



Jesus as a 1st Century Rabbi

“Peter remembered and said to Jesus, “Rabbi, look!” Mark 11:21

Jesus lived and taught within the context of 1st century Judaism. Unfortunately, the more westernized Christianity became, the less Jewish Jesus ended up. Today, many westerners inadvertently project a “Greek Jesus” and wonder why Jews don’t see Jesus as the promised Messiah (in Greek, ‘the Christ’).

One way to study the words, actions, teaching and life of Jesus is to look at them through the lens of a 1st century Rabbi. This is not always easy to do, and we must be aware of the pitfalls, but we can gain a tremendous understanding of the way of thinking, the emphasis on the Hebrew Bible, and the way this was being lived out in Jesus’ day. Jesus (nor Paul for that matter) did not come to create an entirely new religion, rather they are reformers of the Judaism of their day (or *Judaisms* to be more precise since not all Jews agreed on how to live out their Biblical mandate: Sadducees vs. Pharisees vs. Essenes vs. the Zealots).

Here are some books which can serve as a foundational understanding of Jesus as a 1st century Rabbi. The books are listed (in my opinion) in an order of increasingly greater academic nature:

1. *Walking in the Dust of Rabbi Jesus* – Lois Tverberg

Two books by Brad Young:

2. *Meet the Rabbis* - Brad Young
3. *The Parables* – Brad Young

David Flusser has written extensively about the Judaism of Jesus day:

4. *The Sage from Galilee: Rediscovering Jesus’ Genius* – David Flusser with R. Steven Notely
5. *Jesus Rabbi and Lord: The Hebrew Story of Jesus Behind our Gospels* - Robert L. Lindsay
6. *They Also Taught in Parables: Rabbinic Parables from the First Centuries of the Christian Era* –Harvey K. McArthur and Robert M. Johnston
7. *Jewish New Testament Commentary* – David H. Stern
8. *New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* – David Daube

Web-based:

9. First Fruits of Zion – www.ffoz.org. Their weekly eDrash is an excellent way to get weekly bite-sized morsels of the Jewish roots of Jesus’ teaching.

10. Jerusalem Perspective - <https://www.jerusalemerspective.com/>