relies upon the Galatians' existing understanding of the gospel he had given to them: the centuries-old good news blessings G-d's promised to Israel.

⁶² Written about A.D. 49 from Antioch prior to the Jerusalem council (A.D. 50) (Zondervan, 1991, p. 2112) although some scholars place the date later- possibly in the 50s or 60s (MacDonald, 2016, p. 2396)

13- The Good News in Ephesians

During his travels, Paul briefly visited the synagogue in Ephesus (Acts 18:18-21) and then later returned to stay and work tirelessly with the new group of believers for over two years (Acts 19:8-10). Generally speaking, he is viewed as the author of this letter, but even conservative modern scholarship is challenging that idea.⁶³ For the sake of our topic, I will take the traditional position Paul is the author, and the Ephesian believers are his audience.

With a population estimated around 200,000-250,000, Ephesus was the third-largest city in the Roman Empire after Rome and Alexandria.⁶⁴ It was a major center of international trade at the nexus of vital land and sea routes.

Ephesus was of course the home of many cults, but the most significant and powerful deity in the city was Artemis of Ephesus. Artemis features in the narrative of Acts 19 but the cult is also a significant part of the context for the life of the early Christians in the City. Although Artemis was worshipped in many places, the cult of Artemis of Ephesus had its own distinctive characteristics and also changed over time. It was the cult of the Ephesian Artemis which, more than anything else, made Ephesus a centre of religious life during our period [the first & second centuries CE].⁶⁵

I found the good news mentioned early in this letter.

*In Him [Christ] also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory. In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the **gospel** [euaggelion] of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory. (Ephesians 1:11-14)*

Psalm 40 is the first place the message of truth and the good news is connected with salvation. Here Paul tells his audience that they too were sealed in Christ with the Holy Spirit of promise, “the pledge of our inheritance.” The Holy Spirit is the pledge but what is the “inheritance”?

From the perspective of Abraham— “the father of us all” in regards to matters of faith (Romans 4:15)— the inheritance was the Land G-d had promised him along with heirs (us!) to inherit it (Genesis 15). That promise is the earliest reference in Scripture to inheritance connected with the good news. The

⁶³ See Appendix iv- Excursus on Paul’s Authorship of Ephesians for more details

⁶⁴ (Trebilco, 2007, p. 17)

⁶⁵ (Trebilco, 2007, p. 19)

inheritance—and the pardon of our sins required for us to be able to enjoy it—is guaranteed by the Holy Spirit, Himself, since He was given as a pledge of that inheritance.

In chapter 2, Paul informs his Gentile readers that, before they came to faith, their situation was inconceivably dire. But now that they are in Messiah they are no longer separated from Him, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, without hope, or without G-d (Ephesians 2:11-13). Paul makes the point that Christ is the one who reconciled unbelieving Gentiles into His Kingdom (v 16).

*AND HE CAME AND **PREACHED** [euaggelizō] PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:17-22)*

Did you notice how verse 17 is IN ALL CAPITAL LETTERS? Just a reminder: the authors of the NASB translation aren't shouting at us. This is how they indicate a section is a quote from the Tanakh (the "Old Testament"). In this case, Paul is quoting from Isaiah 57 where G-d promises to heal the nation of Israel (those far away), lead them back to the Land and the nation of Judah (those who are near), and restore comfort and peace to them both. G-d will cause their lips to praise Him, and He will declare peace to them. (Isaiah 57:15-19).

Paul validates his point (Gentiles being reconciled into the Kingdom) by quoting G-d's own words: "peace to you who were far away." How much further away could anyone be? If Israel was "far away" and the Gentiles were "excluded from the commonwealth of Israel" (Ephesians 2:12) then Gentiles weren't even "on the same continent" in a manner of speaking.

In chapter 3, Paul connects the gospel with the "mystery of Christ":

*By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the **gospel** [euaggelion], of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power. To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to **preach** [euaggelizō] to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; (Ephesians 3:4-9)*

The “mystery of Christ”—the secret of the Messiah—is that like all of the *Jewish* believers who preceded them, *Gentile* believers are also heirs, members of the body, and partakers of the promises. It is only in the Messiah that both Jew and Gentile have resurrection, life (John 11:25), and the ability to partake of the promises of the good news. G-d gave Paul the grace to share the good news of the unfathomable riches of Christ to the Gentiles.

Ephesians chapter 6 includes the famous description of the “armor of G-d”:

*Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE **GOSPEL** [euaggelion] OF PEACE; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.
(Ephesians 6:13-17)*

Notice all of the sections in this passage that are IN ALL CAPS. Once again, Paul quotes from the Tanakh to prove his point. Verse 15 points to one of the good news passages in Isaiah:

*How lovely on the mountains
Are the feet of him who brings good news,
Who announces peace
And brings good news of happiness,
Who announces salvation,
And says to Zion, “Your God reigns!” (Isaiah 52:7)*

ISAIAH 52
G-d’s reign over His
reunited kingdom

Feet shod with the preparation of the good news of peace and the helmet of salvation? Paul connects the good news found in Isaiah with the armor of G-d.

Paul closes his letter with a request to the Ephesians for their prayers:

*With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the **gospel** [euaggelion], for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. (Ephesians 6:18-20)*

Let's summarize Paul's references to the gospel in this epistle:

- After listening to the message of the good news, the Ephesians believed and were sealed in Christ with the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13)
- Paul quotes from Isaiah chapter 57 (G-d speaks a message of peace) to illustrate his point that the Gentiles (who were "far away") are now fellow citizens and have a place in G-d's household (Eph 2:17)
- He explains the mystery of Messiah: Gentiles are heirs, members of the body, and partakers of the promise in Christ through the good news (Eph 3:6).
- G-d gave Paul the grace to preach the good news to the Gentiles (Eph 3:8)
- Paul quotes the good news passage from Isaiah chapter 52 while describing the armor of G-d (Eph 6:15)
- He asks the Ephesians for their prayers that he speak the mystery of the gospel with boldness (Eph 6:19)

Paul wrote this epistle about thirty years after the death burial and resurrection of the Messiah⁶⁶ and once again we find him writing to his audience about the good news without defining it. Paul had shared G-d's promises to Israel with the Ephesians over the course of about two and a half years (Acts 19:8-10). He relied upon their existing understanding of the message of the good news while he explained its significance in this letter. Paul explains the mystery of the Messiah (Gentile inclusion as heirs to the promises) and reiterates the idea that his good news is the same good news proclaimed by Isaiah.

⁶⁶ Written about A.D. 60, from Rome, during Paul's imprisonment there (Zondervan, 1991, p. 2128)

14- The Good News in Philippians

While in Troas, Paul has a vision that calls him and his companions to the region of Macedonia (Acts 16:9-10). Philippi (not to be confused with the town of Caesarea Philippi in Israel) was a city in northeastern Greece with a population estimated between 10,000⁶⁷ and 46,000⁶⁸ individuals. In Acts 16:10, Luke describes it as “a leading city of the district of Macedonia” so the larger estimate is likely more accurate.

Consisting of Thracians, native Greeks, and Roman colonist farmers, veteran soldiers, and slaves, Philippi was an agricultural colony.⁶⁹ Usually, Paul’s first stop when visiting a new city was the local synagogue. Instead, we find Paul going to a “place of prayer” (Acts 16:13) which suggests there was no synagogue and a very small Jewish populace.

By the time Paul wrote his letter around 61 CE⁷⁰, the small group of believers had grown significantly to the point where overseers and deacons (plural!) were needed.⁷¹ It is into this environment Paul sends his message.

*I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, in view of your participation in the **gospel** [euaggelion] from the first day until now. For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the **gospel** [euaggelion], you all are partakers of grace with me. (Philippians 1:3-7)*

In his introduction, Paul reminds the Philippians that they have been participants in the good news from the very first day he shared the message with them. He is confident that Messiah will continue to work in them and has an exceptional warmth towards them because, even though he is imprisoned, they are “partakers of grace” with him.

*Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the **gospel** [euaggelion], so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear. Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will; the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the **gospel** [euaggelion]; the former proclaim*

⁶⁷ (Verhoef, 2013, p. 16)

⁶⁸ (Oakes, 2007, p. 46)

⁶⁹ (Thurston & Ryan, 2016, p. 26)

⁷⁰ (Zondervan, 1991, p. 2143)

⁷¹ Philippians 1:1

Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. (Philippians 1:12-18)

Paul informs the Philippians that his incarceration has turned out to be a good thing: news has spread far and wide and given him the opportunity to share the good news. It has also encouraged other believers to “speak the word of G-d without fear.” He acknowledges that some are preaching Christ with impure motives (envy and strife, v 15) but others are doing so out of love. Either way, Messiah is proclaimed, and Paul rejoices.

*Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the **gospel** [euaggelion] of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the **gospel** [euaggelion]; in no way alarmed by your opponents—which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God. (Philippians 1:27-28)*

Paul encourages the Philippians to live in a manner worthy of the good news of Messiah so that he will know they are united and striving for the faith. The Gentiles in Philippi are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9) like all other believers but their opponents would suggest otherwise. The believers’ lack of alarm is a sign of salvation for them but a sign of destruction for their opponents.

In chapter 2, he continues to urge the Philippians to be united in spirit, intent on one purpose, and to live with an attitude of humility. Since Paul is incarcerated in Rome, he plans to send Timothy to them and learn how things are going (v 19) and speaks glowingly of Timothy’s character and service:

*But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the **gospel** [euaggelion] like a child serving his father. (Philippians 2:22)*

As he concludes his letter, Paul urges Euodia and Syntyche to live in harmony:

*Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the **gospel** [euaggelion], together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. (Philippians 4:3)*

He reminds them of their gracious giving to support his ministry:

*You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the **gospel** [euaggelion], after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; (Philippians 4:15)*

He thanks them for their gift which has left him “amply supplied” (v 18)

Here’s a summary of Paul’s references to the good news in this letter:

- The Philippians were participants in the good news from the beginning (Phil 1:3)
- Paul’s circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the good news (Phil 1:12)
- Those who preach out of love know Paul is appointed for the defense of the gospel (Phil 1:16)
- He exhorts the Philippians to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ so that he will hear they are with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel (Phil 1:27)
- Timothy served with Paul in furthering the gospel like a child serving his father (Phil 2:22)
- Euodia and Syntyche have shared Paul’s struggle in the cause of the gospel (Phil 4:3)
- No group aside from the Philippians supported Paul at the first preaching of the gospel after he left Macedonia (Phil 4:15)

At the risk of sounding like a broken record (do kids these days even know what a broken record *is* much less what one sounds like?), we again find Paul writing to his audience *about* the good news without explaining what it *is*. Paul shared the gospel with the Philippian believers when he initially visited them and relied upon that understanding in his letter. He is not educating them about the good news; he is encouraging them to live as if they believe it and trust in the G-d who gave it.

15- The Good News in Colossians

Colossae was a small town located in the Lycus River valley near Laodicea and Hierapolis⁷² about 100 miles east of Ephesus⁷³. Paul likely never taught in Colossae (he includes the Colossians and Laodiceans among those who have “not personally seen my face”- Col 2:1). His letter reveals that Epaphras, a native of Colossae (Col 4:12), delivered the word of truth to them. Some scholars believe that Epaphras heard the good news from Paul in Ephesus⁷⁴. In the first century, the town was declining in stature and was destroyed by an earthquake just a few years after Paul wrote Colossians.⁷⁵

Because of its prevalence in Christian literature about the town, I feel compelled to include this observation as well: “Without doubt Colossae was the least important church to which any epistle of St. Paul is addressed.”⁷⁶

Paul refers to the good news only twice in this letter. Both instances are in found in chapter one:

*We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints; because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the **gospel** [euaggelion] which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth; just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf, and he also informed us of your love in the Spirit. (Colossians 1:3-8)*

In his introduction, Paul expresses the thankfulness he has for the Colossians and the love they have for all the saints. They have hope laid up for them in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 3:2) of which they had previously heard in the word of truth and the good news of that kingdom (and its King!) has come to them just as it has to all the world.

