

Part 4, Paper 144, At Gilboa a...Decapolis, Midwayer Commission

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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Jesus' retreat, Mount Gilboa, apostles' teachings, volatile political climate, John the Baptist, communion of sonship, Lord's Prayer, silent prayer, extraterrestrial prayers, Decapolis mission, John's execution, turning point, strategic leadership, personal challenges, deep dive

SPEAKERS

John, Sarah

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Sarah 00:00

You know how everybody always says they want to learn from the greats, to sit at the feet of the masters? Well, today's deep dive takes us right into one of those moments. It's sort of like a master class on life and faith with Jesus himself and
- J

John 00:13

and it happens during a surprisingly low key period, the months between Jesus starting his ministry and the events leading up to his crucifixion. It's September, and tensions are sky high in Judea and Galilee, John the Baptist is imprisoned by Herod Antipas.
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Sarah 00:29

Oh, wow. Okay, so like paint that picture for me a little bit. Why was John in prison? What was Herod so worried about? Well,
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John 00:35

Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee, was a complex figure to say the least. He was caught between maintaining Roman favor and placating his Jewish subjects. John, you know, outspoken and uncompromising, publicly condemned Herod's marriage to his brother's wife, Herodias. This wasn't just a personal slight, though. It was a direct challenge to Herod's authority, both religiously and politically.



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Sarah 00:57

So John ends up in prison, and Jesus, knowing all of this, decides to lead His apostles on a retreat to Mount Gilboa. But it's not just a relaxing getaway, right? This is strategic,

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John 01:08

exactly. Yeah, it's a deliberate move on Jesus's part, and it's fascinating to unpack why he has three main goals for this retreat, and they're all interconnected.

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Sarah 01:18

Okay? I'm intrigued to lay it on me. First he

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John 01:20

needed to solidify his apostles understanding of his teachings. Now, these were devoted followers, but they weren't always on the same page, you know, right? Think about it. They came from different walks of life. They had different personalities. And their interpretations of Jesus's message, especially the idea of the kingdom, were pretty varied.

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Sarah 01:38

Yeah, you know, that's something I can relate to. Even today, within any group of friends, you're gonna have different perspectives on just about everything. Precisely,

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John 01:46

imagine the dinner table conversations at that retreat. We know, for example, that Andrew and John were convinced the kingdom had already arrived, while Peter and James were certain it was still to come. Can you imagine the debates? Oh, I

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Sarah 01:59

can practically hear it now. But disagreements aside, they were all drawn to Jesus and His message. It really makes you wonder what it would have been like to be a fly on the wall during those teachings.

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John 02:11

Well, and that's where the second reason for the retreat comes into play. The political climate was volatile. Staying put in Judea or Galilee with all eyes watching wasn't the wisest move. Tensions were running high after John's arrest, and Jesus knew that open conflict at that point

wouldn't help anyone, so lay

S Sarah 02:27

low. Let things cool off a bit. Make sense? Okay? That's two reasons. What's the third,

J John 02:32

waiting and seeing what would happen with John the Baptist, his imprisonment was a huge wild card. It could have sparked an uprising or led to a harsher crackdown by Herod, or take in any number of unpredictable terms, talk

S Sarah 02:44

about a tense waiting game. So Jesus uses this retreat to teach to regroup and to strategize. It's incredible to think that this quieter, less talked about period was so pivotal. Absolutely,

J John 02:57

this retreat wasn't just about avoiding trouble. It was about preparation, about laying the groundwork for a movement that was about to change the world. And this

S Sarah 03:06

is where it gets really interesting, because amidst all this strategizing and waiting, Jesus drops this like bombshell teaching on prayer, and it's not what you might expect.

J John 03:14

You're right. This wasn't about rote prayers or going through the motions. This was about something much deeper, what he called communion of sonship. Communion

S Sarah 03:23

of sonship. Now that's an interesting phrase. What does that even mean? It's

J John 03:26

about understanding our relationship with God as deeply personal and intimate, like a child with a loving parent, and that this relationship should be reflected in how we pray. Jesus wanted to move his followers away from formal, ritualistic prayer and toward a more heartfelt,

spontaneous connection with the Divine.

