

Week #: 18 Text: _____ Title: Follow the Rabbi #7/8

Songs: Kadosh

Days of Elijah

Audio: Ray Vander Laan – Follow the Rabbi teaching

Can be found online at: <https://oneinjesus.info/2008/10/ray-vander-laans-follow-the-rabbi-lectures/>

Video: Ray Vander Laan, Faith Lessons: Early Church – The Gates of Hell

Why don't Jews believe?

- God hasn't opened their eyes. Bless God for his giving you the insights he has and allowing you to see what they cannot see. God put something or someone in your life that brought you to Jesus.
- A Jew (especially a religious Jew) would view Jesus as a rabbi. Now the rabbi is gone, so they look to the followers of the rabbi to see what He was about.
 - In the Byzantine period:
 - Christians killed 1.5-3 million Jews because they were Jewish.
 - In the late period, to become a member of a church, you were required to take an oath to never read Hebrew, never eat Jewish foods, never have any Jewish friends, never go to Jewish festivals, never read a Jewish Bible.
 - In the Middle Ages:
 - More than 3-6 million Jews were slaughtered by Crusaders – not only by Christians, but in the name of Jesus.
 - Crusaders were given permission to plant a cross and rape women as long as it was in front of the cross. Also permission was given to cut babies in half in front of a cross, because in doing so they would go to heaven. Girls would crowd into synagogues when the crusaders would come into town, and they would commit mass suicide so that they would be spared the horrors of what the crusaders would do to them.
 - During the Inquisition:
 - 700k Jews were killed by Christians because they refused to convert.
 - The Holocaust:
 - An estimated 6 million Jews were killed by execution or in concentration camps.
 - Martin Luther wrote a treatise on "The Jews and Their Lies," in which he says every Jew ought to be made to eat feces and drink urine and be locked into a synagogue and burned alive.
- All those people claim to be talmidim (disciples) of the Messiah, Jesus. We've spent 2,000 years proving to Jews that Jesus is a fraud.
- The biggest stumbling block to any religious Jew to believing in Jesus is not the trinity, nor is it the idea of Jesus dying for the sins of people – it's what his disciples have been like.
 - We have church "crusades", and campus "crusades", and we call our Christian sports teams "crusaders" and we wear crusader crosses. What do we say to the Jewish world?
- Yes, they will have to answer to God for their lack of belief, but part of it is our fault.
- If you want to reach a Jew, then act like Jesus, because now their dilemma is that your rabbi must be genuine.

- Book: *Through Arab Eyes*
 - An Oxford scholar wrote it about the Crusades only using Arab sources – it’s very telling.
- Jesus said, “A student (talmid) is not above his teacher; it is enough for a talmid to be like his teacher.” He says, “Be like me!”
- If you find that every single thing that Jesus did that was cool was because he was God, then you can’t be like him. If there are things He did as a human, now it becomes possible for you – filled with the Holy Spirit and with your heart changed, directed by God – to be like him.

Why is so much of this stuff new?

- When we cut our Jewish ties like Augustine did and the Byzantines did, to say, “Because the Jews rejected Jesus, God rejected them, and we replace them as the church,” [this is known as Replacement Theology] now all ties with studying Jewish roots were cut.
- Christian seminaries do not read Jewish sources – no Mishna [history books from the period of 1-100 years ad], no Talmud [the first five books of the Torah], no Josephus [Jewish historian]. It is a black hole when it comes to Jewish sources.
- RVL says he has learned far more from Jews who didn’t believe Jesus was Messiah than he has from all the Christian teachers he’s ever had.
- The Lord’s Seven Feasts:
 - Passover
 - 5 days before Passover, the lamb is chosen. On Passover the lamb is killed.
 - Jesus: 5 days before Passover was the triumphal entry. He came on that day because he was the lamb. On Passover he died.
 - Unleavened Bread:
 - You put grain in the ground and then pray to God to bring the harvest for the coming year. They pray a blessing, “Give us life out of the earth.”
 - During that feast, Jesus was being buried in the earth.
 - First Fruits:
 - You bring the beginning of your harvest to Jerusalem and bless God because the first part of the harvest is coming and that means the rest will follow.
 - Jesus rose just as First Fruits began. Paul said, “...as the first fruits of those who rise from the dead.”
 - Shavuot (Pentecost):
 - The feast that celebrated the Ten Commandments coming down on Mt Sinai, as well as the beginning of the late harvest.
 - After Jesus left, the Holy Spirit came down. When Moses descended the mountain, he found them worshipping a golden calf and 3k people died because of it. On the same day, 1200 years later, the Holy Spirit came down and 3k people believed.
- Every single piece of the Christian Bible falls right into the framework of the Hebrew world.
- Did Jesus ask us to continue the feasts?
 - He is the completion of all of the feasts, so in that sense, no. However, we can continue to perpetuate the memory of Jesus by celebrating the feasts in light of their fulfillment.

