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## Iconic Last Days: False Images and Picture-Perfect Prophecy – Part II

By Wilfred Hahn



As with all the rapid transformations that have impacted the world this past century—particularly those changes that have either coincided with or accelerated after the refounding of Israel—literal Bible believers are wise to ponder the last day significance of these trends.

As such, in Part I of this series we posed this question: In the cosmological timeline of the world, just why should it be that the technology of “images” should play such a prominent role today?

The Bible surely has much to say about images and visions (i.e. false images, graven images) and their interplay with our eyes (i.e., “The eye is the lamp of the body”—Matthew 6:22). We have only scratched the surface and are specifically focusing on the communication revolution involving images in these last days. In this respect we noted that a unique development of our time is the proliferation of images, whether in the form of icons, pictures or the video. These images are an inextricable part of our culture and have had an enormous effect upon the world.

It was concluded that our generation is being prepared to be deceived by images—and ultimately by the image of the beast (Revelation 13:15). Yet, at the same time, God allowed it to be so in order that our intensely “image conscious” generation would also be ideally equipped to understand endtime prophecy.

We continue with the investigation of our iconic age—the endtime era of “communicating by image.”

### Recorded Visions Specifically Selected

Not all prophecies given to the Old Testament prophets were recorded in the Bible. For example, it is mentioned that in the latter times of Eli—up until Samuel came on the scene—that there were not many visions. Says the Bible, “In those



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days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions" (1 Samuel 3:1). Even though there were not many, we know that few as they were, they were not recorded.

Also, consider "the visions of Iddo" mentioned in 2 Chronicles 9:29. We do not know their content since they are not recorded in the Bible. Why were not all visions given to the prophets preserved for our benefit in written form these thousands of years later? For one reason or another, they were not necessary for us to study.

Obviously, all recorded prophecies in Scripture were meant for the future, and therefore mostly future generations. We also know that some prophecies were not to be fully comprehended until the latter times. For example, recall that Daniel was told that the meanings of his visions would not be fully deciphered by the Jews until a much later period. After asking for further clarification because he did not understand, he was told, "the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end" (Daniel 12:9).

This indicates that some of Daniel's visions were intended for different generations. Also, on various occasions, prophets were told that their prophecies applied to the distant future (see Daniel 8:26 and Ezekiel 12:27). Such prophecies would have been of little practical interest to people living at the time of their utterance.

We can conclude then that the prophecies recorded in the Bible may serve different purposes for different generations. To be sure, all Scripture is profitable for teaching (2 Timothy 3:16). From our era, looking back, fulfilled prophecies testify to their veracity, proving that "God is not



a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind" (Numbers 23:19). We can therefore be certain that all prophecies recorded in Scripture will occur, even if yet unfulfilled.

But what of all the prophecies that did speak of the far future—namely the last days ... the very last days? Here, we make two interesting observations. A high proportion of prophecies that apply to the latter days (we are referring here to the Great Tribulation) and that provide the greater volume of detail were given in the form of graphic, symbolic visions. By comparison, earlier prophecies were more likely to be in the form of "the Word of the Lord" or acted out symbolically. Here we think of Ezekiel lying on his right side for 390 days (Ezekiel 4:9) or the prophet Ahijah rending Jeroboam's cloak into 12 pieces (1 Kings 11:30).

But why should God have chosen to primarily communicate to later generations (such as ours) in visions which are rich in symbols and imagery? In Part I we reasoned that it is likely no coincidence that God aligned the form of prophecies to allow our "image-conscious" generation to better understand their meaning and form of communication.

To see this connection, let's examine a few prophetic issues as might a modern, media-savvy, video-watching individual.

### How to Produce a Vision

More than a few times in my profession I have fancied the notion of being able to see into the future. As a global investment strategist and economist, I would certainly be successful if I could. However, even if a blue genie popped out of a lamp and offered me the wish of "picture-per-



fect” future vision, just how would I request to receive it? This is a very important question, one that could make all the difference in how I would be able to interpret the future.

Putting yourself in that position, just how would you request the future to be disclosed? Would you like to be able to view the future from the present time point? Or, would you wish to astro-travel into the future and view things as they are at that time. This is a critical difference. You would be writing down this vision with a very different reference point. For example, John the Revelator spoke of some of the events taking place in Revelation as if he was seeing them from that future time point. In order to more correctly understand his vision, we would need to know the reference time point.

Also, just what effects would be used to produce the vision? For example, how many time points in the future would you want to observe ... in other words, how many picture frames and at what speed? Would you request a single non-moving picture (a still-frame), or a time machine that makes stops at various time points, perhaps every week, year or 50-year period? The problem with any of these approaches is that some very significant details could be missed. It would be dangerous to act on any vision with incomplete information.

On the other hand, would a prophet be enabled to watch a continuous video (vision) of the future? Of course, if that were possible, they wouldn't really be seeing into the future. One would be living in real time at that future point, just as we are in real time at this very moment. Once the vision was completed, it would be a case of Rip van Winkle waking up, back to his own world, at a much older age. Therefore, when receiving visions, prophets will want to see them at

fast-forward speed and not miss any of the plot.

All of the foregoing description serves to point out the technical problems in the viewing of the future. It would be foolhardy to rely upon any vision based upon our own interpretations. Now we can understand how Old Testament prophets might have struggled in their interpretations. But more importantly, we can better understand that the Holy Spirit played a role in communicating the specific words of prophecy to the prophets, who were aided through image-laden visions. For the Bible says, “For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21). The prophets then wrote them down for future generations to read and interpret.

