

Encapsulated - Episode 3 of 10

FADE IN:

INT. 'HELD IN COMMON' CHURCH - DAY

A few dozen congregants are filing in. At the door, an USHER is requiring them to partake in communion before they're allowed to enter.

USHER

(for each congregant)

In remembrance of him. In remembrance of him.

Inside the sanctuary, a choir is singing.

CHOIR

Holy, happy separation!

They alone are truly blest

Who from all besides retiring,

And Himself alone desiring

Find in Jesus only rest,

Find in Jesus only rest.

(The congregation sings along as they file  
into the pews)

Jesus calls to separation,

And Himself hath led the way;

His own life the explanation,

His own life the illustration

Who is ready to obey?

Who is ready to obey?

The pastor, BIG SIMON (55), walks to the podium.

BIG SIMON (spoken, not sung)

Unto thee, beloved master. Nearer, nearer, let us

be. Unto thee in consecration. Unto thee in

separation. Ever, only, unto thee.

CONGREGATION

Ever, only, unto thee.

BIG SIMON

Let us pray.

INT. COLLEGE DORM ROOM - DAY

ALLY (20) is eating toaster waffles and reading a book called 'Debunked - myths and hoaxes of the 20th century'. Rock music is playing in her earbuds.

Her phone rings. She pulls out her earbuds, answers, and puts it on speaker.

ALLY

Please tell me you've got something, I'm not doing any good in draft mode.

MAN (Phone)

What part of 'it's still too sensitive' makes you think I have an assignment?

ALLY

What part of 'people need to get over it' makes you think I care? It's been, what, two months now? I think that's plenty of 'coping time'.

MAN

There'll always be coping time.

ALLY

Just give me a story! Anything, I'll even do a spot with an obvious conspiracist.

MAN

Ally, look, my hands are tied. Corporate said no fact-checking on potential scams, period.

ALLY

But that's our job! We're supposed to expose the kinds of stunts that-

MAN

With a tabloid, sure, but not with the Gazette.

ALLY

Forget it, I'm going solo.

MAN

I don't blame you, I'll hit you up if the company decides people are ready for reality again.

ALLY

Don't bother.

INT. 'HELD IN COMMON' CHURCH - DAY

Big Simon is preaching to a rapt audience.

BIG SIMON

People ask me sometimes, Big Simon, why can't we go back to the Early Church? Why don't we have the spark? Why aren't we speaking in tongues, casting out demons, performing signs, holding our possessions in common? Why isn't the Lord adding to our number daily? Big Simon - and then they go full David on me - I feel like God's FORSAKEN us.

(the congregants murmur and chuckle a bit)

Now, we all know God NEVER leaves us or forsakes us, isn't that right?

CONGREGATION

Amen!

BIG SIMON

But boy it sure feels that way sometimes!

CONGREGATION

Amen!

BIG SIMON

But all truth is God's truth. Catch that now - ALL truth is GOD'S truth. You may not like it - just like that barrier out there, you may not like it - but that doesn't make it less TRUE. And when somebody tells me, 'why have we fallen SO FAR from the early church?', I may not like it - but that doesn't make it less TRUE.

CONGREGATION

Amen!

BIG SIMON

So I asked God, what is it that we're missing, show me what we're doing wrong! And you know what God said? You know how he spoke to me? Same way he always does, same as for the last two thousand years - through his HOLY WORD.

CONGREGATION

Amen!

BIG SIMON

And the HOLY word of God says - in the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 4, verse 33 - 'And with great power, the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus'. Catch that - THEIR testimony. Not testimony passed down from their forefathers. Not testimony they read on Wikipedia.

