

*Trinity Episcopal Church  
Celebrating 150 Years  
Honor the Past — Build the Future*

**Tuesday & Wednesday Bible Class 2008**  
The Rev. James C. Ransom, Leader

## **Eclipsing Empire**

*Paul, Rome, and the Kingdom of God*



Marcus Borg and Julian Dominic Crossan are two of America's leading New Testament scholars. Marcus Borg's *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time* has been a popular book for many years now, and the above title introduces the theme of this fall's series. Drs. Crossan and Borg believe that there is a more authentic Christianity lurking behind the popular beliefs of most contemporary believers. Their quest is to identify the authentic Paul and the more original Gospel message for us and to invite us to embrace this refreshing way of being Christians. Their mission is to plant this transforming Gospel in those who live in today's church, that the whole Body of Christ might be leavened and the church be a more authentic witness to Christ. While this series focuses on the Apostle Paul, it ranges more widely than Paul's letters to explore other expressions of the Gospel message.

In March of 2006, while Borg was in Turkey leading a group of pilgrims in the quest of St. Paul, there was a total eclipse of the sun. The experience of the eclipse became the symbol of this series, signifying the eclipse of Rome's imperial theology by the theology of the Kingdom of God.

Each session contains a presentation by Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan, a visit to a city visited by Paul and an exploration of the ancient remains, and then a study of Bible texts related to the theme of the presentation. Come and join me and these eminent scholars as we look at the New Testament through their eyes.

## **Fall 2008 Tuesday Bible Class Schedule**

*Morning Prayer begins at 10:00 a.m. in the choir of the church. Class begins at 10:30 a.m., ending at Noon. Each video presentation is about 20 minutes.*

Tuesday, September 9, 2008

**Empire** The social and political environment in which Paul's letters and other books of the New Testament were written.  
Site visit to Ancyra in Galatia  
Study Test: Galatians 1:1 — 2:21

Tuesday, September 16, 2008

**Jesus** Jesus and Paul proclaim the same Gospel. Their language, message, and anti-imperialism unify their theology and experience.  
Site visit to Ephesus  
Study Texts: Philippians 1:27 — 3:1 and Ephesians 2:1-22

Tuesday, September 23, 2008

**Mission** The Paul of Luke's Acts of the Apostles and the Paul of the Epistles are contrasted. Both show Paul's non-violent confrontation with Roman imperial theology and power. Paul's search for peace through justice and grace trumps the Roman peace through victorious domination.  
Site visit to Miletus  
Study Text: Acts 20:1-38

Tuesday, September 30, 2008

**Character** What was Paul like? The marks of his character are explored through his letters and Acts and non-Biblical sources. How Paul embodies the Gospel of Jesus is the theme.  
Site visit to Pisidian Antioch  
Study text: Acts 16:1-40; 13:13-52

Tuesday, October 7, 2008

**Vocation** How did Paul know the Lord Jesus? What did he experience when he claimed he was "in Christ"? A look at Paul's "conversion."  
Site visit to Perge  
Study texts: Acts 9:1-30; 22:1-16; 26:1-23

Tuesday, October 14, 2008

**Cities** This class takes a detour to explore life in the ancient cities of the Roman Empire and how Paul was able to use the dynamics of urban life to form Christian communities across ethnic and class distinctions.  
Site visit to Syrian Antioch (present day Hatay)  
Study text: First Thessalonians

Tuesday, October 21, 2008

**No Bible Class** — Clergy Conference

Tuesday, October 28, 2008

**Letters** Three Pauls are reflected in the New Testament epistles attributed to Paul. We will explore the Radical Paul, the Moderate Paul, and the Conservative Paul. Which one serves us best?

Site visit to Rome

Study Texts: Galatians 3-4, and Philemon

Tuesday, November 4, 2008

**Ethics** Paul makes his inclusive claim that we are all one in Christ Jesus, and begins to spin out the implications of this vision of humanity with God's redeeming grace and love.

Site visit to Athens

Study texts: Acts 17:15, Romans 16, Colossians 3:18 — 4:15, Ephesians 5:22-33, I Timothy 2:11-15

Tuesday, November 11, 2008

**Theology** The contrast between the Roman Emperor as Savior of the World and Son of God and Paul's message of participation in the Risen Lord as Savior of the World could not be more stark. A breakthrough experience of radical grace.

Site visit to Priene

Study Texts: Galatians 1:6 — 2:21

Tuesday, November 18, 2008

**Eschatology** The Kingdom come and coming in Christ and at work in the world. Paul's interactive eschatology — a transformed life in the image of Christ.

Site visit to Hierapolis for a parousia

Study Text: I Corinthians 15

Tuesday, November 25, 2008

**No Bible Class** — Thanksgiving break

Tuesday, December 2, 2008

**Icons** Our study takes a second detour to consider Eastern Christian theology in the early years of Christianity. A slightly different and refreshing look at Jesus' birth, baptism, resurrection, and judgment.