- (Feasts Continued:)
 - Rosh Hashanah – Trumpets:
 - Announcing that judgment is coming. It’s announced with the shofar.
 - After the death, burial, Holy Spirit – what comes next is the second coming.
 - Yom Kippur:
 - Day of atoning for sins – judgment day.
 - Sukkot:
 - The promised land feast.
 - Fulfilled in heaven.
- The whole Christian message is in the Lord’s feasts.

Caesarea Philippi:

- North of Galilee about 30 miles and east, to Mount Hermon.
- The ancient world worshipped fertility gods.
 - The view was that the fertility gods, male and female, had sex; rain was the sperm. The crops, and lambs, and babies were the fruit.
 - Then the gods went away to the underworld and it stopped raining and you had the dry season.
 - The underworld in Greek is called Hades. In Hebrew it was called Sheol. It’s a dark, dreary, watery place, and it’s under the earth. So wherever there was a body of water or water coming out of the earth, they said it was the gate to the underworld.
 - Every year in the spring, the gods would go into the cave and down to the underworld, and if they were worshipped right, then in the fall they would come back from the underworld, copulate, and the people would have fertility.
- The Canaanites gods were Baal and Asherah.
 - They were worshipped at Mount Hermon (and in the city of Dan nearby) because the River Jordan comes out of the ground at this mountain.
 - Alexander the Great came through this area about 330 b.c., and made a Greek city right in front of this cave, and turned it into the world’s center of the Greek fertility god named Pan.
 - Pan is the same myth – copulates with his mistresses called nymphs, they have babies, then he goes down to the underworld and disappears for the dry season, and then he comes back.
 - This was being done c. 330 b.c. at this cave, because at that time the river ran out of that cave.
 - Now it does not run out of the cave. There was an earthquake in 1879 that changed the course of the river –the cave collapsed, and now the river runs out of the bottom of the mountain.
 - They thought this was where Pan went into the underworld, so they called the town Paneus, which means “of Pan.”

