

ST ARMANDS KEY LUTHERAN CHURCH  
SARASOTA, FLORIDA

## COME, JOIN THE CONVERSATION

ON

**PETER** AND **THE FIRST EPISTLE** THAT BEARS HIS NAME

**CONVERSATION PLAN** for Thursday –October 23, 2014

Session #2 – “*Peter & Paul and the Christian Revolution*”

*Video Episode 1*

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**GENERAL INTRODUCTIONS:** *briefly - Who are we who have gathered today in Ogram Hall?*

**READING FROM SCRIPTURE: ACTS 2 37-47** –

When the people heard Peter’s Pentecost sermon, *“they were deeply troubled and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘What shall we do, brothers?’*

*Peter said to them, ‘Each one of you must turn away from his sins and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven; and you will receive God’s gift, the Holy Spirit. For God’s promise was made to you and your children, and to all who are far away – all whom the Lord our God calls to himself.’*

*Peter made his appeal to them and with many other words he urged them saying, ‘Save yourselves from the punishment coming on this wicked people!’ Many of them believed his message and were baptized, and about 3,000 people were added to the group that day. They spent their time in learning from the apostles, taking part in the fellowship, and sharing in the fellowship meals and the prayers.*

*Many miracles and wonders were being done through the apostles, and everyone was filled with awe. All the believers continued together in close fellowship and shared their belongings with one another. They would sell their property and possessions and distribute the money among all, according to what each one needed. Day after day they met as a group in the Temple, and they had their meals together in their homes, eating with glad and humble hearts, praising God, and enjoying the good will of all the people. And every day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved.”* (GOOD NEWS BIBLE – TEV)

**PRAYER IN UNISON:** “GOD OUR CREATOR, EARTH HAS MANY LANGUAGES, BUT YOUR GOSPEL ANNOUNCES YOUR LOVE TO ALL NATIONS IN ONE HEAVENLY SPEECH. MAKE US MESSENGERS OF THE GOOD NEWS THAT, THROUGH THE POWER OF YOUR SPIRIT, EVERYONE EVERYWHERE MAY UNITE IN ONE SONG OF PRAISE; THROUGH YOUR SON, JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD, WHO LIVES AND REIGNS WITH YOU IN THE UNITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, ONE GOD, NOW AND FOREVER. AMEN.” *(alternate - The Prayer of the Day for the Festival of Pentecost)*

**THE MUTUAL SHARING OF PEACE BY GOD’S PEOPLE**

## A LOOK AT OBJECTIVES FOR THIS SESSION:

- To expand on our knowledge of Peter, and our appreciation of his role as both disciple and apostle;
- to share knowledge, ideas, and attitudes about meetings and cooperation that might have existed between the Apostle Peter and the Apostle Paul;
- to become further enlightened about religious, social, historical and cultural conditions in the world during the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE; and specifically at the *time/place, when/where* the Jesus' Movement began;
- to examine the understanding of contemporary theologians regarding major pivotal points in the ancient development of the 'Jesus Movement;'
- to understand the importance of "**Apocalyptic Age**" as being something more than a modern day Christian's hope of Eternal Life;

### 1. Facilitator's General Introduction to "Peter & Paul" – Video Episode 1

Immediately following His crucifixion and death, Jesus' followers faced a bleak future. Their mission seemed destined for quick extinction. Considered subversives by the Roman government, they, too, faced the real possibility of execution. Yet, in short order seeming defeat was turned into victory; darkest fears were turned into jubilant expressions of faith. Several appearances of the Risen Jesus convinced them that his death was ushering in God's Kingdom on earth; it was an explosive moment of hope. This video portrays Peter, in particular, as the one who likely having fled to his home region of Galilee after Jesus' crucifixion, returned from that location to Jerusalem following the experience of meeting Christ at breakfast on the lake shore. Peter's purpose was to develop a new community of ardent believers, centered on the Temple in Jerusalem. But all did not remain bright for very long – the days ahead were marked by persecution, imprisonment and dispersal. During the darkest of those times, Peter found support from an unlikely source, the apostle Paul. As you watch this video, be especially aware of religious, political, social and cultural conditions of the time. Personally try to experience the profound impact of Jesus' post resurrection appearances through the eyes of his followers. Attempt to understand the concept of "*apocalypse*" in a new frame of reference.