Later, Paul exhorts the Colossians to continue in their faith:

*And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach— if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the **gospel** [euaggelion] that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister. (Colossians 1:21-23)*

⁷² (Thompson, 1963, p. 112)

⁷³ (MacArthur, 1992, p. 5)

⁷⁴ (deSilva, 2004, p. 691), (Murphy-O'Connor, 2008, p. 211)

⁷⁵ (Thompson, 1963, p. 112)

⁷⁶ (Lightfoot, 1892, p. 16)

He reminds them to continue in the faith and not move away from the hope of the good news which they have heard.

A quick summary of these two instances:

- The Colossians love all the saints because of the hope laid up for them in heaven of which they had previously heard in the word of truth, the good news which had come to them (Col 1:5)
- Messiah has reconciled the Colossians to Himself if they continue in the faith steadfast and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that they have heard (Col 1:22-23)

While Paul does not provide any explanation of what the gospel is, he does shed some light on what it does and its impact on the lives of believers:

Messiah says that everyone will know that we are His disciples if we have love for one another (John 13:35). Paul says that the reason Colossians love the other believers is because of the hope laid up for them in heaven that they heard in the good news message of what is to come.

The prophet Isaiah tells us that G-d will keep those who are “steadfast of mind” in perfect peace because of their trust in G-d (Isaiah 26:3). Paul shares that concept to the Colossians: they will remain steadfast in faith (and not move away from the hope of the gospel) to demonstrate that Messiah has reconciled them to Himself.

16- The Good News in First and Second Thessalonians

Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians

Thessalonica is one of the oldest continually inhabited cities in the world⁷⁷. Due to its age, modern researchers have abundant *historical* documentation but limited *archaeological* evidence because it has been inhabited since the 4th century BCE. I guess people frown on archaeologists digging up their homes.

The city of Thessalonica was a large and prosperous seaport, situated on the northernmost point of the Thermaic Gulf; it was a short distance east of the mouth of the Axios river. In Paul's day it was one of the most important cities in the Roman province of Macedonia.

The majority of Thessalonians were native Greeks. Because of the political status of the city [a "free city" permitted to govern itself], it retained its essential Greek character. A sprinkling of Romans and Orientals lived there, and because of the attractive commerce at Thessalonica, there was a large Jewish colony in the city. The activity and influence of this Jewish community may be seen in the large number of Gentile "God-fearers" who frequented their synagogue, having become dissatisfied with their pagan religions.⁷⁸

Estimates of the city's population in the first century are usually around 200,000.⁷⁹

After visiting Philippi where there appears to be no synagogue (Acts 16), Paul travels to Thessalonica and visits a sizeable synagogue reasoning with the Jews from the Scriptures for three Sabbaths (Acts 17:1-2). Some of them were persuaded along with a large number of the G-d-fearing Greeks and several of the leading women (Acts 17:4). As frequently happens to Paul, the synagogue leaders become jealous of Paul's success with the Gentiles and set the city in an uproar (Acts 17:5). They sought Paul and Silas but couldn't find them, so they dragged Jason and some other Jewish believers before the city authorities (v 6). Based upon the charges made against Jason, Paul, Silas, and the others ("they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus") it seems that Paul had placed considerable emphasis on the concept of the Kingdom of G-d and Jesus as the soon-to-be-returning King.

It appears that Paul stayed in the city for several weeks because he had transitioned from "house guest" to "laborer" to support himself and not be a burden to his hosts (1 Thessalonians 2:9). He had received financial gifts more than once from the Philippian believers over a hundred miles away (Philippians 4:16). After the uproar, however, the Jewish believers sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea (Acts 17:10).

Paul travels from Berea to Athens to Corinth over the course of a few weeks or months. It was less than a year after his visit that Paul writes his first letter to encourage the believers in Thessalonica.

⁷⁷ (Still, 1999, p. 63)

⁷⁸ (Hiebert, 2002, pp. 33-34)

⁷⁹ (Jensen, 1974, p. 8)

Paul mentions the gospel in his greeting:

*We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you; for our **gospel** [euaggelion] did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. (1 Thessalonians 1:2-5)*

Paul shared the *words* of the good news, but that wasn't all the Thessalonians received. They received the full conviction of its truth, spiritual power, and the Holy Spirit.

In chapter 2, Paul mentions the gospel again:

*For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the **gospel** [euaggelion] of God amid much opposition. For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit; but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the **gospel** [euaggelion], so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts. (1 Thessalonians 2:1-4)*

Paul and Silas had boldness in G-d to be able to proclaim the good news of G-d to the Thessalonians in spite of much opposition. Their exhortation came from the heart of men who had been entrusted by G-d with the good news, but their work went beyond the desire of diligent teachers:

*Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the **gospel** [euaggelion] of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us. For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the **gospel** [euaggelion] of God. (1 Thessalonians 2:8-9)*

Because of their affection towards the Thessalonians, Paul and Silas worked hard at some form of employment while they were proclaiming the good news so as not to be a burden.

After they were sent away due to the uproar in the city, Paul and Silas grew concerned about the new believers over the ensuing weeks and months.

*Therefore when we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the **gospel** [euaggelion] of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith, so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this. (1 Thessalonians 3:1-3)*

Paul sent Timothy, who was also a fellow laborer in sharing the good news of Messiah, to the Thessalonians to strengthen and encourage them in their faith. Timothy did so for a while and then returned to Paul.

*But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has **brought us good news** [euaggelizō] of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you, (1 Thessalonians 3:6)*

This verse marks the first time in Paul's writings that I found the word *euaggelizō* used in a generic sense: Timothy brought Paul good news of the Thessalonians' faith and love.

Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians

In his *The Story of God Bible Commentary*, Dr. John Byron⁸⁰ provides a helpful synopsis of the reasons Paul wrote his second letter to the believers in Thessalonica.

Based on statements in 2 Thessalonians, it seems that in spite of Paul's efforts (or perhaps because of them), the situation [for the Thessalonian believers] had deteriorated in three areas.

First, Paul acknowledged in his first letter that the Thessalonians were facing a degree of opposition. Indeed, he was afraid that it might have undone all of their work there (1 Thess 2:14; 3:3-5). While this underlying concern is present in the first letter, it is a major concern in the second letter. We are not given any specifics, but it appears that the opposition from outside has increased to the point that Paul must encourage them by reminding them that God will act on their behalf someday in the person of Jesus (1:5-2:12)

Second, while there was some confusion about the status of those who had died before the return of Jesus, which Paul dealt with in his first letter, a whole new confusion over the day of the Lord has arisen. There are some who think the day has already occurred (2 Thess 2:2). Paul is not exactly sure how this confusion arose, but he is careful to provide some information that will put their hearts at ease. As with his attempts to encourage them in the face of persecution, he will direct their thoughts toward what God will do in Jesus.

Finally, there is a group of people in the church who are acting in a way that is disorderly and are, therefore, becoming a burden to the church. These people refuse to work and spend their time being "busybodies" (2 Thess 3:11). Paul touched on aspects of this situation his first letter (1 Thess 4:9-12; 5:14). To what degree this is

⁸⁰ Professor of New Testament at the evangelical Ashland Theological Seminary

the same group or the same problem is not clear. But Paul's response to the situation provides us with an example of church discipline from Christianity's earliest period.⁸¹

In his introduction, Paul greets the believers in Thessalonica and speaks proudly of them because of their perseverance in the midst of persecution and affliction (2 Thess 1:4). He reminds them of G-d's character of justice.

*For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the **gospel** [euaggelion] of our Lord Jesus. (2 Thessalonians 1:6-8)*

Paul comforts the afflicted believers declaring condemnation for those who afflict them and do not hearken to the good news of the coming King.

In chapter 2, he puts their hearts at ease with the knowledge that Christ's return (i.e., the "day of the Lord") has not yet occurred but affirms they are among the elect.

*But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. It was for this He called you through our **gospel** [euaggelion], that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14)*

Believers aren't called through the gospel to salvation (as if salvation were the goal). We are called through the gospel for the purpose of gaining the glory of the Lord Jesus the Messiah. We are chosen to be conformed to the image of G-d's Son (Romans 8:29), and Paul reminds them of this.

Summarizing Paul's use of gospel in these two letters:

- The Thessalonian believers received the good news, conviction of its truth, spiritual power, and the Holy Spirit. (1 Thes 1:5)
- Paul and Silas had boldness in G-d to be able to proclaim the good news of G-d to the Thessalonians in spite of much opposition. (1 Thes 2:2)
- Their exhortation came from the heart of men entrusted by G-d with that good news. (1 Thes 2:4)
- Because of their affection towards the Thessalonians, Paul and Silas worked hard at a job while they were proclaiming the good news so as not to be a burden. (1 Thes 2:8-9)

⁸¹ (Byron, 2014, pp. 173-174)

- Paul sent Timothy, who was also a fellow laborer in sharing the good news of the Messiah, to the Thessalonians to strengthen and encourage them in their faith. (1 Thes 3:2)
- Timothy brings Paul good news of the Thessalonians' faith and love. (1 Thes 3:6)
- Those who afflict the Thessalonian believers and do not obey the good news will receive retribution from G-d (2 Thes 1:6-8)
- Believers are called through the good news to gain the glory of the Messiah (2 Thes 2:13-14)

For the past nine letters, Paul consistently describes his work of sharing the good news, how it was received, and how it changed the lives of believers. He mentions others as fellow laborers in the gospel and notes how he and the other apostles worked while sharing the gospel so as not to be a burden to their hosts. What he hasn't done is define what the gospel actually is and he doesn't need to: it's already been defined in the Tanakh.

17- The Good News in Paul's Letters to Timothy and Philemon

There are only a handful of references to the good news in Paul's letters to Timothy and Philemon, so I'm grouping them together in this single chapter.

During his first trip through the region of Lycaonia, Paul likely encountered Timothy (Acts 13-14) when he, his grandmother, and mother came to faith (2 Timothy 1:5). According to Acts 16, Paul encounters Timothy in Lystra during his second trip through the area and wants the young disciple of Messiah to travel with him. Since Timothy's mother is Jewish but his father was Greek, Paul had Timothy circumcised to avoid any potential quarrel with the Jewish disciples (Acts 16:3). Afterward, Timothy became Paul's closest companion.

Paul leaves Timothy in Ephesus (Acts 18:19, 1 Tim 1:3) and then later sends him and Erastus into Macedonia (Acts 19:22). Although he is "young" by the standards of first-century Jewish society (probably less than forty years old)⁸², his "youth" is only an issue when he is interacting with the elders of each local community where he ministers.

The question of authorship directly impacts the possible dates and reasons why the letters were written. Since the early nineteenth century, scholars have grown increasingly convinced that the three letters known as the "Pastoral Epistles" (1 & 2 Timothy and Titus) were not written by Paul in the first century but by one of his disciples as pseudepigraphal works in the early second century. David E. Aune⁸³, goes as far as saying "The vast majority of all critical New Testament scholars now regard the Pastorals as pseudepigraphal letters."⁸⁴ Gordon Fee⁸⁵ notes that the author was likely a disciple of Paul.

