

The Good Message of Jesus Christ

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Introduction

The *euangelion* or “good message” that the Lord Jesus Christ preached is the same message His apostles preached. There’s no difference whatsoever in messages because the apostles learned from Him and were sent by Him with His message. And His message is faithfulness to Him as Lord: “No man can **serve** two **masters**” (Mat 6:24); “No servant can **serve** two **masters**” (Luk 16:13); “Who then is a **faithful** and wise **servant**, whom his **lord** hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?” (Mat 24:45); “His **lord** said unto him, Well done, *thou* good and **faithful servant**: thou hast been **faithful** over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things” (Mat 25:21); “He that is **faithful** in that which is least is **faithful** also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much” (Luk 16:10); “And he said unto him, Well, thou good **servant**: because thou hast been **faithful** in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities” (Luk 19:17).

About 500 years ago the Protestant Reformation introduced a new message that we’re saved by faith or belief. And Bible translations have been “doctored” ever since to support that message. It’s not the message of faithful obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ that He preached but a new and different message.

The good message

The Greek noun *euangelion* is derived from the adverb *eu* for “good” and the noun *angelos* for “messenger.” It literally means “good message.” However, rather than transliterating it into English as “evangel” or something similar, it’s widely translated into the coined meaningless word “gospel.” When asked what “gospel” means, the typical answer is that it’s “good news.” What happened is that the broader meaning of *euangelion* has been diminished by replacing this word with something meaningless that could then be instilled with a narrower definition. “News” is strictly a report of information while “message” not only communicates news and information but other ideas as well. It has a broader meaning.

By limiting *euangelion* to simply “good news,” such statements as “But they have not all **obeyed the gospel [euangelion 2098]**” (Rom 10:16), “them that know not God, and that **obey not the gospel [euangelion 2098]** of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2Th 1:8), are puzzling. Obey the news? When we pick up the newspaper from our driveway in the morning, we don’t think to ourselves about obeying it. In translating *euangelion* as “gospel” and ascribing it the definition of “good news,” the directive of obedience to Jesus Christ as Lord has been expunged from the *euangelion* He preached. Therefore, we’re taught that all we must do to be saved is receive the good news and believe the information.

The Messenger of the Lord

The Greek noun *angelos* transliterated as “angel” is the root of the noun *euangelion* for “good message.” This word *angelos*, and its Hebrew equivalent *mal’āk*, means “messenger,” one that is sent by another to deliver a

message. Messengers can be celestial beings we called “angels,” or they can be human beings functioning as messengers. Although used for the name of God’s celestial messengers, *angelos* or *mal’āk* isn’t a type of being but a role, service, or function.

In the following passage, the same word *mal’āk* is used for both celestial beings sent by God to Jacob, and for human beings sent by Jacob to Esau, “And Jacob went on his way, and **the angels [mal’āk 4397] of God met him**. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This *is* God’s host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim. And **Jacob sent messengers [mal’āk 4397] before him to Esau** his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom.” (Gen 32:1-3). In these next two verses, *angelos* is used for John the Baptizer sent by God as His messenger to His people, “Behold, **I send my messenger [angelos 32] before thy face**, which shall prepare thy way before thee” (Mar 1:2). Shortly after this, it was also used for celestial beings sent by God to minister to Jesus, “And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and **the angels [angelos 32] ministered unto him**” (Mar 1:13).

In Abraham’s days, we’re introduced to a particular Messenger called “the angel [mal’āk 4397] of the LORD [Y’hōvâ 3068]” (Gen 16:7,9,10,11,22:11,15). This Messenger isn’t mentioned again until He appears to Moses in the burning bush, “And the angel [mal’āk 4397] of the LORD [Y’hōvâ 3068] appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush” (Exo 3:2). This, of course, is the pre-incarnate Son of God sent by the Father as His Messenger.

However, the Jews that rejected Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah and as the Son of God claimed that “the angel of the LORD” in their Scriptures was simply a great celestial being—one of God’s created angels. This error is what the writer of Hebrews was disputing particularly in the first chapter, “**For unto which of the angels [angelos 32] said he at any time**, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?” (Heb 1:5), “**But to which of the angels [angelos 32] said he at any time**, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?” (Heb 1:13). The Messenger of the Lord isn’t an angel because God called Him “my Son” and said to Him “Sit on my right hand.”