(the congregants laugh)

It was THEIR testimony. They saw WITH THEIR OWN EYES the risen Jesus. And it was BECAUSE of what they saw, what THEY saw, that they preached with GREAT POWER. My wife Tara will tell you that I

preach with great power when the Seahawks win -  
could you IMAGINE if I saw our Lord and Savior??  
(they laugh again)

Brothers and sisters, this barrier is not a  
burden, but a blessing. It's not a BURDEN, but a  
BLESSING. God has given us the gift of divine  
proof. It may not be our Lord and Savior, risen  
in the flesh - but who in their right mind can  
see what's happening and think, 'Nah. Nah. It's  
not God, it's just SCIENCE!'

CONGREGATION

Amen!

BIG SIMON

Brothers and sisters, we have an opportunity from  
God HIMSELF to bring back the early church. Do  
you think it's a coincidence that we're less than  
a mile from the barrier? That we have a front row  
seat to the greatest example of God's unde-NIABLE  
presence that the modern world has ever seen?  
'Nah. Nah. It's not God, it's just science.'

(the congregants laugh and cheer)

For the first time in two THOUSAND years, we can  
proclaim in our OWN tongues the mighty works of  
God - this is OUR testimony. And when they look  
back at us - our children, and our children's  
children, they'll say of us - 'And with great  
power, they were giving THEIR testimony to the  
power of our great Lord.'

CONGREGATION

Amen!

BIG SIMON

And the power of the spirit was upon THEM!

CONGREGATION

Amen!

BIG SIMON

And the Lord's supper was taken by THEM!

CONGREGATION

Amen!

BIG SIMON

And everything was held in common among THEM!

CONGREGATION

Amen!

BIG SIMON

And believers EVERY DAY were ADDED - TO - THEM!

CONGREGATION

AMEN!!

BIG SIMON

Glory be to God! Let us pray!

EXT. THE DIVINE SPAN - DAY

The Divine Span is a two-mile long stretch of the invisible barrier in an open field, just beyond the city limits, which is swarming with people.

Along it are hundreds of booths, tents, canopies and stalls for various religious groups. Priests, Rabbis, Imams, etc. are united in this vibrant ecumenical bazaar.

Ally is carrying around a camcorder and microphone, looking for a story. She passes by a geode vendor and steps under a gazebo through a curtain of beads.

ALLY

Hi! What is this?

WOMAN

This is a meditation oasis. Please, join us.

There are a handful of pilgrims on both sides of the barrier who are tracing along it with crystals.

ALLY

What are they doing?

WOMAN

Communing, becoming one with the wall.

Ally, unimpressed, walks to the next canopy for the 'Held In Common' church - there's nothing underneath it except a mini fridge, and a MAN standing with a communion plate.

MAN

Sorry, communion first.

(he offers her a wafer and wine)

ALLY

No thanks - I'm an atheist, so...

MAN

I see. Can I at least pray for you? Or interest you in one of our Sunday services?

ALLY

Shouldn't you be at one right now?

MAN

We have two - I already went this morning, Big Simon likes us to have twenty-four hour coverage. You never know when the Lord will call.

ALLY

But it doesn't look like you have anything- I mean, other than the fridge, it's empty in there. Am I... missing something? Did you get robbed?

MAN

This is a viewing tent - God has given us a miracle, we just make it easier for our brothers and sisters to see it up close.

ALLY

You should sell your spot and give the proceeds to the poor, isn't that in the Bible somewhere?

She walks away, still unimpressed. There's a large crowd at a booth further down, she walks over to it.

ONLOOKER 1

Look - he's coming back!

ONLOOKER 2

Shield your eyes!

There's a bright flash. A second later, the crowd erupts into cheers of 'Praise Jesus' and 'God is good'. A man named ELIJAH (33) is passing among the crowd.

ELIJAH

Bless you. God be with you. Peace.

ALLY

What's his deal?

ONLOOKER 1

That's Elijah. He can pass through!

ALLY

I find that hard to believe.

ONLOOKER 2

It's true, I've seen him on both sides.

ALLY

How much does he charge?

ONLOOKER 1

Charge? He's a man of God, he doesn't charge!

ALLY

Oh?