For the purposes of this book, I've taken the same position as Professor Fee:

The present commentary has been written from the perspective of Pauline authorship, fully aware of the many difficulties that entails but convinced that theories of pseudepigraphy have even greater historical difficulties.⁸⁶

1 Timothy

Paul writes his first letter to Timothy to encourage Timothy in his mission to "remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies" (1 Timothy 1:3-4). Throughout the book, Paul reminds Timothy of "sound

⁸² Gk. νεότης (elsewhere in the NT always in the phrase ἐκ νεότης ["from youth"], Mark 10:20, Luke 18:21; Acts 26:4). Among the various Greek schemes (more or less detailed) for classifying age groups (e.g., Dio Chrysostom 74.10; Philo, *On the Creation* 105; cf. *On the Embassy to Gaius* 227), a more basic distinction between "young" and "old" existed that placed youth at the age of forty and under (e.g., Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 2.22.5; see also Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.197; cf. *1 Clement* 21.6-8). (Towner, 2006, p. 314)

⁸³ The emeritus Walter Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins at the University of Notre Dame

⁸⁴ (Aune, 2010, p. 552)

⁸⁵ Professor Emeritus of New Testament Studies at Regent College

⁸⁶ (Fee, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus* (Understanding the Bible Commentary Series), 2011, p. 16)

doctrine” for believers and their life in the community of faith and condemns the false teachers and their false doctrines.

It is in this context that Paul makes a single reference to the good news:

*But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, according to the glorious **gospel** [euaggelion] of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted. (1 Timothy 1:8-11)*

We can draw four direct conclusions about the good news from Paul’s statements here.

1. Paul was entrusted with the good news (v 11).
2. The good news is glorious (v 11).
3. There is “sound teaching” (literally: “uncorrupted instruction”) that is in accord with the good news (v 10) because Paul lists several things that are not in accord with it.
4. Law (not “The Law” but just “law” in general) is for those who are lawless and do things that are contrary to the sound teaching of the good news. Paul provides several examples of these contrary things: rebellion, ungodliness, sin, unholiness, profanity, murder, immorality, homosexuality, kidnapping, lying, and perjury.

In verse 3, Paul informs Timothy that “certain men” (we aren’t told specifically who) are teaching strange doctrines, straying from the proper goal of instruction (verse 6), and making confident assertions about the Law even though they do not understand what they are saying (verse 7). Paul clarifies that the problem is not with the Law but with these men. The Law is good if one uses it lawfully and Paul indicates these “certain men” were not.

Pastor and theologian R.C. Sproul writes, “The law reflects the will of the Lawgiver, and in that regard it is intensely personal.”⁸⁷ The “lawful use” Paul mentions to Timothy only applies to believers since unbelievers lack any personal relationship with G-d. Philosopher, historian, and theologian Rousas Rushdoony puts it in somewhat different terms: “The law is the revelation of God and His righteousness.”⁸⁸

Paul’s “lawful use” doesn’t apply to unbelievers because they don’t regard the Law anyway and reject the revelation of G-d and His righteousness. At best, they view Him and His Word as irrelevant history⁸⁹ and, at worst, as bigoted fiction⁹⁰. It isn’t **for** them.

⁸⁷ (Sproul, 2018)

⁸⁸ (Rushdoony, 1973, p. 6)

⁸⁹ “I can’t help thinking that some of the Bible’s teachings are irrelevant to modern day life and I feel that it is time for Christianity to move on, and that Christians should accept the Bible as a product of its time.” (Dillon, 2013)

⁹⁰ “I recognize him [Jesus Christ] perfectly well for who he is: bigoted fiction.” (Religion, 2013)

In **this** age, before Messiah returns and establishes His Kingdom on Earth, those who believe the good news that the Kingdom is coming and confess Jesus is the King have submitted to His authority and His Law. The Spirit has established the Kingdom in their hearts. When we as believers act unrighteously and behave as if some portion of the King's Law does not exist, we rebel against the King. We are "lawless and rebellious" in Paul's terms and need to be corrected and conformed to the standards of the Kingdom. *This* is the lawful use of the Law.

I have known too many days where my own unrighteousness (gossip, pride, unkind speech... whatever) was abruptly ended by a brief reading of Scripture or a brother admonishing me with the Word. In **this** age, we all still need such reminders "for all have sinned" (Romans 3:23) and "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us." (1 John 1:1).

In **that** age (the Messianic era, the world to come), believers will dwell in the fulfillment of the good news. From the beginning of Scripture, the good news speaks of the Land and the heirs G-d promised to Abraham, the repentance and salvation of Israel, the fullness of the kingdom of David, and the Lord G-d reigning and ruling over them with righteousness. That coming Kingdom has a Law that reflects the will of the Lawgiver. In **that** age of the Messianic Kingdom, believers will receive the promise of the New Covenant that G-d Himself will write His Law upon our hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-33).

Oh, Lord, please hasten that day.

2 Timothy

Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy around 67 CE while incarcerated in Rome.

The epistle of 2 Timothy is written like a farewell discourse. It is a highly personal document, a deeply moving farewell message, from Paul the faithful aged apostle facing martyrdom to his favourite spiritual son and apprentice Timothy.⁹¹

Paul's initial references to the good news in this letter occur in the middle of the first chapter.

*For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the **gospel** [euaggelion] according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the **gospel** [euaggelion], for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher. (2 Timothy 1:7-11)*

⁹¹ (Solomon, 2015, p. 24)

Paul encourages Timothy to join with him in suffering for the good news. The glory of the coming Kingdom is worth such suffering. Timothy should do this by the power of G-d's grace. They have had it from all eternity, but this grace has been revealed by the appearance of Jesus the Savior who brought the life and immortality to light by the good news.

Paul's last mention of the good news in his letters to Timothy is in chapter 2:

Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel [euaggelion], for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned. (2 Timothy 2:8-9)

Using military, athletic, and agricultural metaphors (v3-6), Paul continues to exhort Timothy to be strong and then reminds him to remember Jesus the Messiah who has risen from the dead and is the promised descendant of David according to Paul's good news.

Philemon

Paul's shortest epistle is a single chapter written to a single individual, the eponymous Philemon.

According to the New American Commentary:

Paul wrote Philemon to implore him to forgive and receive his runaway slave, Onesimus (v. 10). No doubt when Onesimus determined to get matters straight at home, some fear entered his heart. Even though his master was a good man (vv. 4-7), as a runaway slave, Onesimus deserved punishment. If nothing else, he could be made an example to other slaves. Paul took the role of a mediator, imploring Philemon to have mercy on this new Christian. Perhaps the friendship between Philemon and Paul provided an avenue of approach.⁹²

Paul's only mention of the gospel in this letter is found in verse 13 in his appeal for Philemon's grace towards Onesimus:

*I appeal to you for my child Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my imprisonment, who formerly was useless to you, but now is useful both to you and to me. I have sent him back to you in person, that is, sending my very heart, whom I wished to keep with me, so that on your behalf he might minister to me in my imprisonment for the **gospel** [euaggelion]; but without your consent I did not want to do anything, so that your goodness would not be, in effect, by compulsion but of your own free will. (Philemon 1:10-14)*

⁹² (Melick, 1991)

In this passage, Paul simply mentions that he is imprisoned because of the good news and had desired for Onesimus to stay and minister to him during his imprisonment. Without Philemon's consent, Paul did not want to do anything that might be perceived as compulsive.

Here is a summary of Paul's use of the good news in his letters to Timothy and Philemon:

- Paul was entrusted with the good news (1 Tim 1:11)
- The good news is glorious (1 Tim 1:11)
- There is "sound teaching" in accord with the good news (1 Tim 1:10)
- Paul invites Timothy to join in suffering for the gospel (2 Tim 1:8)
- Jesus abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the good news (2 Tim 1:10)
- Jesus Christ is risen from the dead and a descendant of David, according to Paul's gospel (2 Tim 2:8)
- Paul desired Onesimus to stay with him so that he might minister to Paul in prison for the good news (Phm 1:13)

Paul penned thirteen letters to various audiences at various times in his decades-long ministry. Throughout them all, he describes and refers to the good news but does not define it. The good news had already been defined for G-d's chosen people for over a thousand years, and Paul found no need to depart from that well-established idea. He shared and discussed the good news with everyone he encountered and leveraged that existing understanding when writing his letters.

18- The Good News in the Letter to the Hebrews

The author of the letter to the Hebrews is not named in the text and, as one scholar described it, “The absence both of solid testimony, internal or external, and of any firm traditions means that, as things are, the riddle of the authorship of Hebrews is incapable of solution.”⁹³ Dr. David L. Allen⁹⁴ presents a reasonable case for Luke as the author of Scripture quoting notable Christians such as Eusebius, Origen, John Calvin, and Franz Delitzsch.⁹⁵ Regardless of its human author, centuries of believers have held the letter to the Hebrews to be Divine in origin.

The intended audience of the letter (whether ordinary Jews or Levitical priests) were *Hebrew* believers. In the mid- to late-first century, they were being expelled from their synagogues and excluded from participating in Temple worship which was still central to the lives of believers in Jerusalem (Acts 2:46, Acts 5:20,25, Acts 5:42, Acts 22:17, etc.). The author alternately comforts his audience with affirmations of the greatness of Messiah and warns them against choosing anything less than Him.

It is in this context that the letter writer mentions the good news only twice:

*For indeed we have had **good news preached** [euaggelizō] to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. (Hebrews 4:2)*

*Therefore, since it remains for some to enter it [G-d's rest], and those who formerly had **good news preached** [euaggelizō] to them failed to enter because of disobedience, He again fixes a certain day, “Today,” saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, “TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS.” (Hebrews 4:6-7 quoting Psalm 95)*

Both *believing* and *unbelieving* Jews had the good news proclaimed to them, but that very same message was of no benefit to the unbelievers because they did not receive it along with trust in G-d's promises (during the days of the Exodus) or in the work of Messiah (in the first century). The good news must be received with a high degree of trust (faith) for it to be of benefit.

Those who received the good news **without** faith demonstrated their lack of trust by their disobedience to G-d (verse 6).

The letter to the Hebrew believers sheds no light on what the good news **is** nor would it need to unless it was departing from the millennia-old understanding the first-century Hebrews already had. What the letter to the Hebrews *does* tell us is that the good news must be received with faith it to have any effect.

⁹³ (Hughes, 1987, p. 19)

⁹⁴ Dean of the School of Preaching, Distinguished Professor of Preaching, Director of the Southwestern Center for Expository Preaching and George W. Truett Chair of Ministry at the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

⁹⁵ (Allen, 2010)

19- The Good News in Peter's First Epistle

The question of who wrote this epistle and when remains a point of debate among scholars. The text, itself, indisputably claims that Peter, the disciple of Messiah, wrote it. I'm taking the traditional position of Petrine authorship around 62-64 C.E.⁹⁶ Based upon the text, Peter's audience appears to be Jewish believers who are suffering persecution at the hands of Roman authorities (e.g., 1 Peter 2:12)

Peter's first mention of the good news occurs in his introductory benediction:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

*As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the **gospel** [euaggelizō] to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look. (1 Peter 1:3-12)*

In verse 4, Peter mentions the inheritance the believers will receive in the Kingdom of Heaven. What is this "inheritance"? I covered this briefly in chapter 13 when I examined Paul's similar statements in Ephesians:

From the perspective of Abraham— "the father of us all" in regards to matters of faith (Romans 4:15)—the inheritance was the Land G-d had promised him along with heirs (us!) to inherit it (Genesis 15). That promise is the earliest reference in Scripture to inheritance connected with the good news. The inheritance—and the pardon of our sins required for us to be able to enjoy it—is guaranteed by the Holy Spirit, Himself, since He was given as a pledge of that inheritance.

⁹⁶ (Zondervan, 1991, p. 2254)

This is the promised Kingdom of Heaven!

Peter goes on to discuss the salvation his audience is obtaining by faith. The prophets searched and inquired of Scripture about the “grace that would come” wanting to know about the person of Messiah and when He would arrive. Which prophets proclaimed the good news and the grace that would come? As noted at earlier in the book, Isaiah, Nahum, and Joel were those prophets, but I encourage you also to consider Moses, David, and other Psalmists who wrote as prophets when they prophesied about the good news regarding:

- G-d’s righteousness, faithfulness, salvation, and lovingkindness (Psalm 40:7-10)
- G-d’s victory against Israel’s enemies (Psalm 68:7-14)
- G-d’s salvation, glory, and wonderful deeds (Psalm 96:1-6)

The promises of salvation described throughout the Tanakh were for the national salvation of Israel. Of course, a **national** salvation requires **individuals** *within* the nation to be saved, but those promises do not assure salvation to every individual in that nation (as history has continually borne out).

Peter writes that the answers to the prophets’ “who” and “when” questions (answers which even the angels wanted to know!) have been revealed to his audience. He goes on to exhort them to prepare their minds for action, keep sober in spirit, and fix their hope completely on the grace shown to them since they received answers to those questions in the revelation of the person of Messiah (1 Peter 1:13).

Peter expects a change in thought and behavior for those who heed the good news. He reiterates this idea later in the same chapter when he again mentions the good news:

Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. For,

*“ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS,
AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS.
THE GRASS WITHERS,
AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF,
BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER.”*

*And this is the word which **was preached** [euaggelizō] to you. (1 Peter 1:22-25)*

The NASB's use of ALL CAPS here indicates Peter is quoting the Tanakh, specifically the "good news" passage from Isaiah chapter 40 (see verses 3-11).

He reminds his audience that Isaiah 40 is part of the good news that was proclaimed to them.

ISAIAH 40
G-d's arrival as a shepherd
to tend, protect, and lead
the people of Israel

In chapter 4, Peter exhorts his believing Jewish audience to arm themselves with the purpose of suffering in the flesh just as the Messiah did. He informs them that the pagan Gentiles, "having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries" will be surprised that the believers do not follow them into the same behavior (1 Peter 4:3-4). He cautions them that the King of the coming Kingdom is "ready to judge the living and the dead."

*For the **gospel has** for this purpose **been preached** [euaggelizō] even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God. (1 Peter 4:6)*

Peter informs them that the good news has been preached for this purpose: that even those who are already dead (in the flesh) may live in the spirit according to the will of G-d.

Peter continues his theme of sharing in the sufferings of the Messiah, not as "murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler" (v 15) but as one who follows the Messiah in righteousness.

*For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the **gospel** [euaggelion] of God? AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER? Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right. (1 Peter 4:17-19)*

Peter paraphrases Proverbs 11:31 and asks, "if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner?" If the believers are going to experience G-d's judgment, what about those who do not **obey** the good news of G-d? I don't even want to imagine such a thing!

Peter's connection of obedience with the gospel is similar to Paul's "obedience of faith" (Romans 1:5, 16:26) and his description of Messiah's work through him resulting in "obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed" (Romans 15:18). It seems Peter also expects that the lives of the believers would be conformed to the good news of the coming Kingdom and its King.

In summary, Peter's mentions of the gospel include:

- The good news preached to Peter's audience included answers to the prophets' questions of "who" and "when" regarding the Messiah (1 Pet 1:12).
- The believers have been "born again" of an imperishable seed (that is, through the Word of G-d) and specifically connects the good news they have heard with the good news of Isaiah 40. (1 Pet 1:24-25)
- The good news was preached (even to those who are dead) so that they may live in the spirit according to the will of G-d. (1 Pet 4:6)
- A question regarding the outcome for those who do not obey the good news of G-d since "it is with difficulty that the righteous are saved." (1 Pet 4:17-19)

Written about thirty years after the death, burial, and resurrection of the Messiah⁹⁷, Peter's first epistle (much like Paul's letters) refers to the good news as a concept that is already known to his audience. He reminds them that they are privileged to have answers to previously unanswered questions ("who" is the Messiah and "when" will He arrive?) and connects their spiritual rebirth with the good news of Isaiah 40 (promising G-d's arrival as a shepherd to tend, protect, and lead the people of Israel). The proclamation of the good news is so that that the hearers may live in the spirit and that their behavior may be conformed to that good news and all that it demands.

⁹⁷ 1 Peter was written about A.D. 62-64 (Zondervan, 1991, p. 2254)

20- The Good News in Revelation

The Book of Revelation—revelation [singular] not revelations [plural], a pet peeve I wanted to address up front ;) —was written by the Apostle John in the first century. Most scholars place the date of Revelation during the reign of Emperor Domitian (81-96 C.E.)⁹⁸ based upon the writings of Eusebius of Caesarea in the early fourth century quoting Irenaeus of Lyons from around the end of the second century. Others scholars place the date in late 69/early 70 C.E. prior to the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.⁹⁹

In either case, John was writing to “the seven churches that are in Asia” (Revelation 1:4) and to a broader community of believers experiencing persecution. His prophetic message recounts his apocalyptic visions while on Patmos (Revelation 1:9) and he only mentions the good news twice.

In chapter 10, John relates his vision of an angel and the “little book” which, at the end of the chapter, John eats. The angel takes an oath and swears that there will no longer be a delay:

*Then the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted up his right hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, WHO CREATED HEAVEN AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE EARTH AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE SEA AND THE THINGS IN IT, that there will be delay no longer, but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished, as He **preached** [euaggelizō- announced as good news] to His servants the prophets. (Revelation 10:5-7)*

In the days of the voice of the seventh angel (the seventh of the seven trumpets), the mystery of G-d has reached its concluding point. This point had been proclaimed as good news to G-d’s servants, the prophets.

As noted previously, the good news proclaimed to the prophets was about:

- G-d’s righteousness, faithfulness, salvation, and lovingkindness (Psalm 40)
- G-d’s victory against Israel’s enemies (Psalm 68)
- G-d’s salvation, glory, and wonderful deeds (Psalm 96)
- G-d’s arrival as a shepherd to tend, protect, and lead the people of Israel (Isaiah 40)
- G-d’s peace, salvation, restoration of Israel, and G-d reigning over them (Isaiah 52)
- G-d bringing the nations and their wealth to Israel because He has glorified them (Isaiah 60)
- G-d providing liberty, freedom, comfort, and abundance in the Promised Land (Isaiah 61)
- G-d providing peace enabling Judah to celebrate her appointed feasts and pay her vows without “the wicked one” passing through her (Nahum 1 & 2)
- G-d’s restoration of Israel (and all who call upon the Name of the Lord) to the Promised Land (Joel 2)

⁹⁸ (Moberly, 1992)

⁹⁹ (Gentry, 1989)

The enormous, unanswered questions the prophets had asked (and into which angels longed to look) were “who?” and “when?”. What was the “mystery of G-d” John mentions?

Paul provides an answer:

*For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of **God’s mystery, that is, Christ Himself**, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (Colossians 2:1-3 emphasis added)*

At the end of the angels’ seventh trumpet, believers’ millennia-old question of “When will He return?” will finally be answered and the Kingdom of G-d will commence.

The final mention of the good news in John’s revelation is found in chapter 14 after his vision of the Lamb on Mount Zion along with the 144,000 “purchased from among men as first fruits to G-d and to the Lamb.”

*And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal **gospel** [euaggelion] to **preach** [euaggelizō] to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; and he said with a loud voice, “Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters.” (Revelation 14:6-7)*

Both the Greek noun and the Greek verb are used in this final mention of the good news! This verse describes the good news as “eternal” and informs us that it is for “every nation and tribe and tongue and people.” The angel who has this eternal good news to preach makes a specific proclamation: fear G-d and give Him glory.

May it always be so for those who believe.

The book of Revelation’s use of the good news:

- In the days of the voice of the seventh angel the mystery of God is finished, as He **preached** to His servants the prophets. (Rev 10:5-7)
- An angel flying in midheaven has an eternal **gospel** to **preach** to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people. (Rev 14:6-7)

21- Summary

After searching through Bible from Genesis to Revelation and connecting the dots between the Tanakh and Apostolic Scriptures, I had documented one hundred and twenty-seven¹⁰⁰ observations about the good news.

118 of these observations (93%) were from the Apostolic Scriptures, and 9 of them (7%) were from the Tanakh.

Twelve of the verses in the Apostolic Scriptures (10%) include quotes from or references to the good news passages in the Tanakh.

An overwhelming majority (*ninety-two percent!*) of the passages in the Bible that mention the good news simply refer to it without defining what it is.

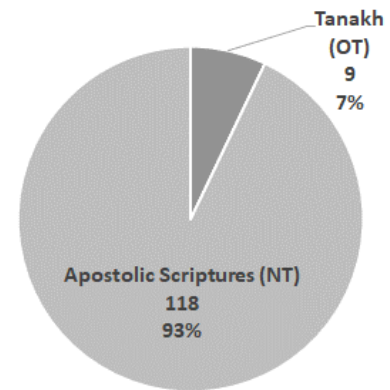


Chart 1: Observation Source

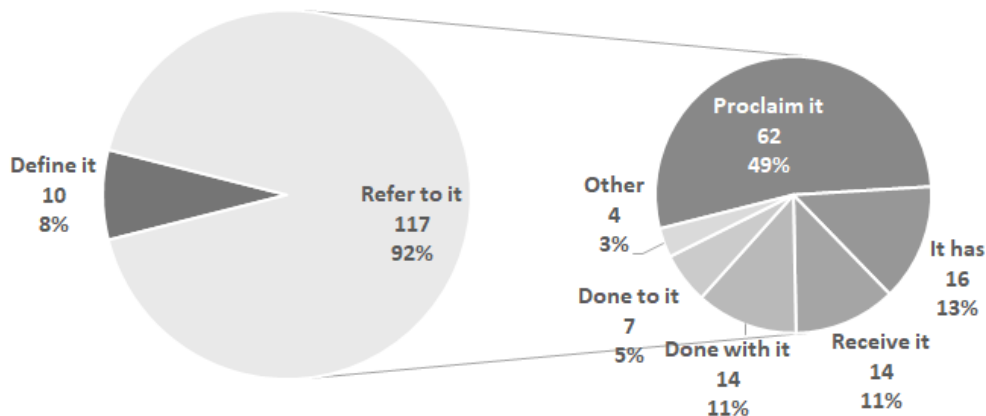


Chart 2: Observation Categories

These references include passages where:

- it was proclaimed (e.g., 1 Thes 2:9)
- it has some attribute (e.g., the *glorious* gospel of 1 Timothy 1:11)
- it was received (1 Cor 15:1)
- it has something done with it (partially fulfilled by Messiah in Matt 11:2-5)
- it has something done to it (corrupted into a “different gospel” in 2 Cor 11:4)

¹⁰⁰ For those who are keeping count, yes, there were a total of 129 observations but one of them was the announcement of the good news of John the Baptist’s birth (Luke 1:19) and another is simply a general statement that Timothy brought good news about the Thessalonian believers to Paul (1 Thes 3:6). Not counted among my observations were the eight verses in the Tanakh which used the verb for “proclaiming good news” in a general or ironic manner.

There are also four “other” passages where:

- Mark connects John the Baptist with the good news of Isaiah 40 (Mark 1:1-4)
- Luke connects John’s ministry with the good news of Isaiah 40 (Luk 3:1-6)
- Paul quotes the good news passage of Isaiah 52 in order to prove that Israel *has* heard the good news (Rom 10:15)
- Paul quotes the good news passage of Isaiah 52 while describing the armor of G-d (Eph 6:15)

None of these actually tell us what the gospel is... just what was done *by* it, *with* it, *to* it, etc.

