

Part 3, Paper 92, The Later Evolution of Religion, Melchizedek

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SPEAKERS

Sarah, John

J John 00:00

So we're diving into a topic today that I think everyone has at least some opinion on, even if they haven't really dug into where those ideas come from. Religion.

S Sarah 00:08

It's a bit like that. Yeah. I mean, it's everywhere you look, across cultures, throughout history, but getting to the root of it, understanding how those beliefs first took shape. But that's a whole other story, and

J John 00:19

that's what we're tackling in this deep dive, we're turning to a text that offers a pretty unique perspective on that whole evolution of religious belief, the Urantia Book, yeah, it

S Sarah 00:29

really digs into those underlying forces, like those basic instincts and experiences that sort of laid the groundwork for Well, everything from ancient rituals to the world religions we see today exactly.

J John 00:40

And to really grasp how we got from point A to point B, we need to rewind all the way back, right back to a time before organized religion. before those grand cathedrals. even before

...written language, really

S Sarah 00:52
right back to the beginning. And

J John 00:54
what was there back then?

S Sarah 00:55
Fear. Fear. I mean, think about it, our earliest ancestors, they were confronted with this vast, mysterious world, right? Natural disasters, disease, the darkness of night, no real way to explain it all.

J John 01:08
I mean, yeah, even today we talk about that fear of the unknown, but it must have been on another level back then. Oh,

S Sarah 01:13
absolutely. And without any kind of scientific framework to explain those things, to make sense of it all. Well, it's only natural that they look for answers, for some sense of control in the realm of the spiritual. So those

J John 01:25
early rituals, those attempts to appease spirits or make offerings to the forces of nature, is that where we start to see those primal fears taking shape as something well. More

S Sarah 01:36
precisely, according to the Urantia Book, that's exactly where those earliest forms of spiritual belief emerged from, that deeply human need to make sense of the unknown, to establish some kind of relationship with those forces that seemed so powerful, so beyond our control.

J John 01:52
Instead of just accepting the unknown, those early humans sought to understand it, to influence it. Even exactly

influence it, even exactly.

S

Sarah 01:58

And here's where things get really interesting. The Urantia Book suggests that this inherent drive towards spirituality, this need to connect with something bigger than ourselves, wasn't just a coincidence. It actually points to three divine influences that shaped early religious thought.

J

John 02:15

Okay, I'm intrigued. Give me the rundown. What are these influences? So

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Sarah 02:18

the book calls them the adjutant of worship, the Adjutant of wisdom and the Holy Spirit,

J

John 02:23

those are some pretty loaded terms. Break them down for me, what do those influences actually represent in terms of the human experience? Okay, sure,

S

Sarah 02:32

let's start with the adjutant of worship. This one ascribes this almost instinctive capacity within us as humans, this ability to sort of perceive a reality beyond ourselves. Think of it like that feeling of awe and wonder you get when you look up at a starry sky or, you know, you witness like the sheer power of nature. Okay,

J

John 02:50

so it's like a built in radar we all have. But instead of detecting objects, it's detecting something beyond the physical realm.

S

Sarah 02:57

Exactly. Now the adjutant of wisdom is where things get even more interesting. This one speaks to our tendency to kind of direct that sense of awe, that wonder towards something we're constantly seeking deeper meaning, a greater understanding. It's like this drive that pushes us to go beyond those simple explanations and grapple with the bigger questions of existence, like



John 03:19

we're hardwired not just to sense that there's something more, but to constantly try and grasp what that more actually is. And



Sarah 03:25

the Holy Spirit, according to the Urantia Book, is what bridges those two influences. It's like this initial spark of higher consciousness within each of us. You know, it allows us to not only grasp those spiritual concepts, but to actually experience them, to feel their impact on a personal level.



John 03:40

So it's not just about acknowledging some higher power intellectually. It's about feeling that connection. That's what gives rise to that very human yearning for something more, something beyond this earthly existence, right? Absolutely.



Sarah 03:51

And when you take these three influences together, this ability to sense something greater, that drive to try and understand it, and the capacity to experience it personally. That's where you start to see the very foundation of religious belief taking shape. It's like



John 04:06

this perfect storm of influences all coming together to shape our earliest understanding of the Divine, of our place in the universe. No wonder religion has played such a significant role in human history. But how do we go from these primal instincts, these early attempts to make sense of the world, to the development of actual practices and eventually organized religion. It feels like there's a missing link somewhere in that evolutionary chain. So we have these primal instincts, this inherent yearning to connect with something bigger than ourselves. But how do we go from that to building these elaborate systems of belief, from fearing the darkness to constructing these grand cathedrals. How did the Urantia Book explain that leap?



