



Pastor's Page

"Talk of the Town"

Some people thought it was an 'April fool' - I wasn't sure. However when I heard it reported on the news again the following day I began to believe the story. "People in the city got very excited as some began to hail his arrival as the "coming of the Messiah" Others pointed out that this city has had many false Messiahs in the past and that he may prove to be just the latest in that long line of failures. But some believe that he is the answer they're looking for the one whose coming they have eagerly anticipated. I speak of course of Alan Shearer's return to Newcastle United as manager!!

If you've read the sports pages in some of the newspapers this week you will have come across this messianic language used to describe the appointment of Alan Shearer at Newcastle. With only 7 games left to keep Newcastle in the Premiership he has a big mission on his hands. Already a hero on Tyneside if he succeeds with this challenge he will be seen as a saviour and all the footballing messianic accolades would be heaped on him again.

Two thousand years ago the real Messiah entered the city of Jerusalem riding on a donkey cheered on by excited disciples. They had all come for the annual Passover feast and their sense of hope and excitement was high as they approached the Holy city. They anticipated that this feast was going to be different to any other! Believing that Jesus really was the Messiah they began to think that he would now have a showdown with the Romans and completely overthrow them as he established Israel again as a sovereign nation with Him as their King. No wonder they shouted, "Blessed is the King of Israel" and "Do not be afraid daughter of Zion see your King is coming on a colt" Those who knew their scriptures realised that they were witnessing prophecy being fulfilled. (Zechariah 9:9) This was intoxicating stuff! A whole crowd of them joined in, waving and roaring as the carpenter continued on his way. Some of his religious critics appealed to Jesus to quieten his disciples down but he would have none of it. Then with the city clearly in sight Jesus broke down as he surveyed the scene and through his tears said; "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace.....but...you did not recognise the time of God's coming" (Luke 19:42 & 44) From this point onwards the mood seemed to change.

And these words of Jesus seem to sum up the tragedy of Holy week. Tragedy in that God had come in Christ to rescue his people from their real enemy – which wasn't Rome but Satan, sin and death – and most people missed it. Jesus was not the sort of Messiah they had expected and crucifixion was not a form of "victory" that they recognised. But if they had only known their scriptures better they would have understood that the coming Messiah was also the 'suffering servant' who *"took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows"* who was *"pierced for our transgressions"* and *"crushed for our iniquities; and "the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed"* This is our great hope.

There will be a lot of talk of the Messiah this week – make sure that you put your trust in the right one – to miss him would be a crying shame!

5th April 2009