So, what then is the good news and which ten passages give us the definition?

The gospel is the good news of:

- G-d’s righteousness, faithfulness, salvation, and lovingkindness (Psalm 40:7-10)
- G-d’s victory over Israel’s enemies (Psalm 68:7-14)
- G-d’s salvation, glory, and wonderful deeds (Psalm 96:1-6)
- G-d’s arrival as a shepherd to tend, protect, and lead the people of Israel (Isaiah 40)
- G-d’s peace, salvation, restoration of Israel, and G-d reigning over them (Isaiah 52)
- G-d bringing the nations and their wealth to Israel because He has glorified them (Isaiah 60)
- G-d providing liberty, freedom, comfort, and abundance in the Promised Land (Isaiah 61)
- G-d providing peace enabling Judah to celebrate her appointed feasts and pay her vows without “the wicked one” passing through her (Nahum 1 & 2)
- G-d’s restoration of Israel (and all who call upon the Name of the Lord) to the Promised Land (Joel 2)

And finally, this good news is G-d’s power for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek (Rom 1:16).

The Good News of...

Especially in the Apostolic Writings, the good news is sometimes called “the good news of” something:

The good news of...	Mentions
The Kingdom	10
Christ	9
G-d	6
Paul (“my good news”)	3
--no qualifier--	99

When the Messiah walked the earth in the first century, He proclaimed the good news of the **kingdom**. In later decades, when describing His life and His work, the apostles referred to the good news of **Christ** or the good news of **G-d**.

Paul’s use of the term “my gospel” refers to his view of the good news which includes Gentiles who are “grafted in” to Israel (Romans 11), “adopted” into the family of Israel (Romans 8, Ephesians 1), and

made a part of the Commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2) by the work of G-d's Spirit and not as the result of the legal works of ritual conversion (i.e. circumcision).¹⁰¹

The good news of...	Speaks to...
The Kingdom	the "what" of the gospel
Christ	the "who" of the gospel
G-d	the whole gospel
Paul ("my good news")	Gentile inclusion in the promises of the gospel

These are not different gospels; rather they are facets of the same beautiful gem that is the singular gospel. Before the arrival of the Messiah, Israel knew the "what" of the gospel but they didn't know the "who" or the "when." Once He had arrived, they knew the "what" and the "who" but not the "when" of His Second Coming.

¹⁰¹ Mark Nanos covers this in great detail in his book, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letter*

22- The “Protoevangelium”

Throughout my research and discussions with others about the gospel, I’ve encountered the concept of the “protoevangelium”¹⁰²: the idea of a “first gospel” proclaimed in Genesis chapter three. As revealed by Scripture, the good news is primarily focused on G-d’s victory over Israel’s enemies and the reign of Christ as the prophesied Davidic King in the Land promised to Abraham. Humanity’s first and greatest enemy, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan (Revelation 12:9, 20:2) will be defeated as prophesied by G-d, Himself, in Genesis 3:15.

*And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel.” (Gen 3:15 NKJV)*

In that sense, yes, this verse marks the first time one *element* of the good news is mentioned in Scripture. Since the gospel is so much more, to claim this is the “first gospel” shortchanges the audience on what the gospel actually is. It’s like offering only a hundred bucks out of a million-dollar prize.

The earliest reference to this concept is by the late-second-century author Irenaeus:

For this end did He put enmity between the serpent and the woman and her seed, they keeping it up mutually: He, the sole of whose foot should be bitten, having power also to tread upon the enemy's head; but the other biting, killing, and impeding the steps of man, until the seed did come appointed to tread down his head — which was born of Mary, of whom the prophet speaks: "You shall tread upon the asp and the basilisk; you shall trample down the lion and the dragon;" — indicating that sin, which was set up and spread out against man, and which rendered him subject to death, should be deprived of its power, along with death, which rules [over men],¹⁰³

I recommend against using the term protoevangelium to avoid the trap that has ensnared the “gospel = justification by faith” crowd: narrowly limiting the good news to a single portion of its full meaning.

¹⁰² The protoevangelion [ending in -ion] is completely different and refers to a non-canonical book (the Gospel of James) written after 150 C.E.

¹⁰³ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book III, Chapter 23, Number 7 (Lyon, 2018)

23- The Gospel in Other Contemporary Jewish Literature

Scholars following the grammatical-historical hermeneutic often use a number of tools to validate their interpretation of ancient literature (including the Bible). Two of those tools include 1) examining the same text as it was translated into other languages during the same time period and 2) examining other (in this case extra-Biblical) literature from the same era by the same people-group. The goal of both is to identify the meaning that is conveyed in those other texts and see if their modern interpretation aligns with the meaning understood by the original audience.

The first approach did not help my research because I have little access to or knowledge of the ancient Syriac, Coptic, and other languages of the period. Every *modern* language that the Bible has been translated into simply borrows from the Greek: evangelio (Spanish), evangelium (German), evangelie (Dutch), евангелие (*yevangeliye*, Russian), etc. These words have no intrinsic meaning beyond what is borrowed from the Greek word for “good news.” So instead, I turned to the second of these tools.

It may come as a shock to many, but the *Christian* Bible is a thoroughly *Jewish* document: all 66 books of the commonly-accepted canon were written by Jewish men¹⁰⁴ inspired by the G-d of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Paul describes it as one of the many benefits for the Jewish people.

*Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision?
Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of
God. (Romans 3:1-2)*

What does other, contemporary Jewish literature say about “the good news”?

Surprisingly, neither the Hebrew verb בָּשַׂר (*baśar*) nor the noun בְּשָׂרָה (*b’sorah*) is found in other Jewish literature of the period. The only reference I was able to find is an editor’s note in the Talmud¹⁰⁵ reflecting the polemic between believers and unbelieving Jews during the second, third, and fourth centuries.

The Talmud records highly technical and legal discussions regarding G-d’s commandments. The Soncino Edition Talmud, Order Moed, Tractate Shabbat 116a includes the statement “All Sacred Writings may be saved from a fire, whether we read them or not; and even if they are written in any language, they must be hidden.”¹⁰⁶

Further into the debate, the question narrows to “The blank spaces of a Scroll of the Law, may we rescue them from fire or not?” The response is this, “The blank spaces and the Books of the Minim may

¹⁰⁴ See [Appendix vi- Excursus on Luke’s Jewish Identity](#)

¹⁰⁵ The Talmud (Hebrew for “study”) is the record of rabbinic teachings that spans a period of more than six hundred years, beginning in the first century C.E. and continuing through the sixth and seventh centuries C.E. The Talmud is actually made up of two separate works: The Mishnah, primarily a compilation of Jewish laws, written in Hebrew and edited around the year 200 C.E. in Israel; and the Gemara, the rabbinic commentaries and discussions on the Mishnah, written in Hebrew and Aramaic, emanating from both Babylonia and Israel over the next three hundred to five hundred years. (Katz, 1998, p. 9)

¹⁰⁶ (Epstein, 1932, p. 359)

not be saved from a fire, but they must be burnt in their place, they and the Divine Names occurring in them.”¹⁰⁷

This English translation of the Talmud includes editorial footnotes about the “Minim”:

*Sectarians. The term denotes various kinds of Jewish sectarians, such as the Sadducces, Samaritans, Judeo-Christians, etc., according to the date of the passage in which the term is used. The reference here is probably to the last-named.*¹⁰⁸

The footnotes also include a reference to the book, *Christianity in the Talmud*, which comments on this same passage:

That they were heretical is shown by the context, because the books of the Minim have just been mentioned. And that they were Christian is shown unmistakably by the concluding words, which contain plays upon the name Evangelion.

*‘Aven giljōn’ means ‘a worthless thing of a book [roll],’ or, since ‘Aven’ in the O.T. generally has some reference to idolatry, ‘a book of idolatry.’ In like manner Avon giljon may be rendered ‘a book of iniquity.’ R. Meir, to whom belongs the credit of the original jeu d’esprit, lived in Palestine in the latter half of the second century. His teachers were R. Aqiba, whom we have already met with as a fierce opponent of Christianity, and Elisha ben Abuja, himself inclined to heresy, and well acquainted with the books of the Minim. The gibe of R. Meir is clear proof that in his time the term Evangelion was in common use, and we may perhaps conclude from the passage before us that it was a generic term for the ‘Books of the Minim,’ or, at all events, that it included more than one book.*¹⁰⁹

While unflattering, this section of the Talmud provides an early reference indicating that the good news was associated with the “minim” and mocked and ridiculed by unbelieving Jews. Unfortunately, it does not help us improve our understanding of what the gospel actually is.

Throughout history, the *concepts* of the gospel (G-d’s righteousness, faithfulness, salvation, lovingkindness, etc.) are ubiquitous in Jewish literature. I can only conclude that the disconnect between what the Hebrew Scriptures describe as “the good news” and what is written about the very same concepts after the first century *without using the same label* is a result of normative Judaism abandoning the term *b’sorah* due to its strong association with the “Christian sectarians”.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, p362

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, p363

¹⁰⁹ (Herford, 1903, pp. 162-163)

One of the more common expressions that may have come to replace “the good news” in Jewish circles is “the yoke of the kingdom of heaven.” Dr. Petri Luomanen¹¹⁰ makes this observation:

In Didache 6:2 [an early Christian “statement of faith”] those able to carry the ‘whole yoke of the Lord’ are called perfect, and 1 Clement 15:17 mentions the ‘yoke of his (the Lord’s) grace.’ In Rabbinic sources the bearing of the yoke of the kingdom of heaven, the yoke of the Torah or the yoke of commandments is equal to confessing God’s sovereign reign and authority.¹¹¹

Since the Kingdom of G-d represents only a *portion* of the good news, I am unable to make a definitive connection between “the good news” and the “yoke of the kingdom of heaven” without risking the same trap that has befallen the “gospel = justification by faith” crowd: it limits the good news to only a small portion of its full meaning.

I was unable to find any other references in contemporary Jewish literature to validate my understanding of the good news found in Scripture.

What about early *Christian* literature?

¹¹⁰ Lecturer and researcher at the University of Helsinki and the Academy of Finland; post-doctoral fellow at the Department of Biblical Studies at the University of Helsinki; Professor of New Testament and Early Christian Culture and Literature.

¹¹¹ (Luomanen, 1998)

24- The Gospel in Other Contemporary Christian Literature

Aside from G-d, nobody knows the exact dates when the Apostolic Writings were penned, but it is generally accepted that they were written in the latter half of the first century.¹¹² Prior to the arrival of Christ, there were no “Christians” or Christian literature. The believers were first called Christians in Antioch (Acts 11:26) about 15 years after the death, burial, and resurrection of the Messiah. Aside from the books of Scripture, there were numerous letters, books, and other documents penned by those who were (or claimed to be) “Christian.”

In the nineteenth century, many of these documents (or surviving fragments) were translated and compiled into a multi-volume series collectively entitled *The Ante-Nicene Fathers- The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*.¹¹³ *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* includes writings from at least forty-eight authors reflecting the first three centuries of Christian thought.¹¹⁴

There are two thousand, one hundred and sixteen uses of the word “gospel” in these volumes. Up to the mid-second century, most authors use the term gospel in the same manner as the apostles: they refer to a known idea and recount that it is proclaimed, received, rejected, etc. Unfortunately, they don’t define it or explain what it is. They also don’t describe it to any degree, and when they do, their descriptions aren’t different from those in Scripture.