S Sarah 03:45

So it's not about saying the right words, but about having the right heart. Exactly.

J John 03:49

He was challenging centuries of tradition, urging his followers to move beyond empty gestures and connect with God from a place of genuine love and trust. And he used stories to illustrate this point beautifully. Oh,

S Sarah 04:02

tell me you're gonna talk about the story of the persistent neighbor. It's one of my favorites. There's something so relatable about someone banging on your door at midnight needing bread. It's happened to all of us, right? Perhaps

J John 04:13

not at midnight, but we've all been in situations where we desperately needed something, and that's precisely the point Jesus was making. He told that story to illustrate the importance of persistence, sincerity and unwavering faith in prayer.

S Sarah 04:26

And it's not about wearing God down, right? It's about that unwavering FAITH that, as you said, reflects a deep trust in a loving parent.

J John 04:33

Yes, it's about aligning our will with God's will, not about bending his will to ours. Okay?

S Sarah 04:39

So we've got these apostles up on Mount Gilboa, completely immersed in these profound teachings on prayer, and they're blown away, right? They realize they need a way to share this revolutionary idea with others. Yeah, absolutely.

J John 04:52

They wanted something tangible, a model for their own prayer life, and something they could

easily pass on to new believers that

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Sarah 04:59

makes a. Lot of sense. It's like, how do you bottle this lightning in a jar, this revolutionary way of talking to God, exactly,

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John 05:05

and it's interesting, you mentioned bottling lightning because Jesus wasn't just bucking a trend. He was turning centuries of tradition on its head. Back then, even John the Baptist had specific prayers He taught his followers. It was the norm. So

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Sarah 05:21

what did they do? Did Jesus just say, here's a prayer. Memorize this. Well, that's where

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John 05:25

things get really interesting. Remember how we talked about the apostles coming from different backgrounds? It turns out the prayer that we know today as the Lord's Prayer wasn't something brand new that Jesus came up with just for them. Wait,

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Sarah 05:37

seriously, I always assumed Jesus taught them the Lord's Prayer for the first time up on that mountain, and

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John 05:42

that's what most people think. It's understandable, but the Lord's Prayer actually has a history, a fascinating one at that. It was something Jesus had taught his family years earlier back in Nazareth. No way

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Sarah 05:53

you're blowing my mind here. So the Lord's Prayer wasn't just for the apostles, it was for everyone,

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John 05:58

precisely. It's a powerful reminder that spiritual practices, even ones as significant as this

precisely. It's a powerful reminder that spiritual practices, even ones as significant as this prayer, have origins, contexts and evolutions. Okay, I

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Sarah 06:07

need to sit with that for a second. We're talking about the Lord's prayer, the prayer being shared in a family setting, years before Jesus even began his public ministry. That changes things. It makes it so much more intimate. Somehow,

J

John 06:19

that's a great word for it intimate, and it challenges us to think about the Lord's Prayer, not just as a liturgical text, but as a deeply personal expression of our relationship with God.

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Sarah 06:31

Wow. Okay, so we've talked about the what and the why of Jesus's teachings on prayer, but there's also the how, and this is where I'm reminded of something that seems kind of contradictory. We know that Peter, James and John often accompanied Jesus during His nighttime prayers, but they rarely heard him speak. What's up with

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John 06:49

that? That's a great observation, and it points to another crucial aspect of Jesus's prayer life that he modeled for his disciples, silent prayer. He often prayed silently in his heart, not for show or for anyone else to hear.

