

BSL: Gospel

BIBLE AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

εὐαγγέλιον - Euaggelion (yü-än-ge'-lē-on)

Euaggelion is the Greek noun that literally means “Good News” and from which we get our modern Christian term: “Gospel.” The word Gospel has come to represent a broad spectrum of phrases, euphemisms, analogies, and doctrinal points that generally comprise a representation of God’s plan for the salvation of Man through the death and resurrection of Christ. However, Biblical authors did not necessarily use the word in all instances with such a thorough definition in mind. When expositing Scripture, care must be taken to understand context and implied meaning of Euaggelion.

Euaggelion is found 77 times in the New Testament and can be categorized into four general types of usage: Pre-Ascension, Paulean Liberal, Paulean Orthodox, and Eternal. The Apostle Paul developed the theology and definition of the noun Euaggelion most thoroughly. Euaggelion can be found 4 times in Matthew, 8 times in Mark, twice in Acts, once in 1 Peter, once in Revelation and 66 times in the Paulean epistles.

Uses / Meanings of the Word

Pre-Ascension:

In contrast to the customarily assumed definition of Gospel, its use prior to the ascension of Christ inherently does not include implications of salvation through the substitutionary atonement in Jesus’ death. Examples include Matthew 4:23 where the Jesus used the term of the “Good News” that the He, the Messiah, had arrived and the restoration of God’s Kingdom was at hand. To apply a post-resurrection view of justification on Jesus’ use of Euaggelion in this context would be anachronistic. It is interesting to consider that the same principle also applies to verses such as Matthew 24:14, that “this” Euaggelion must be preached to all nations.

Paulean Liberal:

Although the majority of Paul’s use of Euaggelion would conform to our customarily assumed definition of the Gospel, there are several exceptions in which Paul uses the term more liberally in reference to “Good News.” One example is Romans 16:25, where Paul uses a personal pronoun to indicate the Euaggelion was his own. This does not, of course, imply that Paul himself was the savior, but rather that he had personalized the message and/or its delivery. Most scholars rightly note that he also quickly adds, “and the proclamation of Jesus Christ,”—which is a phrase closely related to the verb “Euaggelizo,” to preach the Gospel. Another example is found in 2 Corinthians 4:3-4, where the Euaggelion is actually the Good News that Christ is glorious because of His divinity. The context of Paul’s earlier description of glory shining through veils supports this.

Eternal:

Although it is used only once in this manner, the Eternal Euaggelion is a significant use of the term. Found in Revelation 14:6-7, the term is defined totally absent of the name of Christ. Instead, it assures two things: God is to be feared and His judgment is coming. This is called “eternal” because it is the simple truth about God that He revealed throughout History, even before the Law and prior to Christ’s life on earth.

Paulean Orthodox:

The most popular definition of Euaggelion comes from Paul’s orthodox use of the term. This Paulean Orthodox use of the term entails, as most would assume, the completeness of the salvation message. The strongest passages for deriving the definition are Romans 1:1-17, 1 Cor. 15:1-5, and Col 1:23.

According to these verses, the orthodox definition contains the following parameters:

1. The Gospel is “According to Scripture,” with it’s basis in Old Testament prophesy, law, etc.
2. Personal Sin and Separation from God
3. Atoning death of Christ
4. Bodily Resurrection of Christ

The importance of adhering to such an orthodox definition, not adding nor subtracting truth, is emphasized most strongly by Paul in Galatians 1:6-9.