

# FIRST-CENTURY JEWISH GOOD NEWS

## *The Great Hebrew Hope*

“Even after the battle at Mantinea, which Thucydides has described, the one who first announced the victory had no other reward for his glad tidings [euangelion- singular] than a piece of meat sent by the magistrates from the public mess” (Plutarch; Agesilaus, p. 33, 1st century).

“Accordingly, when [Aristodemus] had come near, he stretched out his hand and cried with a loud voice: ‘Hail, King Antigonus, we have conquered Ptolemy in a sea-fight, and now hold Cyprus, with 12,800 soldiers as prisoners of war.’ To this, Antigonus replied: ‘Hail to thee also, by Heaven! but for torturing us in this way, thou shalt undergo punishment; the reward for thy good tidings [euangelion - plural] thou shalt be some time in getting” (Plutarch; Demetrius, p. 17, 1st century).

“Why, as we are told, the Spartans merely sent meat from the public commons to the man who brought glad tidings [euangelion] of the victory in Mantinea which Thucydides describes! And indeed the compilers of histories are, as it were, reporters of great exploits who are gifted with the faculty of felicitous speech, and achieve success in their writing through the beauty and force of their narration; and to them those who first encountered and recorded the events [εὐαγγέλιον- euangelion] are indebted for a pleasing retelling of them” (Plutarch; Moralia (Glory of Athens), p. 347, 1st century).

**Acts 4.33**—With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

**Acts 2.22-24**—You crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power.

**Acts 2.32-33**—This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.

**Acts 3.12-16**—You handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, and you killed the Author of life, but God raised from the dead.

**Acts 4.10-11**— . . . Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, but whom God raised from the dead.

**Acts 5.30-32**—The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree.

**Acts 10.36-43**—They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day.

**Acts 13.35-38**—Even though they found no cause for a sentence of death, they asked Pilate to have him killed. When they had carried out everything that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. But God raised him from the dead . . . And we bring you the good news that what God promised to our ancestors he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising Jesus.

**Mark 1.14-15**—After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. “The time has come,” he said. “the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news [euangelion - gospel]!”

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**Ched Myers**—“Belief in miracles is concentrated here on the specific situations of distress, on possession, disease, hunger, lack of success, and danger, in other words on situations which do not strike as hard in all social groups . . . the popular character of these stories is that in them people whose social and economic position left them no other outlet articulate their hopes . . . It seems to me that a degree of class correlation in the primitive Christian miracle stories can hardly be denied . . . Their [the healings of Jesus] 'divine power' lay not in a manipulation of nature but in confrontation with the dominant order of oppression and in witness to different possibilities . . . The discourse of healing and exorcism is central to this section. G. Theissen, in his study of the social function of the primitive Christian miracle stories, points out that most contemporaneous Hellenistic miracle sources originated from the aristocracy, and through the highly institutionalized practice of divination and technique-magic were 'concerned with the maintenance of the accepted order and way of life.' Other pagan tradition of 'sorcery and magic represent an individualistic reaction to growing social disintegration.' In contrast, the gospel miracles assert the promise and possibility of radical socio-political change in behalf of the disenfranchised. They function to subvert, not legitimate, the dominant order . . . In sum, Jesus' symbolic acts were powerful not because they challenged the laws of nature, but because they challenged the very structures of social existence . . . Healers and magicians abounded and practiced freely in Hellenistic antiquity, but Jesus encounters official hostility almost from the outset . . . he is politically accused for both his dealings and his exorcisms. There must be more to these stories than is immediately obvious to the modern reader.” (Binding the Strong Man: a political reading of Mark's story of Jesus)

**Delores S. Williams**—It seems more intelligent and more scriptural to understand that redemption had to do with God, through Jesus, giving humankind new vision to see the resources for positive, abundant relational life. Redemption had to do with God, through the ministerial vision, giving humankind the ethical thought and practice upon which to build positive, productive quality of life. Hence, the kingdom of God theme in the ministerial vision of Jesus does not point to death; it is not something one has to die to reach. Rather, the kingdom of God is a metaphor of hope God gives those attempting to right the relations between self and self, between self and others, between self and God as prescribed in the sermon on the mount, in the golden rule and in the commandment to show love above all else. (Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk, pp. 130-131)

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**Matthew 4.23**—Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news [euangelion] of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.

**Matthew 10.7-8**—As you go, proclaim this message: ‘the kingdom of heaven has come near.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.

**Luke 4.43**—But he said, “I must proclaim the good news [euangelion] of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.”

**Luke 10.9**—Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’

**Luke 9.6**—So they set out and went from village to village, proclaiming the good news [euangelion] and healing people everywhere.

**Acts 8.12**—But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

**Acts 19.8**—Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God.

**Acts 20.25**— Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again.

**Acts 28.23**—They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. He witnessed to them from morning till evening, explaining about the kingdom of God, and from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets he tried to persuade them about Jesus.

**Acts 28.30-31**—For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance

