

## FEATURE ARTICLE: "Then And Now"

**WARNING: You are entering the "TRUTH ZONE". You may not like what you read. At times it may make you feel uncomfortable. That is not my goal. My goal is to speak truth that will provide spiritual guidance for you and your family in a time of great spiritual darkness.**

**You can be sure that what you read here will be TRUTH!**

Christmas... It's the most wonderful time of the year and if you don't believe it just listen to the song Andy Williams recorded in 1963. "It's The Most Wonderful Time Of The Year" must have resonated in the hearts of people all over the world because over the next 30 years it became one of the top ten Christmas songs ever written. The catchy lyrics talk about things people do at Christmas time; things I would dare say everyone reading this has enjoyed many times.

For me, Christmas has become special. It is not just a day, but rather a season, which I believe brings out the best in each of us. Yes, it has become very commercialized, but we must remember that this is because people buy gifts, not for themselves, but for those they love who mean so much to them. It is a season for giving and remembering the most precious gift ever given, the gift of God's Son given to redeem us from our sin. It is that magical time of pageants, candlelight communion services, and family get-togethers.

One of my favorite memories of Christmas was the year we rode to grandma's house in a one-horse open sleigh. (Yes, I am that old) My dad got out the sleigh, harnessed the horse, and then covered with warm blankets, off we went. It was only about a mile ride, but I still remember it clearly. It was so special.

These are the things that make Christmas special to each of us, but what did the incarnation mean to people back in Bible times? To get the answer to that question we must look at what their world was like. At the time of Jesus' birth, Israel was occupied by the Romans. How this impacted those people is hard for us to comprehend, but something Daniel wrote about the Roman empire might give us a clue.

### **Daniel 7:7 Living Bible**

7 Then, as I watched in my dream, a fourth animal rose up out of the ocean, too dreadful to describe and incredibly strong. It devoured some of its victims by tearing them apart with its huge iron teeth, and others it crushed beneath its feet. It was far more brutal and vicious than any of the other animals....

When the Romans conquered a nation they would seek to control it by allowing local leaders to maintain their positions of authority providing they did what Rome wanted. Many positions of authority were sold to the highest bidder and this practice lead to horrible political corruption. A good example of this would be the tax collectors. They could demand whatever payment they wanted because they had the power of Rome behind them. They collected the taxes Rome demanded and then added whatever they wanted for themselves. They were some of the most deeply hated people in all of Israel.

The religious leaders were also in bed with the Romans. They too had the power of Rome behind them and to cross them meant death. We can see this illustrated at the trial of Jesus. They were allowed to collect a temple tax which placed heavy burdens upon those who came to worship. The thing God intended to be a great blessing became just another burden for God's people. Luke referred to this in Luke 19.

### **Luke 19:45-46 New King James Version**

45 Then He went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in it, 46 saying to them, "It is written, 'My house is a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'"

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So there you have it, the people at that time faced political corruption and a religious system that only added to their burdens. For 300 years there had been no true prophet sent from God; the heavens were silent. I don't think it is possible for us to fully comprehend how dark and hopeless it was. No wonder Isaiah the prophet said:

**Isaiah 9:2 Amplified Bible, Classic Edition**

2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great Light; those who dwelt in the land of intense darkness and the shadow of death, upon them has the Light shined.

As I consider all this I see so many similarities to what we face today. The political corruption in our nation makes me want to vomit. Career politicians go into an office with very little net worth and retire decades later with a net worth of hundreds of millions of dollars and no one dares question how they obtained their wealth. It has become so bad that one political leader bragged about withholding huge sums of foreign aid from an overseas government until an investigation into crimes his son had been involved in was stopped. I am convinced many of the leaders of our nation are in bed with those who seek our destruction.

In this darkness, the church should find it easy to shine the truth of God's righteousness and power, but instead, it has no answers. With each year that passes our world grows darker while the church pretends to be the

powerful army that scripture says it should be.

This may seem like a depressing message that does not fit with stories of Christmas pageants and sleigh rides to grandmother's house, but I assure you it does. It does because our God is not intimidated by the darkness. In fact, He seems to delight in finding the darkest situation and penetrating that darkness with His glorious light. **The darkness that held the world captive 2000 years ago did not stop Him then, and it will not stop Him now!** Let that penetrate your soul and become an anchor for you today. Darkness did not prevail then and darkness will not prevail now.

**I declare it in the mighty Name of Jesus!**



AND THAT MY FRIENDS  
IS THE TRUTH!