

MLK DAY 2019: 90 Years of Prophecy and Reality - by Zaccar Ben Dan

As we reflect on the birthday, and subsequently the life, of one of our most profound civil rights activists we are inspired to embrace both the good and bad of what his life represented. We accept what we have been taught that his life should mean to us but we should also seek the deeper meaning of what his legacy created and also what his legacy caused. As we compare the juxtaposition of these opposing points of enlightenment, we can then really understand that this man was GOD sent, and we can interpret the prophecy that his life was set to fulfill.

During the March on Washington, Dr. King made one of the most prophetic and exposing speeches that this country has ever known. One of the greatest aspects of that speech is the opposing view-points that it created. Those opposing viewpoints are revealed and manifest depending on the mindset of those who read it, and more so the mindset of those who use it to explain the state of his people 50 years later. Those opposing viewpoints will also be reflected as the purpose of his life becomes a topic of discussion.

Many will say the "dream" of Dr. King's speech was fulfilled, as we have had a black president, who himself was a huge sign of hope for the negroes that Dr. King referenced in his speech. We have seen blacks achieve heights in all aspects of society that were never thought possible when Dr. King stood before so many in Washington DC back in 1963. With all of the progress that has been made within the past 50 years, blacks still find themselves subject to the same conditions that caused that speech to be written over half a century ago.

Over a hundred and fifty years after freedom was granted to the negro, blacks are still subject to voter intimidation. Public officials can talk about attending a public hanging and still get elected. Fifty years after that speech still "the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality," and those sworn to protect can still refer to blacks as "Alabama porch monkeys." Incidents such as these represent the realization that there remain so many in this country that have not embraced the reality that we are all citizens. It also shows that many have not understood the insensitivities of certain statements as it relates to the horrors that have plagued the citizens of their nation. Some of those citizens being just as much of a pillar to this country as the "founding fathers."

That speech was polarizing because it depicts a country at a crossroad. The Civil Rights Act was eminent, yet the country still had a choice to make. While civil rights can be legislated laws cannot force one to accept that an individual is worthy to be treated as an equal. Dr. King's birthday is set to come in on January 15, 2019 and this country is in the midst of a hostile climate that mirrors 1963 and 1929, the year of his birth. The major difference between these eras is that now there are laws in place to prosecute certain acts of violence. Ironically, it did not deter the one who decided to murder the elders of a church group that had invited him in to pray together. The laws were put in place to legislate certain types of behavior, yet the emotional component was not put in place to effectuate the necessary healing for all the many years of anger, hurt, and pain that the institution of slavery caused between, for lack of a better term, whites and blacks.

The opposing viewpoints identified in his speech are actually a microcosm of the opposing views of what his life actually represented. The fact is Dr. King was selected to be memorialized with a national holiday when other civil rights leaders were not. This is not to say he was not deserving because any who choose to sacrifice their life for the advancement of their people should be celebrated. Dr. King is celebrated because his legacy is accentuated with his desire for non-violent protest regardless of the circumstances. While other civil rights leaders sought an approach that reinforced an individual's right to defend themselves when being provoked and attacked.

Dr. King's legacy of non-violence was pure because it came from the understanding GOD gave him. That approach was taken and exploited by those who used that ideology to pursue violence against an individual and his followers who disclosed their intention to tolerate physical abuse in hopes that human acceptance would come in the end. As opposed to other civil rights leaders that made known their intentions of taking a proactive approach in ensuring the safety of themselves and their followers. Both approaches met with the same fate and civil rights leaders on both sides of that spectrum were murdered by those seeking to quell any type of forward progress of blacks in this country.

The enlightenment from these opposing views comes in understanding that there are those from 1619 through 2019, that do not buy into America's creed that "all men are created equal." Whichever approach that will be chosen by those seeking to uplift themselves to become better, we need to understand the mentality of those whom we are seeking acceptance and justice from. Many of Dr. King's dreams from his 1963 speech have yet to come to fruition. These dreams may not come to fruition because there are those whose inflexible and insensitive subconscious will not allow Dr. King's dream to become their reality. There are so many that have become slaves to the negative propaganda that America the Beautiful preached while justifying the horrors of slavery.

However, one portion of his dream is beginning to come to fruition. Dr. King reiterated the prophecy "the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." Many are beginning to recognize and shake the adverse effects caused by the Willie Lynch letters. We are beginning to have a more compassionate approach to each other, and we are beginning to stand together against the acts of civil injustice. The glory of the LORD has been revealed to all flesh, and we are beginning to realize it, yet there are some that choose to ignore it. HIS glory is being revealed nonetheless.

That speech on the grounds of Washington DC also contained a wealth component which also provokes opposing viewpoints. "So, we've come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice." As we are beginning to speak out against these acts of violence and injustice against us, we should take a page from Dr. King and the various methods he used to galvanize his people and help them to understand the power that they actually have. We have the power to use our dollars in financial institutions that exhibit a respect for us and withhold them from establishments that do not. We can boycott the NFL just as they boycotted the Montgomery Bus Company because both have shown a lack of regard for us and the things we choose to stand for.

We can also use our “riches of freedom” and our “security of justice” as a means to better our communities, thereby bettering ourselves. We can support our causes rather than choose a stance of indifference, or worse an act of sabotage. We can allow this Dr. King birthday to represent a prophetic turning point to bethink ourselves in the lands of our captivity just as Moses prophesied that we would do. We embrace the good that his life represented by applying the ideologies of community cohesion that he spoke of. We embrace the bad that his life represented to understand that there are individuals that took a pure soul and sought to exploit his passive characteristics to continue to oppress those he tried, at the cost of his life, to uplift. In the end his legacy was meant for good, and we need to embody that legacy for the good that GOD meant it.