



Here Comes the Dreamer

On April 4, 1968, as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was leaving the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee to go out for dinner, a shot rang out. MLK, the victim of an assassin's bullet, was rushed to a hospital where he died later that night.

While I have never visited the spot, I have read that the Lorraine Motel in Memphis still displays a wreath and a plaque with MLK's name, the date of his birth (1929) and the date of his death (1968). The plaque also includes an excerpted summary of a passage from the 37th chapter of Genesis, cited at Dr. King's funeral.

The excerpted quotation inscribed on the plaque is taken from the 1611 Authorized King James Version. These are hate-filled words of Joseph's older brothers, as they saw their younger brother at a distance, travelling to visit them as they grazed the sheep of their father Jacob.

"They said to one another, 'Behold, here cometh the dreamer... Let us slay him... And we shall see what will become of his dreams.'"

Not quite five years before he was killed, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. announced that he had a dream. Here's an excerpt from "I Have a Dream" given on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C. on August 28, 1963:

"I have a dream that my four little children will live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.... I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain made low, the rough places will be made plain and the crooked places will be made

straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together."

Just as Joseph's brothers didn't agree with or like the dreams that Joseph had and related to them (Genesis 37:5-11), in 1963 not everyone agreed with Dr. King's dream. In fact, there were many churches in North America that strongly denounced Dr. King, condemning him for personal flaws and faults and even made fun of him, in the name of God.

On Martin Luther King Jr. Day, we pause to remember his dream. We remember his dreams of justice, of harmony and we remember the need to denounce hatred, greed and indifference to the pains and hurts of others. Dr. King once said: *"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."*

But Christ-followers have even a bigger dream. As beautiful as the dream of Martin Luther King Jr. is, we have a more majestic dream. Our dream is the vision Jesus had and has of his kingdom. In the kingdom of God, as MLK Jr. said, in his citation of the soaring rhetoric of Isaiah 40: 4-5, *"every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain made low, the rough places will be made plain and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together."*

Jesus had a dream—indeed, the sarcastic and hate-filled comments about Joseph by his brothers, *"here cometh the dreamer... let us slay him,"* apply far more to Jesus than anyone who has ever lived. *"Here cometh the dreamer... let us slay him"* is precisely how the religious establishment of

Jesus' day reacted to him. And they did crucify him.

They were not thrilled that Jesus' dream would mean the end of their religious world—they were not happy that Jesus was clearly going to change everything they lived for, believed and cherished. They were not thrilled with the inclusive gospel of the kingdom of God, including the reality that all mankind is loved and accepted by God

No one upsets religious apple carts and gets away with doing so. And they thought, erroneously of course, that by crucifying the dreamer they would eradicate the dream.

The dream is alive and well. It has found fulfillment in many ways over the last 2,000 years—it continues to, and one day *"...the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea"* (Habakkuk 2:14).

My friends—whatever battle you may be fighting—no matter how depressed you may be—know that Jesus is alive. He is our risen Lord. He invites you to share and participate in his dream, his kingdom, if you will only embrace it.

Don't give up. The road is long. Darkness at times obscures your path. There are times when it may seem the light at the end of the proverbial tunnel has been extinguished. Remember: *Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.* □

—Greg Albrecht

Join us for the complete message of "Here Comes the Dreamer" at the audio teaching ministry of Christianity Without the Religion, the week of January 17, 2021.