

EVANGELISATION

The Sender, the Sent One, and the Recipient

A biblical-theological introduction to the gospel, mission, preaching, and evangelistic practice

Primary translation: Hoffnung für alle | Supplementary use of original-language terms and selected parallel translations for clarification



Aim of this short study: We demonstrate the biblical connection between mission, proclamation, and the response of faith so that believing Christians may understand the gospel with theological clarity and communicate it in practice.

Guiding Structure

The Sender	The Sent One	The Recipient
God initiates salvation and sends.	Christ embodies and proclaims salvation; the church is drawn into his mission.	People hear the gospel, believe, call upon Christ, and are led into discipleship.

Introduction

In the New Testament, evangelisation is not an optional ecclesial activity added onto church life; it is the enactment of the divine mission within history. The Father sends the Son, the Son sends his disciples, and the Holy Spirit empowers the church to bear witness. Evangelisation therefore begins neither with human activism nor with ecclesiastical self-preservation, but with God's own movement toward the world. Where the church truly understands itself, it does not revolve around itself but lives as a sent people.

1. The Gospel: Term, Power, Effect, and Function

In the New Testament, the word "gospel" corresponds above all to the term euangelion: good, saving, royal news. In the Old Testament, the underlying background is especially the root bsr, that is, the bringing of joyful news of salvation, victory, or God's reign. The gospel is therefore not primarily a religious opinion, an ethical programme, or an invitation to self-optimisation. It is the divine announcement that in Jesus Christ God has acted decisively for the salvation of the world.

For this reason, the gospel is more than information. According to Romans 1:16, it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. It exposes sin, calls to repentance, proclaims forgiveness, establishes reconciliation with God, liberates from bondage, and opens participation in the new creation. Its efficacy does not lie in rhetorical brilliance but in God's own action through the proclaimed word. The gospel accomplishes what mere human speech cannot accomplish: it confronts the conscience, illumines the heart, and calls forth faith.

The church is not in the world for its own sake, but as bearer and witness of this message. It embodies the gospel not instead of preaching, but together with it. Through word, prayer, holy living, works of mercy, and public testimony, it serves the advance of God's reign. Yet the church never replaces Christ; it points to him. Its missionary function is therefore derivative, representative, and ministerial: it speaks because it has first been addressed; it is sent because it has first been called.

Key statement

We do not first proclaim a religious culture, but God's saving action in Jesus Christ.

2. God's Intention to Reveal the Liberating Gospel at the End of the Age

Already the Old Testament links God's future salvation with public proclamation. Isaiah 40:9 calls Zion to appear as a bearer of good news. Isaiah 52:7 portrays the messenger who announces peace, salvation, and the reign of God. Isaiah 61:1–2 joins an anointed, Spirit-filled sending with the proclamation of good news to the poor and liberty to the captives. These texts show that God's saving acts are not meant to remain hidden; they are to be declared, heard, and made known among the nations.

In the New Testament this line is intensified. In Luke 4:18–21 Jesus reads Isaiah 61 as a programmatic self-revelation. At Pentecost, Peter explicitly interprets the outpouring of the Spirit as the fulfilment of Joel's eschatological promise and immediately moves into public proclamation. Revelation 14:6 even speaks of an "eternal gospel" proclaimed to every nation, tribe, language, and people. Thus, at the culmination of history, the unveiling of salvation and the worldwide communication of salvation belong together.

Biblically speaking, the end time is therefore not merely a time of crisis, but also a time of revelation. God does not conceal his salvation, but causes it to enter public view through sent witnesses.

3. The Messenger in Isaiah 61:1–2 and in the Wider Biblical Witness



Isaiah 61:1–2 is foundational for a theology of evangelisation. The Anointed One is filled with the Spirit precisely in order to bring good news to the poor, bind up the broken-hearted, proclaim liberty to captives, and announce the favourable year of the Lord. Here proclamation is not an accessory to salvation; it belongs to the manner in which salvation reaches people. The message is inseparable from the sending and the empowerment of the messenger.

In the Old Testament, the messenger often fulfils a royal or salvation-historical function. He conveys victory, peace, return, or deliverance. That is why Isaiah 52:7 links the beautiful feet of the messenger with the public arrival of God's reign. The messenger stands not for himself but for the one who sends him; he represents the sender and makes his will known. This representative logic is crucial: what matters is not private religiosity, but commissioned communication.

In the New Testament, this thought is not weakened but deepened christologically. Jesus is not only the proclaimer of the gospel; he is at the same time its content and personal centre. Again and again the Gospel of John presents him as the one sent by the Father (for example John 5:23–24; 6:38; 20:21). His words, works, and signs are inseparable from his being sent. He does not speak from independent religious initiative, but from filial obedience and perfect union with the Father.

From here the church's mission is to be understood. As the Father has sent the Son, so the Son sends his own (John 20:21). The church therefore does not live out of autonomous religious initiative, but out of participation in the *missio Dei*.

4. Why the Gospel Must Be Proclaimed and Why Mission Is Essential

The New Testament knows no gospel without proclamation. In Romans 10:14–15, Paul presses the point sharply: how are people to believe in the one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? Faith does not ordinarily arise through silence, vague religiosity, or mere moral example, but through the intelligible witness to Christ. The necessity of proclamation rests not on ecclesiastical expansionism, but on the God-ordained means by which salvation is communicated.

