

The True Gospel Message As Proclaimed In The Old Testament

No term is more misused in the world of professing Christianity than “gospel.”

We hear of gospel music, gospel tracts, gospel preaching, etc. but Christ’s true gospel message is seldom heard.

Galatians 1:6-9 [New King James] *“Only One Gospel: I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.”*

Yet who really understands what the message is that is called the “gospel” or “good news”?

The gospel, [good news] that Jesus Christ brought from God the Father for all humanity, is good news, yet it also contains an element of warning.

Most Christians think of the gospel message as exclusively a New Testament expression. We have the four “gospels” – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

We know that Jesus and the apostles preached the gospel.

In a very real sense, Jesus’ gospel was a sensational, never before proclaimed, news announcement.

Jesus Christ was the newscaster who absolutely assured us that the Kingdom of God would come to this earth.

Jesus Christ qualified for the kingship of that Kingdom by conquering Satan the devil is a spiritual battle of the highest stakes.

Matthew 4:1-11 [NIV] *“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting for forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, ‘If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.’ Jesus answered, ‘It is written: “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”’ Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ‘If you are the Son of God,’ he said, ‘throw yourself down. For it is written: “He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”’ Jesus answered him, ‘It is also written: “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”’ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. ‘All this I will give you,’ he said, ‘if you will bow down and worship me.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Away from me, Satan! For it is written: “Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.”’ Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.”*

Note that Jesus Christ did not tell Satan that the present kingdoms of this world were **not** his to offer to Him, [2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 5:19; Revelation 12:9].

Jesus Christ finally gave Satan a command and he slunk away a defeated being.

Only after this victorious encounter with Satan did Jesus Christ begin to preach the good news, the gospel message, [Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:15].

Few realise that this very same gospel was preannounced in writing by a group of Holy Spirit inspired men, [2 Peter 1:20-21] designated as prophets by the Creator God, one of which was Isaiah.

It may also surprise you to learn that the term “*gospel*” also appears in the Old Testament.

Which Bible did the apostles use? –

The New Testament apostles and writers used the Old Testament.

They referred to it some 850 times, 280 of which are direct quotations.

Which translation of the Old Testament did they most commonly use?

Quotation from, ‘*New Testament Times*’ by Merrill C. Tenney; page 30:

“By the first century AD, the Septuagint had become the Bible of the Jews of the dispersion and was widely circulated through the Roman world. It became also the Bible of the early Christians who preached from it and quoted it in their writings. A large proportion of the allusions to the Old Testament contained in the gospels and the epistles are taken from the Septuagint.”

Scholars are generally agreed that this translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek, called the Septuagint, was done by Greek-speaking Jews in Egypt under the rule of Ptolemy 2 [Philadelphus] about 280 BC when a Greek translation became necessary in that Greek-speaking society.

Why is this fact significant? –

What does it have to do with the gospel message?

Simply this, **when we study certain verses in the book of Isaiah, which we are about to do, in the Septuagint version you will find the same terminology used as in the New Testament in relation to the gospel message!**

The Hebrew expression for “*good news*” or “*glad times*” is “*bâsar*” but when translated into Greek it is “*ēuaggēlizō*” or “*gospel*.”

Now notice a case in point.

Isaiah 40:9 [King James] “*O Zion, that bringest good tidings [bâsar or ēuaggēlizō], get thee up into the high mountain, O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up your voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, behold your God!*”

Here we find a prophecy about the message of the gospel.

Here we are introduced to the basic components of the New Testament gospel message, in the Old Testament prophecy the Creator God gives us through Isaiah.

We have to read the next verse to complete the thought.

Isaiah 40:10 [King James] “*Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.*”

The gospel message has to do with the fact that dynamic, living Jesus Christ is to return to rule this earth with strength.

In our present strife-torn world, what could be better good news than that?

Notice also the message has to do with revealing the true Creator God, “*behold your God.*”

This also tells us that there is a reward, for those who are faithfully doing God's work that is "before Him" will be brought by the Creator God with Him at His coming to rule, [**Revelation 22:12**].

Now notice another scripture in Isaiah which further reveals the make up of the New Testament gospel message.

Isaiah 52:7 [King James] "*How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth **peace**; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth **salvation**; that saith unto Zion, **Thy God reigneth!***"

Included in this gospel message is peace, salvation and God's reigning on earth.

The apostle Paul quoted this very scripture in application to the New Testament preachers of the gospel message.