Site visit to Göreme in Cappadocia and Zelve

Study Texts: Luke 2:1-20; 3:21-22; 24:1-53

Tuesday, December 9, 2008

**Eclipse** This session discusses the eclipse of the sun on March 29, 2006, as experienced at Aspendos in southern Turkey. It sets the stage for a discussion of local congregations as authentic communities of faith as we participate in God's passion for justice.

Site visit to Aspendos

Study Texts: Micah 6-7; Matthew 5:1-16

Tuesday, December 16, 2008

**Conclusion** Review the scenes and reflect on Dominic Crossan's and Marcus Borg's challenge to be a more authentic community of faith. We will share a Christmas luncheon and fellowship.

## **Fall 2008 Wednesday Bible Class Schedule**

*Class begins at 7:30 p.m., ending at 9 p.m. with Compline. Each video presentation is about 20 minutes.*

Wednesday, September 17, 2008

**Empire** The social and political environment in which Paul's letters and other books of the New Testament were written.

Site visit to Ancyra in Galatia

Study Test: Galatians 1:1 — 2:21

Wednesday, September 24, 2008

**Jesus** Jesus and Paul proclaim the same Gospel. Their language, message, and anti-imperialism unify their theology and experience.

Site visit to Ephesus

Study Texts: Philippians 1:27 — 3:1 and Ephesians 2:1-22

Wednesday, October 1, 2008

**Mission** The Paul of Luke's Acts of the Apostles and the Paul of the Epistles are contrasted. Both show Paul's non-violent confrontation with Roman imperial theology and power. Paul's search for peace through justice and grace trumps the Roman peace through victorious domination.

Site visit to Miletus

Study Text: Acts 20:1-38

Wednesday, October 8, 2008

**Character** What was Paul like? The marks of his character are explored through his letters and Acts and non-Biblical sources. How Paul embodies the Gospel of Jesus is the theme.

Site visit to Pisidian Antioch

Study text: Acts 16:1-40; 13:13-52

Wednesday, October 15, 2008

**Vocation** How did Paul know the Lord Jesus? What did he experience when he claimed he was "in Christ"? A look at Paul's "conversion."

Site visit to Perge

Study texts: Acts 9:1-30; 22:1-16; 26:1-23

Wednesday, October 22, 2008

**Cities** This class takes a detour to explore life in the ancient cities of the Roman Empire and how Paul was able to use the dynamics of urban life to form Christian communities across ethnic and class distinctions.

Site visit to Syrian Antioch (present day Hatay)

Study text: First Thessalonians

Wednesday, October 29, 2008

**Letters** Three Pauls are reflected in the New Testament epistles attributed to Paul. We will explore the Radical Paul, the Moderate Paul, and the Conservative Paul. Which one serves us best?

Site visit to Rome

Study Texts: Galatians 3-4, and Philemon

Wednesday, November 5, 2008

**Ethics** Paul makes his inclusive claim that we are all one in Christ Jesus, and begins to spin out the implications of this vision of humanity with God's redeeming grace and love.

Site visit to Athens

Study texts: Acts 17:15, Romans 16, Colossians 3:18 — 4:15, Ephesians 5:22-33, I Timothy 2:11-15

Wednesday, November 12, 2008

**Theology** The contrast between the Roman Emperor as Savior of the World and Son of God and Paul's message of participation in the Risen Lord as Savior of the World could not be more stark. A breakthrough experience of radical grace.

Site visit to Priene

Study Texts: Galatians 1:6 — 2:21

Wednesday, November 19, 2008

**Eschatology** The Kingdom come and coming in Christ and at work in the world. Paul's interactive eschatology — a transformed life in the image of Christ.

Site visit to Hierapolis for a parousia

Study Text: I Corinthians 15

Wednesday, November 26, 2008

**No Bible Class** — Thanksgiving break

Wednesday, December 3, 2008

**No Bible Class** — Rector in New York

Wednesday, December 10, 2008

**Icons** Our study takes a second detour to consider Eastern Christian theology in the early years of Christianity. A slightly different and refreshing look at Jesus' birth, baptism, resurrection, and judgment.

Site visit to Göreme in Cappadocia and Zelve

Study Texts: Luke 2:1-20; 3:21-22; 24:1-53

Wednesday, December 17, 2008

**Eclipse** This session discusses the eclipse of the sun on March 29, 2006, as experienced at Aspendos in southern Turkey. It sets the stage for a discussion of local congregations as authentic communities of faith as we participate in God's passion for justice.

Site visit to Aspendos

Study Texts: Micah 6-7; Matthew 5:1-16