### 2. Introduction to biblical historians and theologians seen in this video:

- a) Allen Dwight Callahan – Prof. of New Testament @ **Harvard Univ.**; specialist in history of biblical interpretation.
- b) John Dominic Crossan – Prof. Emeritus of Biblical Studies @ **DePaul University**. Generally acknowledged as one of the world's foremost Jesus scholars; was a R.C. monk for 19 yrs. & a R.C. Priest for 12 yrs.
- c) Paula Fredriksen – Prof. of Scripture @ **Boston University**; specialist in social & intellectual history of ancient Christianity.
- d) John G. Gager – Retired Prof. of Religion @ **Princeton University**; specialist in relationships between Jews, Gentiles and Christians in ancient world.
- e) Erich Gruen – Retired Prof. of History and Classics @ **U.C. Berkley**; specialist on Jews in the Greco-Roman world; internationally recognized as a prominent classicist.

- f) **Richard Horsley** – Prof. Liberal Arts & Study of Religion @ **Univ. of MA**, Boston; authority on political context of early Christianity within the Roman Empire.
- g) **Amy-Jill Levine** – Prof. New Testament Studies @ **Vanderbilt Univ.** and @ its Divinity School; specialist in Christian origins, formative Judaism, the historical Jesus.
- h) **Tom Wright** – Canon Theologian of **Westminster Abbey**; then appointed Bishop of Durham; specialist on Jesus, Paul, the early church and the relevance of Christianity today.

3. **View: “Peter and Paul”** – Video *Episode I (54:30 minutes)*

4. **YOUR EVALUATION - GROUP DISCUSSION and FUTURE PERSONAL REFLECTIONS about this video:**

A) What new insights, if any, did you gain into Peter’s life, personality and character from seeing this video?

B) According to **Prof. John Dominic Crossan**, the **“Apocalyptic Hope”** of the Jews, living just before, after, and during the time of Jesus, was very different from the view of apocalypse that has been held since that time by most Christians. What is that fundamental difference? Do you *agree/disagree* with the conclusion stated by Prof. Crossan?

C) **Prof. Paula Fredericksen** in the video says: **“the event that seems to draw the apostles back together is their perception that Christ had been raised. For Christians 21 centuries later this seems like a spiritual event something that has religious significance.... For those following Jesus around, this event had immediate historical significance.”** What was that ‘immediate’ reality for those living in the 1<sup>st</sup> century C.E.? . . . . What grew out of this historical understanding?

- D) In your evaluation of the events depicted in the video, what really drew Peter back from his beloved *home region* surrounding the Sea of Galilee, to live/work in Jerusalem? Was this a greater/lesser commitment on Peter's part than when Jesus first called him to be a disciple? What are your personal reflections on the nature of **true "discipleship"** then/now? What does discipleship represent in today's world?
- E) Describe "**THE WAY.**" What was its purpose? What kind of organization, lifestyle and society did it represent? Could this group be classified as: Christian/Jewish/other? Do you know of any similar societies in existence today?
- F) According to the views expressed in the video, there were some **major pivotal points in the development of the "Jesus Movement."** Can you recall them? Are they at all different from what you had envisioned through your previous reading/studying/reflection of Scripture? How has this video presentation changed your own perception of post-Resurrection developments?
- G) When the **Apostle Paul** initially visited the "**Jesus Movement**" community in Jerusalem, what role do you think that **Peter** played in Paul's acceptance?

**DISMISSAL:**

**GO IN PEACE TO LOVE AND SERVE THE LORD:**

***THANKS, BE TO GOD!***

**PREPARATION FOR NEXT WEEK'S SESSION – OCTOBER 30, 2014 – Read Acts 5-6**