Beginning in the second century with the writings of Papias, Justin Martyr, and (somewhat later) Irenaeus), the term “the gospel” takes on the meaning of “the writings of the apostles”: the gospel of Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. For example, in his dialogue with Trypho, Justin writes,

For I have showed already that Christ is called both Jacob and Israel; and I have proved that it is not in the blessing of Joseph and Judah alone that what relates to Him was proclaimed mysteriously, but also in the Gospel it is written that He said: ‘All things are delivered unto me by My Father; ‘and, ‘No man knoweth the Father but the Son; nor the Son but the Father, and they to whom the Son will reveal Him.’¹¹⁵

I have not found any mention of the gospel in the first three centuries of Christian literature that offers an explanation of the good news other than what has been recorded in the Scriptures or provides an understanding contrary to what I have documented in my studies.

¹¹² (Thomas Nelson, 1988, p. 1399)

¹¹³ The ante-Nicene period begins in the late first century and extends to the early fourth century up to 325 C.E. and the Council of Nicaea.

¹¹⁴ See appendix vii

¹¹⁵ (Roberts & Donaldson, 1903, pp. 248-249)

25- Conclusion, Reactions, and Implications

Based on an examination of Scripture and contemporary Jewish and Christian literature, I have concluded that the gospel is the good news of:

- G-d's righteousness, faithfulness, salvation, and lovingkindness (Psalm 40:7-10)
- G-d's victory over Israel's enemies (Psalm 68:7-14)
- G-d's salvation, glory, and wonderful deeds (Psalm 96:1-6)
- G-d's arrival as a shepherd to tend, protect, and lead the people of Israel (Isaiah 40)
- G-d's peace, salvation, restoration of Israel, and G-d reigning over them (Isaiah 52)
- G-d bringing the nations and their wealth to Israel because He has glorified them (Isaiah 60)
- G-d providing liberty, freedom, comfort, and abundance in the Promised Land (Isaiah 61)
- G-d providing peace enabling Judah to celebrate her appointed feasts and pay her vows without "the wicked one" passing through her (Nahum 1 & 2)
- G-d's restoration of Israel (and all who call upon the Name of the Lord) to the Promised Land (Joel 2)

And finally, the good news is G-d's power for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek (Rom 1:16).

Jesus of Nazareth, Yeshua the Messiah, is the Promised One who will bring about all of these.

Potential Reactions

I anticipate some reactions to this conclusion so I've noted them here and responded to each.

"Are you saying if someone doesn't believe all of these things then they're going to hell?"

No!

What we believe doesn't save us. We believe *because* G-d saved us.

Gnosticism teaches the idea that individuals are saved by having special knowledge. Paul and the early church fathers of the second century rejected this idea and those who followed it.

The early Church fathers called them gnostikoi, with the sarcastic innuendo that they knew something the rest of the world did not. The writer of 1 Timothy 6:20 takes a similar ironic swipe at them by warning his readers against pseudo-gnosis. Irenaeus, one of the first Church fathers, chose as a full title for his greatest work Against Heresies: A Refutation and Subversion of Knowledge Falsely So Called.¹¹⁶

According to Hebrews 4:2, the good news must be accepted *with faith* for it to be of benefit to anyone. Faith (the outward expression of an inward trust in G-d, His Word, and His promises) requires a change

¹¹⁶ (Morris, 2008, p. 16)

from being spiritually dead to spiritually alive since the things of G-d are spiritually discerned (1 Cor 2:14), and only G-d gives life to the dead (Eze 37:5, John 5:21, Rom 4:17, etc.). Truly, even our faith in G-d—even the ability to trust in Him—is a gift He has given to us and is not the result of anything we have done, heard, chosen, believed, or accepted (Eph 2:8). Salvation is G-d's work.

I'll leave the judgment of salvation where it belongs: in the hands of the Most High. If someone does not believe all of these things then it only means they do not believe all of these things. Let each person search out a matter and let the sum of G-d's Word be truth (Psalm 119:160).

“Are you saying the gospel is not the message of personal salvation?”

Yes!

Personal salvation is a part of the good news, but it is not the whole good news. Spiritual salvation (G-d saving our spirit from death and making it alive) is simply the first step into the larger reality of the new life we have in Christ. Saying “the gospel is the message of personal salvation” is like saying the door to your house is the whole house. Don't stop at the door. Open it, go on in, and enjoy the whole house G-d has created!

While some might not yet see it, accepting that “door” means accepting what is beyond it as well.

When a person believes the gospel and accepts “the good news” in faith, then they are accepting G-d's righteousness, faithfulness, salvation, and lovingkindness. They are trusting in G-d's victory over His people's enemies (past, present, and future). They are acknowledging G-d's glory and wondrous deeds. They are longing for G-d's arrival as a shepherd to tend, protect, and lead His people. They're awaiting the fullness of G-d's peace, salvation, the restoration of His people, and coming reign over them. Even if they don't understand what all of this means, there is within them a great anticipation of the fullness of liberty, freedom, comfort, and abundance in His Kingdom.

Oh, Lord, may You hasten that day!

Implications

So, what does this gospel message mean for believers today?

The “gospel = salvation” message is often portrayed as a “ticket to heaven” (seriously, Google *gospel “ticket to heaven”* and see what I mean) where all you have to do is believe and you're done, you're good, you're “in the club”. Wherever this incomplete gospel message is embraced, there is often no discipleship and no expectation that the lives of those who believe in it will be changed. People spend an hour or so in a special building once a week, hear a feel-good message, and expect their lives to be changed? This is the root cause of the problem I noted in the introduction: 80% of kids raised in evangelical homes are not following Christ by the time they are thirty years old.

In sharp contrast, Peter connects the gospel with obedience (1 Peter 4:17-19) and Paul speaks to the “obedience of faith” (Romans 1:5, 16:26). Paul also proclaims that Messiah's work through him is resulting in “obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed” (Romans 15:18). They both express an

expectation that the lives of the believers would be conformed to the good news of the coming Kingdom along with fealty and obedience to the King.

The temptation to conclude with Solomon's wisdom and conclusion from Ecclesiastes proved too great for me, so here goes:

The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil. (Ecclesiastes 12-13-14)

Why is *this* the conclusion of a study of "the gospel"?

Scripture identifies the gospel—the good news—as **G-d's** righteousness, **G-d's** faithfulness, **G-d's** salvation, and **G-d's** lovingkindness. It speaks of **His** victory over Israel's enemies, **His** glory, and **His** wondrous deeds. It prophesies **His** arrival as a shepherd to tend, protect, and lead His people. And it proclaims **His** reign, **His** liberty, **His** freedom, and **His** comfort to His people.

The gospel is a declaration of His Person and His Character. When His Kingdom comes (and it will, oh, Lord may it be soon!) then He *will* bring every act to judgment as Solomon stated and as Paul affirms:

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10)

It is a consistent message throughout Scripture:

Behold, the Lord has proclaimed to the end of the earth, Say to the daughter of Zion, "Lo, your salvation comes; Behold His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him." (Isaiah 62:11)

Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. (Hebrews 11:6)

In whatever direction the Holy Spirit leads you, may we all deny our sinful nature, take up our cross and follow Messiah (Matt 8:34), "take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor 10:5), and live in a manner that is glorifying to Him with lives reflecting the certainty of His return and the coming fulfillment of His good news.

Live your life in this world as an ambassador—a good and faithful servant—of the coming Kingdom of which you are a citizen.

26- One Final Thought

At the beginning of this book, I noted that the word *euaggelion* was used to translate the Hebrew *b'sorah* into Greek. The gospel defined in the Tanakh provides G-d's foundational revelation of the "good news" to humanity. The gospel begins with G-d's promises to Abraham, later to the nation of Israel, and finally to all who are "grafted in."

For the last two thousand years, most Jews have rejected Yeshua (Jesus) as their Messiah because G-d has blinded their eyes (Romans 11:7). Although they stumble in darkness, many still have a heart towards G-d. In their daily prayers, they read the praises sung by King David when the Ark of the Covenant was restored to Israel.

*Oh give thanks to the LORD, call upon His name;
Make known His deeds among the peoples.
Sing to Him, sing praises to Him;
Speak of all His wonders.
Glory in His holy name;
Let the heart of those who seek the LORD be glad.
Seek the LORD and His strength;
Seek His face continually.
Remember His wonderful deeds which He has done,
His marvels and the judgments from His mouth,
O seed of Israel His servant,
Sons of Jacob, His chosen ones!
He is the LORD our God;
His judgments are in all the earth.
Remember His covenant forever,
The word which He commanded to a thousand generations,
The covenant which He made with Abraham,
And His oath to Isaac.
He also confirmed it to Jacob for a statute,
To Israel as an everlasting covenant,
Saying, "To you I will give the land of Canaan,
As the portion of your inheritance."
When they were only a few in number,
Very few, and strangers in it,
And they wandered about from nation to nation,
And from one kingdom to another people,
He permitted no man to oppress them,
And He reproved kings for their sakes, saying,
"Do not touch My anointed ones,
And do My prophets no harm."
Sing to the LORD, all the earth;
Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day.*

*Tell of His glory among the nations,
 His wonderful deeds among all the peoples.
 For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
 He also is to be feared above all gods.
 For all the gods of the peoples are idols,
 But the LORD made the heavens.
 Splendor and majesty are before Him,
 Strength and joy are in His place.
 Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples,
 Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name;
 Bring an offering, and come before Him;
 Worship the LORD in holy array.
 Tremble before Him, all the earth;
 Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved.
 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;
 And let them say among the nations, "The LORD reigns."
 Let the sea roar, and all it contains;
 Let the field exult, and all that is in it.
 Then the trees of the forest will sing for joy before the LORD;
 For He is coming to judge the earth.
 O give thanks to the LORD, for He is good;
 For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
 Then say, "Save us, O God of our salvation,
 And gather us and deliver us from the nations,
 To give thanks to Your holy name,
 And glory in Your praise."
 Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
 From everlasting even to everlasting.
 Then all the people said, "Amen," and praised the LORD. (1 Chronicles 16:8-36)*

In verse twenty-three they recite this:

שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה כָּל־הָאָרֶץ בְּשִׂרָה מִיּוֹם־אֶל־יוֹם יְשׁוּעָתוֹ

Sing to the LORD, all the earth;
 Proclaim good tidings [בְּשִׂרָה- *b'sorah*- declare the good news!]
 of His salvation [יְשׁוּעָתוֹ – *yeshu'atov*- His Yeshua] from day to day.

Both Jews and Gentiles long for the day when all the earth proclaims the good news of G-d's Yeshua every day.

And may all humanity say "amen" and praise His Name.

