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Introduction

Last year the ABC was running a competition to see what are the best speeches ever delivered, in preparation for a new television series. So as I heard about this I began to wonder what speech I would put forward. The Gettysburg Address by Abraham Lincoln? The one small step for man address by Neil Armstrong? The messages by Gough Whitlam on his dismissal or JFK on his inauguration? Something from Shakespeare perhaps? We probably would all have a different favourite.

But I think my favourite speech is from Martin Luther King, the great American Civil Rights leader, delivered not long before he was shot down for his beliefs. It goes like this. *"I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its freedom. We all need to know to be true, what is self evident - all men are created equal. I have a dream that one day the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will sit down together at the table of the brotherhood of man. I have a dream."*

This speech was delivered some 40 years ago, but it is still a rallying cry, a call to arms for all those who want a better world. *"I have a dream."*

But I wonder what is your dream for this world? Do you dream for world peace - where man would no longer fight one another in war? Do you dream for a day when there will be no sickness, no diseases, no depression, no death? Do you dream for a world with no poverty, no suffering, no violence? Do you dream for families to get on, for people to care for one another? Do you dream for a world full of love not hate?

I know I do. In recent times, I have lost people who have meant a great deal to me. I have seen tragedy rip through a family. I have witnessed fighting and lies and deceit. I have seen on my TV screen violence and hatred and war. And I dream of a day when I won't have to see all these things happen, ever again.

But I'm not alone. Do you know that God also dreams of a day when these things wont happen. Listen to the last chapter of the Bible, to Revelation 21, and you will see that God has a dream, and do you know what? Its very similar to ours.

Listen to it. *"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes."*

There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

God has a dream. A dream where men and women will live in a place with no tears, no pain, no death, no suffering. A place where there will be no evil, no sin whatsoever. A place called heaven. A place where we would all love to be.

But the question that this all raises, is how can we get there? How can we build a society like that? How can we enjoy our dreams, God's dream, my dreams? Well turn with me to Genesis 11, page 10. For there many people came together. They had a dream. A dream for a better world. A dream in which they could build a tower to **heaven**.

A dream where they would enjoy the same sorts of things that we have just been talking about. But they didn't just have a dream, they had a plan. A plan on how to get there. A plan where men and women could work together. A plan where they would have a heaven on earth and it all revolved around a building - the tower of Babel. Lets look closely at this tower shall we?

For it all starts in verse 2 with "Come let **us** make bricks..."

Its a plan with mankind at the centre. Sure God might have made the world. But if we are going to reach heaven, we can't trust God to do anything for us, we have to do it ourselves. Its a plan with us at the centre. Its a plan which involved **the physical**.

They say "Come let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly." So they used brick instead of stone, and tar instead of mortar. Then they said "Come let us build ourselves a city with a tower that reaches the heavens."

Its based on the physical - bricks, tar, cities, towers. Its made up of what we can make, what we can see, what we can do. If we just bind together and make a great city. If we can build a bigger building, complete a more challenging job, find that cure for cancer, if we can develop a more potent nuclear bomb, then together, mankind can build a better world.

It's about becoming **famous**. "Come let us make bricks *so that we can make a name for ourselves*". Its about looking good in other people's eyes. Its about getting our 15 minutes of fame. Its about others saying "Wow, you're so good. That's awesome. You are so talented to be able to achieve something like that."

Its about standing out from the crowd and getting your name known and your reputation enhanced. Its about others congratulating you and slapping you on the back for what you have done.

And lastly its about ignoring God. **NO GOD.**

God might have made the world, but in this attempt at building a better world, there is no reference to God. There is no place for God, there is no desire to include God. So much so that God comes down to see what they are doing, because they haven't sought his opinion - they haven't included him, they have purposely ignored him.

This is mankind's first attempt to get to heaven without God. To make a world that is perfect by going it alone. But it might be mankind first attempt, but it hasn't been its last attempt. Because that is what most people are doing today. Trying to get to heaven without God.

Today people build their towers and say if we just become good people, we'll get to heaven. Or if I can do something great, then my fame will last forever. Or if we can find a cure for cancer then we might be a step closer to living forever! If I just get enough money, find the right partner, wear the right clothes, then life will get better and better.

Or they say what our world needs is no longer to go to war, then we can create a wonderful society, but they fail to deal with the problem of why countries fight. For it is the same reason why we fight with our families, with our friends and with other people at school or work. We are selfish people, who think about me, about us, more than we think about others, about God.

Today 90% of Australians are building their own tower of Babel. They are seeking happiness, they are seeking fulfilment, they are seeking power and recognition and a place in this world, without reference to God. Without living the way God wants us to live. They are doing their own things, hoping to get to heaven.

Now when God looked down and saw this building in Babel, I'm sure he had to almost get out his magnifying glass. He probably said to himself "Is that the best they can do? That's no where near big enough to get to heaven. That will never, ever achieve what its trying to achieve!"

And even though we live in a technically superior age, nothing much has changed. There is still only one man made structure that can be seen by astronauts circling our globe - do you know what it is? The great wall of China!

