

The Gospel – a Messianic Message

By Moshe Schwab

When people hear the word “gospel” they often think of their own version of what the Bible has to say and call it the “gospel.” When Shaul (Paul) uses the word gospel he comes from a background entirely immersed in the Old Testament and the word actually has to do with a messianic message.

First of all, we need to know what the Old Testament has to say about the word gospel. Of course, we have to find words in the Old Testament that mean gospel. That is how some come up with the idea of “good news” or “tidings” (message). It is the Hebrew word “basar” which is translated good tidings in the KJV Bible or good news in the New King James Version (NKJV). It is a message, and we will see that it is a messianic message.

We know that Yeshua (Jesus) is the Messiah and we can find verses that are closely aligned either with the coming of the messiah or the reign of the messiah that have to do with the word gospel. Yeshua (Jesus) quotes this about himself, “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, Because the Lord has anointed Me to preach **good tidings (basar)** to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;” Isaiah 61:1 NKJV. This is obviously a messianic scripture that Yeshua is applying to himself. Yeshua says that, “Today, as you heard it read, this passage of the Tanakh was fulfilled!” Luke 4:21 CJB (for the complete context begin in Luke 4:16).

In the messianic scripture of Isaiah 61:1, Yeshua alludes to the fact that He is the Messiah. Who was the Messiah to be?

“The days are coming,” says ADONAI when I will raise a righteous Branch for David. He will reign as king and succeed, he will do what is just and right in the land. In his days Y'hudah will be saved, Isra'el will live in safety, and the name given to him will be ADONAI Tzidkenu [ADONAI our righteousness]. Jeremiah 23:5-6 CJB.

This scripture is a messianic scripture. Yeshua was born in the line of David just as Jeremiah says. And, although Yeshua says He has gone away for a while, He will be back someday to reign as King. It says His name is Adonai in Jeremiah, which the exclusive word for God, Yud-Hey-Vav-Hey. When the Messiah comes He is supposed to be God according to the Tanakh.¹

Yeshua sent the Holy Spirit in the meantime, also known as our helper or counselor. Yeshua said before His death and resurrection, “But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I don't go away, the comforting Counselor will not come to you. However, if I do go, I will send him to you;” John 16:7. That is why Kefa (Peter) says, “Turn from sin, return to God, and each of you be immersed on the authority of Yeshua the Messiah into forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Ruach HaKodesh! For the promise is for you, for your children, and for those far away - as many as ADONAI our God may call!” Acts 2:38-29 CJB. The Holy Spirit is for any one of us if we will accept Yeshua as the Messiah.

The messianic message (gospel) and the Holy Spirit

Perhaps one of the most important things to understand about the Messiah Yeshua is that He gives those who believe in Him the Holy Spirit. Yeshua has gone away for a while and He sends the Holy Spirit to be our helper, our counselor.

¹ Abraham eats and talks with God and two angels. Abraham starts walking with the two angels who go off toward Sodom and God finishes talking to Abraham and then God leaves too. The Hebrew clearly says that it was God, Yud-Hey-Vav-Hey, the exclusive name for God who was talking to Abraham. “ADONAI went on his way as soon as he had finished speaking to Avraham, and Avraham returned to his place;” Genesis 18:33 CJB. It is not true that God cannot come as a man. God can do what He wants.

The Holy Spirit is not some doctrinal preference, but the primary aim of the message/tidings of Shaul and the other early Rabbis (sometimes called apostles, they were Jewish teachers) who believed in Yeshua. Rabbi Yochanan (John) says we must trust in Yeshua and that would also imply that we must receive the Holy Spirit. “Those who have the Son have the life; those who do not have the Son of God do not have the life. I have written you these things so that you may know that you have eternal life—you who keep trusting in the person and power of the Son of God.” 1 John 5:12-13 CJB. Yochanan tells us to keep believing in Yeshua and His power.

The power of the Holy Spirit is accessible to us. “But you will receive power when the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) comes upon you.” Acts 1:8 CJB. Shaul says, “Having one's mind controlled by the Spirit is life and shalom.” Rom. 8:6 CJB. We have “life,” *chai*, through the Holy Spirit and we can have “shalom” and all that shalom is through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is our helper to keep God’s commands and to lead us.

The messianic message (gospel) and what it means to be “Set Apart”

When Shaul (Paul) uses the word gospel it is in a messianic sense. The early Jewish believers in Yeshua would have understood the messianic implications of the word “gospel.” They would immediately be excited over the prospect of the hearing about the Messiah and what it meant to be a follower of the Messiah.

We should always try to understand the Jewish sense of the New Testament scriptures because they were written by Jews for mostly Jews who believed that Yeshua (Jesus) was the Jewish messiah. Many theologians see the context of the word “gospel” to mean only message or good news. They often move quickly over words like “set apart” and say that we have received good news. That is only part of the idea of what Shaul is writing about when he talks about the gospel.

When Shaul says he is “set apart” for the gospel (messianic message) in Romans 1:1 he means it in the sense of being made holy by the power of God. He is to be a holy messenger bringing the gospel, the messianic message. We see the concept of becoming holy and pure to give God’s message in Isaiah:

Then I said, "Woe to me! I [too] am doomed! — because I, a man with unclean lips, living among a people with unclean lips, have seen with my own eyes the King, ADONAI-Tzva'ot!" One of the s'rafin flew to me with a glowing coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. He touched my mouth with it and said, "Here! This has touched your lips. Your iniquity is gone, your sin is atoned for." Then I heard the voice of Adonai saying, "Whom should I send? Who will go for us?" I answered, "I'm here, send me!" He said, "Go and tell this people: Isaiah 6:5-9 CJB.

So Shaul, just like Isaiah, has likewise come as a holy emissary (apostle²) of God to give the people a message. In Romans 1:1 CJB, Shaul says that he is, “Set apart for the Good News of God.” Modern theology misses the point. Shaul had an encounter with God and is “set apart” and made holy (and he intends to live a holy life) to give them the messianic news, how exciting! ³

We are also set apart to be a holy people and to live right through the Messiah and the Holy Spirit. Israel was to be a holy and set apart people, “Because you are a people set apart as holy for ADONAI your God;”

² The word apostle means messenger. Just like there were many messengers for God in the Old Testament, there are also many in the New Testament era. It is an important common ministry to the believers Shaul says in Ephesians 4:11. Also in the gospels, Yeshua sends out 12 and also 70. It is incorrect to think an apostle is some unique special ministry. Those who claim to be apostles are often filled with pride because they think they are someone extra special. Denominations that claim authenticity by coming from the apostles or having apostles don’t understand what the word apostle really means.

³ There is also a probable double message in the Greek word for good news. The Greek word for gospel was also a word used for a message from the emperor god. So, when Shaul talks about the “gospel” he also means a message from the true God in contrast to the false emperor god of Rome.

Deuteronomy 14:2 CJB. That hasn't changed. Shaul (Paul) says about the believers in the Messiah, "However, now, freed from sin and enslaved to God, you do get the benefit - it consists in being made holy, set apart for God, and its end result is eternal life;" Romans 6:22 CJB. Notice how it says, "holy, set apart." We live holy lives and follow God's commandments.

Yeshua Identified Himself as the Messiah with messianic news (message)

Yeshua clearly says that He is bringing the "good news," and that He is the Messiah when He quotes Isaiah 61:1. Yeshua (Jesus) quoted this prophetic messianic scripture from Isaiah and says that this scripture has been fulfilled. Isaiah wrote this some 600 years before Yeshua came. Yeshua stops before the day of vengeance in Isaiah 61 because that has not been fulfilled yet. The day of vengeance is not here yet. God wants to give every one of us the chance to hear the messianic message. "God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth; 1 Timothy 2:3-4 NKJV.

He is really trying to save us. We should take advantage of that opportunity. According to Strong's Lexicon, the Hebrew word "l'basar" translated "good news" in Isaiah 61 means to give news, to proclaim, or to preach.⁴ There is another messianic scripture referring to the future messianic kingdom in Nahum: "Look! On the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, proclaiming shalom." Nahum 2:1 CJB.

Shaul (Paul) saw the messianic news as a news of peace in the book of Ephesians, "And wear on your feet the readiness that comes from the **Good News** of shalom." Eph. 6:15 CJB. Shaul no doubt gets this rabbinic messianic idea from Isaiah. "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him who brings **good news (basar)**, proclaiming shalom, bringing good news of good things, announcing salvation and saying to Tziyon, 'Your God is King!'" Isaiah 52:7 CJB

Who is this person? It says in Isaiah 40, "Here is your God!" It also says there that it is "Adonai ELOHIM." He brings reward; feeds His flock and carries them. I believe it is the good news from God about the coming of Yeshua (Jesus). Yeshua is the Hebrew word for salvation. Here comes salvation (Yeshua) we could say. Let's look at Isaiah 40:9-11:

You who bring **good news (basar)** to Tziyon, get yourself up on a high mountain; you who bring **good news (basar)** to Yerushalayim, cry out at the top of your voice! Don't be afraid to shout out loud! Say to the cities of Y'hudah, "Here is your God! Here comes Adonai ELOHIM with power, and his arm will rule for him. Look! His reward is with him, and his recompense is before him. He is like a shepherd feeding his flock, gathering his lambs with his arm, carrying them against his chest, gently leading the mother sheep."

Yeshua identifies himself as this shepherd in the book of John (Yochanan) and says. "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep ... No one takes it away from me; on the contrary, I lay it down of my own free will ... My sheep listen to my voice, I recognize them, they follow me, and I give them eternal life." John 10:11, 18, 27 CJB. "Here is your God!" it says in Isaiah. Follow Him.

The messianic hope of a better life

The word "gospel" (basar in the Old Testament) absolutely should have this sense of the messiah coming in the both the Old Testament and New Testament portions. It also concerns the giving of the Holy Spirit, the Ruach HaKodesh. Again, Kefa (Peter) said, "Kefa answered them, 'Turn from sin, return to God, and each of you be immersed on the authority of Yeshua the Messiah into forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Ruach HaKodesh!'" Acts 2:38 CJB. That is among the first things that Kefa told the people to do because the Messiah had come and so an introduction to the

⁴ From Strong's Hebrew Lexicon, <http://www.eliyah.com/cgi-bin/strongs.cgi?file=hebrewlexicon&isindex=basar>

messianic message must include the message of repentance (being holy, set apart) and the giving of the Holy Spirit.

The **messianic message is good news** because it helps us to live good lives through the Holy Spirit. God wants to help us to follow the Torah, His instruction. After all, God should know best how we should live and what's best for us. We have the hope of doing better because of God's goodness through Yeshua. "But God is so rich in mercy and loves us with such intense love that, even when we were dead because of our acts of disobedience, he brought us to life along with the Messiah." Eph. 2:4-5 CJB. We are in a position to succeed because of the Messiah, but some will not succeed.

Those that do what is wrong will be judged someday in the future. Kefa says, "Their punishment, decreed long ago, is not idle; their destruction is not asleep! For God did not spare the angels who sinned; on the contrary, he put them in gloomy dungeons lower than Sh'ol to be held for judgment. And he did not spare the ancient world; on the contrary, he preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness." 2 Peter 2:4-5 CJB. Noah did what right and that's why he was a righteous man. We become righteous by actually doing what is right, not thinking we are right. God wants to save us and wants us to receive Yeshua (salvation⁵).

Finally

So, the word "gospel" is a messianic message, a prophetic message, a tremendous message of hope for those who have believed in the Messiah and receive the Holy Spirit. The gospel is a message of hope that helps us to live better lives and avoid future condemnation. It is not simply "good news.". There is much more to understanding to the word "gospel" than modern theology has to say.

I make the practice of replacing the words "gospel" or "good news" with the words "messianic message." It can be helpful because of what the words actually refer to. I suggest you do that too. It helps me to think about what actually happened and what the good news is: the coming of the Messiah Yeshua, all that was accomplished through Him, and the giving of the Holy Spirit to help us.

The Jewish Messiah has come to the world and those that believe in Yeshua can receive the gift of the Holy Spirit; they can follow God's commandments better through the help of the Holy Spirit; they can be saved from spiritual death; they are brought to new life through the Messiah Yeshua. The Bible talks about being born again when we accept Yeshua as the Messiah. The Hebraic understanding of this is to start a new life. That life is to start in the here and now and someday we will actually be born anew and raised from the dead in the future kingdom when Yeshua reigns for all eternity. It wouldn't be a bad idea to begin a relationship with the future King now. I have, how about you?

⁵ The name Yeshua means salvation so not only does God want us to receive Yeshua as the Messiah, but to receive salvation. Yeshua is Jesus' real name.