For this reason, divine sending is not incidental. Whoever is sent stands under commission, authority, and responsibility. In Matthew 28:18–20, Jesus calls, authorises, and sends his disciples; in Acts 1:8, he ties witness to the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Christian mission is thus never self-authorising. It is grounded in Christ's lordship, shaped by the Spirit's power, and directed toward the nations.

The gospel must be proclaimed because people are not saved through moral improvement, cultural belonging, or religious intuition, but through Jesus Christ alone. Acts 4:12 leaves no room for a parallel path of salvation. Therefore, silence is not a sign of humility where Christ must be named.

5. Preaching, Hearing, and the Activation of Faith



According to the New Testament, faith regularly arises in connection with hearing the word of Christ. Romans 10:17 states this succinctly: faith comes from hearing. This does not mean that every casual listening already constitutes faith, but that God ordinarily uses proclaimed truth as the instrument by which he awakens trust. The preached word becomes, through the Spirit, the place where Christ encounters people.

In Acts, we see this pattern continuously: Peter preaches and the hearers are cut to the heart; Philip proclaims Christ in Samaria; Paul explains and testifies in synagogues, marketplaces, and households. Again and again, proclamation, hearing, conviction, repentance, and faith belong together. Wherever preaching is reduced to vague spirituality or ethical motivation, this biblical sequence is obscured.

For practice, this means that we should speak clearly, christocentrically, intelligibly, and in a way that invites decision. Unintelligible insider language, moralising pressure sermons, or purely abstract doctrinal formulae miss the evangelical dynamic. The aim is not manipulation, but truthful witness that opens the space for faith-filled response.

6. Explaining the Gospel So That New Christians Can Retell It

A simple and robust summary can be stated in four sentences:

First: God created us, loves us, and wants fellowship with us.

Second: Our sin separates us from God; we cannot save ourselves.

Third: Jesus Christ died for our guilt and rose bodily from the dead; in him God gives forgiveness and new life.

Fourth: Whoever repents, trusts Jesus, and calls on him as Lord receives forgiveness, reconciliation, and the Holy Spirit.

A somewhat more dialogical version may sound like this: “The gospel means that God has not given up on us. Our guilt is real, but God’s grace is greater. Jesus took our sin upon himself at the cross and rose again so that we might be reconciled to God. Whoever turns to him does not receive mere religious help, but new life.”

What we should pay attention to in conversation: first we listen, then we connect with the person’s real need, then we proclaim Christ clearly, and finally we invite a conscious response.

7. Three Brief Practical Examples

Example A: Guilt and Shame

A colleague says: “I have done things I cannot forgive myself for.”

Response: “This is precisely where the gospel becomes decisive. The Bible does not say that we must cleanse ourselves. It says that Jesus carried our guilt. Forgiveness is not self-soothing, but God’s gift on the basis of the cross. If you want, we can bring this to Jesus together.”

Example B: Search for Meaning and Inner Emptiness

A friend says: “Outwardly everything is working, but inwardly I am empty.”

Response: “Success does not satisfy the deepest longing of the heart. We were created for God. Jesus is not only a helper for crises, but the Lord of life. He not only forgives the past; he gives a new centre and a living hope.”

Example C: Fear, Suffering, and Loss of Control

A neighbour says: “Since this crisis, I am constantly afraid.”

Response: “Jesus does not promise a life without problems, but he gives reconciliation with God and a hope that reaches deeper than the crisis. At the cross he bore sin, guilt, and death; in the resurrection he opened a future that fear cannot close. We can entrust ourselves to him.”

A Simple Prayer of Surrender

“Lord Jesus Christ, I come to you. I acknowledge that I have sinned and cannot save myself. Thank you that you died and rose again for my guilt. I ask you for forgiveness. Be my Lord and Saviour. Give me your Holy Spirit and lead my life. I entrust myself to you. Amen.”

Supplementary Pastoral Guidelines

After such a prayer, we continue to accompany people: with Bible reading, prayer, fellowship, baptism, committed discipleship, and pastoral rooting in the local church. Evangelisation does not aim at a momentary decision alone, but at a life of following Christ.

Conclusion

Biblical evangelisation begins with God. The Father sends, the Son embodies and proclaims salvation, the Spirit empowers the church, and the human being is called to become a believing recipient. The gospel therefore stands at the centre of the church's identity and task. Where it is truly proclaimed, God gathers a people for his name. Where it falls silent, the church loses its missionary clarity. The future of faithful witness therefore does not lie in strategic activism, but in a renewed return to the sending God, to the sent Christ, and to the hearer whom God would draw to faith.

Terminological Clarification

Term	Brief description
euangelion	“Good news”; God’s saving royal message in Jesus Christ.
euangelizomai	To proclaim or make known the good news.
kerysso	To herald publicly, to proclaim openly.
apostello	To send with commission, authority, and representative character.
bsr / besorah	Old Testament word group for joyful news, salvation announcement, and victory message.

Selected Literature and Primary Sources

Bible references primarily according to Hoffnung für alle / Bock, Darrell L.: Luke 1:1–9:50. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1994 / Bosch, David J.: Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991 / Schnabel, Eckhard J.: Early Christian Mission. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004 / Wright, Christopher J. H.: The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006.

Note: For the sake of readability and length, longer biblical quotations have largely been paraphrased; the references provided are intended for further personal study and reflection.