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Sarah 07:01

So it's okay if my mind wanders when I pray, I'll admit it, I've always felt guilty about that. It's

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John 07:06

not about emptying your mind, but focusing your intention your heart. It's about that communion of sonship we were talking about earlier, that deep personal connection with God that transcends words, okay,

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Sarah 07:16

that actually takes the pressure off. But wait, there's more to this prayer thing, right? Jesus shared additional prayers, prayers not meant for the public. What was that about? Yes,

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- J** John 07:24
and this is where things take a truly fascinating turn. According to some accounts, the source of these prayers was other inhabited planets. Wait
- S** Sarah 07:33
what other planets you're saying? Jesus taught extraterrestrial prayers. I've never heard this before. It definitely
- J** John 07:39
sounds incredible, these cosmic prayers weren't widely shared until the 20th century with the publication of the Urantia Book.
- S** Sarah 07:46
The Urantia Book, okay, refresh my memory on that one. Right?
- J** John 07:49
So the Urantia Book is a complex and controversial text that claims to reveal new spiritual truths. And while we might not fully understand the origins or purpose of these cosmic prayers described within it, they do offer a mind blowing glimpse into the vastness of creation and the universality of prayer, extraterrestrial
- S** Sarah 08:08
prayers. It's almost too much to get my head around. Okay, I need a minute to process this, but before we get too lost in space, let's bring it back down to earth. Remember John's apostles? They were going through their own journey trying to make sense of their leader's imprisonment and the rise of this new movement led by Jesus. Absolutely.
- J** John 08:27
While Jesus and his apostles were having this intense spiritual retreat, John's apostles were grappling with all sorts of questions and anxieties. It's easy to imagine them feeling a little lost and uncertain about the future,
- S** Sarah 08:40
and then they show up at the Gilboa camp talk about a collision of worlds. It really



John 08:44

was. You have these two groups, both devoted to their respective leaders, both trying to navigate a very volatile and uncertain time. So



Sarah 08:52

how did it go when John's apostles met Jesus and his apostles? Was it awkward? Did they all get along?



John 08:59

I doubt it was a totally seamless transition. It probably involved some awkward moments and some pretty intense discussions. They had disagreements, differing interpretations of events. They faced challenges in trying to unify their messages. It's easy



Sarah 09:12

to forget, even with divine guidance, building a movement is messy. So how did they eventually find common ground? What were some of the key decisions they made during this time?



John 09:23

Well, adopting the Lord's Prayer was a major step. Of course, it's a prayer for



Sarah 09:27

everyone, right? It's brilliant when you think about it, common ground through shared prayer. What else



John 09:33

they decided to continue their work separately but collaboratively. They recognized the need to maintain their unique identities while still working towards a common goal,



Sarah 09:42

working smarter, not harder. Did they come to an agreement about anything else? Yes,



John 09:46



John 09:46

baptism was a big one. They ultimately decided that, out of respect for John, as long as he was alive, His apostles would handle the baptisms, and Jesus's apostles would provide the primary instruction for new believers.



Sarah 09:59

So respecting existing structures while incorporating new teachings. It was a compromise, but a really strategic one.



John 10:06

Exactly this period was about so much more than just Jesus teaching. It was about him leading, guiding, adapting and shaping the future of his movement, even while facing extremely challenging circumstances.



Sarah 10:18

Okay, so you've got this fascinating mix of collaboration and compromise happening at Gilboa, and then things take another turn, right? Jesus and his followers head to the Decapolis, a region with 10 Greek cities. Tell me more about that. The



John 10:30

Decapolis mission was huge. It marked a significant shift in strategy. Up until this point, Jesus had been focused primarily on Jewish communities, but the Decapolis was different. This was about reaching beyond traditional Jewish audiences, engaging with different cultures and beliefs, so stepping



Sarah 10:47

out of their comfort zone and into unknown territory. It sounds risky, absolutely,



John 10:52

but it was calculated risk, and it speaks to Jesus' growing confidence in his message and his mission.



Sarah 10:58

What were they doing in the Decapolis for those two months.

J John 11:01

It was a time of intense teaching, healing and connecting with people from all walks of life, but it was also a time of strategizing and consolidating their message. Remember, this was the end of simply absorbing John's followers. They were forging their own path, developing their own identity.

S Sarah 11:17

Wow, you can almost feel the momentum building. Okay, so back to John the Baptist, still in prison, still waiting for something, and then he sends messengers to Jesus with this incredibly loaded question, Are you the one, or should we look for another? Talk about a tense moment.

