



SCHOOL FOR MINISTRY
The Episcopal Diocese of San Diego

NEW TESTAMENT 2

1.2 The Early Church: Acts I – Peter & the Jews

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Last week we re-considered the thorny issues of the Quest for the Historical Jesus last we, as we looked at the gap between the Life of Jesus of Nazareth and the emergence of the early church, and its biographical and theological portrayal of Jesus. We also examined the Historical, Religious and Cultural Background of Saul of Tarsus, and began to ask probing questions about the impact that St. Paul had on the “Jesus Movement” as it transformed into the Christian Church. This week we turn to the “Official History” of that shift from the Judaism of Jesus to the Christianity of Paul (and Peter, eventually), as documented by Luke in the second volume of his two-part account of the Life of Jesus (The Gospel of Luke) and the Life of the Church (The Acts of the Apostles). If Luke is a Biography of Jesus, then Acts is a parallel Biography of the Early Church. The first part of Acts focuses on Peter’s preaching of the Gospel to the Jews in Jerusalem; and the second part charts the mission of Paul to take the message of the Gospel “global” by preaching to the Gentiles. [Read through the opening and closing verses of Luke and Acts, and compare them to see just how obvious this is – in many ways, Acts mirrors the structure of Luke, but with Peter and Paul as the biographic subjects rather than Jesus, such that many of the central events of Jesus’ life being recapitulated in the lives of the Apostles.]

Assignment #2 for Class on Saturday 19th January 2019

Reading

Please read through the first part of The Acts of the Apostles that focuses on the Ministry of Peter and the other Disciples to the Jews (Acts 1-12). I suggest reading through the introduction to Acts in your Oxford Annotated NRSV Bible beforehand; and then reading through the assigned chapters of the book in one sitting. Acts is written as a propulsive, page-turning narrative full of adventures and excitement. If you can, try to read the chapters through a second time, this time using the annotations and notes in your Bible as an aid to understanding and interpretation.

Thinking & Responding

For this week’s Response Paper, I want you to focus on the portrayal of Peter in Acts 1-12 as the leader of the Jesus Movement. Remember that the author of Acts, Luke the Evangelist, was a close follower of Paul, and that there is considerable tension and rivalry between Peter and Paul in Acts. Questions to think about: *Describe the early Christian community in Acts. What is Peter’s Vision and Mission for the Gospel? How is he portrayed as a Leader? How Effective is he? Is this the same Peter we’re Familiar with from the Gospels? What is the Response of the Jews to the Apostles... and Why do they Respond in this way?* Please write your Response in approximately 400-500 words (12-point font, double-spaced, one-inch margin, with your name at the top of the paper). Type up and print your Reflections, and be ready to share and discuss your insights. I will collect them in to review and grade at the end of the class.