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Messianic Perspectives[®]

God has not forgotten the Jewish people, and neither have we.



THE
SECOND COMING
OF
Elijah
BY DR. GARY HEDRICK

Multitudes of Christians around the world look forward to the return of Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) to this planet at the “end of days.”¹

According to some polls, many people who don’t even consider themselves particularly religious nonetheless agree that the Lord will come back someday.²

And as the world around us continues its descent into chaos and darkness, the cry of every redeemed heart is, “Come, Lord!”³

Something that isn’t quite so widely known, however, is that Jesus may not be the only biblical personage who’s slated to return at the end of this age.



Bamberg Apocalypse Folio (11th century)

John's End-Time Vision

Sometime around AD 95, the Apostle John sat down and penned the Book of Revelation.⁴ In a series of visions given to him by Yeshua the Messiah through an angel (1:1), it provides an amazing glimpse into the future of our world.

The book outlines itself in 1:19: "Write the things **which you have seen**, and the things **which are**, and the things **which will take place after this**." So from John's perspective, it talks about the past (things that "have" been), present (things that "are"), and future (things that "will" be).

The past is the vision in Chapter 1; the present (that is, John's present) is the messages to the seven Messianic congregations in Chapters 2 and 3; and the future is everything from Chapters 4 to 22.

Revelation can be viewed as a commentary on the OT Book of Daniel. Sir Isaac Newton, in fact, recognized this relationship between the two books and wrote a dual commentary on both of them: *Observations Upon the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse of St. John* (two volumes).⁵

In Chapter 11, John describes a compelling scene that unfolds on the streets of Jerusalem during the coming Tribulation.⁶

And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth. And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire (vv. 3-6).

When we interpret Revelation, it's important to remember that words like "laser," "rocket," "helicopter," "bomb," or "airplane" (or their modern Greek/Hebrew equivalents) were unknown to John. After all, none of these implements of war existed in his day. So he describes, as best he can with a first-century vocabulary, what he sees in this mind-boggling vision (1:10-11).

There are striking parallels between Revelation 11 and Daniel 7, where the Prophet Daniel describes a future period of international upheaval and spiritual warfare in which the "kingdom" of the anti-Messiah tramples down all opposition (Dan. 7:23-25). Ultimately, the Kingdom of God prevails and God's people ("saints") assume rulership over the earth (v. 27)—but not before the forces of evil wreak havoc on much of humanity.

Returning to Revelation, John first of all saw two old-fashioned street preachers ("witnesses") proclaiming God's Word in Jerusalem. Not only do they prophesy/preach, but God also empowers them to work miracles. They are able to withhold rain for extended periods of time, for instance (drought is a serious matter in Israel even today); and whenever they are threatened, "fire . . . devours" their enemies (v. 5). They carry on like this for three and a half years.

One cannot help noticing the parallels with the OT ministry of the Prophet Elijah, who withheld rain (1 Kings 17:1, 7) and called fire down on his enemies (2 Kings 1:10, 12).⁷

The aged Apostle continues:

When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth (Rev. 11:7-10).

Messianic Perspectives®

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Evidently, the two witnesses will have garnered a worldwide audience by this time (note that it says the “nations” will see their dead bodies after they are killed [v. 9] and “those who dwell on the earth will rejoice” [v. 10]).⁸

“Beast” is another name for the Anti-christ (or, anti-Messiah), whose power comes from the Abyss, the demonic realm of darkness (20:1-3).⁹ He declares war on God’s two prophets and ultimately is allowed to kill them (for a purpose that becomes apparent later). Their bodies are left on display in the streets while people all over the world gloat and celebrate their demise.

But that’s not the end of the story. Note the next three verses in Revelation 11:

Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.” And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them. In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven (vv. 11-13).

Can you imagine television programming worldwide suddenly being interrupted when this happens? First, the news strip across the bottom of the screen says something like: “Breaking news (Jerusalem)—Reuters is reporting that the two controversial preachers who died earlier this week in Jerusalem have been seen alive. Details to follow.”



Sermon and Deeds of the Antichrist (1499-1502) by Luca Signorelli

Where There's a Will, There's a Way

We understand, as you do, that while we're here, there are no shortages of needs that take our time and resources. And though our intention is to remember the Lord's work with a financial gift someday, more immediate needs divert our attention. To our regret, that day of remembrance never comes, which is why including CJF Ministries in your will is an excellent way—without disturbing your current priorities—to ensure that your hard-earned assets will continue supporting the Lord's work even after you're gone. If you've never considered such a method of assisting, we'd be most grateful if you'd make it a matter of prayer. Should you require additional information, we'd be happy to provide helpful instructions.

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Once cameras are in place, the live video feed from Jerusalem will provide the world with undeniable evidence that a miracle has indeed occurred. The two prophets (whose carcasses had been on display for several days) will be standing once again in the streets. Then they will be “raptured” (that is, transported upward in a “cloud” to heaven; v. 12) while the world looks on in stunned disbelief.

Afterward, there will be a huge earthquake in Jerusalem resulting in massive destruction and thousands of fatalities. Many of the people in Israel (and presumably elsewhere) will be afraid and humble themselves before God (v. 13).

We now see that God allowed His two witnesses to be killed so He could resurrect them as a testimony of His power to the whole world—and to validate their message of impending judgment.

Two Prophets: Why the Anonymity?

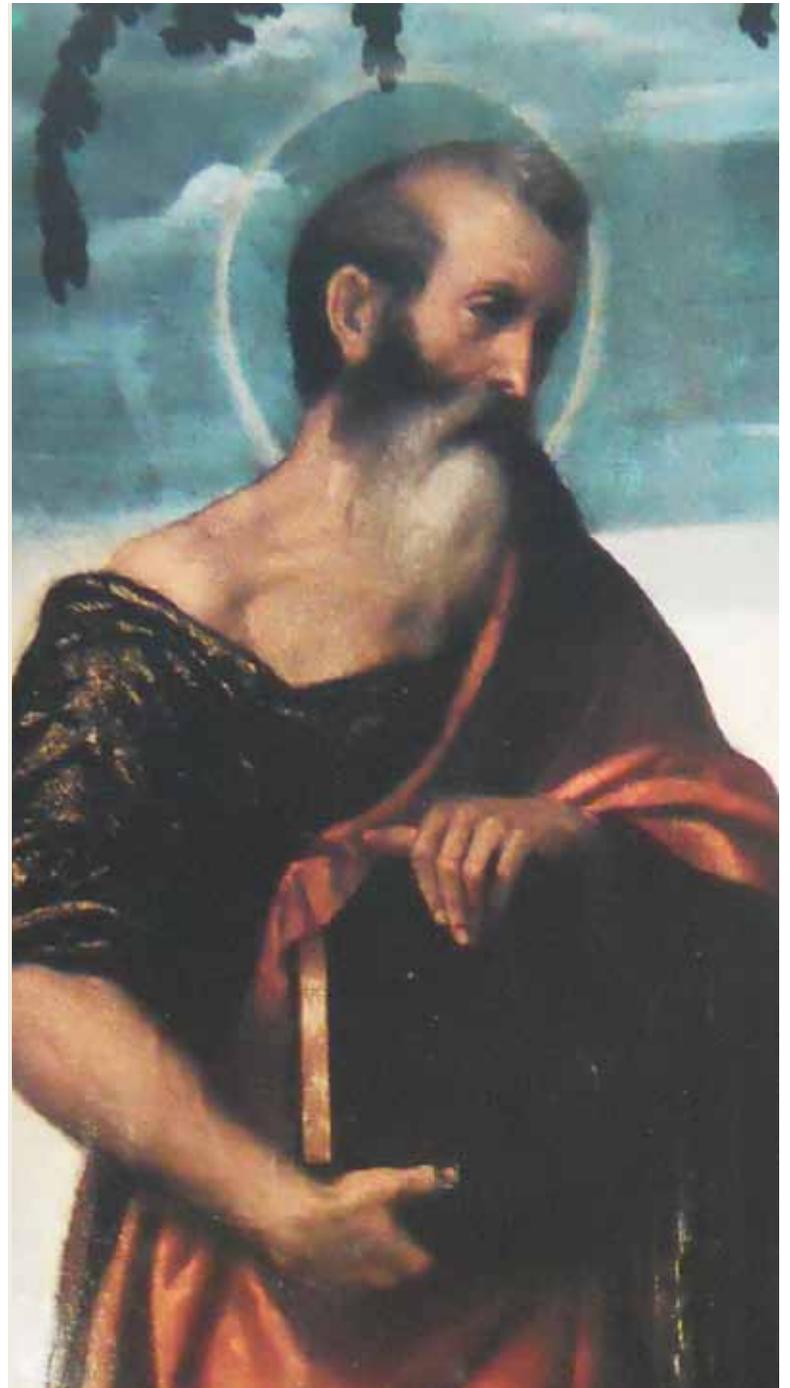
It truly is a remarkable prophecy—and it all centers around these two fearless and unflinching “witnesses.”

So why doesn’t John tell us who they are? Interpreters who claim that the witnesses are symbolic say that’s why they’re not named—that is, because they’re not real people.

However, there are plenty of other possibilities. For instance, it wasn’t all that unusual for an OT prophet not to mention his name. In the case of Jonah, for instance, his hearers only needed to know that he was God’s spokesman. He told the people on the ship, “I am a Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land” (Jonah 1:9). There is no evidence that he told the people of Nineveh his name, either.

The basis of Jonah’s authority was that he was coming in the name of Yahweh, Creator of heaven and earth. After all, he was delivering God’s message, not his own—so in that sense, the messenger’s name wasn’t relevant.¹⁰

Besides, one can easily imagine that if two well-known, newly repatriated OT prophets suddenly appeared and announced their names, it would be a distraction because the world would see them as delusional. People who heard them would be more concerned about their identity claims than about their message of repentance. It would only make it more difficult for the witnesses to carry out their mission.



Profeti Enoch ed Elia by Moretto da Brescia

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So Who Are They?

Nonetheless, inquiring minds want to know!

Who are these two guys, anyway?

Many theories (some dating as far back as the second century AD) have been proposed to answer this question.

The following summary is based, in part, on information provided in one of Grant Osborne's commentaries:¹¹

Literal Views (and Adherents)

- Elijah and Enoch (earliest view)—held by Tertullian (AD 160-225), Hippolytus (170-235), and numerous other patristic writers
- Elijah and Jeremiah—Victorinus (c. 270)
- James the Bishop of Jerusalem and the Apostle John—Bacon (1200s)
- Two unnamed Christian prophets (martyred by Titus)—Gelin (1938)
- Elijah and Moses—Alford, Scott, Barnhouse, Thomas (all 20th century)
- Peter and Paul (martyred by Nero)—Munck (1950), Boismard (1949)
- Elijah and John the Baptist—McGee (1981)

Allegorical Views (and Adherents)

- The two witnesses symbolize “the ministers of the Gospel and churches of Christ”—Gill (18th century)
- They represent the Old Testament and the New Testament, the Land and the Prophets, or Israel and the Church—many modern commentators (19th and 20th centuries)¹²
- They are symbols of “the witnessing Church”—many modern commentators, including: Swete, Lohse, Conside, Metzger, Talbert, Giesen, Mounce, Beale, and Aune (all 20th century)
- They symbolize “the witnessing and dying Church”—Court (1979)¹³



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ELIJAH & ENOCH

IN ANCIENT NON-BIBLICAL SOURCES

The Prophet Elijah (Heb., *Eliyahu haNavi*) is celebrated in many ancient Jewish sources as the forerunner of the Messiah. In the *Havdalah* ceremony, which marks the end of Shabbat, one stanza says:

Elijah the prophet, Elijah the Tishbite, Elijah the Gileadite, Quickly let him come to us with Messiah ben David, The man who was zealous for the name of God.¹

Another ancient Jewish source, *1 Enoch* (which claims to be the words of Enoch himself) declares:

And the Lord of spirits will abide over them, And with that Son of Man shall they eat, And lie down, and rise up forever and ever. And the righteous and elect shall rise from earth And cease to be of downcast countenance, And they shall be clothed with garments of glory. And these shall be their garments: Garments of life from the Lord of Spirits. And your garments shall not grow old, Nor your glory pass away before the Lord of Spirits.²

The *Gospel of Nicodemus* (an apocryphal work whose date of composition is uncertain) alludes to the ancient tradition that the two witnesses in Revelation 11 are Elijah and Enoch:

And two very ancient men met them, and were asked by the saints, Who are ye, who have not yet been with us in hell, and have had your bodies placed in Paradise?

One of them answering, said, I am Enoch, who was translated by the word of God: and this man who is with me, is Elijah the Tishbite, who was translated in a fiery chariot.

Here we have hitherto been, and have not tasted death, but are now about to return at the coming of Antichrist, being armed with divine signs and miracles, to engage with him in battle, and to be slain by him at Jerusalem, and to be taken up alive again into the clouds, after three days and a half.³

Another apocryphal work, *The Apocalypse of Elijah*, purports to finish the story John started in Revelation 11. It says that after they're raptured, Elijah and Enoch later return to earth, descend into Jerusalem, and kill the Beast by melting him "like ice melted by fire."⁴

Of course, the fact that ancient sources like these identified the two witnesses as Elijah and Enoch doesn't necessarily make it so. After all, only the Bible itself is our source of infallible truth. Nonetheless, it's a good indication that many people in ancient times embraced the literal interpretation and accepted the witnesses as two real people.



¹ *Seder Avodat Yisrael*, 310.

² *1 Enoch* 62:14-16. The NT quotes from this same book in Jude 14.

³ *The Gospel of Nicodemus*, Ch. 20 (vv. 2-4).

⁴ III, 91-96 (from *The Apocryphal Old Testament* by H.F.D. Sparks [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984], 773).

Biblical Clues

While theories, commentaries, and non-biblical sources can be fascinating, the only thing that really matters is what the Bible itself says. God's Word is our final authority.

So, then, are there any clues in Scripture about the identity of these two witnesses in Revelation 11? I believe there are.

First, it's hard to overlook the fact that the only two people in human history who never died were both OT prophets. On different occasions, they were caught up to Heaven without ever having experienced physical death. Those two prophets were Elijah (2 Kings 2:11) and Enoch (Gen. 5:24).¹⁴

This is especially intriguing in light of the NT principle that all mortals (by definition) must die: "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27).¹⁵

Is it merely coincidental that John sees two OT-style prophets standing in the streets of Jerusalem—and that there just happens to be two OT prophets who never died (at least, not yet) and who are therefore presumably available for active duty?¹⁶

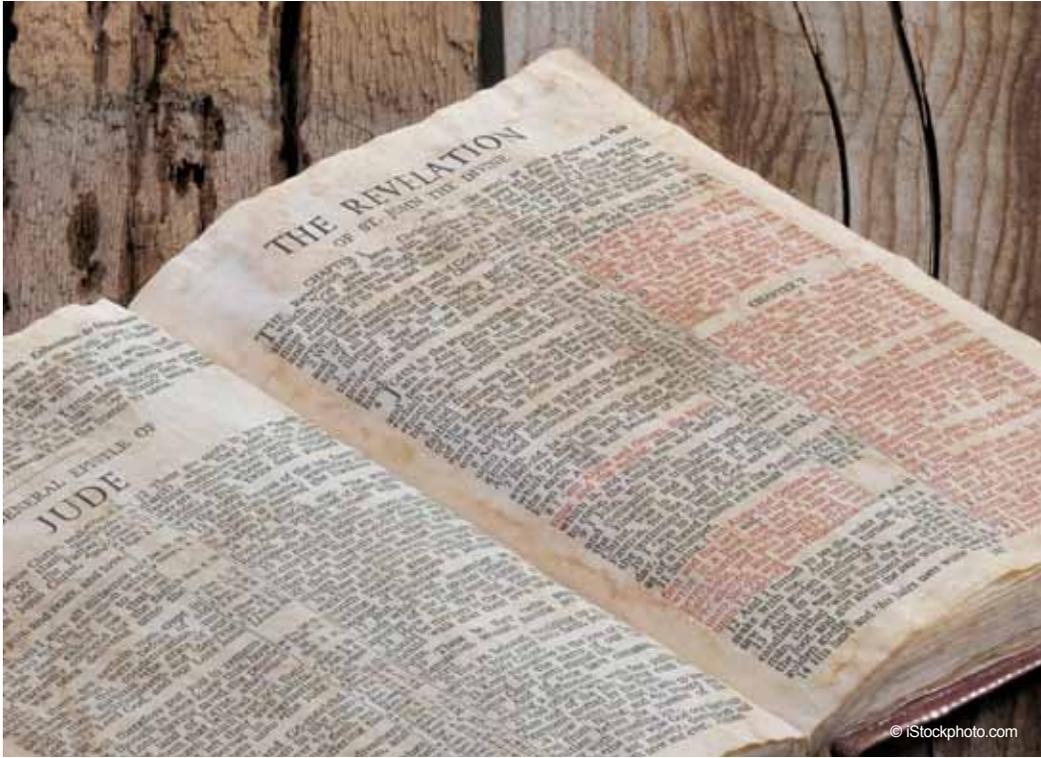
Fortunately, the evidence isn't entirely circumstantial. For instance, at the very end of the OT, the Prophet Malachi has this prediction:

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse (4:5-6).

So there you have it. Elijah will return at the end of time. Centuries later, Yeshua explained that Elijah would come to help "restore all things" (Matt. 17:11). This is the same restoration that Luke (Acts 3:21) and Paul (Rom. 8:20-23) talked about.¹⁷ Malachi made it personal by linking *restoration* with *reconciliation*. Families will be reconciled when the fathers' hearts are turned to their children and vice versa.

But some commentators say, "Hold on. That Elijah prophecy was fulfilled when Jesus came 2,000 years ago. John the Baptist was 'Elijah.'"

And in a limited sense, they're right. John the Baptizer was the forerunner of the Messiah at His first coming—and as such, he came "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17). John was "the Elijah" in the sense that he stepped into Elijah's sandals and served as the first-century forerunner for the Messiah (Matt. 11:14-15).



But let's not forget that the Messiah comes twice. So it's perfectly reasonable to say that there are two forerunners—John the Baptizer (2,000 years ago, at Messiah's first coming) and Elijah (yet future, at His Second Coming).

Yeshua himself made a distinction between the actual Elijah who comes and "will restore all things" (in the future) and the representative "Elijah" (i.e., John the Baptizer) who had already come (17:10-13). The Lord's argument was that if they didn't believe John, who came in the spirit and power of Elijah, they won't believe the real Elijah, either.

John himself said he wasn't Elijah. When the priests and Levites in Jerusalem asked him if he was Elijah, his answer was direct and to the point: "I am not" (John 1:21).

Even today, in the traditional Passover Seder, our Jewish friends place an empty chair and an extra cup of wine—known as "Elijah's Cup"—at the table. This reflects their longstanding belief that the Prophet Elijah will come to prepare the way for the Messiah before the day of the Last Judgment.¹⁸

Why Does It Matter?

The issue here is really more than just the interpretation of a few verses in Chapter 11. It's more about how we look at the entire Book of Revelation. Is it dry, dusty history about ancient events with little relevance to our lives today, as some people claim? Or is it an exciting (and at the same time, sobering) window into the future of Planet Earth?

Our inquiry into the possible identities of the two witnesses in Chapter 11 gives us an opportunity to consider what a literal-futurist view of Revelation can teach us.

1. What it tells us about God's heart.

How remarkable that even at this late stage in history, as the world plummets blindly into the final phase of the Tribulation Period, God is still reaching out to lost people by sending His two witnesses to warn them about the judgment that lies ahead.

Talk about "amazing grace"—this is it! Like the Bible says, "*The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance*" (2 Peter 3:9).

Maybe you're reading these words right now, and you know in your heart of hearts that you've never reached out in faith and received God's free gift of eternal life (John 3:16-17). You can do it right now, before you read another line!

2. What it tells us about OT/NT continuity.

The appearance of two OT prophets here at the end of the NT provides continuity in the biblical narrative. This isn't two separate, disjointed plans (God's working in the OT as distinguished from His working in the NT), but one continuous plan that has two aspects—one for Israel and another for the Church.¹⁹

How sad that so many Christians in our day have been taught that the NT has replaced the OT. Not so! The NT is built on the foundation of the OT. If you were to remove every trace of the OT from the NT, there would be almost nothing left!²⁰

Speaking about the OT, Paul said, "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work*" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Believers who consider the OT passé are missing out on a treasure trove of spiritual truth and an inexhaustible source of edification and instruction.

Revelation is replete with OT images—including the 12 Tribes (Chapters 7 and 14), the Son of Man (1:13; from Daniel 7:13), the Lion of the Tribe of Judah (Rev. 5:5), the Lamb (v. 6), the Temple/Tabernacle (15:5), the New Jerusalem (21:2), and even the "bride-groom" motif of Chapters 19—21, among others. These concepts are all rooted and grounded in the OT.

Here at the end of the NT, then, when God needs two witnesses to proclaim His final message to the world, upon whom does He call? He calls on two OT prophets!

3. What it tells us about prophecy/history.

Prophecy is history—real history—written in advance. Does Revelation employ symbols and metaphors? Absolutely! (John himself explains some of the symbolism in 1:19-20.) But that doesn't mean Revelation isn't talking about real events. Here in Revelation 11, the two witnesses certainly look like real people—they live, they speak, they interact with their hearers, and they die. John even tells us what they're wearing (v. 3)!

Is there a combination here of literal and figurative language? Of course there is. But the tenor of the language certainly lends itself to a description of real people and actual events. Are the witnesses literally breathing fire (v. 5)? Maybe not, but even that wouldn't mean the events and people themselves aren't real. The Church jumped the track centuries ago when it started allegorizing big chunks of God's Word. The future events described by the prophets are just as literal as the past prophecies that have already been fulfilled (like Messiah's being born in Bethlehem).

4. This is as real as it gets.

Sometimes there's a tendency to treat biblical prophecy like a Hollywood epic—the good guys win the day and ride off into the sunset (roll credits).

However, let's remember that Daniel and John were describing real events in real time. This isn't just about the sweeping, forward march of history with its crumbling kingdoms and global calamities. It's intensely personal. People—multitudes of them—will suffer and die. There's pathos and pain—with no actors or stunt doubles. John puts a human face on the events of the Tribulation by introducing us to these two men. In the midst of this vast conflict (which rages in Heaven and on earth), here are two courageous prophets who take a stand against the powers of hell that are arrayed against them.

And even after they are killed, God raises them up again three-and-a-half days later in a spectacular display of His power that shakes the world to its very foundations.

This should encourage all of us to stand up for what's right—and to speak the truth in love, even when people don't want to hear it.

Conclusion

There are several, very obvious parallels between Elijah and Enoch:

- Both were prophets sent from God;
- Both proclaimed an unpopular, prophetic message;
- Both were “raptured”; and
- Neither experienced death.

The view that they are the two witnesses in Revelation 11 seems to line up favorably with the biblical data. Admittedly, much of the evidence is circumstantial; however, it's unlikely, in my view, that the pieces of the puzzle fall into place so well merely by coincidence.

However, I'm sure Elijah and Enoch would both agree with me when I say that biblical prophecy should never be allowed to become an exercise in

pointless speculation and shallow sensationalism. Rather, it should motivate us to live godly lives and to be productive in the work of the Kingdom:

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works (Titus 2:11-14). 

Dr. Gary Hedrick
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ENDNOTES

¹ The Hebrew term for “end of days” is *acharit hayamim* (אחרית הימים). In Jewish thought, it refers to a period of earthly cataclysms and disasters just prior to the future redemption (Deut. 31:29).

² According to a 2010 survey by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press and *Smithsonian Magazine*, 41 percent of American respondents said they expect Jesus' Second Coming by the year 2050 (“Jesus Christ's Return to Earth,” from the Pew Research Databank; accessed at pewresearch.org).

³ A common expression in the early Church was, “*Maranatha!*” It's a combination of two Aramaic words meaning “Our Lord, Come!” and expressed their desire for the soon return of *HaAdon Yeshua HaMashiach* (the Lord Jesus Christ). See 1 Corinthians 16:22 and Revelation 22:20.

⁴ For a classic discussion (in German) in favor of the mid-90s date for the writing of the Book of Revelation, see H. Giesen's *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (Regensburg, Germany: Pustet, 1997), 41-42. English readers will find a similar treatment of the subject in *The Book of Revelation* by Robert H. Mounce in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 15-21.

⁵ The copy we consulted was digitized from a 1733 version that's housed in the Bavarian State Library in Munich and was accessed online at books.google.com.

⁶ The term “Tribulation” (Matt. 24:21, 29; Rev. 7:14) in our usage here refers to a seven-year period that immediately precedes the Messiah's coming in glory (Rev. 19:11-16). Also known as “the time of Jacob's trouble” (Jer. 30:7; cp. Dan. 12:1), its world-shaking, cataclysmic events are the “beginning of sorrows” (cf. