

**WHEN GOD STEPPED INTO TIME**  
**(A Christmas Message)**  
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**Text: 2 Timothy 1:8**

At Christmas we tend to speak more about this doctrinal truth called the incarnation, but what exactly are we talking about? And how important is it to our salvation?

**Speaking of the incarnation of Jesus Christ someone wrote,** He assumed “the form of a servant” without the defilement of sin, enriching what was human, not impairing what was divine: because that “emptying of himself,” whereby the Invisible made himself visible, and the Creator and Lord of all things willed to be one among mortals, was a stooping down in compassion, not a failure of power. Accordingly, the same who, remaining in the form of God, made man, was made man in the form of a servant... For the selfsame who is very God, is also very man; and there is no illusion in this union, while the lowliness of man and the loftiness of Godhead meet together. For as “God” is not changed by the compassion exhibited [in the Incarnation], so “Man” is not consumed by the dignity bestowed [in the Incarnation]...And as the Word does not withdraw from equality with the Father in glory, so the flesh does not abandon the nature of our kind. For, as we must often be saying, he is one and the same, truly Son of God, and truly Son of Man. (Lodahl, p.152)

**This is why Paul writes in 2 Timothy 1:8-10** “So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” NIV

God lives outside of time in an eternal present. We, on the other hand live inside of time in an ever-changing present. And yet we have assurance that salvation and immortality is ours if we trust in Jesus Christ. It is the truths of the incarnation of Jesus Christ that make the truth of our salvation a reality. His entrance into this world in the incarnation made all the difference.

Note the *steps* that Jesus Christ took in order for us to be assured of salvation.

## **I. JESUS CHOSE TO STEP INTO TIME.**

### **A. Before there was time there was a redemptive plan (vv. 9-10).**

**Revelation 13:8** calls Jesus, “The Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.”

**Phillip Yancy** writes, “How could anything be said to occur ‘before the beginning of time’? Such wording suggests the viewpoint of a God who lives outside of time. Before creating time, he made provision to redeem a fallen planet that did not yet even exist! But when he ‘stepped into time’...God had to live and die, by the rules of our world, trapped within time.” (Yancey, 198-99)

### **B. This plan is revealed to us through Jesus Christ (v. 10).**

“This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” NIV

## **II. JESUS CHOSE TO LIVE A LIFE OF A LIMITED EXISTENCE WHILE ON EARTH.**

### **A. Jesus chose suffering in this world over uninterrupted glorification (vv. 9 & 12).**

**Note Philippians 2:6-8.** Speaking of Jesus Paul wrote, “Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!” NIV

### **B. His faithfulness to the Father in this world assures His faithfulness to us in this world (vv. 8-9).**

**The writer of Hebrews assures us of the faithfulness of Christ in chapter 2:14-18.** He writes, “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.” NIV

## **III. JESUS HAS MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR US TO STEP OUTSIDE OF TIME AND INTO AN UNLIMITED EXISTENCE.**

### **A. Through His entrance into our world we have assurance in access to His world (v. 10).**

## **B. When He destroyed death immortality became a reality (v. 10).**

**Look back to our text once again. Paul writes,** “This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has **destroyed death** and has **brought life and immortality** to light through the gospel.” NIV Bold added

## **CONCLUSION**

Did you ever read Bret Harte's story *The Luck of Roaring Camp*? Roaring Camp was supposed to be, according to the story, the meanest, toughest mining town in all of the West. More murders, more thefts--it was a terrible place inhabited entirely by men, and one woman who tried to serve them all. Her name was Cherokee Sal. She died while giving birth to a baby.

Well, the men took the baby, and they put her in a box with some old rags under her. When they looked at her, they decided that didn't look right, so they sent one of the men eighty miles to buy a rosewood cradle. He brought it back, and they put the rags and the baby in the rosewood cradle. And the rags didn't look right there. So they sent another of their number to Sacramento, and he came back with some beautiful silk and lace blankets. And they put the baby, wrapped around with those blankets, in the rosewood cradle.

It looked fine until someone happened to notice that the floor was so filthy. So these hardened, tough men got down on their hands and knees, and with their hardened and horny hands they scrubbed that floor until it was very clean. Of course, what that did was to make the walls and the ceiling and the dirty windows without curtains look absolutely terrible. So they washed down the walls and the ceiling, and they put curtains at the windows. And now things were beginning to look as they thought they should look. But of course, they had to give up a lot of their fighting, because the baby slept a lot, and babies can't sleep during a brawl.

So the whole temperature of Roaring Camp seemed to go down. They used to take her out and set her by the entrance to the mine in her rosewood cradle so they could see her when they came up. Then somebody noticed what a dirty place that was, so they planted flowers, and they made a very

nice garden there. It looked quite beautiful. And they would bring her, oh, shiny little stones and things that they would find in the mine. But when they would put their hands down next to hers, their hands looked so dirty. Pretty soon the general store was all sold out of soap and shaving gear and perfume and those kinds ... the baby changed everything.

That's the way it is for those of good will. That's the way it is for those who please God. The baby enters into their lives, and he slips into every crevice of their experience, until they say "Hark! Listen, the herald angels sing! God is for us. And Christmas is forever."

-- Bruce W. Thielemann, "Hark! The Herald Angels," Preaching Today, Tape No. 63.

**It is these wonderful truths that give Paul the confidence to say,** "And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day." (2 Timothy 1:11-12)

## References

Lodahl, Michael. (1994). *The Story of God*. Kansas City, KS: Beacon Hill Press.

Yancey, Philip. (1992). *Disappointment with God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.