### The Prophetic Video Camera

Other aspects of modern video technology may help our understanding of Bible prophecy. For example, consider the surveillance camera. Normally, these devices point at a fixed view; others move in a regular or random arc. Yet, they remain attached to one mounting spot. So it is with the Bible's perspective of prophecy and historical events. It takes the view of a camera that is installed as if overtop Israel and Jerusalem.

This camera of the Old Testament focused upon the live action in this general Middle Eastern area, swinging its angle of view as far east as Susa in Elam, north to Assyria and Babylon, and south-west to Egypt.

The world's major successive powers of those times, such as the Assyrians and the Romans, are only caught on this surveillance camera as they trample across Israel and Judah. They are bit actors, not even deserving their own camera installation.

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Later, in the New Testament, the arc of the camera widens somewhat, but not much, roving as far as Rome and more northern parts of Asia Minor. In our time today, this camera would still not have captured long glimpses of America on its footage. At best, this nation would only make a fleeting cameo appearance—minor interventions over the past century, and more recently, the incursion into Iraq.

Yet today, the video camera of Bible prophecy still remains fixed to its pedestal above Israel, limiting its arc of view to the general surrounding area. It has not moved from its spot. This perspective is often overlooked by Bible readers, given that the majority of the world's Christians (also the greater world populations and economies) lie outside the line of this camera's view. We might therefore think that most of the important action in the world is in America, in China, Europe or perhaps other wealthy or populous countries.

The Bible at best only gives mention to these countries as either “islands of the seas”; the “kings of the east”; or Gog from

the far north (Ezekiel 38); without even turning its camera in their direction. Imagine this insult to the developed, high-income countries supposedly running the world order of today.

In the not too distant future, the world's news cameras will show the very scenes prophesied. The world will see graphic images of the “signs and wonders” that the False Prophet will perform and will gaze upon the dead bodies of the Two Witnesses lying dead in Jerusalem.

Given the globally-linked news networks today, such distant scenes will not be surprising to the world. Today, only three major news agencies are the source of over 80 percent of news feeds. And, interestingly, there are now more reporters per capita in Israel than anywhere else in the world.<sup>1</sup>

### The Deluge of False Visions

Fitting our iconic times, false visions full of symbolic images abound today. An epidemic of vain imaginations seems to be expressed today in the form of self-professed visions. In them Jesus is supposedly seen in various sizes and ages (from 900 feet tall to the form of a little baby). Angels are making regular appearances, bearing new revelations and “new and improved” enlightenment that directly contradicts Scripture. The apostles anticipated that this would happen, saying, “But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!” (Galatians 1:8).

Various new movements amongst supposedly Christian sects rely heavily on the visions of their new modern-day prophets. To have received a vision from an angel (however defined) is taken as a badge of a “higher level” Christian. Anyone opposing these false prophets, even with Scripture, is charged as “hindering



the Spirit.” Again, the Apostle Paul knew this would happen, saying, “Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. He has lost connection with the Head [...]” (Colossians 2:18-19). And, we are reminded that the day will come that they will think they are doing God a service by killing and persecuting believers (John 16:2).

It is perhaps significant that both Ezekiel and Jeremiah, who were contemporaries, both warned against false visions and prophets. It was the time just before Jerusalem was conquered by the Babylonians and the “time of the Gentiles” began. Today, in our blurred time of icons, the world is again at an endpoint and is being besieged with false visions and dreams. “They are prophesying to you false visions, divinations, idolatries and the delusions of their own minds” (Jeremiah 14:14). Our post-modern world is open to these visions. And why not? After all, they are no less believable than many movie plots.

### Thoughts to Ponder

God’s goodness has allowed that the wiles of our enemy, though devastating to the unwary, can also have a parallel positive effect. As such, even as the volume of both information and images has exploded today, serving to distract and clutter our minds (See *Midnight Call* magazine, “The Business of Snatching Minds,” November 2004), at the same time important information for the discerning and seeking person is more accessible than ever before. Though much of humanity is deadened by the drivel of trivia and entertainment, at the same time there can be no excuse for not

knowing the Truth—the Gospel. It is at our fingertips as never before ... if we seek it.

So it is with the age of images. Even as the eyes of the world are distracted by the appeals and beckonings of a kaleidoscope of moving images, our conditioning to this medium at the same time may help open up the images of prophecy. Yet, all along the world is being conditioned to become vulnerable to the “image of the beast.” This phrase is mentioned exactly 10 times in the Bible, a number that frequently coincides with the meaning of systemic and planned completeness.

We trust the images given to the prophets through visions imparted by the “Spirit of Jesus,” which are recorded in Scripture. It would be safest to ignore entirely all that claims to be new prophetic visions today. “Their visions are false and their divinations a lie. They say, ‘The LORD declares,’ when the LORD has not sent them; yet they expect their words to be fulfilled. Have you not seen false visions and uttered lying divinations when you say, ‘The LORD declares,’ though I have not spoken?” (Ezekiel 13:6-7).

The world may be totally inundated with what is seen today, being under the intense gaze of billions of cameras. However, we gaze in another direction: “[...] we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:18). Says the Bible with respect to the existence of Jesus Christ and His offer of salvation, “[...] blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29). (MC)

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### ENDNOTE

- 1 Donna Rosenthal, ‘Israel Is Slightly Smaller Than China,’ And Other Misconceptions. *The Jewish Daily Forward*. <<http://www.forward.com/articles/13322/>> Accessed May 10, 2008.