And our great achievements in science, in technology, in negotiations, hasn't brought us a lack of pain, a lack of death, a lack of racism, a lack of fighting. No today, human methods to reach heaven have all failed. They have all failed dismally.

So what does God do? Well He comes down and frustrates man's plans. For God knows that way will never work. God knows that is not the way to heaven. So he stops them by giving them all different languages. So now the foreman can't communicate with the workman. Or the architect with the foreman. Or the engineer with the architect. They just can't understand what each other is saying. And so they go their own separate ways.

And even though we have the internet and computers and the like, our languages still keep us apart. I was reading recently where a man who had travelled to almost every country in the world, was saying that there is only one word that almost all the world knows. Any ideas of what it might be? Coca Cola!

Today we might be able to communicate to each other about a soft drink, a bit of fizzy drink, but everything else, everything of real importance, we now have great difficulty with, because our languages and our subsequent cultures are just so, so different.

So if this doesn't work, how are we going to get to Revelation 21? How are going to see our dreams of a better world come true? Does this mean there is no hope for us? Does this mean that man's arrogance and sin has triumphed? Does this mean we no have no where to go?

No, because straight after the scattering of the people of the world, the Bible records the story of a man called Abraham or Abram as he was then called. You see God frustrated man's attempts at getting to heaven, because he wants to introduce us to his own way of getting there.

And God's way comes from him giving us his blessings. Turn with me to the start of Genesis 12 please. *"The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."*

God has decided to give us a taste of heaven, a deposit of things to come, by creating a new society based on those who will listen to him like Abraham! You see God's blessings come from those who will put their trust in **God**

See what God says "I will make you a great nation. I will bless you." I will do the very things you want. You see the God who made the world, is the God who will lead us to the perfect world. And as we read about Abraham. We see that he **listened** to God

He was willing to hear what God said. He took the time to comprehend God's instructions. He wasn't so caught up with his own ideas, his own plans, his own dreams, that he wasn't willing to listen to the one that had made him in the first place.

We find out that Abraham was willing to not just listen but to **follow** God's ways.

He didn't listen first and foremost to his own thoughts, to his friends, even to his family. He listened to God and he showed how much he respected God, that he listened to him and then did what God said. Even when God said *"leave behind your own home, your family, your security and go to a place where I am telling you"*. Abraham didn't even know where God was saying to go, he just got up and left.

Which is what **faith** is all about. Trusting God so much that as long as he is with you, you are willing to do anything, go anywhere, be anyone that he wants you to be. And lastly these blessings will come, when Abraham is willing not just to receive what God has to offer, but he is willing to share what God has given him with those around him. With **others**.

For God says "*And all the people on the earth will be blessed through you.*" These things don't happen when you try and keep all the good things to yourself. These things don't happen when you are concentrating on just me. These things happen, when you are willing to open your eyes to the world around you, when you are willing to do something for others, rather than do something just for yourself.

Basically when we look at Genesis 11 and Genesis 12 we see two different models on which to base society on. Two different towers. One seeks to ignore God, whereas the other has God as its basis. One seeks to make a name for themselves, whereas the other is trying to instead follow God. One seeks fame, the other seeks to look after others. One is full of distrust, the other is full of faith.

I have a dream, a dream for a better world. But do you know what - its not just a dream - it can be a reality. For in God's followers, in the Church, in the people like Abraham, we can get a taste of this dream. For when we are like Abraham and put God at the centre of our lives, when we listen and follow his Word, the Bible, when we have faith, we see that we can make a difference in this world and we can make a difference in our world.

But the church is far from perfect. A little later in Genesis 12 we will see that Abraham is far from perfect. So how do we get past the taste of this sort of world and actually find heaven. Actually live in this perfect world. Well we only do that when God steps into our world. Where we see a man who does listen to God all the time. A man who followed God's word 100%. A man who had legendary faith. A man who came to bring others to God, others to heaven. We only experience heaven if we are willing to put our trust in this man, **Jesus**.

For Jesus says "*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No-one gets to the Father, no one gets to God's place, except through me.*" You see heaven will never will be here on earth. There will always be pain, always be disappointment, always be death. But if we are willing to climb the tower that Jesus built. If we are willing to jump on his shoulders, and let him take us to his father. Then our dreams will come true. Our wildest dreams will come true.

The two towers show us two ways. One is based on what we do and the other is based on what Jesus has done. So which way are you going to go? The way of the world or the way of the word? Which tower is your tower, the one with me at the centre or the one with God at the centre?

And that is why the Church is so important. Because those who want to go God's way, are showing everyone else that there is an alternative. We are not perfect. We are not the people that God would have us be.

But together we can be men and women of faith, trust, obedience. People who follow Jesus. And when we do that together we give our society an alternative. A real alternative. So don't just decide which tower is your tower. But make your dream, God's dream. Where he binds together the men and women of faith, into His people. So that through them, he can work through his world to recapture the dream of God's people in God's place under God's rule.

I have a dream and it is God's dream. And my hope and prayer is that it is your dream as well.