Part 4: Who Are the Two Witnesses?

M., your closing comment is noted: "It seems to me that there must be an alternate interpretation."

Christians have long been exposed to a variety of "alternate interpretations" regarding the identity of the Two Witnesses. That so many Christians hold varying opinions concerning the identity of the Two Witnesses is proof enough there is confusion surrounding this issue.

The greater issue, of course, is, "What saith the Scriptures?" How people read (use) Scripture is framed by many factors -- the preconceived opinions of learned priests, ministers or doctors of theology. Then again, a person's formal training or lack thereof can certainly determine the conclusions people draw.

Several hundred Christian denominations exist today; each formed and framed as distinct from others because countless Christians have been taught to "proof-text" Scripture. Proof-texting Scripture has for hundreds of years left only confusion, and still today leads people to erroneous conclusions (interpretations). "Proof-texting" is the simple, pervasive practice of choosing a particular verse of Scripture and sometimes a particular word within a particular verse of Scripture. EXAMPLE: "What church do you belong to?" "I belong to the church OF GOD." Another replies, "I belong to the church OF CHRIST." Yet another reasons, "I belong to the TRUE church." One emphatically declares, "I baptize only in the name of Jesus," while others "baptize in the name(s) of THE FATHER, THE SON and THE HOLY GHOST." Thus confusion is multiplied!

In more modern Christian history, some ministers and theologians are trained to read and apply Scripture contextually. The difficulty, of course, is to re-train millions of adherents to read, interpret and believe the Bible differently than they have -- this has broken some denominations to shreds, or at least caused prominent ministers and theologians to be "excommunicated."

M., I'm trying to cover several bases, knowing full-well that many will read and refuse the identity of the Two Witnesses that I believe, meets Scripture.

One of the more widely accepted interpretations identifying the Two Witnesses insists
that the language of Revelation chapter 11:3-11 is *symbolic* and not to be interpreted literally. This seems reasonable to many persons because there is so much *symbolism* within the book of Revelation.

**But the book of Revelation** IS NOT ORIGINAL! THE BOOK OF REVELATION CONTAINS CITATIONS FROM, OR ALLUSIONS TO, 28 OF THE 39 BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. ACCORDING TO ONE AUTHORITY THERE ARE 505 SUCH CITATIONS AND ALLUSIONS, SOME 325 OF WHICH ARE TO THE PROPHETIC BOOKS OF THE OT -- ISAIAH, JEREMIAH, EZEKIEL, AND DANIEL IN PARTICULAR. And more, and more, and . . .

So what is the context of the **Two Witnesses**? Only the symbolism apparent in Revelation, or is there a greater context? What shall we do with all the previous references to the **Two Witnesses** throughout Scripture? Is **Bible** study the study of a single writing or a collection of writings?

Regarding the identity of the **Two Witnesses**, we should add Jewish history (Jewish understanding / interpretation) to our study. For the Jew, the Bible is Old Testament Scripture alone! But as Christians, our context is wider: *Old Testament and New Testament*. This means we have references from Jesus and His disciples, the NT writings of the Apostles to consider.

Regarding Jewish history and interpretation, there is a reason why the leading Rabbis, Scribes and Pharisees appeared at the river Jordan to question John the Baptist. John was preaching, "Repent, the kingdom of heaven is at hand." In plain English, John was preaching, "**Messiah is on His way!**"

This puzzled and troubled John's audience -- **WHY?**

Regarding Jewish history and interpretation, there is a reason why the leading Rabbis, Scribes and Pharisees at last rejected Jesus as the true Messiah -- **WHY? Jesus' own disciples** were at times puzzled regarding Jesus' claim to be Messiah. Hearing the taunts of the leaders, the Disciples, "asked him [Jesus], saying, Why say the scribes that Elias [Elijah] must first come?" Mark 9:11. Jesus was also preaching, "Repent, the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matthew 4:17. In plain English, Jesus was preaching, "**Messiah has arrived!**"

Jews of that day and Jews of this day understand why the questioning; why the bewilderment and overt rejection of Jesus as the true Messiah. Though Jesus attempted to satisfy the questions of His own Disciples regarding the issue of Elijah (and Moses) appearing in person to herald Messiah's coming -- these questions persisted all the way to the Cross!:

"About the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias [Elijah]. And straightway one of them ran, and took a spunge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias [Elijah] will come to save him."

-Matthew 27:47-49 KJV.

Once more: Jews understand these things! Most Jews rejected Jesus at His first coming because they could not be satisfied that "Moses and Elijah had indeed returned, according to their Prophets."
In **Part 5**, Monday, I intend to finish this study with plain Scripture.

**“QUOTABLE”**

"I told you the times they are a-changin' and they did. I said the answer was blowin' in the wind and it was. **I'm telling you now Jesus is coming back, and He is! And there is no other way of salvation.**"

--Bob Dylan, (quoted from any number of his concerts since converting to Christianity).

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