Sarah 04:45

Well, it's a fascinating journey, really. You know, it's this winding road that begins with our earliest ancestors looking around and saying, okay, the sun, the moon, the river, something powerful is at work here, and that's where we start to see. The rise of nature worship, right? Those earliest attempts to, I don't know, maybe understand or even influence these forces through rituals and offerings. Don't



John 05:07

be angry river God, and please don't flood our village this year. Yeah, it's relatable even now,

S

Sarah 05:12

exactly. But just as humans evolved, so too did those fears, right? And along with them, are spiritual practices. And this is where we get to the ghost cult, this belief that spirits, you know, often those of our deceased ancestors, they kind of lingered and could influence the world around us. So now it wasn't just about appeasing the forces of nature, but also, you know, navigating this whole other realm of spirits. Because

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John 05:34

the storm is one thing your dead grandfather deciding to, I don't know, mess with your crops because he's not happy with how you're honoring his memory. Those fears run deep precisely,

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Sarah 05:45

and so we see these more elaborate rituals starting to emerge, sacrifices, all designed to either appease or ward off these unseen forces. It's like humanity's attempt to create this whole rule book for how to interact with the spiritual world. And

J

John 05:59

these practices, these attempts to understand and interact with the unknown, they gradually evolve into more codified systems of belief, eventually leading to what we would recognize as organized religion, exactly.

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Sarah 06:10

And you know, this is where the Urantia Book offers this really fascinating example of how tradition, even in the face of progress, exerts this powerful pull. The text talks about how even after humans discovered metalworking, which is a huge technological leap, right, many religious rituals still use stone tools, particularly for sacrifices. It's

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John 06:31

like this inherent human thing, right? We find comfort in the familiar, even when we develop newer, more efficient ways of doing things. There's this tension between innovation and tradition, this reluctance to let go of the old ways, especially when it comes to something is deeply ingrained as well religious practice Absolutely

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Sarah 06:46

and you know, I think it really speaks to the power of ritual, of those repeated actions and symbols that sort of connect us to something bigger than ourselves, something ancient, unchanging. But this also brings us to another key concept from the Urantia Book, this idea of epochal revelation. Okay,

J John 07:04

let's unpack this. What exactly does epochal revelation mean in this context?

S Sarah 07:10

So far, we've been talking about this gradual, almost organic evolution of religious thought, right? This kind of slow burn driven by human experience and observation. But the Urantia Book argues that alongside that gradual evolution, there have also been these very specific moments in history where divine knowledge, true, spiritual insight, is directly revealed to humanity. So

J John 07:30

it's not just about us fumbling around in the dark trying to understand the divine. It's about the divine breaking through and revealing itself to us in a more direct way,

S Sarah 07:38

exactly. And the Urantia Book actually highlights five key epochal revelations throughout human history, with each one kind of building upon the last and pushing our understanding of the Divine just a little bit further. These moments, they introduce new perspectives, they challenge those existing beliefs, and they often become the foundation for major religions. Which

J John 07:58

makes you wonder if these epochal revelations are so significant, why isn't there just one unified belief system? Why all this diversity of interpretation? And

S Sarah 08:08

that's a question that takes us right to the very heart of the human experience, to the power of personality and interpretation. Because even with these moments of divine inspiration, these flashes of insight, it's still up to us as humans to receive it, to interpret it, and ultimately to live by those truths. And that's where things get really interesting.

J John 08:26

So we have these major cosmic downloads, right, these epochal revelations, but then they get filtered through this very human lens of interpretation and experience. Exactly. It seems like that human element, those people who grapple with those ideas and try to share them, must play such a huge role in how those beliefs actually take root and spread. Oh, absolutely.

S Sarah 08:47

Think about it, even with divine inspiration, those messages, those revelations, they don't just magically spread and take root. You need individuals who can connect with those truths, embody them, communicate them in a way that resonates with other people. It's like the difference between reading a powerful quote in a book versus hearing someone deliver that same quote with conviction and passion in a way that truly moves you.

J John 09:07

It reminds me that quote, I think it's often attributed to Maya Angelou. People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel. And it feels like these leaders, these prophets, they don't just deliver a message, they embody it, right, precisely.

