

BSL: Evangelism

BIBLE AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Εὐαγγελίζω - Euaggelizo (yü-än-ge-lē'-so)

Euaggelizo is a verb form derived from the noun Euaggelion—literally “Good News” which we translate “Gospel”—that means to proclaim the good news. Euaggelizo was often used without a direct object in the Greek, but translated as “Preach the Gospel,” with the direct object, Gospel, assumed in the phrase. However, in some uses, such as “Preach the Word” (Acts 8:4), we see a direct object (in this case, “Logos,” or “Word”) placed after the verb and translated as such.

Euaggelizo is rarely found in any other Ancient Greek texts in this form, but found 55 times in the new testament, making it a truly “Christianese” term. As such, a study of the word’s true roots is difficult.

Roots - Parallel Texts

Most New Testament scholars agree that Matthew and Luke were written after Mark and likely used Mark’s account as a resource. Euaggelizo is not found anywhere in Mark’s account, once in Matthew, but Luke uses it 11 times in his account, and 16 more times in Acts. The parallel texts from Luke to Mark where Luke utilized the verb Euaggelizo, Mark constructed the phrase in more proper Greek terms: Kerusso the Euaggelion, or “Proclaim” the “Gospel.”

The Greek verb Kerusso means to proclaim, and is used in a political sense to describe the actions of a herald. It’s use inherently implies a backing authority, such as a king or general, behind the message.

This direct tie can also be seen in other verses such as Acts 8:4-5, where the scattered believers were said to “Euaggelizo” in verse 4, and expounded on in verse 5 where Phillip is said to be “Kerusso” or Proclaim Christ. Likewise, Isaiah 61:1-2 distinctly describes the actions of a herald proclaiming God’s word, and later Jesus quotes the verses in Luke 4:18 using the verb Euaggelizo.

Key uses of the word in understanding its meaning:

Acts 8:25 - While in Samaria where the Gospel had already been proclaimed, Peter and John did not “Euaggelizo.” Instead they “testified and spoke” the word—restating and confirming its validity. However, in the very next verse, they return to Jerusalem and “Euaggelizo” to the Samaritans living there where the Gospel had not yet been proclaimed.

Acts 14:21 - The presentation of the Gospel is coupled with “Didaskos”—to teach. Proclamation was only one aspect of an Apostle’s life, as edification and sound teaching obviously pervade the ministry of every Apostle in the New Testament.

Romans 10:15 and 1 Peter 1:12 - The work of the Old Testament prophets is directly correlated with the Gospel of Christ. The predictions and heralds that the Old Testament prophets made of Christ is tantamount to “Euaggelizo” to the Jews who came before Christ.

Inappropriately associated synonym:

In today’s Church, we often associate “Evangelism” with the concept of persuasion, and proselytizing. The Meriam-Webster dictionary defines Evangelism as: The winning or reviving of personal commitments to Christ.

However, the Greek word for persuasion, Peithos, can be found in active verb form, such as when chief priests and elders “persuaded” the crowds to release Barabbas instead of Jesus. This word can only be found 4 times in the New Testament referring to the ministry of the Gospel (Acts 13:43; 18:4; 19:8; 28:23), and all 4 times refers to a conversation with fellow Jews persuading them that Christ is their Messiah.

Index to all instances of Euaggelizo in the Bible:

Matt. 11:5; Lk. 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; Rom. 1:15; 10:15; 15:20; 1 Co. 1:17; 9:16, 18; 15:1f; 2 Co. 10:16; 11:7; Gal. 1:8f, 11, 16, 23; 4:13; Eph. 2:17; 3:8; 1 Thess. 3:6; Heb. 4:2, 6; 1 Pet. 1:12, 25; 4:6; Rev. 10:7; 14:6