

Part 3, Paper 95, The Melchize...ngs in the Levant, Melchizedek

📅 Thu, Oct 03, 2024 11:15AM 🕒 13:15

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Melchizedek teachings, one God, Mesopotamia upheaval, Salem missionaries, Ishtar clash, Egyptian afterlife, Akhenaten reforms, Zoroastrianism origins, Ahura Mazda, ethical conduct, Kaaba significance, Muhammad's message, monotheism evolution, historical mystery, idea power

SPEAKERS

Sarah, John



John 00:00

Welcome to another deep dive. You guys have sent us some really fascinating excerpts this time around, all dealing with the Melchizedek teachings and how they kind of reverberated across the ancient world. It's like



Sarah 00:11

we're about to trace the footsteps of an idea, you know, watching how this belief in one God ripples outward, right and leaves its mark on, well, some pretty influential civilizations. It's like



John 00:23

a historical mystery tour, exactly. We're going way back, way before the Roman Empire, before even the golden age of Greece. Oh yeah, we're talking about the cradle of civilization, Mesopotamia, around 2000 BCE. And what a



Sarah 00:37

time of upheaval and change, right? Imagine a world where you've got multiple gods being worshiped, often with rituals and practices that, well, let's just say they might raise a few eyebrows today, more colorful than we're used to, maybe, to put it mildly, and into this world, step the Salem missionaries, bringing with them this radical, I mean, truly revolutionary, message one God, the Father and Maker of all,



J John 01:03

talk about shaking things up. And it wasn't just talk either, right? The Urantia Book describes how they tried to, I don't know, make this abstract idea resonate with the Mesopotamian. Oh, absolutely. They really tried to meet people where they were at. They even tried to simplify that whole Pantheon down to seven major deities. A

S Sarah 01:20

valiant effort, wouldn't you say? But as the book points out, they ran into a bit of a roadblock, mainly Ishtar. Ishtar, right? This goddess whose worship was so deeply intertwined with Mesopotamian culture, their social practices,

J John 01:32

especially, it seems, when it came to the role of women, exactly, and that clash

S Sarah 01:36

of values, it really led to the decline of the Sumerian kings in that region. It's

J John 01:41

kind of sad in a way. Makes you wonder, though, if those early missionaries could have foreseen how their efforts, even if they seemed unsuccessful at the time, how they would echo down through history. It's incredible to think about. I mean, some scholars even suggest that some of the Psalms we read today, those ancient hymns, might actually have roots in those early Mesopotamian teachings.

S Sarah 02:03

It's a fascinating thought, isn't it, to think that something as enduring as the Bible might contain these whispers of a well, a forgotten religious movement from millennia ago. Okay,

J John 02:13

so Mesopotamia was a bit of a mixed bag. What happens as these ideas kind of drift south to Egypt now, the Egyptians, they already had a pretty sophisticated understanding of the afterlife, but their relationship with the divine was, well, let's just say they had a God for everything. You're

S Sarah 02:29

not kidding. Ancient Egypt was like a tapestry of local deities. right? You had Gods linked to

...and you've got the Egyptian gods, right? And you've got the gods of animals, natural forces, even specific cities, right?

J John 02:38

Right? Each with their own temples, their own rituals, their own stories. I

S Sarah 02:42

was very localized, very as the Urantia calls it tribal, tribal,

J John 02:45

okay? But even within that system, you start to see the seeds of something different taking root, right? We've got someone like a menemapee who basically says, Hold on everyone. Stop obsessing over tombs and rituals and start focusing on living a righteous life. Right now, I'm paraphrasing. Of

S Sarah 03:01

course, you've got the gist of it. And his words, they had an impact far beyond Egypt's borders too. Think about it. This Egyptian sage and his ideas about conscience and ethical conduct, they end up influencing texts like the Hebrew Book of Proverbs even find their way into Greek philosophical thought. It's

J John 03:18

like this ripple effect across time and cultures, and that's just one example, right? Oh, yeah, the real rock star of this Egyptian chapter has to be Akhenaten. Talk about ambition. This Pharaoh attempts to completely overhaul Egyptian religion, replacing their vast Pantheon with the worship of a single god, Akhenaten.

S Sarah 03:37

It's a period in Egyptian history that still fascinates scholars to this day. Imagine the audacity right, to try and shift an entire nation's spiritual understanding in a single generation, and he almost pulled it off too.