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Appendix i- List of all verses containing *euaggellion*

2 Samuel 4:10 (LXX)

Matthew 4:23; 9:35; 24:14; 26:13

Mark 1:1, 14–15; 8:35; 10:29; 13:10; 14:9; 16:15

Acts 15:7; 20:24

Romans 1:1, 9, 16; 2:16; 10:16; 11:28; 15:16, 19; 16:25

1 Corinthians 4:15; 9:12, 14, 18, 23; 15:1

2 Corinthians 2:12; 4:3–4; 8:18; 9:13; 10:14; 11:4, 7

Galatians 1:6–7, 11; 2:2, 5, 7, 14

Ephesians 1:13; 3:6; 6:15, 19

Philemon 1:5, 7, 12, 16, 27; 2:22; 4:3, 15

Colossians 1:5, 23

1 Thessalonians 1:5; 2:2, 4, 8–9; 3:2

2 Thessalonians 1:8; 2:14

1 Timothy 1:11

2 Timothy 1:8, 10; 2:8

Philemon 1:13

1 Peter 4:17

Revelation 14:6

Appendix ii- List of all verses containing *euaggelizō*

1 Samuel 31:9 (LXX)

2 Samuel 1:20; 4:10; 18:19-20, 26, 31 (LXX)

1 Kings 1:42 (LXX)

1 Chronicles 10:9 (LXX)

Psalms 39:10; 67:12; 95:2 (LXX)

Joel 3:5 (LXX)

Nahum 2:1 (LXX)

Isaiah 40:9; 52:7; 60:6; 61:1 (LXX)

Jeremiah 20:15 (LXX)

Matthew 11:5

Luke 1:19; 2:10; 3:18; 4:18, 43; 7:22; 8:1; 9:6; 16:16; 20:1

Acts 5:42; 8:4, 12, 25, 35, 40; 10:36; 11:20; 13:32; 14:7, 15, 21; 15:35; 16:10; 17:18

Romans 1:15; 10:15; 15:20

1 Corinthians 1:17; 9:16, 18; 15:1–2

2 Corinthians 10:16; 11:7

Galatians 1:8–9, 11, 16, 23; 4:13

Ephesians 2:17; 3:8

1 Thessalonians 3:6

Hebrews 4:2, 6

1 Peter 1:12, 25; 4:6

Revelation 10:7; 14:6

Appendix iii- Complete list of observations from Scripture

- G-d's righteousness, faithfulness, salvation, and lovingkindness (Psalm 40:7-10)
- G-d's victory over Israel's enemies (Psalm 68:7-14)
- G-d's salvation, glory, and wonderful deeds (Psalm 96:1-6)
- G-d's righteousness, faithfulness, salvation, and lovingkindness (Psalm 40)
- G-d's victory against Israel's enemies (Psalm 68)
- G-d's salvation, glory, and wonderful deeds (Psalm 96)
- G-d's arrival as a shepherd to tend, protect, and lead the people of Israel (Isaiah 40)
- G-d's peace, salvation, restoration of Israel, and G-d reigning over them (Isaiah 52)
- G-d bringing the nations and their wealth to Israel because He has glorified them (Isaiah 60)
- G-d providing liberty, freedom, comfort, and abundance in the Promised Land (Isaiah 61)
- G-d providing peace enabling Judah to celebrate her appointed feasts and pay her vows without "the wicked one" passing through her (Nahum 1 & 2)
- G-d's restoration of Israel (and all who call upon the Name of the Lord) to the Promised Land (Joel 2)
- Connect John the Baptist with the good news of Isaiah chapter 40 and John's call for Israel to "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand". (Matt 3:2-3)
- Record Messiah's declaration of the good news of the kingdom throughout the Land of Israel using the same message as John: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt 4:17,23)
- Capture Messiah's response to John's disciples quoting the Isaiah 61 good news passage and affirming that He is, indeed, the One who will bring the good news to pass. (Matt 11:2-6)
- Document Messiah's prophesy that the good news of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come. (Matt 24:14)
- Recount Mary of Bethany's anointing which will be recalled wherever the good news is preached (Matt 26:13)
- Begins with Gabriel's announcement of the good news of John's birth (Luke 1:19)
- Connects John's ministry with the good news passage in Isaiah 40 (Luke 1:67-79)
- Shepherds receive the good news that the promised Savior has been born (Luke 2:8-11)
- Connects the ministry of John the Baptist with the good news of Isaiah 40 (Luke 3:1-6)
- John proclaims the good news that the Promised One is coming (Luke 3:15-18)
- Messiah reads the Isaiah 61 declaration of the good news (Luke 4:18-19)
- Messiah was sent for the purpose of proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of G-d throughout Judea. (Luke 4:42-44)
- Messiah affirms He is the Promised One by quoting the good news of Isaiah 61 (Luke 7:22)
- Messiah travels through the Land proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of G-d (Luke 8:1-3)
- Messiah sends his disciples into the Land to proclaim the good news of the kingdom (Luke 9:1-6)
- The good news of the kingdom is preached and everyone is forcing his way into it (Luke 16:16)
- Messiah is preaching the good news and some challenge His authority to do so (Luke 20:1-2)
- The disciples teach and preach the good news of Jesus as the Messiah (Acts 5:42)
- After they are scattered they continued preaching the word (Acts 8:4)

- Philip preaches the good news of the kingdom of G-d and the reputation of Christ (Acts 8:12)
- Peter and John preach the good news to many villages of the Samaritans (Acts 8:25)
- Philip preaches the good news of Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:35)
- Philip preaches the good news in cities from Azotus to Caesarea (Acts 8:40)
- Peter recounts his preaching the good news of peace through Christ to the Judeans (Acts 10:36)
- Some of the disciples proclaim the good news of the Lord Jesus to the Greeks also (Acts 11:20)
- Paul preaches the good news of the promise (heirs, the land, and G-d's presence) made to the fathers (Acts 13:32)
- Paul travels throughout Asia Minor and continues to preach the good news (Acts 14:7)
- Paul and Barnabas declare they are "men of the same nature as you and preach the good news to you that you should turn from" idolatry to the living G-d. (Acts 14:15)
- Paul travels to Derbe, preached the good news to the city and made many disciples (Acts 14:21)
- During the Jerusalem council, Peter says that by his mouth "the Gentiles would hear the word of the Gospel and believe" (Acts 15:7)
- Paul shared the ruling of the Jerusalem council with believers in Antioch and taught and preached the good news of the word of the Lord (Acts 15:35)
- Paul interprets a vision as G-d calling him to preach the good news in Macedonia (Acts 16:10)
- Epicurean and Stoic philosophers think Paul is proclaiming "strange deities" because he was preaching the good news of Jesus and the resurrection (Acts 17:18)
- Paul says his ministry is to testify solemnly of the good news of the grace of G-d (Acts 20:24)
- Paul is an apostle set apart for the good news of G-d (Rom 1:1)
- He serves G-d in the preaching of the good news of His Son (Rom 1:9)
- Paul is eager to preach the good news to those also who are in Rome (Rom 1:15)
- He is not ashamed of the good news, for it is the power of G-d for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek (Rom 1:16)
- According to Paul's good news, G-d will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus (Rom 2:12-16)
- Paul quotes Isaiah 52: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!" to prove that Israel *has* heard the good news (Rom 10:15)
- The unbelievers did not all heed the good news (Rom 10:16)
- From the standpoint of the good news the unbelieving Jews are enemies for the sake of the believers but from the standpoint of G-d's choice they are all still loved for the sake of the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Rom 11:28)
- Paul ministers as a [metaphorical] "priest" of the good news of G-d so that his "offering" of the Gentiles may become acceptable and sanctified by G-d's Holy Spirit (Rom 15:16)
- From Jerusalem to Illyricum, Paul has fully preached the good news of Christ (Rom 15:19)
- Paul aspired to preach the good news where Christ had not yet been named so that he would not build on another man's foundation (Rom 15:20)
- Paul closes his letter with a prayer to G-d who can establish the Romans according to his good news (Rom 16:25)
- Paul was sent to proclaim the good news, not in cleverness of speech, so that the work of Christ would not be made empty (1 Cor 1:17)

- Paul exhorts the Corinthians believers to imitate him because, in Christ Jesus, he is their father through the good news (1 Cor 1:15)
- Paul and his companions endure all things so they will cause no hindrance to the good news of Christ (1 Cor 9:12)
- The Lord directed those who proclaim the good news to get their living [necessities like food, clothing, and shelter] from the good news (1 Cor 9:14)
- Paul has nothing to boast of because, if he preaches the good news, he does so under compulsion and woe to him if he does not do so (1 Cor 9:16)
- Paul's reward is that, when he preaches the good news, he can do so without charge (1 Cor 9:18)
- Paul does all things for the sake of the good news so that he can become a fellow partaker of it (1 Cor 9:23)
- Paul preached the good news to the believers in Corinth (by which they are saved), and the part of first importance is that Messiah died for our sins, was buried, and raised on the third day (1 Cor 15:1-5)
- Paul had gone to Troas to share the good news of Christ but was restless and left there to go to Macedonia (2 Cor 2:12-13)
- If Paul's good news is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing (2 Cor 4:3)
- The god of this world has blinded the minds of those who don't believe so they might not see the light of the good news of the glory of Messiah (2 Cor 4:4)
- Paul sent Titus and Timothy "the brother whose fame in the things of the good news has spread through all the churches" to the Corinthian believers (2 Cor 8:18)
- Other believers will glorify G-d for the Corinthians' obedience to their confession of the good news of Christ and the liberality of their contribution to others (2 Cor 9:13-14)
- Paul and his companions were the first to travel as far as Corinth to share the good news of Christ (2 Cor 10:14)
- Paul hopes that as the Corinthians' faith grows, Paul's ministry will be enlarged, and they will preach the good news even to the regions beyond them (2 Cor 10:16)
- The Corinthians had been a little too gracious and accommodating toward those who shared a "Jesus" or a "gospel" that Paul had not preached (2 Cor 11:4)
- Paul preached the good news to the Corinthians without charge (2 Cor 11:7)
- Paul is amazed that the Galatians are deserting Messiah for a different gospel (Gal 1:6)
- Some people want to distort the good news of Messiah (Gal 1:7)
- Anyone preaching a gospel other than the one Paul preached should be accursed (Gal 1:8-9)
- Paul's gospel is not according to man nor from man but received via revelation (Gal 1:11-12)
- Paul was called to preach the good news of Messiah to the Gentiles (Gal 1:16)
- The believers in Judea were glorifying G-d because Paul was now preaching the faith (Gal 1:23)
- Paul recounts the submission of his "good news" (Acts 15) to the leaders in Jerusalem (Gal 2:1)
- Paul did not yield to his opponents for even an hour so that the good news would remain with the Gentiles (Gal 2:5)
- Seeing that he had been entrusted with the good news, James, Peter, and John affirmed Paul's ministry to the Gentiles (Gal 2:7-9)

- Paul opposes Peter’s hypocrisy and failure to be straightforward about the truth of the good news (Gal 2:14)
- Paul reminded the Galatians of the grace and kindness they showed to him the first time he preached the gospel to them (Gal 4:12-14) and called them back to that original attitude.
- After listening to the message of the good news, the Ephesians believed and were sealed in Christ with the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13)
- Paul quotes from Isaiah chapter 57 (G-d speaks a message of peace) to illustrate his point that the Gentiles (who were “far away”) are now fellow citizens and have a place in G-d’s household (Eph 2:17)
- He explains the mystery of Messiah: Gentiles are heirs, members of the body, and partakers of the promise in Christ through the good news (Eph 3:6).
- G-d gave Paul the grace to preach the good news to the Gentiles (Eph 3:8)
- Paul quotes the good news passage from Isaiah chapter 52 while describing the armor of G-d (Eph 6:15)
- He asks the Ephesians for their prayers that he speak the mystery of the gospel with boldness (Eph 6:19)
- The Philippians were participants in the good news from the beginning (Phil 1:3)
- Paul’s circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the good news (Phil 1:12)
- Those who preach out of love know Paul is appointed for the defense of the gospel (Phil 1:16)
- He exhorts the Philippians to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ so that he will hear they are with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel (Phil 1:27)
- Timothy served with Paul in furthering the good news like a child serving his father (Phil 2:22)
- Euodia and Syntyche have shared Paul’s struggle in the cause of the good news (Phil 4:3)
- No group aside from the Philippians supported Paul at the first preaching of the good news after he left Macedonia (Phil 4:15)
- The Colossians love all the saints because of the hope laid up for them in heaven of which they had previously heard in the word of truth, the good news which had come to them (Col 1:5)
- Messiah has reconciled the Colossians to Himself if they continue in the faith steadfast and not moved away from the hope of the good news that they have heard (Col 1:22-23)
- The Thessalonian believers received the good news, conviction of its truth, spiritual power, and the Holy Spirit. (1 Thes 1:5)
- Paul and Silas had boldness in G-d to be able to proclaim the good news of G-d to the Thessalonians in spite of much opposition. (1 Thes 2:2)
- Their exhortation came from the heart of men entrusted by G-d with that good news. (1 Thes 2:4)
- Because of their affection towards the Thessalonians, Paul and Silas worked hard at a job while they were proclaiming the good news so as not to be a burden. (1 Thes 2:8-9)
- Paul sent Timothy, who was also a fellow laborer in sharing the good news of the Messiah, to the Thessalonians to strengthen and encourage them in their faith. (1 Thes 3:2)
- Timothy brings Paul good news of the Thessalonians’ faith and love. (1 Thes 3:6)
- Those who afflict the Thessalonian believers and do not obey the good news will receive retribution from G-d (2 Thes 1:6-8)

