

WHOSE GOSPEL?

THE EARLY CHRISTIAN PRESENTATION OF THE GOOD NEWS
ABOUT JESUS IN THE CONTEXT OF ROMAN IMPERIAL THEOLOGY

Holy Trinity Anglican Church
The Season of Advent, Dec 3 – 17, 2006
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December 3: The Gospel According to Caesar

Presented in the first person by Caesar Augustus and his aides. The presentation will explain Augustus' role in the transition from the Roman Republic to the Roman Empire, and how the good news of Caesar's conquest and peace spread throughout the world. The material is taken from historical documents, including proclamations, loyalty oaths, Roman poets (Virgil) and Roman historians (Pliny, Suetonius, Aristides, etc.). The session highlights the use of what we typically consider "religious" terminology: gospel, lord, savior, assembly ("church"), epiphany, faith, son of God, parousia ("return" or "coming"), etc., showing how in the first century these were equally "political" terms for the earthly rule of the divine Caesar.

December 10: Paulitics

How would Paul's letters to assemblies of Jesus-followers been heard in Roman outposts like Philippi, Thessalonica, Ephesus or even in Rome itself? Paul proclaimed a Jewish-style gospel of the Messiah as the true lord of the world, the hope for peace, the only savior, the returning king, etc. But what about Caesar and his gospel? We will explore and discuss passages from 1 Thessalonians and Philippians in our attempt to hear Paul again with first-century ears.

December 17: Jesus: A New Kind of King

What was the Jewish gospel as expressed in the biblical hope of a Messiah-Redeemer and the return of YHWH as King? A close look at Jesus' own kingdom-centered ministry (as taught in the gospels) that show him to be the promised king, the longed for redeemer (including the political redeemer) for both Israel and the world. We will discuss in particular the questions: How is Jesus' kingdom different from other kingdoms? What does the story of Jesus teach us about how evil is to be confronted? How did God accomplish his victory through Jesus? What could all of this mean for the Jesus-followers at Holy Trinity Anglican Ecklesia?