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## ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

(episode 023)

**theme:** God reveals the truth of Scripture to us through the Holy Spirit **scripture:** Luke 24:13-35

**quote:** “Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?” Luke 15:32 **summary:** After the resurrection of Jesus, two of His disciples were on the road to Emmaus discussing all that had recently taken place with Jesus. On the road they were met by Jesus Himself, although they were not aware at first that it was Him. In the course of their journey Jesus revealed to them many truths about Him contained in Scripture. Nit Whitley meets up with these two disciples as they are finishing up a meal at an inn.

God has provided us with His word to teach us, but there are some things in Scripture that can be hard to understand. It is then, as we study and meditate on these things, that the Holy Spirit will lead us into what these things mean. We can learn a lot from the writings of others, those who have gone before us and studied these things deeply, but there is no substitute for studying these things ourselves and praying to God for understanding.

## CHRISTMAS - THE SHEPHERDS

(episode 030)

**theme:** The announcement of Jesus’ birth to lowly shepherds. **scripture:** Luke 2:8-20 **quote:** “And in the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields, and keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened.” Luke 2:8,9

**summary:** Nit Whitley interviews some shepherds who have just witnessed an amazing thing. As they were watching over their sheep during the night an angel of God appeared to them and told them of the birth of the Messiah. Way back in the Garden of Eden God had promised man that He would send a Savior who would redeem them from their sin. It’s amazing to consider that the first people God chose to tell about coming of this long-awaited Messiah were shepherds. They were simple, common folks, not kings or nobleman or scholars.

Jesus came to earth to save men of every nation, race and gender. We don’t have to look a certain way, or be a certain height, or have certain talents or abilities. The angel’s words to the shepherds are as true today as they were when they were spoken, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.” (Luke 2:14).

## GOOD FRIDAY - THE SUFFERING SERVANT

(episode 053)

**theme:** Our salvation required Jesus to suffer. **scripture:** Isaiah 52:13-53:12 **quote:** "Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried." Isaiah 53:4a **summary:** Good Friday is a good time for us to consider what it cost for us to be saved from our sin. God could not simply overlook our sin, His justice demands that the penalty for it be payed. With this being the case, our position is one of hopelessness and helplessness - at least as far as our salvation being dependant upon ourselves.

But God loves us and sent His Son to redeem us, to do for us what we could not possibly do for ourselves. He became a servant for us. Our salvation was costly, and Jesus paid the price for our sins in full. Isaiah 52 & 53 contains much information about the suffering this Servant would endure on our behalf.

"His appearance was marred more than any man," it says in 52:14. 53:3 tells us He was "Despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief...He was despised." He would carry our grief and sorrow. He was pierced and crushed for our sins, the chastening for our iniquities fell on Him.

But all of this He willingly did as a guilt offering for our sins. He took the penalty for sin on our behalf, so that we can have our sins washed away and stand righteous before God.

This Good Friday, let's take some time to meditate on what Jesus endured for us. His love for us and His willingness to die for us are amazing and worth remembering.

## CHRISTMAS - THE THREE WISE MEN

(episode 058)

**theme:** Jesus is King and no one can move Him from His throne. **scripture:** Matthew 2:1-12; Psalm 2 **quote:** "Now, therefore, O kings...worship the Lord with reverence, and rejoice with

trembling." Psalm 2:10,11 **summary:** Matthew chapter 2 tells of magi who came from the east looking for the one "Who has been born King of the Jews?" They had seen His star and followed it to Jerusalem. The one they were talking about, of course, was Jesus. Unfortunately, when they arrived in Jerusalem, they went and inquired of King Herod if he could help them find this newborn King.

Herod was king, but only with the permission of the Roman Empire, who ruled Israel at that time. Herod was also very jealous of his position, and was very interested in what the magi had to say. He tried to get as much information as he could from the chief priests and the scribes as well as the magi themselves. Then, pretending to be interested in worshiping this new King himself, he told the magi to find him and bring word back to him as to where He was. He did this so that he could then kill him.

The magi went their way and found Jesus. But they were warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, they went back to their own country by another way. Herod was furious and took steps to eliminate this rival to his throne. His plans failed.

None of us can thwart God's plan and purpose. He has set Jesus up as King, and although many earthly kings will deny and defy Him, none will ultimately succeed. Earthly kings and earthly kingdoms will not stand, but Jesus' the King will stand forever, and His Kingdom will have no end.

## EASTER - THE EMPTY TOMB

(episode 075)

**theme:** Jesus rising from the dead is the best explanation for why the tomb He was laid in was found empty that Easter Morning. **scripture:** John 20:1-20 **quote:** "He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said." Matthew 28:6 **summary:** After Jesus was crucified His body was laid in a tomb and a stone was rolled in front of the entrance. On the first day of the week, the tomb was found to be empty. Many explanations have been presented as to how this came to be.

