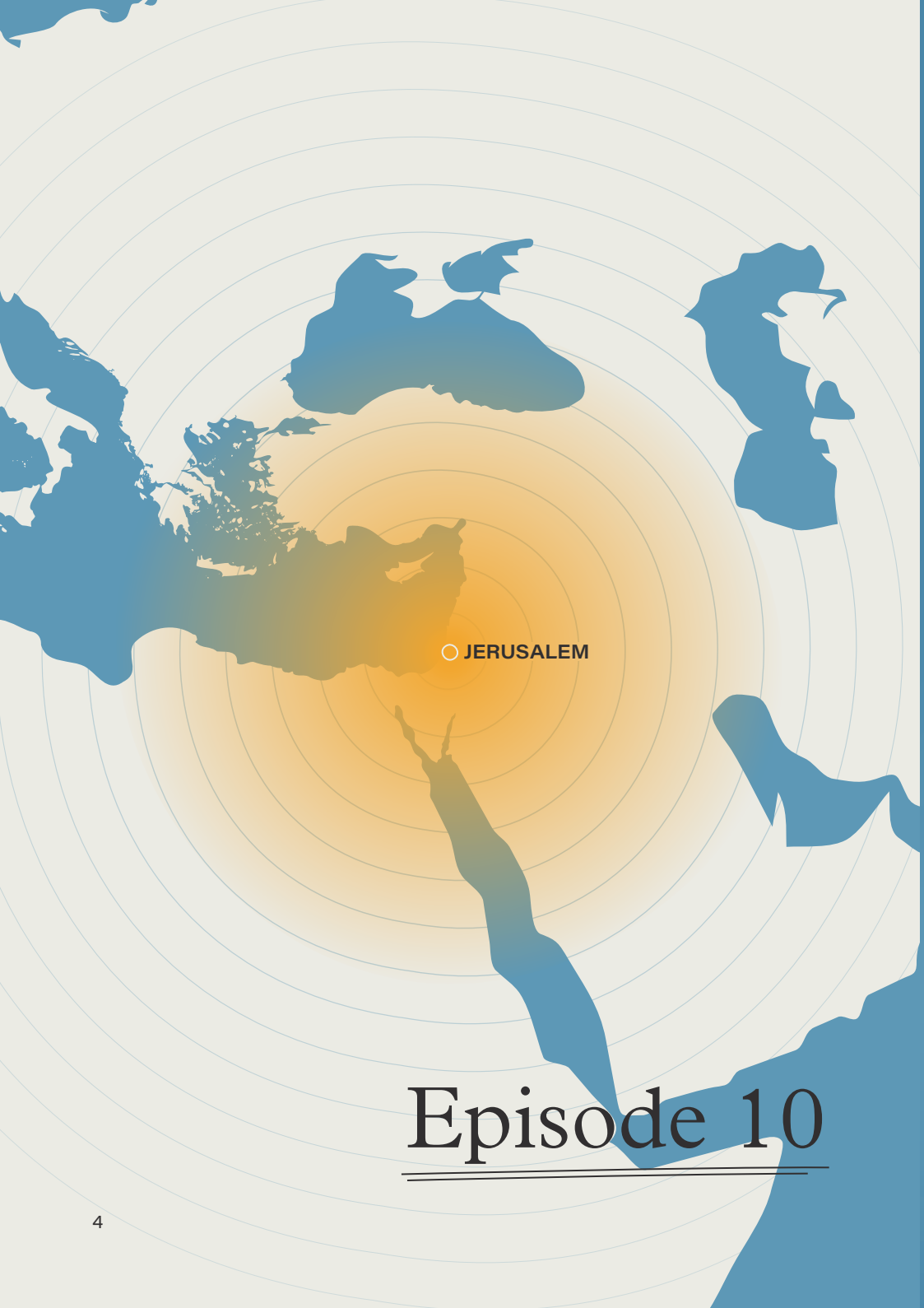


The Word

one to one



○ JERUSALEM

Episode 10

The true church and its leaders

ACTS 4:32-37

*In the previous episode:
Powerful prayer leads
to great boldness.*

*In this episode:
Life with Jesus as
King... and it's good.*

³²All the believers were one in heart and mind.

No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had.

United in generosity

We're still with the Christians in Jerusalem – they are the focus of God's plan, now that the time of the temple leaders is over.

What do we learn about the church?

- The believers are totally united.
- People are amazingly generous.

Let's look back at the last time we heard about this community...

'They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.' (Acts 2:42-45)

This is real church, going from strength to strength. Possessions are held in common; there's love and unity.

We're getting a look at Jesus' kingdom here. And it's a good place to be.

³³ With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all ³⁴ that there was no needy person among them.

God's grace: God's undeserved, saving kindness and power for those who put their trust in Jesus Christ.

Powerful testimony

What are the apostles doing?

- Giving their testimony with great power... (v. 33)
- ...which means talking about Jesus and His resurrection.

The Holy Spirit's power isn't all about miracles or shaking buildings. When someone is filled with the Holy Spirit, they want to speak about Jesus.

The words *'no needy person among them'* point back to the Old Testament. (v. 34)

God promised His people that obeying Him would mean *'there need be no poor people among you'*. (Deuteronomy 15:4) That promise is now being fulfilled through the church.

Notice the connection between verses 33 and 34. The unity and generosity come from the apostles' words.

The message is life-changing for those who respond.

^{34b} For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales ³⁵ and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

³⁶ Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means 'son of encouragement'), ³⁷ sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.

Joseph: this man was clearly well known to the apostles; they even give him a nickname. We'll meet him throughout Acts and we'll see that this name was well chosen!

No one in need

How does the church look after those who need help?

- Christians sell things and give the money. (v. 34)
- The apostles make sure that the money gets to those in the church who need it. (v. 35)

We now get a case study: a man called Barnabas sells a field and donates the money to the church. (vv. 36, 37)

Having your own things wasn't a problem, but people were willing to give them up for others, because of what Jesus had done for them.

It's powerful evidence of the difference it makes to have Jesus as King.

The unity, love and generosity here come from knowing God's grace, through the apostles' teaching that Jesus is Lord.

Let's stop and think

The apostles get mentioned a lot in this short episode. In fact, four times in six verses! **(vv. 33, 35, 36, 37)**

- They speak about Jesus with great power. **(v. 33)**
- They are trusted with the job of sharing out gifts to those in need. **(v. 35)**
- They even give people new names! **(v. 36)**
- They receive the money Barnabas brings. **(v. 37)**

The apostles are central to everything that's happening. And they couldn't be more different from the angry, fearful temple leaders.

We're seeing that they are now the true leaders of God's people.

Some might think that having Jesus as King would mean the end of all the good things we enjoy. That's not the picture we get in Acts. This is a loving community that's different to anything else around it. Most societies dream of ending poverty... but how many could say that 'there was no needy person among them'?