

Part 4, Paper 159, The Decapolis Tour, Midwayer Commission

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Decapolis tour, Jesus's teachings, forgiveness parable, restorative justice, unexpected sources, scripture interpretation, active faith, non-violent resistance, God's love, compassion, positive change, small actions, belief into action, community decisions, deeper meaning

SPEAKERS

Sarah, John



John 00:00

Ever feel like you've just scratched the surface of a familiar story?



Sarah 00:03

I know what you mean. Well,



John 00:04

that's what we're doing today, diving deep into a lesser known chapter of Jesus's ministry. You know, it's found in the Urantia Book,



Sarah 00:12

right? This text, it presents itself as a kind of spiritual revelation. I guess you could say it offers, you know, additional teachings and contexts that go beyond the traditional biblical accounts.



John 00:24

And we always encourage listeners to approach any source with, you know, a discerning ear, yeah? But think of this deep dive as a chance to explore a different perspective, like we're talking about someone we all thought we knew, yeah, we're specifically looking at Jesus's tour of the Decapolis. Oh, okay. It was a region of 10 cities, a real blend of cultures. It's

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Sarah 00:46

interesting. This tour, it's described as well. Light on miracles,

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John 00:50

yeah, heavy on the teachings, yeah, almost like a deliberate choice, you know, to emphasize the power of ideas over I guess you could say this spectacular. Okay,

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Sarah 00:59

I'm intrigued. Let's unpack that a bit. Okay, so imagine joining Jesus and his followers, roughly 100 people, on this month long journey. Okay, no dramatic healings, no parting of seas, wow. Okay, just deep conversations, like really thought provoking parables, I see. And that brings us to our first stop, the city of hippos. This is where Jesus, well, he drops this bombshell parable about forgiveness. Oh, tell me more about this. So picture this. Okay, a king forgives an enormous debt. Okay, we're talking like millions in today's money, wow, only to then have that same servant turn around and refuse to forgive a much smaller debt owed to him.

J

John 01:40

Oh, wow, that's that. That's a powerful story. It really is. It's like getting that winning lottery ticket and then refusing to tip the cashier \$1 you know? Yeah, yeah. Have you ever felt that tension, that gap between being forgiven for something big but then struggling to forgive a smaller offense?

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Sarah 01:59

Oh, absolutely, yeah. And I think the Urantia Book really highlights that, you know, true forgiveness. It's not about these warm, fuzzy feelings, you know what? I mean? It's a choice. It's something we make. It's an act of will. It transcends our emotional state, which, let's be honest, can be messy. Sometimes

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John 02:16

it's like, yeah, my feelings may still be hurt, but I'm choosing to move forward, you know, I'm releasing this grudge

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Sarah 02:23

precisely. And the Urantia Book, it adds this really interesting layer to this, okay, it talks about how this whole idea of forgiveness as a choice, it plays out in groups, especially when you're thinking about, you know, community decisions, making sure things are fair. So



John 02:37

connecting it to today, it's like, instead of just focusing on punishment, we might explore things like restorative justice programs or, you know, community mediation to address harm



Sarah 02:49

Exactly. Yeah, it raises the question like, how do we as a society balance holding people accountable with offering compassion, you know, like giving people opportunities to grow. It's, uh, it's definitely something to ponder as we move to our next stop on this Decapolis store.



John 03:06

Our next stop takes us to gamala. And here we encounter a disciple named John, who's, well, he's having a bit of a crisis, uh oh. He comes across this guy, Aiden. Aiden's out there preaching about Jesus. Okay? And John's immediate reactions like, wait a minute, who authorized you to do this? Yeah, it's an understandable reaction, when you think about it, yeah. Imagine dedicating yourself to a teacher, you know, learning their methods, their ways, and then someone comes along, seemingly bypassing that whole process, and starts proclaiming the same message, right, right? It's like that feeling you get when you spend all night studying for an exam, and the person next to you who you know never even opened the book. They ace it



Sarah 03:45

exactly. And you know this story, it kind of highlights an important theme that runs throughout Jesus's teachings. Oh, okay, what's that? This idea that rigid structures official authority, they aren't the only paths to truth, or, for that matter, to doing good. So



John 04:01

what matters more the perfectly credentialed messenger, or, you know, the impact of the message itself. It's something to consider as we navigate a world with so many voices all vying for our attention. Absolutely,



Sarah 04:12

it challenges us to be open, you know, to hearing truth from unexpected sources, even those outside of our usual circles, our beliefs. It's



John 04:23

almost like Jesus is saying. Hey, don't get so caught up in the how? Focus on the what? The

message itself. Right? The message itself. And that leads us to another fascinating story. This time we're in Abila, okay, we've got a disciple named Nathaniel, and he is really wrestling with how Jesus interprets scripture,

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Sarah 04:42

hmm, yeah, this is interesting. You know, Nathaniel, he seems to favor a more literal approach to the Hebrew Scriptures, right, like taking it word for word, exactly. But Jesus, He encourages a more nuanced understanding, you know, taking into account the context, the deeper meaning, okay, so

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John 04:58

not just what it says, but, like. What it means, yeah, yeah. And this is where things get really interesting, because the Urantia Book, it suggests that Jesus taught that scripture well, it reflects the time it was written in. Makes sense like it's a product of its time, right? It's full of truth, but that truth needs to be interpreted exactly. You need discernment, recognizing that knowledge and understanding those things evolve over time. Absolutely,

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Sarah 05:22

it's not about just throwing scripture out the window, you know, it's about engaging with it, but on a deeper level, taking that historical context into account, you know, allowing for our understanding to grow.

J

John 05:35

It's like appreciating, I don't know, a classic piece of literature, right? Exactly like understanding the historical context. It just it enhances the meaning, for sure, it doesn't diminish its power at all. And what I find really fascinating is that the Urantia Book claims that Jesus chose not to have everything he said written down. Really. Why is that to avoid later generations clinging to just these rigid interpretations.

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Sarah 06:01

Oh, wow. So like no four gospels as we know them exactly. That's wild, right?

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John 06:07

Just imagine, what if Jesus's teachings were passed down just through oral tradition, you know? Yeah, evolving and adapting over time.



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Sarah 06:15

Hmm, fascinating. It really makes you think about how we approach these religious texts today. You know the importance of context interpretation, really getting to the heart of their meaning. It kind of

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John 06:27

reminds me of that quote, I think it's attributed to Galileo, where he says, The Bible shows the way to go to heaven, not the way the heavens go. Yeah, exactly. And speaking of evolving understandings, shall we move on to Philadelphia? Let's

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Sarah 06:37

do it. Okay, so

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John 06:39

in Philadelphia, Jesus, he delivers this powerful message about faith being an active force, okay, not just, you know, a passive belief system. I like that. It's so easy to fall into that trap of, okay, I believe this. Check. Moving on, right. Yeah, next,

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Sarah 06:53

right. But Jesus, He challenged that whole notion and of the Urantia Book, it even describes him as converting get those passive doctrines into calls to action.

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John 07:03

Passive doctrines, huh? That's an interesting way to put it right. What

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Sarah 07:08

do you think about that term, passive doctrines?

J

John 07:11

Well, I think it refers to those beliefs that we have that just kind of stay stagnant. They're just in our minds. We don't really do anything with them. We don't translate them into action. You know, Jesus, He challenged people to live their faith, not just, you know, talk about it, so, less about just believing in God, and more about letting that belief inspire you to actually make a difference in the world, exactly.

- S** Sarah 07:32
And I think one of the most powerful examples of this is, you know, his interpretation of turning the other cheek,
- J** John 07:37
right? Because that's so often misconstrued. Oh, for sure, people see it as passive, weak, right? Like you're a pushover. But, you
- S** Sarah 07:44
know the Urantia Book, it really emphasizes that Jesus intended it as a call to action, like a strategic, non violent resistance. No, it's
- J** John 07:54
not about being a doormat, but about what choosing a different kind of strength? Yes,
- S** Sarah 07:58
a strength rooted in compassion, you know, a refusal to be drawn into that cycle of violence and revenge. Wow, that's powerful. It's about walking the walk, not just talking the talk, you know, embodying your beliefs in your actions, even in the face of adversity. It's
- J** John 08:14
about taking that leap of faith and putting it into practice. Right? Absolutely. And
- S** Sarah 08:18
you know, what I find so compelling about the uranti book is how it portrays Jesus like he's taking these big, you know, almost abstract ideas about God, and He makes them so relatable,
- J** John 08:29
okay? Like, what give me example? Well,
- S** Sarah 08:31
like, the concept of God's love, it's not this distant, cold, you know, impersonal force, right? It's portrayed as this most tangible love. Like, as well as a parental love for their child.

portrayed as this real, tangible love, like, as real as a parent's love for their child,

J John 08:41

and that kind of love, you know, that deep, unconditional care, it makes you want to do something. It makes you want to reach out, to make a difference however you can.

S Sarah 08:50

Yeah, it reminds me of this quote. I think it's from the Dalai Lama. He said, Love and compassion, they're necessities, not luxuries. Wow,

J John 08:57

yeah, he's right. Without them, humanity cannot survive powerful words, they really are. And as we're wrapping up this whole exploration of the Decapolis tour, I'm left with this sense of, I don't know, like a challenge, yeah, and possibility all at the same time. Yeah? I hear that, because if Jesus could do that back then challenge the norms, you know, rattle some cages, inspire real change. What's stopping us from doing the same today? It

S Sarah 09:25

really makes you think, doesn't it like? What small act of courage? What choice, even if it seems insignificant, could we make that? Could, you know, start this ripple effect, a ripple effect of change in our own lives and the lives of those around us?

J John 09:39

Maybe it's just, I don't know, reaching out to someone we know who's hurting, or speaking up when we see injustice, or even just, you know, choosing kindness in a moment where it'd be easier to be well, not so kind. It could be anything,

S Sarah 09:50

really like maybe it's committing to learning more about something, deepening our understanding, you know, challenging our own assumptions, because,

J John 09:58

as. We've seen in this deep dive, real growth happens when we get out of our comfort zones. We engage with the world in a way that that really matters, right? I think so. So as you go about your weak listeners, think about the stories from this lesser known chapter of Jesus's

ministry. Remember the teachings we talked about from the Urantia Book, yeah, ask yourself, What's one small action you can take, you know, to turn belief into action. Choose love over apathy. Be that force for positive change that the world needs. Yeah,



Sarah 10:28

I love that. Keep those gears turning everyone until next time you.