

The Gospel . . . Old Testament concept or New Testament?

I can't help but ask questions like this. It is the way I am "wired". Maybe it has to do with my training as a medical doctor. When Jesus took the scroll from the attendant in the synagogue in Luke 4:16-30, He said He'd come to "preach the gospel." Some more current translations say, "good news." I work primarily from The New King James Edition as well as the King James Version. Jesus couldn't have been using a concept the Jews were not familiar with or Luke, at least, would have been required to teach the reader exactly what a "gospel" or "the good news" was. They had to know. That is why questions like this are important to ask.

Jesus was quoting from Isaiah 61:1-2. According to Isaiah, the term is "preach good tidings." It is not my intent to make this an in depth, scholarly exercise but a practical one. I am deeply indebted to Dr. James Strong's time tested work, "The Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible." It is my primary reference tool. It is easily available in print or via electronic format. I am particularly fond of www.blueletterbible.org. It is their concordance of choice. If you are not familiar with this web resource, I highly suggest you check it out. I don't read biblical Hebrew, Greek or Latin. With this extremely valuable resource, it isn't necessary. They've done the work for us.

The concept of "good tidings" or "glad tidings" is related to the Hebrew word, "basar," found as Strong's #H1319. The concept involves the delivery of news, good or bad, causing it even to be "published" by word of mouth or script. It appears, according to Dr. Strong, seven times in the prophets, Isaiah and Nahum. Nahum's use is almost identical to Isaiah's.

To get from the Hebrew of the "Old Testament" to the Greek of the "New Testament" could be tedious were it not for www.blueletterbible.org. For each verse in the Hebrew Bible, it notes it's parallel translation into the "Septuagint," or "LXX", which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (Tanakh). This translation was done by Rabbi's during the second and third centuries, "B.C." or "B.C.E." After Alexander had conquered the then known world, the primary language became Greek. It is important to note, the Septuagint was translated by Torah observant, Orthodox Jews, before Jesus of Nazareth was on the scene. This translation helps us understand the Greek "New Testament."

The Hebrew word בִּשְׂרָ “basar” is translated into the Septuagint as the Greek word εὐαγγελιζόμενος “euaggelion.” When we examine the word “gospel” in the “New Testament,” it is found as Strong’s #G2098. It is the same word, εὐαγγέλιον “euaggelion.” You can see the same root structure in these words copied from Isaiah 52:7 and Matthew 4:23, courtesy of the scholars at www.blueletterbible.org.

To paraphrase Amos 3:7, “the LORD (Yahweh of Jehovah) does nothing unless He tells His secrets to His servants the prophets.” The LORD planted the seed of the glad/good tidings with His, prophets Isaiah and Nahum. To paraphrase Paul, “God calls what is not as though it is,” Romans 4:17.

This may seem like a lot of words but the point must be clear. The gospel is not a “New Testament” concept. The people were in anticipation of glad tidings. The glad tidings had been “published” in the “Old Testament,” which is why Jesus starts preaching from Isaiah. So if we are willing to “rethink” how we have been taught, there might be “other gospel writers” than Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. It isn’t heresy to think out of or venture out of the box. If the LORD (Yahweh or Jehovah) hadn’t done it, He’s would still be in the Ark of the Covenant encased in acacia wood. I’m glad He’s seated at the right hand of the Father and out of His box!

The discussions that follow this explanatory word are not meant to change scripture, but perhaps how we think about scripture. Jesus came to challenge the Jews as to how they thought about scripture. Holy Spirit is still challenging us as to how we think about scripture. Isn’t this what Luke and Paul are talking about in Acts 17:11? Let Holy Spirit challenge you be a “good Berean.”

They following texts are useful to see this correlation: Isaiah 40:9, 41:27, 52:7, 61:1 and Nahum 1:15, from either a KJV or NKJV using Strong’s Concordance.