

The Priene Calendar Inscription

It seemed good to the Greeks of Asia, in the opinion of the high priest Apollonius of Menophilus Azanitus: “Since Providence, which has ordered all things and is deeply interested in our life, has set in most perfect order by giving us Augustus, whom she filled with virtue that he might benefit humankind, sending him as a savior, both for us and for our descendants, that he might end war and arrange all things, and since he, Caesar, by his appearance (excelled even our anticipations), surpassing all previous benefactors, and not even leaving to posterity any hope of surpassing what he has done, and since the birthday of the god Augustus was the beginning of the good tidings [εὐαγγέλιον] for the world that came by reason of him,” which Asia resolved in Smyrna.'

<https://web.archive.org/web/20170722070724/http://www.masseiana.org/priene.htm>

This two-part tablet announces the intention of the city of Priene in western Turkey to change their calendar so that it begins on the birthday of the Roman Emperor Augustus in September. By doing this, they signal that, for them, time itself depends upon the beneficence of the new emperor. Near the top of tablet 2 (see the darkened lines to the right), they acknowledge Augustus as son of God whose birth marks the beginning of "good tidings" (EYANΓEΛION) for the world. It was cut in 9 BCE, a few years before Jesus' birth.



The tablet demonstrates that the term "good tidings" or gospel was a political term before Paul or Mark—or perhaps Jesus himself—decided to use it in conjunction with the message of Jesus.

<https://webpages.scu.edu/ftp/cmurphy/courses/sctr027/artifacts/priene-calendar.htm>