One is that Jesus didn't really die on the cross but was merely unconscious. Lying in the dark, damp cave revived Him, and He got up, rolled away the stone and presented Himself to the disciples as the risen Lord. Even if Jesus had survived the crucifixion, it's not likely He would have

been strong enough, especially in a beaten condition, to roll a stone the size of the one that most likely had been placed in front of the tomb (some estimate it could have weighed between 1½ to 2 tons). Even if all this had happened, how likely would Jesus have been to convince His disciples that the beaten, weakened, and battered man standing before them was a conquering king?

Another theory is that the disciples stole His body and only claimed He had risen from the dead. There are many problems with this theory, not least of which is the fact that all of the disciples, except for John, died martyr's deaths because of their belief in the resurrection of Jesus. How likely is it that one would die for something he knows is a lie?

The most reasonable explanation is that Jesus rose from the dead, just as He had said He would. Of all the explanations offered, this is the one that most coincides with the facts and, as miraculous as it is, is the most reasonable.

“He has risen, just as He said.”

## **PASSION WEEK - THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE**

(episode 083)

**theme:** A life built upon anything besides Jesus is destined to ruin. **scripture:** Matthew 21:42; Ephesians 2:20 **quote:** “For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” I Corinthians 3:11 **summary:** Nit Whitly takes us to a construction site to illustrate this Reality Check. One team of builders is building upon a weak and faulty foundation. The other is building upon a solid one. The second team, in fact, is using as their cornerstone one that was rejected by the first. We can understand the necessity of building a house or other building upon a solid foundation. Without this, the building is in danger of falling. Bad weather, shifts in the earth and time itself can spell doom for any structure built upon a weak foundation.

The same can be said of our lives. Jesus Himself, quoting Psalm 118, in speaking of Himself said, “The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief cornerstone; this came about from the Lord and it is marvelous in our eyes” (Matthew 21:42).

Any life that does not have Jesus Christ as its foundation is in big trouble. Not just in this world, but more importantly in eternity. All philosophies and theories that reject Jesus Christ are faulty and at some point will fail. The greatness of that fall will depend upon at what point and to what degree they digress from the word of God. But even if someone were to make it through life without any major disasters with a faulty foundation, they will have to face eternity without the only foundation that can save their souls.

Set your life on a solid course. Have Jesus Christ as your foundation, and build upon that foundation with a life lived for the glory of God.

## **NEW YEARS - EZRA & RESOLUTIONS**

(episode 137)

**theme:** With the coming new year, let's resolve to examine our relationship with God. **scripture:** Ezra 9,10 **quote:** “Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, ‘You have been unfaithful...Now, therefore, make confession to the Lord God of your fathers, and do His will’...Then all the assembly answered and said with a loud voice, ‘That's right! As you have said, so it is our duty to do,’” Ezra 10:10-12 **summary:** The city of Jerusalem was being rebuilt after the Jewish exile in Babylon. But although the city was being restored, the people were in rebellion against God. Ezra was sent to the city in order to re-establish God's law in the land and in the hearts of the people. Along with the physical restoration, a spiritual restoration was needed as well.

The people were confronted with their sin and their response was to repent and turn from it. They made a pledge to obey God and make right those things they had done wrong.

Each New Year's many people make resolutions. These usually involve breaking bad habits, or losing weight, or getting more exercise. With this coming New Year, let's make a resolution to examine our walk with God on a regular basis. And, when we discover an area where we have strayed, let's further resolve to repent and eliminate that sin from our lives.

It's a tough resolution to make and a tough one to keep, but it's also one that we need.

## THANKSGIVING

(episode 138)

**theme:** We have much to be thankful to God for, but the greatest cause for thankfulness was for sending His Son to redeem us from our sin. **scripture:** Psalm 26:7 **quote:** "That I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving, and declare all Thy wonders." Psalm 26:7 **summary:** As the Reality Check gang gathers for a Thanksgiving dinner, Nit Whitley interviews several of them to determine what they are thankful for.

Of course there are many things we can be thankful for - each one of us. But the biggest and greatest thing we should be thankful for is God sending His own Son to earth to redeem us from our sin. It was an act of love - the love God has for us, men and women fallen in sin. We could not save ourselves, and so Jesus came to earth, taking upon Himself the form of a man, and living a perfectly sinless life. He then willingly gave His life up as a ransom for us.

When we celebrate Thanksgiving, let's remember to thank God for all the good things He has done for us and given to us. Not least being the sending of His Son. We will never be able to thank God enough - but even today let's try.