- Believers are called through the good news to gain the glory of the Messiah (2 Thes 2:13-14)
- Paul was entrusted with the good news (1 Tim 1:11)
- The good news is glorious (1 Tim 1:11)
- There is “sound teaching” in accord with the good news (1 Tim 1:10)
- Paul invites Timothy to join in suffering for the gospel (2 Tim 1:8)
- Jesus abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the good news (2 Tim 1:10)
- Jesus Christ is risen from the dead and a descendant of David, according to Paul’s gospel (2 Timothy 2:8)
- Paul desired Onesimus to stay with him so that he might minister to Paul in prison for the good news (Philemon 1:13)
- The unbelieving Hebrews had good news preached to them, but it did not profit them because it was not united with faith (Hebrews 4:2)
- For those Hebrews who formerly had good news preached to them but failed to enter because of their disobedience, G-d tells them “today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.” (Hebrews 4:6-7)
- The good news preached to Peter’s audience included answers to the prophets’ questions of “who” and “when” regarding the Messiah (1 Peter 1:12).
- The believers have been “born again” of an imperishable seed (that is, through the Word of G-d) and specifically connects the good news they have heard with the good news of Isaiah 40. (1 Peter 1:24-25)
- The good news was preached (even to those who are dead) so that they may live in the spirit according to the will of G-d. (1 Peter 4:6)
- A question regarding the outcome for those who do not obey the good news of G-d since “it is with difficulty that the righteous are saved.” (1 Peter 4:17-19)
- In the days of the voice of the seventh angel the mystery of G-d is finished, as He **preached** to His servants the prophets. (Revelation 10:5-7)
- An angel flying in midheaven has an eternal **gospel** to **preach** to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people. (Revelation 14:6-7)

Appendix iv- Excursus on Paul's Authorship of Ephesians

Paul is generally viewed as the author of Ephesians but since 1792¹¹⁷ scholars have grown increasingly unconvinced. Raymond Brown, professor emeritus at the liberal Union Theological Seminary estimated 80% of modern scholars take the position that Paul is **not** the author¹¹⁸ of Ephesians. Harold Hoehner, professor of New Testament studies at the more conservative Dallas Theological Seminary challenged this claim and performed an analysis of 390 scholarly articles on Ephesians by 279 authors dating from 1519-2001. The overall results showed that just 39% of scholars were *against* Pauline authorship, however, when considering just the articles from 1971-2001 (i.e. "modern scholars"), 45% were for, 4% were uncertain, and 51% were against.¹¹⁹

Indeed, many scholars no longer even view the Ephesian believers as the original audience of this letter:

Two factors make Ephesus unlikely as the destination of the letter. (1) The words "in Ephesus" are omitted in several early witnesses, including p46, which dates to the beginning of the third century and is the earliest manuscript we have of this letter. A few scholars argue that Ephesus was the original destination and that the city's name has been removed to make the letter acceptable to a broader audience. Most scholars, however, recognize that "in Ephesus" has been added later to the text. The problem is that without the "address", verse 1 does not make much sense. Several emendations have been proposed, but although interesting, none is convincing. The suggestion that the letter is a circular letter to be read in more than one place is probably correct, but the hypothesis that the original letter left a blank to be filled in Tychicus, the letter carrier (cf. 6:21-22), is without foundation.

(2) Most likely the author did not know the readers personally. The statements in 1:15; 3:2-4; and 6:23-24 do not sound like comments of someone with firsthand knowledge of his readers. According to Acts, Paul spent better than two years in Ephesus and was emotionally attached to the believers there (see Acts 18:19-21; 19:1-41; 20:17-38). If this letter were to Ephesus, one would expect it to have more of the warmth evidenced in Philippians instead of the general tone it has.

Obviously then, specific knowledge of Ephesus—as amazing as this ancient city was—does not help us much in interpreting the letter. We may safely assume that the letter was a general letter to Gentile believers in south-western Asia Minor and that it became identified with Ephesus as the most important city between Rome and Antioch [here Hoehner footnotes Adolph Jülicher's 1904 book, "An Introduction to the New Testament"].¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ (Hoehner, 2002, p. 6)

¹¹⁸ (Brown, 1997, p. 225)

¹¹⁹ (Hoehner, 2002, pp. 6-19)

¹²⁰ (Snodgrass, 1996, p. 21)

Even in light of the unanswered questions regarding its author and audience, scholars maintain the letter is part of the canon of Scripture.

Appendix v- Excursus on Peter's Authorship of 1 Peter

In the *1 Peter- Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, Dr. Karen Jobes (New Testament professor at Wheaton College¹²¹) outlines the four key points of evidence against Petrine authorship of 1 Peter:

The weightiest evidence that 1 Peter is a pseudonymous work has rested on four points: (1) the Greek of the epistle is just too good for a Galilean fisherman-turned-apostle to have written; (2) the book's content suggests a situation both in church structure and in social hostility that reflects a time decades later than Peter's lifetime; (3) 1 Peter exhibits a dependence on the so-called deuteropauline books and must therefore have been written after them, which would date 1 Peter to the late first century; and (4) Christianity could not have reached these remote areas of Asia Minor and become a target for persecution until a decade or more after Peter had died, at the earliest.¹²²

Even in light of the challenges to the Petrine authorship of this epistle, scholars maintain the letter **is** part of the canon of Scripture, and a majority still support the traditional view.

¹²¹ <https://students.wts.edu/alumni/lives/alumniprofiles/profile.html?id=5>

¹²² (Jobes, 2005, p. 6)

Appendix vi- Excursus on Luke's Jewish Identity

Some may object to the claim that the entire Christian Bible was written by Jewish men and point to Luke as a Gentile doctor who authored the two single largest portions of the Apostolic writings. (Although Paul wrote more letters, Luke's two books contain about 38,000 total words compared to Paul's total of 32,000 and John's 28,000.) The predominantly Gentile believers of the last 1,900 years have likely sought one of "our guys" to have a hand in Scripture, but modern scholarship continues to reveal the flaws of the traditional view of Luke as a Gentile.

These include:

- **Luke is not mentioned among the group "of the circumcision" (Colossians 4:10-11).**
This fails to take into account the first-century distinction between men who were *born* Jewish and *converts*. "The circumcision" refers to Gentiles who have converted to Judaism or those who believe it is necessary to do so.¹²³
- **The name "Lukas" is not Jewish.**
Neither is the name "Paulos" (Paul) Jewish, but he identifies himself as a "Hebrew of Hebrews" (Philippians 3:5).
- **Luke is a physician (Colossians 4:14).**
This falsely assumes there were no Jewish physicians.
- **Luke appears to be writing to a Gentile audience.**
He may have also been writing to a Gentile audience as well as Hellenistic Jewish believers who would not appear "Jewish" in their thinking or outward appearance.¹²⁴
- **Luke was born in Antioch.**¹²⁵
Jews were born throughout the Roman Empire (Acts 2:5), and Paul was born in Tarsus (Acts 21:39, 22:3), but that made them no less Jewish.
- **The Jews were entrusted with the oracles of G-d (Romans 3:1-2)**
If Luke were a Gentile, then Paul's statement would be false.
- **Paul is not accused of bringing a "Gentile" Luke into the Temple**
Paul's enemies (falsely!) accuse him of bringing Trophimus into the Temple. Why not add Luke—who was an eyewitness to the mob—to bolster those charges? (Acts 21)
- **Overlooking Luke's intimate knowledge of the Levitical Temple service**
Luke begins his gospel with an account of Zacharias' priestly service in the Temple, describing his

¹²³ See "Paul and the Gentile Problem" by Matthew Thiessen

¹²⁴ (Danker, 1988, p. 346)

¹²⁵ Hackett quoting Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History (Hackett, 1852, p. 2)

selection by lot from among the rotating divisions of priests, and noting his exact position next to the altar of incense. Based on this and other evidence, some scholars take the position that not only is Luke a Jew but he is a member of the Levitical priesthood.

One of them notes two key observations which point to Luke being a Jew, if not a priest:

The first is his obvious knowledge of the Scriptures. He feels totally at home in them; more than that, he feels so at ease that he can interpret them, allude to them, cite them, string phrases together from them, and construct the significance of his Lord Jesus on their basis. He constantly weaves scriptural words, ideas, and episodes into his writing. And his interpretive methods are consistent with known contemporary Jewish methods, and that includes the rather sophisticated gezerah shevah¹²⁶ technique, as it was later known.

My second reason for thinking Luke was Jewish hangs on his authority. In a comparatively small Christian community (not just a local one but also in the widespread community) in the first century of the Era, the authority of a writer was quite significant, especially when dealing with the foundational myths [a traditional story regarding the early history of a people] of the Christians and their interpretation. Understandably, a Jewish teacher would have had his authority more easily accepted than a Gentile teacher.¹²⁷

Absent any direct statement from Scripture about Luke's heritage, we are left to infer it from the remaining facts that the Bible does provide and those inferences overwhelmingly support a Jewish Luke.

¹²⁶ *Gezerah shavah*: comparison of similar expressions. It is probable that etymologically the word *gezerah* means "law" – as in Daniel 4:4, 14 – so that *gezerah shavah* would mean a comparison of two similar laws (Bezah 1:6; see however S. Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, 193ff.); if the same word occurs in two Pentateuchal passages, then the law applying in the one should be applied to the other. [taken 5/5/2018 from Hermeneutics, Jewish Virtual Library, at <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/hermeneutics>]

¹²⁷ (Strelan, 2013, p. 106)

Appendix vii- Authors included in the Ante-Nice Fathers

Volume 1- Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus (7)

Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Mathetes, Polycarp

Volume 2- Fathers of the Second Century (5)

Clement of Alexandria, Tatian, The Pastor of Hermas, Theophilus of Antioch, Writings of Athenagoras

Volume 3- Latin Christianity- Its Founder, Tertullian (1)

Tertullian

Volume 4- The Fathers of the Third Century (3)

Commodianus, Minucius Felix, Origen

Volume 5- The Fathers of the Third Century (4)

Caius, Cyprian, Hippolytus, Novatian

Volume 6- The Fathers of the Third Century (16)

Alexander of Alexandria, Alexander of Cappadocia, Anatolius, Archelaus, Arnobius, Dionysius, Gregory Thaumaturgus, Julius Africanus, Malchion, Methodius, Pamphilus, Peter of Alexandria, Phileas, Pierius of Alexandria, Theognostus of Alexandria, Theonas of Alexandria

Volume 7- The Fathers of the Third and Fourth Centuries (5)

Asterius Urbanus, Clement, Lactantius, Venantius, Victorinus

Volume 8- The Fathers of the Third and Fourth Centuries (5)

Clement of Rome, Memoirs of Edessa, Pseudo-Clementine, the Twelve Patriarchs, Theodotus

Volume 8- Recently Discovered Additions to Early Christian Literature (2)

Origen (again), the Epistles of Clement (companion of Paul?)

There are other letters and books included in these volumes whose authors are unnamed. In total, there are 48+ authors considered in the series.