She points out a tip jar at Elijah's tent, which is literally overflowing as people stuff bills into it.

ONLOOKER 2

Completely voluntary, helps him keep up his strength - it's tiring work, passing through.

ELIJAH

I must rest for a while, but I will return to you this evening. God bless you all.

ONLOOKER 1

Poor man. See, he's not even taking the money with him!

ALLY

As if anybody around here would steal it.

The onlookers ignore her and follow Elijah to his car. Ally walks over to the canopy, which is deserted.

ALLY

Where's the switch...

(she feels around the ground)

I wonder if - no, too obvious. Well,...

(she knocks on the ground in different spots until she hears a hollow sound)

Figures. How does it open though?

ONLOOKER 3 (passing by)

Only Elijah can go through, there's not a hole in the wall. He's been touched.

ALLY

So was I, but I didn't let it get to me.

(she traces the outline of a trapdoor)

He's probably got a remote control...

(she pulls out her camcorder)

Here at the Divine Span, at a tent for a man called Elijah. Claims he can walk through - gone for the morning, but is coming back later. Looks like he's using a remote-activated trapdoor, possibly a twin on the other side. Will stick around for the evening's demonstration.

ONLOOKER 4 (passing by)

Are you doing a story on Elijah?

ALLY

Um, well actually-

(notices the woman's walking stick)

Yes, I was thinking I could record him as he - what do you call it, passes through?

ONLOOKER 4

His transcendence?

ALLY

Sure, yeah. I want to get a good spot - but I'm curious.. Woah, would you mind if I borrowed your staff for a second? I'm getting a vision.

ONLOOKER 4

Don't let me be caught hindering the Lord's work.

ALLY

Bless you.

(she reaches the stick across the barrier)

I can feel something. The spirit is moving!

(she taps the ground on the other side. Sure enough, there's a hollow spot)

And.. lost the vision. Darn. Thanks though.

ONLOOKER 4

Want me to pray for the Lord to restore it?

ALLY

No - no, I'm actually.. Buddhist.

ONLOOKER 4

So's my husband, we were both agnostic before the 20th, but it changed us, you know?

ALLY

I feel the EXACT same way.

The woman senses that Ally is patronizing her, scoffs, and walks away. Ally rolls her eyes.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

Big Simon and his wife TARA (56) are taking a stroll. There are homeless people everywhere.

TARA

A shame that they've let the place go.

BIG SIMON

This is all temporary until they build more housing - most of the residential areas are-

TARA

I'm not talking about people who were displaced. You know I meant the REGULAR homeless.

BIG SIMON

Sorry, still in teaching mode. Yes, you're right, but that doesn't seem to be on anybody's mind.

TARA

It's on MY mind, it's still MY park too.

BIG SIMON

But- sorry, you're right. You're right.

TARA

All truth.

BIG SIMON

I know - I'm a work in progress, just keep nudging me when I try to minimize your-

Big Simon's focus suddenly shifts to a street preacher.

TARA

What? Oh, Si, please.

STREET PREACHER

And when man had multiplied on the face of the Earth, the Lord was sorry he had made man. And he DIVIDED their tongues, because in arrogance, they proclaimed, we can become like God!

TARA

Can't we just take a WALK for once?

BIG SIMON

The Lord's work!

TARA

You're insane!

BIG SIMON

You don't like how the park has fallen by the wayside? Here's a chance to redeem it, make it a little less hateful.

(running to the preacher)

And you can't spell insanity with saint!

TARA

You're not wrong.

STREET PREACHER

And in the days of Moses, the Lord held back Pharaoh's army with a fire, so that they could not pursue the Israelites!

HOMELESS MAN

Go to hell!

STREET PREACHER

And then the lord surrounded them with walls of water, and they came CRASHING down.

(to the homeless man)

And YOU, you TOO will go to hell when the Lord tears down these walls! As in the days of Jericho, whose walls fell when-

BIG SIMON

You're theology is all across the map, sir - mind if I offer my counsel, as a pastor?