J John 11:34

It's a question that's puzzled theologians and scholars for centuries. It's easy to read it as doubt, but I think it's more nuanced than that. What do you mean? Well, John, even in his confinement, must have sensed the magnitude of what was happening with Jesus's ministry. Perhaps this question wasn't so much about his own doubt, but a way to reassure his followers amidst the uncertainty, or maybe even a way to offer Jesus an opportunity to publicly declare his mission in a more definitive way.

S Sarah 12:00

Interesting. So how did Jesus respond to this? Did he take it personally?

J John 12:04

Not at all. He responded with compassion and understanding, telling the messengers to go back and tell John about all they had witnessed. The blinds receive their sight, the lame walk. Those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear. The dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor.

S Sarah 12:21

Wow, that's not just an answer. It's a powerful affirmation of his mission,

J John 12:26

exactly, and it speaks to the deep respect and love that Jesus had for John. He understood the burden John carried and the difficult circumstances he was facing, and John hearing that must have felt perhaps a mixture of relief confirmation and maybe even a sense of peace. It's hard to know for sure. What we do know is that not long after this exchange, John the Baptist was executed. Oh man,

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Sarah 12:48

that's right, it's easy to forget about that part. It's such a brutal end to his story. How did Jesus react when he heard the news?

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John 12:53

He was obviously deeply saddened, but he also recognized this tragic event as a turning point, a turning point, yes, a call to action. He gathered his disciples and said, John is dead. Herod has beheaded him. Tonight, go into Joint Council and arrange your affairs accordingly. There shall be delay no longer, the hour has come to proclaim the kingdom openly and with power. Tomorrow we go into Galilee. John's death marked the beginning of a bolder, more public sage in Jesus's ministry.

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Sarah 13:23

So it's like everything that came before the retreat, the teachings, the collaborations, the challenges, it was all preparation for this moment,

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John 13:30

exactly, and it sets the stage for the dramatic events that would unfold in the weeks and months to come. Wow, what

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Sarah 13:35

a story it's like. We've been on this incredible journey uncovering this hidden chapter in the life of Jesus. You know, I've heard these stories countless times, but I've never really thought about this period in such depth before. It's fascinating,

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John 13:49

isn't it. We often focus on the more dramatic, miraculous parts of Jesus's ministry, but this period often overlooked, reveals so much about his character, his leadership and the strategic brilliance with which he built his movement, totally

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Sarah 14:04

it's like we've been handed this missing puzzle piece. Knowing about this retreat, those incredible teachings on prayer, the collaborations with John's apostles and the Decapolis mission, it adds a whole new dimension, doesn't it?

J John 14:15

Absolutely. It shows us a leader who was both deeply spiritual and incredibly strategic, someone who wasn't afraid to challenge the status quo, who knew how to build consensus, and who was willing to adapt his approach to meet the needs of the moment.

S Sarah 14:30

And he did all of that while navigating intense political pressure, personal loss and the weight of his own impending mission. It's mind blowing when you really think about it. It certainly

J John 14:41

is, but it also makes him so much more relatable. Don't you think he wasn't just some distant, divine figure? He was a human being facing real challenges with courage, compassion and an unwavering faith in His purpose? That's such

S Sarah 14:54

a good point. It's easy to put Jesus on a pedestal and forget that he experienced the full spectrum of human emotions, including. Including doubt, grief and frustration, this period we've been exploring really brings that home. It

J John 15:04

certainly does, and it makes his message of hope, love and forgiveness all the more powerful.

S Sarah 15:09

You know. It makes you wonder what else we might be missing, what other hidden chapters are waiting to be discovered in the stories we think we know so well. That's the

J John 15:18

beauty of deep dives like this. There's always more to learn, more to uncover, and every new discovery has the potential to deepen our understanding and challenge our perspectives.

S Sarah 15:28

So for you listening, here's something to chew on. How Does knowing what we now know about this period change your perspective on the more well known stories of Jesus's life? Does it change how you view his miracles, his teachings, his ultimate sacrifice.



John 15:43

It's a question worth pondering.



Sarah 15:44

It sure is yeah until next time, keep diving deep.