The writer of Hebrews went on to say, “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of **the heavenly calling**, consider **the Apostle [apostolos 652]** and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus” (Heb 3:1). The Greek *apostolos* is someone sent on behalf of another as a messenger. In this case, it’s the Messenger of the Lord that called to Abraham from heaven, “And the angel of the LORD **called unto him out of heaven**” (Gen 22:11), “And the angel of the LORD **called unto Abraham out of heaven**” (Gen 22:15). This is “the heavenly calling.” He also later quoted from the passage where the Messenger of the Lord called to Abraham, “For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, Saying, **Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee**” (Heb 6:13-14).

And **the angel [mal’āk 4397] of the LORD** called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: **That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed** as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which *is* upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; **because thou hast obeyed my voice**. (Genesis 22:15-18)

The message that the Messenger of the Lord was sent to deliver to Abraham was praise for his obedience to God through this test, “God did tempt [*test*] Abraham” (Gen 22:1). God was testing Abraham’s obedience, if he would go through with what he had been commanded (although stopped short of carrying it out).

James cited this event as an example of faithfulness, “But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith [*pistis* 4102] without works [*actions* 2041] is dead? Was not Abraham our father **justified by works [*actions* 2041], when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?** Seest thou how faith [*pistis* 4102] wrought with his works [*actions* 2041], and by works [*actions* 2041] was faith [*pistis* 4102] made perfect?” (Jas 2:20-22). The Greek *pistis* translated here as “faith” is actually “faithfulness,” and *ergon* translated as “works” is simply “actions.” He was saying that Abraham’s obedient actions showed his fear of God and faithfulness to Him, “**And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven,** and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here *am* I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: **for now I know that thou fearest God,** seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only *son* from me.” (Gen 22:11-12). That he was “justified by works [*actions* 2041],” is that his fear of God was validated by his obedient actions.

This same message of obedience delivered by the Messenger of the Lord to Abraham is the *euangelion* or “good message” delivered by the Lord in His ministry. The message delivered by God’s pre-incarnate Son is the message delivered by God’s incarnate Son—the good message of obedience to Him in the fear of God.

Obey the good message

The Greek verb *hypakouō* means “to obey” as with a servant obeying his master, “**Servants, be obedient [*hypakouō* 5219]** to them that are *your* masters according to the flesh” (Eph 6:5), “**Servants, obey [*hypakouō* 5219]** in all things *your* masters according to the flesh” (Col 3:22). Derived from the preposition *hypo* for “under” and verb *akouō* for “to hear,” this word carries the idea of “under the hearing” of someone. A servant is “under the hearing” of his master in the sense that he’s obligated to do whatever he hears his master say. Paul used the noun form *hypakoē* in these two parallel verses that form the bookends of his letter to the Romans, “**obedience [*hypakoē* 5218] to the faith [*faithfulness*]** among all nations, for his name” (Rom 1:5), “made known to all nations for the **obedience [*hypakoē* 5218] of faith [*faithfulness*]**” (Rom 16:26).

Within his letter to the Romans, Paul stated several times that the *euangelion* of God and of Jesus Christ is what he had been sent to deliver as his own message: “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called *to be an apostle*, separated unto **the gospel [*euangelion* 2098] of God**” (Rom 1:1); “For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in **the gospel [*euangelion* 2098] of his Son**” (Rom 1:9); “For I am not ashamed of **the gospel [*euangelion* 2098] of Christ**” (Rom 1:16); “In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to **my gospel [*euangelion* 2098]**” (Rom 2:16); “That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering **the gospel [*euangelion* 2098] of God**” (Rom 15:16); “I have fully preached **the gospel [*euangelion* 2098] of Christ**” (Rom 15:19); “I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of **the gospel [*euangelion* 2098] of Christ**” (Rom 15:29); “Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to **my gospel [*euangelion* 2098]**, and the preaching of Jesus Christ” (Rom 16:25).

Romans is the most detailed and thorough discourse on the *euangelion* or good message of Jesus Christ ever penned. From its introductory statement “obedience [*hypakoē* 5218] to the faith [*faithfulness*]” (Rom 1:5), to its conclusion “the obedience [*hypakoē* 5218] of faith [*faithfulness*]” (Rom 16:26), it’s all about faithful obedience to Jesus Christ as Lord. This is the good message of Jesus Christ that Paul was sent to preach.

Chapter six in particular defines obedience to Jesus Christ as His servants, “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves **servants to obey [hypakoē 5218]**, **his servants ye are to whom ye obey [hypakouō 5219]**; whether of sin unto death, or of **obedience [hypakoē 5218]** unto righteousness?” (Rom 6:16). He made it clear that we’re servants of whom we obey, not necessarily of whom we claim to obey. Just calling Christ “Lord” doesn’t make Him our Lord if we’re not doing what He said, “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luk 6:46). While it’s true that we obey the Lord Jesus Christ because we’re His servants, it’s not true that we’re His servants if we don’t obey Him. We obey Him because we’re His servants, but if we don’t obey Him we’re not.