- The word “panic” comes from the worship of Pan, because the people would get so wild and crazy. Also the word pandemonium comes from the worship of Pan.
- In Jesus’ time there were three King Herods that had taken over from Herod the Great (who killed all the babies in Bethlehem):
 - Herod Antipus
 - Herod Archilleas
 - Herod Phillip – ruled what is called Galilee. He needed a capital, so he took this little village of Paneas and he turned it into a fairly large city that would be the capital of his district. He renamed it Caesarea in honor of the emperor. The problem was, there was already a city named Caesarea, so he instead called it Caesarea Philippi (meaning Philip’s Caesarea).
- Caesarea Philippi:
 - It was a city of about 20k people.
 - There were four religious shrines.
 - Temple to Augustus – the first temple in the world built to Caesar Augustus.
 - The water out of the underworld came out of the cave and under Herod’s temple.
 - Next to the temple was an open air shrine to Pan. Pan is the shepherd’s fertility god, so he was worshipped outdoors.
 - Next to that is a Temple to Zeus, but scholars now believe it was not there at Jesus time – perhaps 30 years or so later is when it was built.
 - Next was the shrine of the sacred goats.
 - The Pan shrine was a niche that had been carved into the rock right next to the cave (out of which the river ran). In front of it was the open air platform where Pan was worshipped.
 - This city had become the main city of worship for Pan – meaning, what the Vatican is to Catholicism, Caesarea Philippi was to Pan. It was the world center of worship, just 28 miles from where Jesus lived.
 - In the niche would have stood the statue of Pan.
 - Generally Pan is portrayed as a half goat – half man with a goat like face. In the Greek tradition, he is pictured with a huge, erect phallus. It is this that is worshipped. It is believed that the virile power of that sex organ is what he will use to give you fertility and make your farms and your flocks fertile.
 - On Pan’s celebration day, which is in the spring of the year, they would parade that sex member statue through town so that everybody would worship it.
 - During this ceremony, the priests and priestesses of the Pan cult would copulate in front of the worshippers.
 - This could have been to as many as 100k people at a time.
 - There were smaller niches carved in the rock. These would hold idols to Pan’s mistresses. They are called nymphs.
 - This area was so incredibly evil. The Jewish rabbis, or those religious Jews, wouldn’t be caught dead in a city like that.

- Where the river came out of the mountain was known as the *Gates of Hades*. Where the worship was done was called the *Rock of the gods*, because all these pagan gods were on the face of that cliff.
 - During the worship ceremony, the sacred goats would be brought out, and they would mate (they were in heat), and then came the pandemonium – which was the entire community (or all that could) copulating. (With each other, male to male, female to female, male to female, and with the goats.)
- One morning, Jesus said to his talmidim that they were going to Caesarea Philippi.
 - I imagine those young men were thinking that their families would kill them if they knew where they were going.
- It's interesting that the Bible says Jesus walked 28 miles, but not one word of what was said in that time is recorded. Perhaps he didn't say a word – he just walked and they followed, and were left to their own thoughts as to what he was thinking taking them to a place such as this. Rabbis do this often still.
- How close did Jesus get with the talmidim? (It is not known.)

Matthew 16:13-17

¹³ *When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?"* ¹⁴ *And they said, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets."* ¹⁵ *He saith unto them, "But whom say ye that I am?"* ¹⁶ *And Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."* ¹⁷ *And Jesus answered and said unto him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."*

- Why did Peter say, *You are the Messiah, the son of the LIVING God*? It's an un-jewish thing to say. Why didn't he just say, *You are the Messiah, the son of God*?
- Jewish scholars suggest that they were close enough to at least know what was there at the temple area. Peter says, son of the LIVING God, in contrast to the worship of the false god in front of them.

Matthew 16:18

"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

- Catholic tradition says that the rock on which the church would be built was Peter.
 - In a way, this is right. 1 Peter 3 tells that the church is built on the disciples.
- Protestants have always said that the rock on which the church is built is Peter's confession that Jesus is Messiah.
 - This too is Biblical – He is the stone the builders rejected, the chief cornerstone and the capstone.

- From a Jewish point of view – on THIS rock I will build my church – on the physical rock right in front of them. “On top of this rock...on top of this worship...on top of all this, I will build up my church.”
 - As a Christian, your mission is going to be to leave your closed-knit Godly little communities and build God’s community in place of the world’s false worship.
 - You have the answer that people are looking for when they’re down there in the mud with the goats.
 - If you think this is a stretch – look at the next line from the text:

Matthew 16:18

¹⁸ *“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; **and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.**”*

