

Part 4, Paper 170, The Kingdom...of Heaven, Midwayer Commission

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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Kingdom of Heaven, personal transformation, inner shift, divine connection, communal brotherhood, cosmic brotherhood, spiritual awareness, Jesus's teachings, Urantia Book, institutional church, inner kingdom, compassionate action, divine spark, spiritual growth, ripple of hope

SPEAKERS

John, Sarah

S Sarah 00:00

Welcome to the deep dive. We're diving into a topic today that's a well, it sparked a lot of debate over the centuries. Oh, absolutely, the kingdom of heaven. We're going straight to the source, turning to the Urantia Book, okay? Specifically, paper 170 right, to uncover what this phrase Kingdom of Heaven really meant to Jesus. It's

J John 00:19

fascinating, is it? Because even before we get to Jesus, the idea of a kingdom of heaven, it was already, you know, kind of a blend of different interpretations, like a theological mixtape, exactly a theological mixtape. And before Jesus, you had the Hebrew prophets, right? Who, you know, they were considered the spiritual leaders, the thinkers, yeah, and they had their own ideas about what this kingdom looked like, Okay? And then if you widen the lens even further, Persian teachings, they also had an influence. It's more

S Sarah 00:51

layered than I think a lot of people realize. It's more layered, yeah, we're not just talking about a single definition here, right? So when Jesus comes onto the scene, what makes his teachings stand out from all of these earlier ideas about the kingdom of heaven.

J John 01:04

Well, I think what made Jesus so revolutionary is that he took these existing concepts okay, like the Hebrew idea of a kingdom that was both present and future, okay, and even the Persian idea of good overcoming evil, yeah, and he breathed new life into them, okay, you know, he

infused them with his own unique message.

S Sarah 01:26

So he's like remixing this classic track exactly, adding his own verses, yes. So what did this new sound, this new understanding of the kingdom of heaven? What did it actually entail? Well, this

J John 01:38

is where it gets really interesting, because Jesus actually tried to steer people away from the word kingdom altogether. Wait.

S Sarah 01:45

He tried to ditch the term. He did that seems counterintuitive. Why walk away from something so central to his message? Because

J John 01:52

he was advocating for something even more radical, something even more powerful, a kingdom that wasn't about earthly power, okay, or politics,

S Sarah 02:01

it wasn't about a physical throne.

J John 02:05

No, okay, he was talking about a kingdom within, a kingdom

S Sarah 02:08

within, yes. So we're shifting years from external to internal. Precisely. This isn't about a physical place. No,

J John 02:15

not at all. All right, for Jesus, the kingdom of heaven wasn't about geography or even some far

S Sarah 02:21

off event, it's not about escaping to this other realm.

J

John 02:23

No, no, it was about a transformation that started within each person, okay? So

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Sarah 02:27

I'm sensing a theme here, personal transformation. Absolutely. It's not about, you know, waiting for divine intervention, right? Or even just following rules. It's about a shift. It's about cultivating that inner shift, yes, changing how we relate to to God, to the Divine, yes, yes, and in turn, how we treat others. You've hit the

J

John 02:47

nail on the head. Okay, good. You know, remember that famous line from Jesus, the kingdom is within you? Oh, yeah. That simple phrase, I think, really captures the very essence of his teachings. Yeah. He emphasized cultivating a deep personal connection with God, okay, and then letting that relationship guide our actions.

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Sarah 03:07

So, less about outward displays of faith, more about the internal work of aligning ourselves with with God's will,

J

John 03:13

exactly. And the Urantia Book, you know, gets even more specific, outlining five distinct ways that Jesus used the term kingdom, five different facets, five. So it wasn't just this one size fits all concept. Okay,

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Sarah 03:26

let's make sure our listeners can really grasp these nuances. Okay. Can you elaborate on these five different ways Jesus used the term kingdom, of course.

J

John 03:33

So the first, as we've discussed, is that personal, individual experience of connecting with the Divine Right. That's the foundation. That's the core. From there, Jesus talks about a community of believers, okay, a brotherhood that emerges when people live out these principles of love and service. So

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Sarah 03:52

it starts with starts with me, and it expands outward to we precisely,

J

John 03:56

okay. And this outward expression, it wasn't about trying to be good, right? Or racking up spiritual points, yeah, it's not about checking boxes, exactly. Yeah, Jesus saw good deeds as a natural outflow of that interconnection. Okay, it's like a healthy fruit tree. You don't have to force it to bear fruit. Yeah? It just does.

S

Sarah 04:15

I like that analogy that the fruit being the good deeds, it's the natural result of an inward reality. Yes, it feels more authentic and sustainable. Wouldn't you say absolutely, it's not about again, checking boxes, but allowing this inner transformation to then guide our actions. That's

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John 04:32

the beauty of it. Okay? It's about being not just doing

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Sarah 04:35

okay. So we've got the personal yes, we've got the communal, yes, but there's more.

J

John 04:40

There's more because Jesus also used the term kingdom in a more universal sense, okay, encompassing both the earthly and heavenly realms. Okay, a cosmic brotherhood, if you will. Yeah, that transcends the limits of time and space.

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Sarah 04:55

So we've got the personal, the communal, and now this cosmic dimension to the. Kingdom of heaven, layers upon layers. But how did Jesus see this kingdom unfolding on Earth? Was it about some sudden, dramatic takeover? We left off talking about the kingdom of heaven as this multifaceted thing, you know, with personal transformation and this community of believers and even like a cosmic brotherhood, right? It's a lot to unpack. It is, but when we think about how this kingdom was going to actually happen here on Earth, what did Jesus, what did he have in mind?