STREET PREACHER

Verily I say, even Satan HIMSELF masquerades as an angel of light!

BIG SIMON

Look here. Your bit about the tower of Babel - that's a common parallel, no harm there. But you said the Lord was sorry he made man, which is in reference to NOAH, not Babel.

STREET PREACHER

And in the last days, they will kill you, and throw you in prisons, and they will think they are offering service to GOD!

BIG SIMON

You also said that God punished them for wanting to be like God, which is from Adam and Eve - the principle may apply, but again, wrong story.

STREET PREACHER

Blasphemer! And in those days, the religious leaders said that these men are drunk - but they said, lo, they CANNOT be drunk, for it is only-

TARA

Honestly, let's just find a different park.

BIG SIMON

He's not going anywhere. None of us are.

Big Simon approaches the man confidently, whispers in his ear for a minute, then walks away. The preacher immediately drops his sign and leaves the park.

TARA

Quite the intervention.

BIG SIMON

God moves in mysterious ways - there, much more pleasant now.

TARA

I'll say.

EXT. THE DIVINE SPAN - DAY

Ally is still waiting at Elijah's tent, the sun is nearing the horizon. A crowd is starting to form.

ONLOOKER

Here he comes!

Elijah, surrounded by dozens of eager seekers, makes his way to the tent.

ELIJAH

Peace be with you. Bless you. Gather, children!

ALLY

Elijah, is it? I'm Ally with-

ELIJAH

Are you a journalist?

ALLY

Yes, I was wondering if you could answer-

ELIJAH

Splendid! Get that thing rolling, you can ask me questions from the other side.

(Puzzled, Ally turns on the camera)

Here, front row spot, I want this miraculous gift of God to be seen by all. Everybody - whether Christian, Muslim, Hindu or Atheist - I swear to you that our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed me, gifted me. I will now bridge the divide, much like our savior did when he rose from death to life, and I pray that you would be moved to commit your life to God's service.

The crowd steps back as Elijah centers himself in front of the wall. Ally is recording, focusing on the ground.

ELIJAH

If this is your first time, know that there is a great transfer of energy about to take place, so you may want to look away.

(Elijah whispers to Ally)

It shouldn't affect the camera, don't worry.

ALLY

Fine by me.

He presses his hand against the wall, retracts it, and presses again. All for show. He steps back, then lunges at the wall - a flash bursts out, Ally keeps the camera trained on the ground.

Suddenly he's on the other side, where there's an equally large crowd - everybody erupts into cheers and 'amens'.

ALLY

Quite the production.

ELIJAH

Sorry? I can't, too loud!

ALLY

I said, quite the- never mind. Let's see...

(she rewinds the footage, finds the exact moment when it flashes, and can just make out his body dropping through the trapdoor)

It's a fake! He's faking it, I have proof!

Nobody seems interested.

ALLY

He faked it! He has a twin, or a double - see? I can prove it!

ONLOOKER

Leave him alone! He's a saint!

ALLY

He's a fraud! Here, just watch the tape!

BIG SIMON

Beg pardon?

ALLY

This guy, Elijah - he's lying to people. See, watch this!

(she shows Big Simon the footage)

Right... there! You can see his body dropping, then - here, perfect, you can see him spring up on the other side, probably his twin brother. Gah, why won't people listen?

BIG SIMON

That does look convincing. Say, Elijah!

The crowd immediately turns to Big Simon. Whispers and murmurs abound as Big Simon walks to the edge.

ELIJAH

Simon, fisher of men! Bless you, brother!

BIG SIMON

God is good! I've got a doubting Thomas in the crowd, she says you're a fraud. Anything you could do to show her God's truth?

ELIJAH

How about I come back?  
(the crowd cheers)  
Would you all like that?

BIG SIMON

Brilliant!  
(to Ally)  
Is the camera on?

