

Part 3, Paper 86, Early Evolut...ligion, Brilliant Evening Star

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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

early religion, primal roots, Urantia Book, fear and chance, supernatural explanations, ghost souls, death mystery, ethical behavior, moral thinking, religious rituals, shamans' influence, human need, connection desire, unknown fear, ancient beliefs

SPEAKERS

Sarah, John

S Sarah 00:00

For wonder, like, how those you know, ancient ancestors of ours, the ones dealing with life before the wheel even, how they even start wrapping their heads around the big stuff? Where do we come from? What happens after we die?

J John 00:12

It really is quite a journey when you think about it, especially when we peel back the layers of like organized religion we're familiar with now, and go way back, back to a time when belief wasn't so much about, you know, doctrines and scriptures, but more about just making it to the next day totally. And

S Sarah 00:28

that's exactly where we're headed in this deep dive, those raw, primal roots of religion, we're using the Urencia book as our guide, specifically paper 86 which digs into how religious thought first came about. And

J John 00:39

the interesting thing is, the book suggests it didn't start with some big, booming voice from the heavens, some like instant revelation. Instead, it kind of grew naturally out of fear the role of chance and that very human need to make sense of a world they just didn't have the tools to understand, right?

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Sarah 00:56

Like try picturing them for a second huddled around a fire, the darkness all around just pressing in every sound, the wind, thunder, whatever it all must have felt charged with meaning, maybe even danger, exactly.

J

John 01:09

And the book points out that chance, or luck, as we might call it, played a huge role in all of this. Imagine just for a minute being a hunter gatherer. Your whole existence eating that day or not, it all came down to things totally outside your control,

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Sarah 01:22

intense, right? Every Sunrise was like rolling the dice. And the Urantia Book really emphasizes how these early humans were up against this constant, something for nothing, nothing for something kind of deal, and

J

John 01:35

it suggests this awareness it went deeper than just understanding it. This constant uncertainty, feeling powerless to the forces around them created this deep anxiety, this need to somehow get a handle on these unseen forces. So

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Sarah 01:47

rather than just accepting things as random, they sought out agency, right, a reason, a personality behind it all. It's kind of like how even today, we still knock on wood or avoid walking under ladders, like these little echoes of that old desire to, I don't know, appease the unknown

J

John 02:02

Absolutely. And the Urantia Book argues this impulse, this need to personify what we can't see. It's deeply rooted in us. When faced with something unexplainable, early humans with what little they understood about the natural world, well, they looked for answers in the supernatural.

S

Sarah 02:18

So a good hunt wasn't just good luck, it was a sign you'd made the right spirit happy, but a sudden illness, or like a flood, that meant you'd messed up somewhere, angered the wrong one.

J John 02:30

It's a fascinating look into how our minds work. You know, even today, you can see bits of this stub your toe in a chair. People curse at it, as if the darn thing moved on purpose. Or, how about

S Sarah 02:38

when people say, Oh, the universe is testing me. It's like we inherited this, this need to give agency to the unexplainable, even when intellectually we know better, right?

J John 02:47

And this instinct, this need to find meaning in the random, it went into overdrive when it came to the ultimate mystery,

S Sarah 02:53

death, yeah, death, especially when it seemed to just happen no warning, must been terrifying for them. Oh, absolutely.

J John 03:00

Try to imagine that confusion, that fear. The Urantia Book even mentions how some cultures wailed at every sunrise like terrified of what darkness the next night might bring. Really highlights how deeply the fear of the unknown, of what's after this life was ingrained in them, which

S Sarah 03:16

is what makes the whole ghost soul idea, this belief that part of us lives on after we die. So interesting. And it wasn't like one size fits all, right? How different cultures pictured that ghost soul, what happened to it after death? It was all over the place. Yeah, the book

J John 03:31

really makes that point. The Urantia Book uses that variety as like, proof of how much the human mind was struggling here, trying to make sense of something so big, so beyond anything they knew, they came up with different answers, which,

S Sarah 03:43

I mean, makes sense, right? Thinking about it, they only had so much to go on their own experiences trying to understand something totally outside of that, like explaining the Internet to someone who's never even seen a computer exactly,

J John 03:55

They latched on to what they did know, what they could see around the breaths, their shadows, reflections. It became like the basic building blocks of the soul, almost like

S Sarah 04:04

they're trying to catch the invisible reflected in the visible world, right? Like

J John 04:08

the Urantia Book talks about these breath dreams, imagine that for a sec you're an early human. Someone dies, body stops, the Spark's gone, obviously, yeah, but the breath too, that invisible thing that makes us alive, gone. But then sometimes on a cold day, you see it right breath turns into this cloud, this vapor. Maybe that's the soul leaving.