## CHRISTMAS - THE GREATEST GIFT

(episode 146)

**theme:** The greatest Christmas gift of all time was given to us by God Himself **scripture:** John 3:16 **quote:** "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." John 3:16 **summary:** As the Reality Check cast and crew gather for their annual Christmas Party, Nit Whitley mingles in the crowd to ask various Reality Check characters to tell us of their favorite personal Christmas gift of all time.

Each one has their own personal favorites, but without a doubt the number one greatest Christmas gift of all time is the one we all received from God Himself. It is found in the gospel of John, chapter 3, verse 16: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

It is a gift whose value goes beyond life on this earth. It extends into eternity. It's something no one else could give us, since it is God, and He alone, who will ever be capable of offering Himself up as the sacrifice for sin.

This time of year, as we give and receive gifts, let us remember, and be thankful for, the greatest gift of all time: Jesus Christ and His free gift of salvation. It was a costly gift and one given with the deepest love the world has ever known.

## 4<sup>th</sup> OF JULY - GUARDING OUR LIBERTY

(episode 158)

**theme:** Our liberty in Christ is worth guarding. **scripture:** Galatians 5:1 **quote:** "It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery." Galatians 5:1 **summary:** On the 4<sup>th</sup> of July we celebrate the birth of the United States of America. The premise of our nation and the War for Independence that followed was liberty. Liberty is not the freedom to do whatever you want, but the freedom to be self-governing.

Someone who is a slave does not govern themselves. They are controlled by someone or something else. All men are born into slavery to sin. Sin controls us and not only keeps us from eternal life but brings misery to our lives here on earth.

Jesus came to set us free from our bondage to sin. Through His death on the cross the power of sin is broken in our lives. We are set at liberty. We are free to do what is right. We are free to govern ourselves according to God's commands. Liberty in Christ is not the freedom to do whatever we want, it is the freedom to live righteously and to be holy as God is holy.

This doesn't mean that we can't sin anymore. We are still capable of doing that. We can still fall under the yoke of bondage to sin again. That is why we must diligently guard and protect our liberty. We do this by keeping ourselves strong in God's word, studying it and meditating on it - and then putting into practice what we have read.

We help ourselves by being people who pray on a regular basis. Talking with God, asking for His help, thanking Him for what He has done and keeping in communication with Him.

Going to church is also a good way to guard our liberty. Worshiping together with other believers and hearing the Word of God preached and taught will help keep us strong. Getting to know the people in our church, confiding in them and sharing in their lives will help us too.

Jesus paid a high price for our liberty, let's stand firm in that liberty and not allow ourselves to be subject again to a yoke of slavery to sin.

## **PALM SUNDAY - TESTING OF THE LAMB**

(episode 159)

**theme:** Jesus, the Lamb of God, was without spot or blemish **scripture:** Matthew 22:15-46 **quote:** "Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things...but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ." I Peter

1:18,19 **summary:** Nit Whitley's report today takes him to the city of Jerusalem at the time of Christ. In preparation of the Passover lambs are being brought into the city. These lambs will be inspected and tested to make sure they are without spot or blemish. If they are found perfect they will be used as sacrificial lambs at the Passover Meal.

Just as these lambs entered the city and are being tested, so too Jesus entered Jerusalem and is going through a week of testing. His testing has come at the hands of the religious leaders. They have put tough questions to Him in the hope of tripping Him up and having cause to find fault with Him. But they have not been successful.

Jesus has answered all their questions and in the process has put some questions of His own to them. Rather than discredit Him, they have allowed Him to prove that He is without spot or blemish, that He is perfect. And being perfect, He is qualified to be the redeemer, the savior of the world.

His sacrifice on the cross for our sins was what all those Passover lambs represented. He is *the* Lamb of God. His sacrifice was once and for all, and the power of His blood will stand through all time and history to take away the sins of men.

## **LABOR DAY - JASPER & BUSTER & LABOR'S PROFIT**

(episode 160)

**theme:** Working diligently and thoughtfully has great advantages. **scripture:** II Thessalonians 3:10 **quote:** "In all labor there is profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty." Proverbs 14:23 **summary:** Jasper & Buster are visiting the farm of their Uncle Duke. Uncle Duke believes that work is good for a man (or a mouse in this case) and that work should be done with diligence and thoughtfulness.

Jasper gets to his assigned tasks quickly and does them well. Buster isn't quite as industrious. He wastes his day lying around talking about what he will do. When it's supper time Jasper's work is done and he enjoys his meal with the satisfaction of a job well done. Buster, although he's hungry,

finds that he won't be able to eat until his work is done. The end of the day is not the best time to start a job, but he gets to work. Unfortunately his sloth has put him in harm's way.

Whatever course our lives take, whatever God gives us to do as a life's work, there is no substitute for hard work. But hard work is good for us, and we shouldn't shirk it or try to get out of it, but rather embrace it, knowing that in the end our efforts will pay off with blessings.