J John 05:29

Well, this is where we encounter, I think, one of the biggest misunderstandings surrounding Jesus's message, okay? He did speak about a future age, a time when you know, God's will would be more solely realized on Earth, okay, a time of greater spiritual awareness, you know, greater harmony among people. So

S Sarah 05:45

that kind of sounds like what a lot of people probably do imagine when they hear kingdom of heaven, like, almost like a utopia, like, is this? Are we talking about the end of the world as we know it well? And

J John 05:54

you're right. A lot of people do interpret it that way. But here's the crucial distinction, yeah, I think Jesus never explicitly tied this future transformation to his own return, okay, or the establishment of a physical kingdom on earth. So those connections were made later, largely, yes, interpretations made by his followers after his death,

S Sarah 06:13

and those interpretations, I imagine, probably had some pretty significant consequences down the line, absolutely.

J John 06:19

And you know, the Urantia Book really highlights this, how this expectation of Jesus's imminent return, okay, and the full realization of the kingdom, it heavily influenced the early Christian movement, okay? And when those events didn't unfold as anticipated, it led to a reinterpretation of his message, a kind of a shift in focus.

S Sarah 06:41

Okay, so, how did the understanding of the Kingdom of Heaven evolve after Jesus, like it was the original message? Did it just get lost?

J John 06:49

Well, think of it like a seed, you know. Okay, Jesus planted this radical idea of an inner kingdom, a spiritual transformation that could spread outward, right? As his followers tried to cultivate this seed, particularly in the face of persecution, you know, changing social climates, sure, the original concept, it began to take on new forms. Okay, new layers of interpretation were added. And is

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Sarah 07:12

this where we start to see the institutional church as we know it today starting to take shape exactly,

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John 07:17

exactly because, with the perceived delay of a physical kingdom, right? Jesus's followers, you know, they're grappling with disappointment. They're facing these external pressures, yeah,

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Sarah 07:27

they're trying to figure out, how do we keep this going? Exactly? They looked

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John 07:31

for ways to preserve and spread his teachings, okay? They sought structure. They sought a system, right? And this, as our source material points out, is the very beginning of the Christian church, yeah, you know, developing into this social institution. And you can

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Sarah 07:46

see how that development, like in that time, might have been necessary, Oh, absolutely, just as a way to, like, safeguard the essence of what Jesus was talking about, yeah, during a very turbulent period, almost like a caterpillar forming a cocoon before it, before it transformed. What

J

John 08:02

a great analogy. But you know, but here's the thing

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Sarah 08:05

good, just like a caterpillar can get a little too comfortable in its cocoon. Yes, the risk with institutionalization is that the original essence, yes, in this case, that personal, heart centered connection with God that Jesus was so emphatic about, can become overshadowed by the structure itself, yes, by dogma, by rituals, by hierarchy, 100%

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John 08:25

and so by that point, you know, are we even talking about the same thing anymore? Did the meaning of the kingdom of heaven as Jesus intended? It did just get lost in translation?

meaning of the kingdom of heaven as Jesus intended? It did just get lost in translation?

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Sarah 08:35

Yeah, it's a good question, and we're gonna, we're gonna pick it up right there after a quick break, yeah, it feels like we've been, you know, like exploring a map, right, tracing the evolution of this idea of the kingdom of heaven, right through time. Yeah, yeah. But where do we go from here, like, if it's not lost? How do we access this kingdom, this personal transformation today?

J

John 08:57

Well, the Urantia Book actually offers a really intriguing perspective on this, okay, it suggests that there will be a time when Jesus's original teachings on the kingdom, they're revived, yeah, you know, and understood with fresh eyes, kind of stripped of centuries of added interpretations and dogma. So like

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Sarah 09:14

a fresh start, a return to the to that the heart of Jesus's message, exactly. Okay, but what does that? What does that look like, practically speaking, if we're not just waiting for some future event, how do we live as citizens of this kingdom today?

J

John 09:29

That's the heart of it, isn't it, right? If the kingdom of heaven isn't a physical place, right, but a state of being, how do we embody its principles in our in our daily lives. How do we cultivate that interconnection with the Divine and let it, let it guide us, let it inform how we interact with the world around us?

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Sarah 09:48

It's a call to action. Then it's about taking responsibility for that inner transformation, rather than waiting for someone else to usher in some new age, exactly

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John 09:56

and yet. And the Urantia Book really challenges us. Uh, to go beyond, you know, just checking off good deeds, right? It's not just about doing good things, right? It's about, you know, tending to the garden within, okay, cultivating the soil of our hearts. So that compassionate action, it flows naturally.

S

Sarah 10:13

 Sarah 10:19

It's funny. You should say that, because I'm thinking about that quote that we discussed earlier, the kingdom is within you. Yes, it suggests that this isn't something that you know, that we build externally. It starts with that inner shift Precisely,

 John 10:26

precisely. And as we cultivate that inner shift, yeah, as more individuals connect with that source of love and compassion within it, naturally, it ripples outward, yeah, and impacts our relationships, our communities, even the choices that we make in our in our daily lives, it

 Sarah 10:43

becomes less about building walls and more about building bridges. Yes,

 John 10:46

yeah, 100% and remembering that we're all connected, that we all share in that divine spark.

 Sarah 10:52

Such a such a powerful message, especially in times that that often feel so so divided and uncertain. It's a message of hope, of possibility. It is of agency. Yes,

 John 11:02

and it's a journey, not a destination. You know, we may not always get it right, right, but the act of striving right, of cultivating that interconnection and letting it guide our actions. Yeah, that's what it means to truly embody the spirit of the kingdom of heaven. That's

 Sarah 11:18

a That's a powerful thought to leave us with to our listeners, as you go about your week, we invite you to consider, what does it mean for you to embody the principles of the kingdom of heaven? How might you be a seed of change, a ripple of hope in the world? The answers, as always, lie within.