



Pastor's Page

"Talk of the Town"

The whole town was talking about him – he was the man of the moment. People in the city got very excited as some hailed his arrival as the “coming of the Messiah” Others pointed out that this city had 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 believed that he was the answer they were looking for – the one who was going to rescue them - the one whose coming they had eagerly anticipated. I speak of Alan Shearer’s return to Newcastle United as manager 12 months ago!! You may have forgotten but this time last year Shearer was appointed manager at Newcastle with only 7 games left to keep them in the Premiership. It was a massive mission and the newspapers talked about him in messianic terms seeing him as Newcastle’s saviour. However he failed and Newcastle were relegated from the Premiership

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 realized 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’ the one of whom Isaiah said *“he was despised and rejected by men a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows yet we considered him stricken by God smitten by him and afflicted. But he 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 – for this is our God.

So as we enter Holy Week today and attempt to travel with Jesus along this painful path lets pray that we understand afresh the truth about who he is and why he came– because to miss it would be a crying shame!

28th March 2010