

Part 3, Paper 98, The Melchize...s in the Occident, Melchizedek

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SPEAKERS

Sarah, John

J John 00:00

Hey everyone, welcome to another deep dive. Today, we're going to be diving into something pretty intriguing, something called the Melchizedek teachings. We're taking this from paper 98 of the Urantia Book. And you know, we love getting into these less well known areas of religious history, absolutely. So this, it's a really, really old set of teachings, like we're talking almost 4000 years old, right? And it's believed to have influenced a lot of the big Western religions, even if most people have never heard of Melchizedek,

S Sarah 00:29

yeah. It's really a story about how this, this kind of simple idea, the belief in one God, you know, how that idea can spread across different cultures and time and and live its mark on these, these huge, you know, religions that we know today. So,

J John 00:42

so who was this, Melchizedek, and what made his teaching so different and revolutionary, especially for back then? Well, the

S Sarah 00:50

book tells us that we're talking almost 4000 years ago. There was this guy, machi venta Melchizedek, and he lived near where Jerusalem is now, and he started teaching this idea of one God.



John 01:03

Okay, so that makes sense, right? Like that tracks new religious figure, new new religious idea, new religion you'd



Sarah 01:09

think so, right, right, but, but it actually takes a really interesting turn there, okay, because Melchizedek, he wasn't really interested in establishing some kind of structured religion. Oh, interesting. With all the rituals and hierarchies you know, that we often associate with religion, that is surprising.



John 01:28

So, so why even teach about one god if you're not to create, like a new religion out of it, right?



Sarah 01:34

It's, it's kind of counterintuitive, isn't it? Yeah, but that's what I think makes this whole thing so fascinating. So according to the book Melchizedek, he really believed in this idea of, like, a direct connection with the divine, okay, without needing, you know, priests or intermediaries or anything like that, okay? And this, this idea, it's scholars call it anti priest craft, and it had a huge impact on on how his teachings were shared and and how different cultures receive them. Anti



John 02:03

priests, so, so he was basically saying, like, no to having a powerful, organized priesthood. Yeah,



Sarah 02:09

exactly. And, and you have to remember, this was a really radical concept for the ancient world. Like back then, religious authority was basically the same as political power. They were all intertwined. It



John 02:19

makes you wonder, then, how did these teachings spread so well without that kind of formal structure in place to support them? Well, I



Sarah 02:25

guess you could say that ideas, they're kind of like water, right? They tend to find a way to find their own level. Okay, yeah, so Melchizedek teachings, they spread through a few different ways, like there were dedicated missionaries who traveled around, but also just the natural movement of nomadic peoples and and cultural exchange, long trade routes, all that contributed. So it's

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John 02:45

like a ripple effect, starting from one point and just like expanding outward, exactly, yeah.

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Sarah 02:50

And it reminds us that even way back then, ideas could transcend physical boundaries and geographical limitations. You know, people were sharing ideas, even in the ancient world.

J

John 03:02

Were there any other factors you think that helped these teachings gain traction, aside from those ways of spreading around? Oh, for

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Sarah 03:09

sure, one of the biggest ones was how adaptable the teachings were. I mean, melchizedek's main message, this idea of one God, it was so simple, but also so profound, yeah, at the same time. So it was actually relatively speaking, you know, easy to integrate into different cultures, existing belief systems, right? And that turned out to be super important, as his teachings moved west and met all these different cultures in the ancient Mediterranean. You know, speaking

J

John 03:36

of the ancient Mediterranean, it makes me think about Ancient Greece, right? Like they were known for their philosophers and all their different gods, but they didn't really have a strong, centralized priesthood, did they not really? No, and I wonder if, if maybe melchizedek's whole anti priest craft idea had something to do with that. Yeah,

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Sarah 03:55

you could be right. It's interesting, right? The Greeks, they definitely had temples and rituals and all that, but there wasn't this, like, dominant group of priests who were in charge of, like, official religious dogma, right? And because of that, I think it created this environment where, you know, people were free to think about and interpret their beliefs in their own way.

J John 04:16

So even though they still believed in Zeus and those other gods, they weren't necessarily tied to, like, super strict rules and interpretations Exactly.

S Sarah 04:24

And so as these Melchizedek teachings were spreading through Greece, they found all these people who were already having these really deep conversations about the divine, you know, wow. So you have this kind of, like intellectual energy already there, and then you combine that with this, like, more relaxed approach to religious authority, and it created this perfect space for those seeds of, like, monotheism, this belief in one God, to really take root.

J John 04:51

So it's not just like a simple swap, yeah, like old belief out new belief in it sounds like there's this real mixing of ideas happening. Yeah?