J John 03:50

He made some bold moves, that's for sure. But like you said, it was ultimately short lived, right, right? What does the Urantia Book say about why Akhenaten's reforms ultimately failed to take hold. Was it just too much, too fast? Well,

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Sarah 04:02

the Urantia Book, it offers a couple of really interesting explanations, actually. Okay? It talks about how, while Akhenaten, he definitely had the spiritual zeal, right? Yeah, he kind of lacked the political savvy of someone like Moses, who the book points out, was actually able to unite a people and lead them through hardship. Interesting. Akhenaten, also, he faced a ton of pushback from the Egyptian priesthood. Oh, right,

J

John 04:25

right. Of course, they probably weren't too thrilled about this whole one god idea. Not

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Sarah 04:29

one bit they saw their power, their influence, being threatened by his reforms. It's

J

John 04:35

a classic power struggle when you think about totally and it just goes to show how even religious movements, even with the best of intentions, they can get caught up in politics and social structures. Oh,

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Sarah 04:46

absolutely. But it's not like Akhenaten was a complete failure, right? I mean, his ideas, they didn't just vanish overnight,

J

John 04:52

right? Right? There were still traces of his influence. The Urantia Book

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Sarah 04:55

actually draws this really fascinating parallel between Akhenaten. And Jesus? Did you know that? No, I don't think so. It talks about how Jesus, as a young child, remember how the gospel tells us he was taken to Egypt, yeah, to escape Herod, right, exactly. And the book seems to suggest that some in Egypt, maybe those who still held on to Akhenaten's teachings, they saw a connection between the two. Whoa,

J

John 05:19

you're blowing my mind right now

you're blowing my mind right now.

S

Sarah 05:21

It's like this crazy historical What if moment, seriously,

J

John 05:25

it just makes you realize how even small events or seemingly insignificant events can have these huge ripple effects. Oh, totally.

S

Sarah 05:32

And it speaks to the power of ideas, right? How they can stick around long after right? But hey, let's shift gears geographically for a bit. We've seen how this whole one god concept, how it fared in Mesopotamia and Egypt. What about further east in Persia? Persia,

J

John 05:47

that's a whole other ball game, right? Did the Salem missionaries have any more luck there?

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Sarah 05:52

So from the excerpts you sent me, it seems like Persia was actually, at least initially, they were a bit more receptive to the Salem teachings, okay, but then things changed. Yeah. What happened? A new dynasty came into power, one that wasn't quite as tolerant of these monotheistic ideas. Makes sense, the Salem missionaries. They faced persecution. Their communities were scattered. Their teaching well, they were basically driven underground. Wow. But here's where things get really interesting. It's around this time, we're talking the sixth century BCE, that a figure named Zoroaster emerges. Have you heard of him? Oh, yeah, Zoroaster,

J

John 06:29

definitely a major figure in the history of religion. I just, I'm not sure I see the connection to the Salem missionaries yet. So

S

Sarah 06:36

Zoroaster, he's credited with founding Zoroastrianism, right? And the Urantia Book suggests that he actually, in his travels and studies, he encountered remnants of those earlier Salem teachings, really, yeah, he was particularly drawn to the concept of one supreme god, okay,

this idea that really resonated with him. But instead of just, you know, taking it wholesale, he wove it into the fabric of existing Persian beliefs creating something new. So



John 07:03

instead of this whole pantheon of gods, we get Ahura Mazda, exactly,



Sarah 07:07

Ahura Mazda, the one true God, locked in this cosmic struggle against the forces of evil. It's



John 07:13

a much more, I don't know, a much more dynamic vision of the Divine, wouldn't you say,



Sarah 07:16

absolutely This wasn't about passive prayer and acceptance. Zoroaster was calling on people to fight, to actively fight against the darkness and align themselves with the huromazda, the god of light, wisdom, civilization, right?



John 07:28

And we even see echoes of those Salem teachings in zoroasters, emphasis on ethics, on right and wrong. Oh, totally.



Sarah 07:35

It wasn't just about acknowledging Hira Mazda's existence. It was about living a righteous life, making the right choices.



John 07:42

And here's where things get even wilder, right? Because Zoroastrianism, with its ideas about good versus evil, Heaven and Hell, even a final judgment, these ideas end up influencing both Judaism and Christianity. It's incredible, isn't it? Talk about a legacy. It's kind of ironic, when you think about it. The Salem missionaries, they might not have established a lasting presence in Persia, yeah, but their ideas filtered through Zoroaster ended up shaping some of the world's most influential religions. It



Sarah 08:11

— makes you appreciate the interconnected nature of well, everything, doesn't it? History, religion, culture, absolutely.

J John 08:17

Okay. So we've talked about Mesopotamia, Egypt, Persia. Now we got to talk about the Arabian Peninsula, right, the birthplace of Islam, but before we get to that, what does the Urantia Book tell us about the Salem teachings there? Did they have any luck in that part of the world?

