

## Celebrating Easter

Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout,  
Daughter of Jerusalem! See, **your king comes to you,**  
righteous and having salvation, gentle and  
riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.  
[Zechariah 9.9]

We were looking at these remarkable verses, from the pen of God's prophet Zechariah, a few Sunday evenings ago. They were fulfilled by the excited crowds who lined the streets of Jerusalem to welcome Jesus into their capital city on the first Palm Sunday. As such, they anticipate the sense of excitement we should feel at the prospect of Jesus returning to earth at the end of this present age to reign as God's king forever!

Zechariah tells us that *God's king, Jesus, is characterised by righteousness and gentleness* as he brings salvation to God's people. Unlike every other human king, who is (and has been) flawed and characterised by faults and failings – even the best of them – this king is perfect in every way, wholly *righteous*, everything that God could ever wish him to be, totally without sin.

The words of Zechariah remind us that he came to his people *gently*, in humility, riding on the back of a domestic animal (*a young donkey*) not on a vehicle of war (a horse). To bring the imagery up to date, we would say that he rode into town on a bike, rather than in a tank or armoured personnel carrier.



This is because he came to conquer people's hearts and lives through his own great love and self-sacrifice, not through compulsion or coercion, using force of arms or the barrel of a gun.

The phrase *having salvation* suggests that the salvation Jesus possesses, to offer to others, has come to him as the result of a great deliverance that he himself has experienced. Since he himself has been delivered from a great ordeal, the terrors of death by God his Father, he is in a unique position to offer the same salvation to others. He saves others from a position of his own personal victory. He has conquered all *his* foes – sin, Satan and death – for us.

So, he now looks for a response of reciprocal love in response to his great loving sacrifice for us.

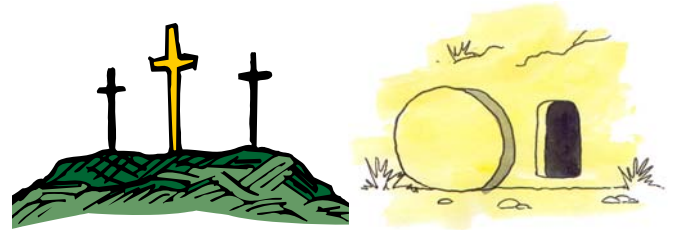
So, join with us in celebrating Easter this year!

**Good Friday, 10<sup>th</sup> April 2009**

Lunchtime Service: 12 noon – 1.30pm,  
with bread and soup lunch

**Easter Day, Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2009**

All-Age Family Service: 11.00-12 noon  
Evening Celebration Service: 6.30-7.45pm



## Tyne and Wear High Sheriff Award

We were delighted to receive the *Tyne and Wear High Sheriff's Award* once again this year, for our work amongst young people. Two of our Rock Solid Club members, who also play in our Under-14s five-a-side football team, **Fibon Nyadu** and **Ciaran Leyland**, collected the award on behalf of the Church during a special ceremony held in Newcastle last month. This is the fourth time in five years that we have been given this prestigious award in recognition of the part we play in helping prevent crime in the area, by providing constructive activities for young people. We give God all the praise and glory for the award. Its cash sum of £375 will be put toward the cost of the registration process for bringing American youth interims to DRBC. We look forward to welcoming Hannah and Travis Shelburne to work amongst the young people of Gateshead in the near future. Our application for registering *Gateshead International Ministries* with the UK Border Agency has now been submitted. Please pray for its speedy acceptance to allow us to issue visa certificates for the Shelburnes.



Ciaran Leyland and Fibon Nyadu with the High Sheriff of Tyne and Wear and Guest of Honour, para-olympian Steve Miller

**Hearing what the Spirit has been**

## **saying to DRBC**

During the past two months in our Small Groups, we have been seeking to discover what it means to be a Spirit-led Church by looking at *what the Spirit has to say to the churches* in our Lord's letters to them, recorded for us in Revelation 2-3.

Here are some gleanings of what we believe the Spirit has been saying to us at DRBC through our studies.

### **Ephesus: Keeping first things first, Rev 2.1-7**

- Jesus knows all about our current situation.
- It's good to persevere and not grow weary in our work for the Lord; we're called to endure hardships for him.
- Our priority is love – for Jesus and his people.

*You have forsaken your first love.  
Remember the height from which you have fallen!  
Repent and do the things you did at first.*

- New people create new opportunities; but there needs to be love and understanding towards old-stagers too; we must welcome new people, but not to the neglect or marginalisation of long-serving members of the church. They must be made to feel a valued part of the church still. Long-serving members should be asked to care for newcomers.
- We have experienced growing pains, in the form of tensions and conflicts; repentance is the key to future blessings.
- We enjoyed an explosion of new ideas and activities a few years ago; we should remember our past fervency and expectancy.
- We must guard against complacency, simply going through the motions.
- Organisation is important, but we must focus on Jesus as our living Lord amongst us.
- It's important to develop our successors who will be able to lead the church on into the next generation.
- We need to guard against cliques and foster a true sense of unity.
- We must guard against pride and depend humbly on the Lord; we must guard against the danger of being self-congratulatory.
- We need to use our spiritual ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to us, so that we truly gain the mind of Christ.

### **Smyrna: Faithful in the face of suffering, 2.8-11**

- We need to focus on what we have (our spiritual riches) and not be preoccupied with what we don't have (our relative poverty in terms of manpower and material resources).
- We need to remember those who have a hard time being a Christian in their family circle or at work.

- Every church is affected by the society in which it finds itself.

### **Pergammum: No compromise with sin, 2.12-17**

- In reading the Bible, we are reading God's message to us; we don't need special forms of revelation to do his will or to know his leading.
- We must guard against any false teaching that will lead people along false pathways.
- It's important to stand up for the truth.
- We must remember that the Bible has a cutting edge; it should frequently be convicting us, convincing us, changing our attitudes and behaviour patterns.

*These are the words of him  
who has the sharp, double-edged sword.*

### **Thyatira: Purity of heart and mind, 2.18-29**

- We must guard against false toleration because of the damage it can cause to a church.
- Does 'doing more' always result in us achieving more? We need to learn how to be more fruitful, not just more busy.

### **Sardis: Wake up to realities, 3.1-6**

- Every reputation is out of date because it is based on our past performance rather than our present reality. There is a terrible danger in basking in a false reputation.
- One of the symptoms of a church being half asleep - or worst still, dead – is uncompleted projects.
- We must guard ourselves against every form of complacency and heed God's wake up call to us.

*You have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.  
Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God.*

### **Philadelphia: Seize God-given opportunities, 3.7-13**

- God makes opportunities abound even for relatively weak churches.
- How can we reach out to the many Jews living around the church? We should expect to see conversions amongst them.
- Though we are weak, we must hold on to what we have, the truth of the Gospel.

### **Laodicea: Staying dependent on Christ, 3.14-22**

- We must see ourselves as Christ sees us, making sure he is central to all we are and do, not left out.
- We must seek from *him* everything we need, and not rely on our own imagined resources.

David Hunt