S Sarah 04:59

Yeah, it's much more organic than that. You know, it's like this fusion, this blending of all these different threads. And it's right in the middle of all this that you get Greek philosophy really taking off, right? You've got thinkers like Socrates and Plato, you know, really pushing the boundaries of conventional thinking. It makes you

J John 05:15

wonder, like, how did all that philosophical thought, did it affect how they understood these Melchizedek teachings. Do you think?

S Sarah 05:21

I think it must have Yeah, and the Urantia Book, it points out how some of the Greek philosophical schools, they started to kind of echo this idea of a single, universal force that's behind everything that underpins the whole cosmos. Okay, they might not have called it God in exactly the same way that Melchizedek did, right? But the basic idea was really simple, this idea of oneness, and it resonated with a lot of people who were searching for, like, a more unified understanding of the universe, like

J John 05:48

all these ancient threads of thought, kind of weaving together, creating something new, you know. But then what happened when these ideas, this mix of Melchizedek and Greek philosophy, ran into the Roman Empire. They were more about structure, weren't they, like a

more official approach to religion?

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Sarah 06:05

Oh, absolutely. And that's where things get even more interesting. So you've got the Roman Empire, and as they expanded, they encountered all these different cultures and beliefs, right? It was like this giant melting pot. And so you had the official Roman gods, of course, but then also all these foreign cults and what they called mystery religions, kind of all swirling around together.

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John 06:26

Mystery religions. Okay, now those sound interesting, yeah, what were those all about?

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Sarah 06:31

So imagine a time when you know the traditional religions, they weren't really doing it for people anymore. Okay? They weren't satisfying that, that deeper need, that yearning for something more. And that's where these mystery cults came in. They had these secret rituals. They promised salvation, or, you know, a better afterlife, and they offered this really personal connection with the Divine. So

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John 06:52

it sounds like a really wild mix, right? You've got the traditional Roman religion, you've got these Greek philosophical ideas floating around, and then these mystery cults promising all these intense experiences. It's hard to imagine how this idea of just one God spread by word of mouth could compete with all that. Yeah,

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Sarah 07:10

it really was a vibrant time for religion in the Roman Empire. And you're right, those mystery cults, they really tapped into something that the older, more official religions didn't always have. You know, that focus on personal experience, that emotional connection. Yeah,

J

John 07:27

definitely, were there any specific mystery cults that were especially popular back then?

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Sarah 07:31

Well, the Urantia Book, it talks specifically about the influence of Mithraism. Have you heard of that one?



John 07:36

I've heard the name, but I don't know much about it. Yeah, it



Sarah 07:39

was this Persian cult, and it had become really popular all over the Roman world. And get this, it actually shared some pretty interesting similarities with early Christianity, like they both had this idea of a savior God, and they both talked about an afterlife.



John 07:54

Wow. So it makes you wonder, did those shared ideas, those similarities, did they help Christianity as it was first starting to spread, like Did it make it easier for people to accept some of those ideas?



Sarah 08:06

That's a really good question. It's definitely possible. It's hard to say for sure, what gave Christianity the edge, you know? What made it ultimately become so dominant? But it's clear that all of these different threads of religious thought, all of those ideas mixing and changing over centuries. It created this, this really fertile ground for Christianity to take root, right,



John 08:28

right? It's like all those older traditions and ways of thinking. They laid the groundwork in a way. So as we kind of jump ahead to today, can we still see any traces of those ancient Melchizedek teachings in Christianity. Now that's



Sarah 08:42

what's so fascinating about all of this, right? Because even though Christianity went on to develop its own unique set of beliefs and practices, it's really interesting to think about how those early encounters with melchizedek's ideas might have, might have shaped things, right? Like the idea of one God, for example, that was revolutionary back in melchizedek's time, but it became absolutely central to Christian theology.



John 09:04

Yeah, it's like this long game of theological telephone where ideas get passed down and they change a little bit with these retelling

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Sarah 09:10

Aha, I like that. And it reminds us that religions aren't static, you know, they're always evolving, always being influenced by the world around them, by people's changing understanding of themselves in the universe.

J

John 09:22

Absolutely So as we wrap up this deep dive into this, this really unexpected story of the Melchizedek teachings, what would you say is like the biggest takeaway, what can all of this teach us about, about how belief systems change and grow?

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Sarah 09:36

Well, I think the most important thing to remember is that beliefs, they're like ideas. They don't usually just travel in a straight line. You know what I mean? They twist and turn. They bump into other ideas. They blend together in ways that we might not expect, and even if we don't always recognize them, those ancient echo, those whispers from the past. They're still there, reminding us how interconnected human thought really is, how these ideas. Can transcend time and cultures and still resonate with us today. It's amazing

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John 10:03

to think about, isn't it kind of makes you feel connected to all those people who came before us, all asking the same big questions. It

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Sarah 10:09

really does well. Thank

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John 10:10

you so much for joining us for this deep dive, everyone. It's been a fascinating journey, and I hope you'll keep exploring these unexpected corners of history with us.