Romans 10:15 [King James] "*And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*"

This is proof that the verses in Isaiah apply to the New Testament gospel message.

We now see that the gospel message includes peace and world harmony.

It also includes salvation and the rulership of the Creator God now in His Church, and directly over the whole world in the world tomorrow, after the return of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

We will see that all these prerequisites were fulfilled by Jesus Christ and the New Testament apostles.

But first notice another passage in the book of Isaiah.

Isaiah 61:1-3 [King James] "*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.*"

In these verses we see the capstone of Isaiah's description of the New Testament gospel message.

Jesus Himself partially quoted this passage, showing that He was fulfilling those very words as He preached the same gospel message.

Luke 4:16-21 [New King James] "*Jesus Rejected at Nazareth: (Matt 13:54-58; Mark 6:1-6) So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: 'The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD. Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.'*"

Without completing the quotation, Jesus Christ stopped reading and closed the book.

Why?

The reason why is that His commission from God the Father was divided into two distinct parts.

Jesus Christ's first coming was to fulfil that first part of this quoted passage of scripture from Isaiah.

The second part of His commission will be to bring about the day of God's judgement is yet to be fulfilled.

That will be the first time when God's ruling worldwide Kingdom will be set up at His Second Coming, and **the law will then go forth from Zion, that is Jerusalem.**

In the meantime, it is the function of the Christian Church to announce this great event in advance, as an important part of the gospel message.

This arrival of Jesus Christ with all of the people faithful to the Creator God, both who have died and are yet alive at that time, and an army of righteous angels, to set up the ruling Kingdom of God on this earth.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 [New King James] *“The Comfort of Christ's Coming: But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.”*

This event is at the heart and core of the New Testament gospel message.

We have seen that Isaiah, in three passages of scripture, described in detail the components of the gospel message as it would be preached in the New Testament.

But what we have not yet examined is just how that gospel message was preached, and how it developed to the present work of the Christian Church.

Let us first notice another Old Testament scripture before we get to the New Testament scriptures.

Malachi 3:1 [New King James] *“The Coming Messenger: ‘Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,’ says the LORD of hosts.”*

Jesus Christ came as a messenger of the New Covenant, an agreement between the Creator God and all humanity.

Jesus, as part of His gospel message, introduced a whole new and distinctly different covenant.

The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah described that new covenant which Jesus Christ later introduced.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 [New King James] *“A New Covenant: ‘Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”*

This applies to all Christians who are “*spiritual Israelites*,” [Galatians 3:28-29].

The Christian church now lives under the conditions of that covenant which will be in universal force when the world-ruling Kingdom of God is set up on earth.

Jesus Christ presented the same laws of God that Israel was supposed to live by, but at most times failed to do so, the great Ten Commandments.

Jesus Christ preached the spiritual application of those same commandments, for example Matthew 5:27-28, that an illegal desire violated the commandment about adultery.

Jesus Christ preached forgiveness of sins through faith in His sacrifice and offered the Holy Spirit to all who obeyed His words, [Acts 5:32] for all humans to develop the very character of the Triune God, [Galatians 5:22-23].

Jesus Christ also announced the coming rule of God’s Kingdom and repentance, [Mark 1:14-15].

Jesus Christ also healed the sick, cast out demons and taught a new way of receiving true righteousness, [Romans 4:13, 16, 18-24].

Jesus Christ also as part of His message spoke of salvation and entry into His Father’s Kingdom as created children of God, [John 14:1-3].

That Kingdom was likened to a pearl of great price or a great treasure, [Matthew 13:45-46].

Jesus Christ showed that humans ought to be willing to forsake anything and everything in order to be part of that Kingdom.

The aged apostle John, some 50-60 years after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, summed up the real meaning of the gospel message.

1 John 3:11 [New King James] *“For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another,”*

As we have seen, this is not all there was to the gospel message, but such love for the Creator God and other human beings is the underlying motivation and philosophy of the message.

Jesus Christ personified the gospel message –

John 15:12-14 [New King James] *“This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.”*

Jesus Christ is the greatest “lover” in all history.

Jesus Christ is at the heart and core of the gospel message, He is the king of that coming Kingdom, He is the way into that Kingdom, [John 14:6], it is Jesus Christ who will set up God’s Kingdom on earth.

Jesus Christ Himself will administer the laws of that Kingdom.

Jesus Christ was the main messenger who came to announce the good news of that Kingdom and prepare people to enter into it.

This is the true gospel message that is explained to us in both the Old and New Testaments of God’s Word, the Christian Bible.