- Where are the Gates of Hades? At the entrance to this temple area.
- Christianity has developed the Crusader castle model that we should build close little city communities to protect our innocent little selves from the ugliness of the devil until our death or the second coming. Jesus said, no –
- The point of a city gate is to defend and protect the city. If the gates of hell will not stand, then who is attacking them?
- Your mission as the talmidim of Jesus is to take on the devil himself. It’s not to build a fort so that your gates can keep him out – that’s backwards. Jesus said, “You go build my church on THIS rock, and when you’re there, the gates of hades won’t stand.”
- Our mission is to do something about the devil and this world, not hide from it.
- Jesus didn’t walk 28 miles with these talmidim to hide behind the mountain and talk about what was going on – he made them face the ugliness of what they were doing there. He made it clear that their mission was not to go back and safely live in Capernaum, but that their mission was to face something pretty ugly and to do something about it.
- In the Greek the text it says *Jesus shouted*
 - 11 times in the Greek it says “*Jesus shouted,*” but our translation just says, “*Jesus said in a loud voice.*”
 - Shout is somehow not thought polite of Jesus – but he shouted at this time.
 - Jesus was a man of fire – a man of passion. You didn’t get mistaken for Elijah over and over again, because you were a soft spoken Greek philosopher.
- Then Jesus shouted to the crowd.
 - How many Pharisees were in the crowd? How many priests? What about Levites? Who was in the crowd?
 - Jesus shouted to the Pan worshippers.

Mark 8:34

³⁴ *When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, “Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. ³⁵ For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it. ³⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? ³⁷ Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”*

- Jesus was saying, “Deny yourself, don’t give into this – it’s sick!”
- Imagine what the crowd thought – looking up at this wild eyed man shouting down to them from the cliffs.
 - Are we really like the rabbi? We struggle with just being able to pray in public sometimes.
- It does not say so in the text, but if you stand on these cliffs and do what Jesus did at that time, shouting down to the crowds below at the temple, then turn back, you will find those with you are embarrassed. I think Jesus did this – he turned back and his talmidim were embarrassed because of his drawing attention to them. This is just an assumption – the text does not say this. What it does say is:

Mark 8:38

³⁸ For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”

- Jesus was telling them, “Don’t you dare be ashamed of me.”
- We cannot be embarrassed to be more like him.
- Philip:
 - One of those in the group was named Philip.
 - He grew up in Bethsaida – a fishing village of 600-800 people.
 - He listened to Jesus that day on the cliffs.
 - (Philip later is said to be the first person to bring Gentile’s to the Messiah.)
 - For reasons history does not record, Philip and his family moved about 950 miles away to a city called Hierapolis.
 - Hierapolis was even more evil than Caesarea Philippi.
 - The city did not have a wall, but it did have a big gate. It was built by the Emperor Vespasian, who called himself “Lord and god”.
 - In ancient times, the main gate of a city always determined whose authority ruled in that city, and to walk through that gate was to say that Vespasian was your lord and your god in Hierapolis
 - Outside that city gate they would crucify people who broke the law.
 - When Philip arrived with his family – some traditions say he had 7 daughters while other traditions say he had 7 sons – he would not walk in that gate.
 - He lived there for years, but he would not walk through the gate. He would instead walk around the gate into the city (no walls surrounded this city).
 - Up above the city now is a place called the Martyrium of Philip, because after a few years someone turned him in and he was arrested, along with his children.
 - They told him he had a choice to either walk through the gate or he would be crucified. He told them he had no choice. He watched as they crucified his wife and his children, then they crucified him as well.
 - He had the passion and chutzpah to not be ashamed of his Messiah. He wanted more than anything else in the world to be just like his rabbi – and he was, if church history is correct.
- To be like the rabbi we spend a lot of time in the desert. You’re not going to be loved by a lot of people. You’re going to be resented by many and rejected by others. There may even be those who want you dead. But if you have the passion to be like the rabbi, who picked you because he believed in you, there will be honey, living water, green pasture, and you will look into the eyes of

God at every step. And in the end, by the grace of God, you will discover that you have become a lot like the Rabbi.

- This is not about a course. This is not about a set of information. This is about a relationship. It's about the text, and about a passionate desire to be like the Rabbi.
- Now you know why the biggest complement you can give a Jew is to say, "You are my rabbi." It means, "I want to be like you."
- Jesus would want you to know, he believes in you.