--CW Says, "Apologies please; I met with too many interruptions Friday while preparing Part 4. Today I am offering a revised version of Part 4 and concluding my study.

Part 4: Who Are the Two Witnesses? A Revision With Conclusions

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 conclusions a person will draw.

Hundreds 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, for hundreds of years, has produced confusion. "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." Proof-texting Scripture is subjective and creates confusion and division!

"We don't see things as they are; we see them as we are." -Anais Nin.

More recently, many ministers and theologians are being trained to read and apply Scripture contextually. The difficulty, of course, is how to re-train millions of adherents to...
read, interpret and believe the Bible differently than they have been taught -- this has broken some denominations to shreds and caused more than a few prominent ministers and theologians to be "excommunicated."

Because so much symbolism is employed within the book of Revelation, many insist that the language of Revelation chapter 11:3-11, is symbolic and not to be interpreted literally. But the book of Revelation IS NOT ORIGINAL -- JOHN WAS THE AUTHOR, BUT 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 more . . .

So what is the biblical context of the Two Witnesses? Is it only the symbolism apparent in so much of Revelation? Or is there a larger context? What are we to do with all those previous references to the two witnesses throughout Scripture? "Our English word 'Bible' is a transliteration, through the Latin and Old French, of the Greek biblia, literally, 'little books' (plural)." Should Bible study be the study of a single writing or should it be the study of a collection of writings?

Then again, what about Jewish thought and interpretation? Are we to disregard Jewish history, Jewish understanding and Jewish interpretation of Scripture? For the Jew, the Bible is Old Testament Scripture alone, but as Christians, our context is larger, comprising both Old and New Testaments. We have references concerning the two witnesses from both Testaments -- from Jesus and the Apostles -- this includes John's vision of the "Two Witnesses" (Revelation chapter 11).

Regarding Jewish history and interpretation, there is a reason why leading Rabbis and Scribes appeared at the river Jordan to question John the Baptist, John 1:19-25. John was preaching, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matthew 3:2. John's message puzzled and troubled his audience -- WHY? In plain English, John the Baptist was preaching, "Messiah is on His way!"

There was good reason why leading Priests of the day went out to question John, asking him plainly,

"Are you Elias [Elijah]? Art thou that Prophet [Moses]??"

When John answered, "No," to both questions, their response was,


Most Jews understand these surface contradictions. 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."

Jesus, like John the Baptist, was also preaching,

"Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matthew 4:17.

In plain English, Jesus was preaching, "Messiah has arrived!"
Hearing the incredulous taunts of respected religious leaders, *Jesus' own disciples* were at times puzzled, perhaps even troubled, regarding *Jesus' claim to be The Messiah*. His Disciples, "asked him [Jesus], saying, Why say the scribes that Elias [Elijah] must first come?" Mark 9:11.

Though Jesus attempted to answer their questions regarding the issue of Elijah (and Moses) appearing in person to herald Messiah's coming -- **bewildering 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.

Once more: Most Jews understand these surface contradictions. 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."

**Alternate Interpretations Versus Plain Scripture**

One of the more popular and widely accepted interpretations **identifying** the **Two Witnesses** of Revelation as the Old and New Testaments can actually be traced to Sir Isaac Newton (1643-1727). Millions have read of the amazing scientific and mathematic achievements of Newton, but are unaware that Sir Isaac Newton devoted many years of his life to intense study of Bible prophecy, particularly the books of Daniel and the Revelation. He actually wrote far more regarding his study of the prophecies than he wrote about science and math!

One Christian author following Newton, George Croly (1780-1860), an Irish writer and clergyman (Dublin), expanded Newton's interpretation (**Two Witnesses** = Old and New Testaments) by combining Newton's views with the history of the French Revolution (see *The Prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation* by Uriah Smith, pps. 531-541).

A careful reading of Revelation chapter 11 will reveal the inadequacies of these honest attempts to identify the **Two Witnesses**. Even if one employs symbolism, "their dead bodies"."lying in the street of the great city."where also our Lord was crucified [Jerusalem]" is far removed, literally or symbolically from Paris or any other place in France!

As one friend has noted, "the **Two Witnesses** according to Revelation chapter 11, are the 'two olive trees that stand before the Lord of all the earth,'" a verse taken directly from the Old Testament book of Zechariah, chapter 4:11-14. His conclusion specifically was, "There is no way that one of the two witnesses was the New Testament -- the New Testament was not yet written. Also, in 1 Kings 6:32, two olive tree doors (stood) at the entrance of the Most Holy Place of Solomon's Temple -- Elijah had not yet been born --Oops."