S Sarah 08:32

So it's interesting, because you'd think geographically speaking, they'd be closer to Salem, right, right? But they actually faced even more obstacles there than in Persia, really. Why is that? The Urantia Book kind of paints this picture of the Arabian peninsula at that time as a land of fiercely independent tribes, each with its own customs, beliefs, practices, right, a very tribal society, exactly. And the Salem missionaries, they came in with this message of organization of centralized authority, which in that context might have backfired. It might have hindered their efforts more than it helped.

J John 09:07

It's a good reminder that even with the best message in the world, how you present it, how you approach people, it matters. Couldn't

S Sarah 09:15

agree more. So instead of finding fertile ground the idea of one God, it just didn't stick in the way they hoped. So. It was a complete dead end. Not entirely. The book mentions families and clans who held onto that idea, the idea of one God, Okay, interesting. They clung to it. Passed it down through generations.

J John 09:35

So these little whispers of monotheism, they persisted. They were there,

S Sarah 09:39

hidden beneath the surface of the more dominant beliefs of the

J John 09:42

time, it makes you wonder, what if things had gone differently? It really

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Sarah 09:45

does, and that's what's so fascinating about this whole exploration. But remember, Arabia does eventually embrace a form of monotheism, of

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John 09:53

course, Islam. But that seems like a huge jump, doesn't it? How do we get from these scattered families? Clinging to the idea of one God to the rise of one of the world's major religions, right? Islam. But that seems like a huge jump, doesn't it? How do we get from these scattered families clinging to the idea of one God to the rise of one of the world's major religions?

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Sarah 10:14

It is a big jump. And the Urantia Book, it doesn't really present it as the straight line, you know, right, right? Like, remember, we're talking about centuries here. Tons of cultural exchange, power struggles, ideas evolving, okay, yeah, that makes sense. But there are some, there are definitely some fascinating clues in the text, like, what, what

J

John 10:32

does the book say about this whole transition to Islam? Well,

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Sarah 10:35

think about the Kaaba in Mecca, okay, long before Muhammad, right, it was already this hugely important religious site, right? All those different tribes coming together exactly a place where they'd gather worship their various gods and

J

John 10:48

the black stone, right? That was a big deal even then,

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Sarah 10:50

oh yeah, the black stone of the Kaaba still a bit of a mystery today, totally, but it was this powerful, powerful symbol for them, okay, but

J

John 10:57

how does that? How does any of that tie into this idea of monotheism.

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Sarah 11:02

So the Urantia Book suggests that the Kaaba it kind of it provided a focal point, you know, like this common ground for people who were otherwise divided by their tribes, their beliefs, something they could all agree on. Yeah, exactly. It represented something bigger than all of them. So

J

John 11:19

it's like, in a way, it paved the way. It created the space for a belief system like Islam to come along. Exactly.

S

Sarah 11:27

It's like it set the stage. And then, of course, you have Muhammad with his message of one God, this universal message which really resonated with people. Oh, absolutely. It offered this way to bridge all those old divisions, unite them under one faith.

J

John 11:41

Wow, when you put it like that, it really shows how, I don't know, how things that seem totally unrelated can actually be connected,

S

Sarah 11:46

right? History is rarely a straight line, none

J

John 11:49

at all. Okay, so Big Picture time. We've journeyed from the banks of the Euphrates all the way to the deserts of Arabia. It's been quite a trip. It really has what? What's the big takeaway for you? What really stood out from all these stories about monotheism? You know,

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Sarah 12:05

for me, it just highlights the power of ideas, yeah, how they can evolve, how they can spread in ways that, honestly, the people who first had them could never have even imagined. It's

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John 12:16

like a chain reaction, almost totally and it also shows just

S Sarah 12:19
how much humans crave connection. You know, this connection to something bigger than themselves, whether

J John 12:26
that's through rituals or philosophy or just, I don't know, staring up at the stars, it's

S Sarah 12:31
all connected. And you know what? It makes you wonder, what about us?

J John 12:34
What about us?

S Sarah 12:35
What ideas are we? Are we grappling with right now that might seem totally wild to people 1000 years from now, that's

J John 12:41
a good question. It's

S Sarah 12:42
like our version of, wait just one. God, are you serious?

J John 12:46
That's a really interesting thought to end on. It's a good reminder to, I don't know, to stay open minded, oh yeah, to remember that we don't have all the answers, and to keep asking those questions exactly. Well, this has been fantastic. Thanks so much for joining me on this deep dive into the Urantia Book and well, the surprisingly long and complicated history of monotheism. And to everyone listening, keep those sources coming and we'll keep exploring them together until next time you.