ALLY

Yeah, I'm all set.

ELIJAH

Stand back everyone!

He does it again. Struggles initially for effect, vanishes in a burst of light, reappears, crowd loves it.

BIG SIMON

A magician pulling off a trick once, on schedule, is nothing. Pulling it off twice, as a random request - I think you've made your case, Elijah.

Big Simon congratulates him, everyone is loving it.

BIG SIMON

In fact, I am so CONVINCED that God is at work here, that I want you to pass through OUR tent - as a symbol of unity for the 'Held in Common' congregation. What do you say, Elijah?

Everyone cheers him on, Big Simon puts his arm around Elijah's shoulder and starts walking away with him.

ELIJAH

Really, Simon, it can be exhausting, especially going twice back to back. I think I'll-

BIG SIMON

Nonsense! The Lord lifts up those who are weary - he will carry them on eagle's wings.

ELIJAH

Yes, but I'm not sure that-

BIG SIMON

Did you hear that? He's not sure! Let's show him the love of Christ, can I get an 'amen'?

The crowd gives a hearty 'amen', then chants 'Elijah! Elijah! Elijah!' They arrive at the 'Held in Common' tent; the man at the entrance offers Elijah communion.

ELIJAH

I'm not so sure-

BIG SIMON

(to the man at the entrance)

Brother, we have a special guest - you know Elijah, right? Mightn't we have something a bit more, sacred, that he can partake of?

The man pulls out a fresh piece of bread and a gold glass of wine from the mini fridge.

ELIJAH

Maybe it's not God's will to-

MAN AT ENTRANCE

In remembrance of him.

BIG SIMON

God makes his will known through his people.

Big Simon gestures to the eager crowd. Elijah reluctantly takes communion.

ELIJAH

In remembrance of him.

CROWD

In remembrance of him.

They cheer as Elijah goes under the canopy and steps up to the wall. He gulps nervously.

BIG SIMON

Lord, we ask for strength on our brother Elijah.

CROWD

Amen!

BIG SIMON

Lord, renew him and sustain him as he-

ELIJAH

Stop! It's fake, she's right, I have a twin!

(he starts choking)

I shouldn't- I'm sorry, I never meant to-

BIG SIMON

Elijah, brother - why has the Lord filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to deceive these people?

ELIJAH

What's happen- I can't, please-

BIG SIMON

Was it not within your power to tell us plainly that you had a twin? Or when you were accused of lying, to admit the truth?

ALLY

Holy shit, I didn't mean to-

Elijah collapses to the ground and convulses. The crowd is at once wary and unable to look away.

BIG SIMON

Why is it that you have contrived this deception in your heart?

ELIJAH

I'm s-s-sorry, I didn't-

ALLY

Somebody call for help!

BIG SIMON

(kneeling next to Elijah)

You have not lied to MAN, but to GOD.

Elijah stops breathing.

MAN IN CROWD

Where's his twin?

WOMAN IN CROWD

He's back there! Come on!

The crowd stampedes back to Elijah's booth. On the other side of the barrier, they dig around, find the trap door, pull out his brother, and harass him.

BIG SIMON

(whispering to Elijah)

Behold, the feet of those you deceived are  
unearthing your brother, and soon he will join  
you in the place below.

Ally is in shock. Big Simon leaves and follows the crowd.  
Tara, who had been hiding back this whole time, runs over  
to Ally and holds her - reassuring her.

A few hundred feet away, the crowd is forcing the twin  
through the barrier.

MAN IN CROWD

You can pass through the wall! Go ahead!

WOMAN IN CROWD

Yeah! Save yourself, and us!

BIG SIMON

Father, have mercy on him, because he knows not  
what he's done.

TWIN BROTHER

Please, make it stop! I'll do anything!

He passes through, the life squeezed out of him. The crowd  
cheers ecstatically.

TARA

(to herself)

And great fear came upon the church, and on all  
who heard these things.

FADE OUT.