

<sup>1</sup>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. <sup>2</sup>I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup>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. <sup>4</sup>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."

<sup>5</sup>He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." <sup>6</sup>He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life."

It's sometime after midnight. You've tried to fall asleep, but your mind refuses to shut off. You wish for someone to talk to but don't want to wake anyone and so you turn the TV on and don't even bother to change the channel away from the infomercial and you're soon convinced that you must "pick up the phone and call now" because this product that, an hour ago, you didn't even know existed, is now something you simply cannot live without and then, as if you weren't already convinced, the announcer exclaims, "But wait, there's more . . ." and you just can't wait to dial because you know that operators are standing by to take your call!

Infomercials can be a bit like traffic accidents, we know we shouldn't watch and yet we just can't to look away. We're drawn in and begin to wonder if this product is the golden ticket—the thing that's going to make us happy, healthy, sexy, skinny, smarter, or whatever it is we want to be that we think we're not and are willing to pay \$19.95 in shipping and handling charges in order to become. I remember watching one of the earliest infomercials when I was a kid—it was for *Ginsu* knives. I was fascinated—a knife that could cut through wood and tin cans and still "remain razor sharp"! My dad, always a good sport, humored us and, along with 2-3 million other folks between 1978 and 1984, he ordered a set of "the world's sharpest knives". I remember when they arrived in the mail—it seemed that by just looking at that shiny, serrated edge I might cut my finger. As a kind of joke, my parents got my brother and I our own *Ginsu* knives for Christmas this year and I can't bring myself to use it—it's just too much with its "but-wait-there's-more-ness".

The makers of *Ginsu* took a knife that was made in Fremont, Ohio, originally sold under the name "EverSharp", translated its name into Japanese, packaged it to imply that the knife would make you as efficient as a Japanese sous chef, and thus was born the modern infomercial. And while *Ginsu* may be able to make claims of creating the infomercial, I hold that they cannot be credited with coining the phrase "But wait, there's more." No, credit for that rightly goes to the author of the *Book of Revelation*.

Now, in the context of the *Book of Revelation*, the thought of "But wait, there's more" is not quite so alluring as it is with the common infomercial. When it comes to Revelation, the "but wait, there's more" isn't going to be a free jar of anti-aging beauty. No, when it comes to *Revelation*, the "but wait, there's more" could mean something very bad indeed, like a seven-headed, ten-horned scarlet beast. But wait, there's more—like all the people of the earth being smitten with ulcers. But wait, there's more—and the list of horrific things that the author of *Revelation* predicts goes on and on. And for years, people have used the prophecies and imagery of this book to oppress and manipulate, terrorize and tantalize. It is a book that is difficult to understand and in the place of informed and faithful Biblical interpretation, people have turned to scare tactics and sensationalism, using the *Book of Revelation* as a weapon against others rather than as a tool for better understanding God.

And in order to better understand God, a first thing to know is that *Revelation* is credited to the same John who wrote the gospel according to John. It is an account of a revelation he had. "<sup>9</sup>I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. <sup>10</sup>On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, <sup>11</sup>which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea." This is a book based on a revelation he claims to have received from Jesus Christ, a revelation about what will happen at the end of time—a revelation informed by his extensive knowledge of the *Book of Daniel* and *Exodus*.

But wait, there's more. A second thing to know about the *Book of Revelation* is that, according to scholars, "The words of *Revelation* do not offer a view of things in any kind of literal way. A word used frequently in the book is 'as' or 'like,' suggesting the world of metaphor, the juxtaposition of words and ideas

that connote a mind groping for adequate expression rather than precise, uncomplicated depiction. Apocalyptic [meaning having to do with the end of time] imagery beckons us to suspend our pragmatism and to enter into its imaginative world. That means being prepared to see things from another, unusual, point of view and being open to the possibility that difference of perspective will enrich our view and lead to difference of insight.”<sup>1</sup> Our modern minds might be tempted to say that this is just a dream and dismiss it. After all, imagine that all of us proclaimed that our dreams indicated the future of the world for everyone. In my case that would mean that we would have all flown here this morning on a red carpet, accompanied by fat corgi dogs because last Monday night I had a dream that Feenie Dog and I were flying over the cherry blossoms on a red carpet. But there is a difference between a common dream and a revelation from God. This book is about the latter.

But wait, there’s more to it than even that. In the ancient world, “vision and dreams were regarded as important. The world of dreams was akin to that less ordered imaginative part of us that becomes active only when our dominant intellectual equipment itself lies dormant.”<sup>2</sup> And so, instead of dismissing *Revelation* as “only someone’s dream”, we might instead think of it more along the lines of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s, “I have a dream” speech. With this speech, which surely contains some revelation from God, he used imagery and metaphor to express a reality of the kingdom of God—indeed that reality for which all Christians pray and dream. We might think of John doing the same in *Revelation*.

Indeed, the passage we heard this morning from *Revelation* is a kind of climax in John’s “I Have a Dream Speech”. It’s his *this* part of King’s speech . . .

*And so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.*

*I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."*

*I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.*

*I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.*

*I have a dream that my four little children will one day 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 today!*

Just as John had a dream—a vision—of the kingdom of God.

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And so it is that that while the images in the *Book of Revelation* may not be literally true, they surely do hold truth, truths that are as important to us today as they were to John on Patmos some 2000 years ago. The truth that one day, one day creation will be restored. But wait, there’s more—the truth that one day, there will be no more crying and no more heartbreak. But wait, there’s more—the truth that Christ will come again and save us, slaying whatever the seven-headed beast in our life might be. But wait, there’s more—the truth that God—God—is the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end. But wait, there’s more—this is not a one-time offer, this is not for a limited time—this, this, this is the gift of salvation—of new life and the life everlasting that are ours through Jesus Christ—today, and the next day, and the day after that for all eternity, thanks be to God. Thanks be to God. So, just call now.

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<sup>1</sup> *New Interpreter’s Bible*, 506-507.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*