



A historic Christmas greeting 50 years ago, from space!  
**Earthrise**

Taken during the **Apollo 8** mission on **Christmas Eve 1968**. The 'Earthrise' photograph was not on the mission schedule and was taken in a moment of pure serendipity. It is an image so powerful and eloquent that even today it ranks as one of the most important photographs ever taken by anyone. US Nature photographer Galen Rowell has described this image as "the most influential environmental photograph ever taken".

As Apollo 8 traveled outward, the crew focused a portable television camera on Earth and for the first time humanity saw its home from afar, a tiny, lovely, and fragile "blue marble" hanging in the blackness of space. When it arrived at the Moon on Christmas Eve this image of Earth was even more strongly reinforced when the crew sent images of the planet back while reading the first part of the Bible - "*God created the heavens and the Earth, and the Earth was without form and void*"--before sending Christmas greetings to humanity. All three crewmen read a part of the 10 passages from the Bible that Astronaut Frank Borman had brought with him. Borman's final words were perhaps the most moving: "**And from the crew of Apollo 8, we close with good night, good luck, a Merry Christmas and God bless all of you – all of you on the good Earth.**"

The next day they fired the boosters for a return flight and "splashed down" in the Pacific Ocean on 27 December. It was an enormously significant accomplishment coming at a time when American society was in crisis over Vietnam, race relations, urban problems, and a host of other difficulties. And if only for a few moments the nation united as one to focus on this epochal event.

Sources: <http://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/pao/History/Apollomon/Apollo.html>  
<http://www.abc.net.au/science/moon/earthrise.htm>  
[http://www.nasa.gov/vision/space/livinginspace/Christmas\\_in\\_space.html](http://www.nasa.gov/vision/space/livinginspace/Christmas_in_space.html)

\* Click on link below for **Apollo 8 Christmas Eve Broadcast**  
[http://nssdc.gsfc.nasa.gov/planetary/lunar/apollo8\\_xmas.html](http://nssdc.gsfc.nasa.gov/planetary/lunar/apollo8_xmas.html)

\* Click on the following link for a terrific **actual audio and visual reenactment of the taking of the Earthrise Photo!** <https://www.youtube.com/embed/dE-vOscpiNc>

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