To take each point in Revelation chapter 11, regarding the **Two Witnesses**, and interpret them symbolically as past history, is to apply them out of context -- **pre**-last day Beast System, **pre**-last day Antichrist, **pre**-last day Judgment, etc., in effect negating the context surrounding the preaching, death and resurrection of the **Two Witnesses** as described in the
book of Revelation.

To quote myself: "History is not prophecy; history is about the past. Prophecy is not about the past; prophecy is about things to come!" So that there is no misunderstanding regarding my understanding, Daniel -- OT, and John -- NT, are indeed, Two Witnesses! They are literally "dead bodies" but living, last-day witnesses!

Plain Scripture

This plain Scripture explains why the scribes questioned John so closely concerning his preaching, "the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." Malachi 4:5, 6.

Personally, I cannot fathom anyone symbolizing this plain Scripture. The context of Elijah's appearance is "the great day of the Lord" and that great day is yet future!

Jesus' own Disciples found it necessary to question Him regarding prophetic declarations about the return of Moses and Elijah to announce Messiah's appearing at "the great day of the Lord."

"They asked him [Jesus], saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come?" - Mark 9: 11.

To which Jesus affirmed Malachi's prophecy:

"Jesus answered . . . unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things." - Matthew 17:11.

Prefacing His response, Jesus said, " . . . if ye will receive it, this [John the Baptist] was Elias [Elijah] which was for to come." Matthew 11:13-15 (please read these verses in context).

NOTE: JESUS' FIRST COMING AND JOHN'S TESTIMONY REGARDING "THE KINGDOM" DID NOT MEET THE FULNESS OF GOD'S PROMISE THROUGH MALACHI.

What about Moses?

Before his death, Moses prophesied and virtually every Jew has since believed Moses will return:

"The Lord will send you a prophet like unto me." -Deuteronomy 18:15, 18 KJV.

NOTE: IN TIME JESUS WOULD SATISFY SOME OF HIS DISCIPLES' QUESTIONS BY TAKING PETER, JAMES AND JOHN TO THE MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION, THUS ALLOWING THEM TO WITNESS MOSES AND ELIJAH ADDRESS HIM AS THE TRUE MESSIAH.

NOTE: More than once Jesus quoted and applied partial Scripture -- Scripture that could
Pertain to both of His Messianic visits; an example is found in Luke 4:16-29. Jesus found it absolutely necessary to say to His followers, especially His Disciples, "I am the promised Messiah, in person." But He could not dare [AND HE DID NOT] allow His followers to understand fully that His Kingly, Messianic reign remained distant, prophetic, future! Jesus kept many things hidden from His Disciples:

"I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them NOW. Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come [Latter rain?!], he will guide you into all truth . . . and he will shew you things to come." John 16:12, 13.

Without offense, the identity of the Two Witnesses is, for me, clear enough in Scripture. Some have attempted to "set me right" by quoting favorite Christian authors, preferred ministers or traditional interpretations but I feel compelled to stay within the bounds of Canonical Scripture.

Post Script

At the personal level, I have satisfied my own curiosity surrounding the return of Moses and Elijah. I have found numerous references to their promised return, their mighty preaching, their deaths and their resurrection! These consistent references to the return of God's appointed Two Witnesses are found in Daniel chapters 7 and 8 as well as Revelation chapters 11, 12, 13 and 14:

My Two Witnesses

Daniel 7:7 "stamped the residue"
Daniel 7:19 "stamped the residue"
Daniel 7:21 "made war with the saints"
Daniel 7:25 "wear out the saints"
Daniel 8:10 "cast down some of the host (stars)"
Daniel 8:12 "and (the) host was given over"
Daniel 8:13 "the host to be trodden under foot"
Daniel 8:24 "shall destroy the mighty and the holy people"

Revelation 11:3 "my two witnesses"
Revelation 11:4 "these are the two olive trees" and "and the two candlesticks"
Revelation 11:6-12 "these; they; them; their"
Revelation 11:10 "these two prophets"
Revelation 12:17 "the remnant"
Revelation 13:7 "war with the Saints"
Revelation 14:12, 13 "the blesses dead" whose "works do follow them"