In chapter ten, confessing Jesus as our Lord isn’t a magic formula for salvation, “That if thou shalt **confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus**, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, **thou shalt be saved**” (Rom 10:9). Just confessing He’s our Lord doesn’t save us. Confessing Him as Lord obligates us to faithful obedience to Him as Lord. Our confession is our commitment to loyally and faithfully obey Him for the rest of our lives. This is also evident by Paul quoting from Moses earlier in this same chapter:

*It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, **that we may hear it, and do it?** Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, **that we may hear it, and do it?** But the word is very nigh unto thee, **in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.** (Deuteronomy 30:12-14)*

By confessing Jesus as Lord, we’re stating from our mouths that we’ve heard Him and are committed to do what He said. It’s a confession of commitment to Him, “But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, **the word of faith [faithfulness], which we preach**” (Rom 10:8). Faithful obedience to the Lord is what Paul and his companions were preaching.

Obedience to Christ as Lord is also evident by the conclusion Paul drew from Isaiah’s prophecy, “But they have not all **obeyed [hypakouō 5219] the gospel [euangelion 2098]**. For Esaias saith, Lord, **who hath believed our report?**” (Rom 10:16), “**Who hath believed our report?** and to whom is **the arm of the LORD revealed?**” (Isa 53:1), “Surely he hath **borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows**: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted” (Isa 53:4). The arm of the Lord is God’s power to work miracles, signs, and wonders. The healings Jesus performed in His ministry proved He was Israel’s Messiah in fulfilment of what Isaiah said, “When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with *his* word, and **healed all that were sick: That it might be fulfilled** which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, **Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses**” (Mat 8:16-17). Although He proved to be their Messiah, yet they esteemed Him stricken and smitten by God in His crucifixion as a common criminal.

The conclusion is that Christ can only be one or the other—the living Lord at the right hand of God, or just another criminal in the grave. If He is alive today at God’s right hand, we should obey His good message He preached, “But they have not all **obeyed [hypakouō 5219] the gospel [euangelion 2098]**” (Rom 10:16). But if He is dead, why obey an executed criminal?

Trusting and committing

The Greek verb *pisteuō* is used almost 250 times in the New Testament. And it's consistently translated "believe" except in only seven verses where the contexts force it to be rendered either "commit" or "trust": "If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will **commit [pisteuō 4100] to your trust [pisteuō 4100]** the true *riches*?" (Luk 16:11); "But Jesus did not **commit [pisteuō 4100]** himself unto them, because he knew all *men*" (Jhn 2:24); "Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were **committed [pisteuō 4100]** the oracles of God" (Rom 3:2); "For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation *of the gospel* is **committed unto me [pisteuō 4100]**" (1Co 9:17); "But as we were allowed of God to be put in **trust [pisteuō 4100]** with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts" (1Th 2:4); "According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was **committed to [pisteuō 4100] my trust [pisteuō 4100]**" (1Ti 1:11); "But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is **committed [pisteuō 4100]** unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour" (Tit 1:3).

The point is that the contexts of these seven verses attest that *pisteuō* means "commit" or "trust." But in the 240 other places where there's no context to force its true meaning, the translators took the liberty of giving it a different meaning by rendering it as "believe." And this is just one of the ways which we've been sold the bill of goods that salvation by simply believing some facts are true.

The following verses, all from the Gospel of John, speak of trusting on Him: "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples **believed [pisteuō 4100] on him**" (Jhn 2:11); "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever **believeth [pisteuō 4100] in him** should not perish, but have everlasting life" (Jhn 3:16); "Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye **believe [pisteuō 4100] on him** whom he hath sent" (Jhn 6:29); "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that **believeth [pisteuō 4100] on me** hath everlasting life" (Jhn 6:47); "He that **believeth [pisteuō 4100] on me**, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (Jhn 7:38); "As he spake these words, many **believed [pisteuō 4100] on him**" (Jhn 8:30); "And many **believed [pisteuō 4100] on him** there" (Jhn 10:42); "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that **believeth [pisteuō 4100] in me**, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (Jhn 11:25); "Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, **believed [pisteuō 4100] on him**" (Jhn 11:45); "Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and **believed [pisteuō 4100] on Jesus**" (Jhn 12:11); "But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they **believed [pisteuō 4100] not on him**" (Jhn 12:37); "Let not your heart be troubled: **ye believe [pisteuō 4100] in God, believe [pisteuō 4100] also in me**" (Jhn 14:1); "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall **believe [pisteuō 4100] on me** through their word" (Jhn 17:20).