S Sarah 09:21

And the Urantia Book dives into some really fascinating examples of this, like take Moses, for instance. You have this incredible leader trying to guide his people towards a belief in one God, right, this concept that we know know as monotheism, but he's up against a serious cultural baggage, namely that persistent grip of the ghost cult that we talked about earlier. Imagine trying to shift those deeply ingrained beliefs, especially when they're tied to fear tradition, a sense of connection to your ancestors. It's

J John 09:49

one thing to receive a divine message, but to then turn around and challenge those deeply held beliefs, those practices that have been passed down for generations. That takes. Some serious courage, absolutely

S Sarah 10:00

and yet, Moses perseveres, he challenges those beliefs, even establishes laws against those practices, all in an effort to move his people towards this more unified understanding of the Divine. And you know, it wasn't always smooth sailing, but his efforts, they had a profound and lasting impact. It just goes to show that even amidst those epochal revelations, those divine downloads, it often takes dedicated individuals to really champion those truths and guide others towards them. So it's



John 10:28

this interplay between divine inspiration and human action, this constant push and pull, between this desire to receive truth and then the challenge of actually putting it into practice within our very human context Exactly.



Sarah 10:38

And that's what makes studying religion so fascinating. It's not just about doctrines and dogmas. It's about these lived experiences of people wrestling with these big questions, trying to make sense of their place in the universe, their relationship to the divine. And as we look across human history, we see this incredible tapestry of faiths that have emerged from that struggle, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, the list goes on and on. It's a testament to the diversity of human experience. And this enduring power of the human spirit to seek out meaning and connection



John 11:07

in each of those traditions with its own unique history, its own prophets and reformers, its own interpretations of the Divine, adds a different thread to that tapestry. It's almost overwhelming to think about, how do we even begin to make sense of such a diverse landscape of belief? Well, that's



Sarah 11:22

where the insights of the Urantia Book, I think, can be particularly helpful. You see, it doesn't claim that one religion has a monopoly on truth. Instead, it seems to suggest that there's truth, there's wisdom to be found in all these different belief systems.



John 11:37

So rather than focusing on the differences, maybe the key is to look for the common threads, those shared values and aspirations that connect us across those differences



Sarah 11:45

precisely. And you know, that's a really important takeaway, especially in today's world. As our societies become increasingly interconnected, we're constantly encountering different perspectives, different ways of seeing the world. And the Urantia Book seems to suggest that instead of seeing that diversity as a threat, we can choose to see it as an opportunity, an opportunity to learn from one another, to expand our understanding of the Divine and to find common ground in our shared human experience.

J John 12:12

It's a powerful message, especially at a time when religious differences are so often used to divide us. But where do we go from here if there's no one right answer, what does the Urantia Book suggest is the future of faith in a world that's grappling with such rapid change and increasing secularization? That's

S Sarah 12:31

the million dollar question, isn't it? And the Urantia Book doesn't shy away from the challenges that modern society poses to traditional religion. I mean, we're talking about scientific advancements, social changes happening at an unprecedented pace, and this increasingly interconnected world where these diverse beliefs are constantly colliding, it

J John 12:49

feels like more than ever we're being forced to confront all these different ways of seeing the world, different ways of understanding our place in it. It's easy to feel overwhelmed by that sheer diversity of belief, or to cling even more tightly to our own beliefs in the face of all that uncertainty, absolutely

S Sarah 13:04

and yet, in the face of all these challenges, the Urantia Book leaves us with this incredibly thought provoking question, can religion evolve beyond dogma, beyond those rigid beliefs and intellectual barriers, to find a new kind of unity,

J John 13:17

a unity that doesn't erase our differences, but rather find strength in them, recognizes the inherent value in those different perspectives.

S Sarah 13:24

Precisely, the text seems to suggest that the future of faith may lie in our ability to move beyond those old divisions and find common ground in our shared human experience, in our shared capacity for awe and wonder, for compassion and connection, for that deep seated yearning for something greater than ourselves. It's a powerful

J John 13:41

vision, and one that I think each of us, regardless of our own personal beliefs, can connect with on a fundamental level. It reminds us that religion, at its core, is about more than just rituals and doctrines. It's about how we choose to live our lives, how we treat one another, the values

we strive to embody in the world. And as we wrap up this deep dive into the the Urantia Book, I'm left with this sense of hope, this possibility that even amidst those age old questions and the challenges of our modern world, maybe, maybe there's a path forward, one that embraces both the diversity of human belief and that fundamental human need for connection and

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Sarah 14:17

meaning, beautifully said. And you know, as with all our deep dives, our goal isn't to provide all the answers, but rather to equip you with the insights and perspectives you need to continue exploring these questions on your

J

John 14:27

own, from those earliest expressions of fear and wonder to this complex and ever evolving tapestry of faith, we've journeyed through millennia of religious history, and while those big questions about the divine and our place in The cosmos may not have easy answers. The Urantia Book reminds us that the search itself is a worthy pursuit, one filled with fascinating twists and unexpected turns and perhaps even a few personal revelations along the way.