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1 Timothy 3:14-16

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Imagine that a famous artist is about to unveil a painting. The painting is covered by a sheet. And everybody wonders, "What is the painting going to look like?" And then the artist pulls back the sheet and reveals his glorious painting. Back in Old Testament times, God promised that he was going to save us from our sins and from death. But exactly how he was going to do it was a mystery. But then when Jesus came God unveiled his plan to save us. In our Bible passage today, God reveals his plan to save us. And that plan involves I. The Cross II. The Resurrection and III. The Ascension.

I. The Cross

First God planned to save us by the cross. In verse 16 it says, "**He appeared in the flesh**" (1 Timothy 3:16). When the Bible uses the word flesh, it means your skin and your bones. But flesh also emphasizes the weakness of your skin and your bones. "He appeared in the flesh" means that Jesus appeared in weakness. Because of sin, our bodies are very weak. We get tired really easily. We get sick. Our backs and our knees get hurt pretty easily. Part of God's plan to save us was that Jesus would come and share our weakness. Jesus got tired and he got sick. Jesus had weak flesh. The only difference between him and us is that Jesus never sinned.

And then Jesus weak flesh was nailed to a cross and all of the things that we have done wrong, were piled on top of him. God put every single one of your sins onto Jesus. That was his plan to save you, with the cross.

II. The Resurrection

The second part of God's plan to save us was the resurrection. "**He was vindicated by the Spirit.**" (1 Timothy 3:16). This is talking about when God raised Jesus from the dead. God raised Jesus to new life again. When God raised Jesus from the dead, Jesus was "**vindicated.**" What does vindicated mean? Well, if someone accuses you of doing something wrong and then it is proven that you did nothing wrong, you have been vindicated. It's like when the judge decided that Tom Brady did not deflate the footballs, I saw a Patriots fan on TV wearing a shirt that said, "VINDICATED." If you know the story of Jesus' crucifixion, you know that the Jewish leaders and the chief priests put him to death even though Jesus was not guilty of any crimes. When God raised Jesus from the dead, it was like God overturning their decision and vindicating Jesus.

But Paul adds that Jesus was vindicated "**by the Spirit.**" This means that when Jesus was raised from the dead, he wasn't weak anymore. He was powerful and glorified. He was super-charged by the Spirit.

You see, other people had been raised from the dead before. Can you think of other Bible people who had been raised from the dead? Jesus raised his friend Lazarus from the dead. One time Jesus raised a widow's son from the dead. Another time he raised a twelve year old girl from the dead. But when those people were raised from the dead, they had the same weak body that they had before. Eventually they got sick again and eventually they died again. But when Jesus was raised from the dead it was different. When Jesus was raised from the dead he didn't go back to his weak self. He'll never get sick again. He'll never die again. He's been super-charged with the Spirit. He's been glorified.

This is extremely important for you because when believers are raised from the dead their bodies will be glorified like Jesus' body was. One time I was explaining to people that not only will our souls go to heaven when we die, but our physical bodies will also be raised from the dead. You won't spend eternity just with your soul. You'll spend eternity with your body. And one of the people I was explaining this to said, "Well, I

don't want this old thing." But when your body is raised from the dead, it will be glorified. The Bible says that Jesus, **"will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body."** (Philippians 3:21)

If you have a wheel chair now, in the resurrection you will be faster than any NFL receiver. You will run and not grow weary. If you are someone who gets sick a lot, in the resurrection you won't even get a headache. Just like Jesus came to share our weakness, he's going to let us share in his resurrection glory. That was the second part of God's plan to save us, the resurrection.

III. The Ascension

God's plan to save us also involved the ascension. Our passage says that **"he was taken up in glory" (1 Timothy 1:16)**. Ascension means "to go up." Jesus was raised from the dead and then he appeared to his disciples over a period of 40 days and then he ascended into heaven and his disciples didn't see him anymore. The book of Acts tells us about it. **"After his suffering, Jesus presented himself to his disciples and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. ... At the end of the forty days, Jesus said to his disciples, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth." After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight" (Acts 1:3, 8-9).**

Jesus was taken up into heaven and the world doesn't see Jesus anymore. But what does the world see? Us! The world doesn't see Jesus but the world does see the church. The church exists to witness to Jesus in the world. Jesus is directing the mission from his throne in heaven, and we are his witnesses here on earth. Our passage says, **"he was preached among the nations, and was believed on in the world."** That's part of God's plan to save us. Somewhere along the line somebody told you about Jesus. Maybe your parents brought you to church when you were young. Or maybe you heard about Jesus in a Christian day school. Or maybe you heard a pastor preaching from the pulpit. You need to hear about Jesus from somebody and that's why the church exists.

Paul says in verse 13, **"Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:13-14).**

Jesus wants us in the church both to believe the right thing and to do the right thing. He wants us to believe the right thing. Paul says that the church is the pillar and foundation of the **"truth" (1 Timothy 3:14)**. Sometimes people say, Well it doesn't matter what you believe as long as you're a good person. But we have seen in 1 Timothy that Paul very much cares that people believe the right thing. Paul tells Timothy in 1 Timothy 1:3, **"command certain people not to teach false doctrine any longer."** So Jesus wants us in the church to believe the right thing. And we believe the right thing by teaching exactly what's in the Bible.

But Jesus also wants us in the church to do the right thing. Paul says, **"I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed you will know how people ought to conduct themselves."** (1 Timothy 3:13) Sometimes people have the attitude, well I believe the right thing so I can sin as much as I want and Jesus will forgive me anyway. But the book of James sarcastically says, **"You believe that there is one God, good! Even the demons believe that."** God's plan to save us transforms our hearts so that we want to not only believe the right thing, we want to do the right thing. And if we believe the right thing and do the right thing and share the right thing, then we will be witnesses of Jesus in the world. Amen.