We're not saved by just believing Jesus Christ existed, believing some facts about Him, or even believing He rose from the dead. That isn't what Paul meant by "shalt **believe [pisteuō 4100]** in thine heart that God hath **raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved**" (Rom 10:9). It's trusting Him to save us from death because He was saved from death. But we can only trust Him when we fulfill our commitment of obeying His good message, "But they have not all **obeyed [pisteuō 4100] the gospel [euangelion 2098]**" (Rom 10:16).

The two complementary Great Commission passages convey this same understanding, "Go ye therefore, and **teach all nations, baptizing them** in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: **Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you**: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the

end of the world. Amen.” (Mat 28:19-20), “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and **preach the gospel [euangelion 2098]** to every creature. He that **believeth [pisteuō 4100]** and is baptized shall be saved; but he that **believeth not [apisteuō 569]** shall be damned.” (Mar 16:15-16). After hearing the good message of Jesus Christ, “preach the gospel [euangelion 2098] to every creature,” we declare our trust in Him to save us by being publicly baptized, “He that believeth [pisteuō 4100] and is baptized shall be saved,” and we commit ourselves to Him as our Lord to obey everything He commanded, “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”

In addition to deceiving us to think we’re saved by believing, we’ve also been duped into calling ourselves “believers.” There are only two verses in the KJV that include the term “believers” and both are mistranslations. In the first case, “And **believers [pisteuō 4100]** were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women” (Act 5:14), the verb *pisteuō* is mistranslated as a noun. A few versions do render it correctly as a verb, “Yet more and more people believed” (NET), “Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed” (NIV). But it’s actually saying that they trusted. In the second case, “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the **believers [pistos 4103]**, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1Ti 4:12), the adjective *pistos* for “faithful” is mistranslated as a noun. Paul was telling Timothy to be an example of the faithful—those faithfully obeying the Lord.

This problem is far more pervasive in newer Bible Versions. The New International Version, for example, calls Christians “believers” over 50 times with about half of the occurrences in the book of Acts alone. Here are just the first five: “In those days Peter stood up among **the believers**” (Act 1:15 NIV); “All **the believers** were together and had everything in common” (Act 2:44 NIV); “All **the believers** were one in heart and mind” (Act 4:32 NIV); “And all **the believers** used to meet together in Solomon’s Colonnade” (Act 5:12 NIV); “When they arrived, they prayed for **the new believers** there that they might receive the Holy Spirit [breath]” (Act 8:15 NIV). The American Standard Version calls Christians “believers” 4 times, the English Standard Version 15 times, the New English Translation about 25 times, and the New Living Translation about 175 times. It’s fishy when one Version has “believers” 2 times, another 4, another 15, another 25, another 50, and another 175!

There’s no record in Scripture that Christians ever called themselves “believers.” There are, however, several places where they called themselves “servants”: “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ” (Rom 1:1); “Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ” (Phl 1:1); “Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a servant of Christ” (Col 4:12); “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” (Jas 1:1); “Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ” (2Pe 1:1); “Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ” (Jde 1:1).

We’re also told that they were called and called themselves “Christians,” “And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (Act 11:26), “Yet if *any man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf” (1Pe 4:16). Christians are Christ-like. Since Christ didn’t just believe some facts were true but always did the will of His Father, likewise we’re to always do the will of Christ.

Trusting in the Lord

Because we’ve all sinned, we can’t approach God on our own terms or merit. The only way God can be reached is through the one means He provided and will accept—His Son Jesus Christ. We must trust His Son to Justify us before God.

The Lord Jesus Christ at the right hand of God justifies us before God when we faithfully serve and obey Him. The Father will accept whoever the Son confesses before Him. Therefore, it's all about doing what the Son says so that we can trust Him for access to the Father, "For through him we both have access by one Spirit [*breath*] unto the Father" (Eph 2:18). Trusting and obeying the Son justifies us before the Father.

Conclusion

The Son of God was sent into this world by His Father to deliver His message and to sacrifice Himself for our sins. The good message He proclaimed isn't strictly news. It certainly includes news but also is comprised of His commandments that we must obey to be saved, "And being made perfect, he became the author of **eternal salvation unto all them that obey him**" (Heb 5:9).

Obedience to the Lord has been obscured by translating *euangelion* as the coined word "gospel," then limiting the meaning of this word to that of news or information that only needs to be believed. Also, commitment and trust in the Lord has been shrouded by translating *pisteuō* as "believe." We're taught that all we need to do to be saved is become a "believer" by simply accepting some facts as true. But this isn't the good message that our Lord Jesus Christ preached. He preached obedience to Him as Lord, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luk 6:46).