S Sarah 04:29

It's kind of beautiful how they took those little moments, those observations, and made them part of how they understood the afterlife

J John 04:35

and dreams. Can't forget those to them, dreams weren't just like imagination, they were as real as being awake. So imagine how real it felt when they dreamed of someone who died, talking to them, interacting. That was proof. As far as they were concerned, some part of that person was still out there.

S Sarah 04:54

Those dreams became like a bridge between worlds, almost comforting and also. So reinforcing that belief that there's something after this life and these

J John 05:02

beliefs, they didn't just stay abstract. They got real practical, real fast, like the fear of a soul escaping when someone sneezes, led to all these rituals meant to, like, trap it in the body, catching the dying person's last breath, hoping that was their essence you were grabbing hold

of.

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Sarah 05:17

It's so easy to just call that superstition now, but picture that realization for the first time, the breath and like the self being connected must felt profound, and it shows how much we need to hold on to what we care about, even when faced with death.

J

John 05:31

The Urantia Book suggests that this need to grapple with death, to find a way for something to last, it played a huge part in shaping not just those early religious practices, but morality too, eventually.

S

Sarah 05:43

So this fear of the unseen, this ghost environment, the book talks about, it's behind everything from how they buried people to the whole idea of right and wrong. Think

J

John 05:53

about it. If you believe you're constantly surrounded by these unseen forces, these ghost souls watching your every move, able to help or hurt you. Well, you're gonna be careful how you act right, that belief that there were consequences beyond just the physical world, that laid the groundwork for ethical behavior.

S

Sarah 06:09

So from this fear, this, I guess, misunderstanding of the world, in a way, came this whole system of values of right and wrong. It's kind of wild.

J

John 06:18

It's the big paradox. The book points out something built on, let's be honest, a flawed understanding of how things worked, but it still gave rise to a sense of morality, of right and wrong that's had a huge effect on human civilization. Makes you

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Sarah 06:33

think, though it's been a while since those early days right science has explained so much that they just didn't get so where does that leave us? Have we really grown out of this need to believe million



John 06:43

dollar question, right? Okay, sure, we might not blame a storm or getting sick on some angry spirit anymore, but have we really moved past this need to find reasons to look for explanations outside of ourselves instead



Sarah 06:56

of spirits? Maybe we blame the government when things go wrong or the economy or how society is set up, like the names change, but the impulse is the same Exactly.



John 07:06

The Urantia Book makes us think, have we really evolved past the need for the supernatural, or has it just, you know, changed clothes to fit in with the modern world? So we've



Sarah 07:18

been talking about how those early humans with this mix of being afraid and kind of amazed by everything, tried to use the supernatural to explain the world.



John 07:27

And it's amazing, really, how those early beliefs try and make sense of luck, death, the soul, it all kind of laid the groundwork for organized religion as we know it, like



Sarah 07:37

they were building this whole belief system, rituals, who's in charge, what's right and wrong, all based on Ghost souls and these forces they couldn't see.



John 07:44

Yeah, and the Urantia Book points out it's not like it was always some scam. Remember, to them that ghost environment was just as real as the ground they walked on. So those



Sarah 07:52

shamans, priests, whoever, saying they could talk to the spirit world, they weren't all making it up. They might have really believed they were reading signs, talking to spirits, calming down the unseen forces, exactly.



John 08:04

And as those guys gained more influence, what they said, the rituals they did, it shaped how those early communities worked.



Sarah 08:13

Makes you wonder now, how much of what we call religion today, all those rituals and rules, how much goes all the way back to trying to please that ghost environment. That's



John 08:23

the big question. Keeps those anthropologists and religion experts busy, that's for sure, yeah, but one thing's for sure, even if those early beliefs missed the mark, sometimes they did something important. They gave



Sarah 08:33

people a way to understand life death, why we're here,



John 08:38

right? And like the urentia book says that's no small thing. Those early religious impulses, even if they seem kind of messed up now, it was a huge step for humans, beginning of a long winding road to moral thinking, exploring what's spiritual, wanting something more than just this physical life



Sarah 08:55

it's like by trying to make sense of what they didn't get, by making those forces into people, they stumbled onto something deeper, something that just feels true to us as humans, and that



John 09:04

wanting, that search for what it all means, what our purpose is, that's still going strong. We might get more sciency about the big questions now, but that desire to connect to something bigger than us that's still big part of being human. So



Sarah 09:17

wrapping up our deep dive here into how religion got started, we're left with this maybe what really matters from those early beliefs isn't the exact rituals or which gods they believed in. It's

really matters from those early beliefs isn't the exact needs or wishes gods they believed in. It's that drive that human need to find meaning, even when faced with the unknown, to find connection in a world that can feel so random and chaotic sometimes,

 John 09:38

and maybe, just maybe, that same drive is going to keep pushing us, leading us to understand even more, connect even deeper, as we keep exploring the universe and where we fit into it all. Thanks

 Sarah 09:48

for joining us on this trip back to the roots of religion until next time, keep those questions coming, stay curious and keep on diving deep.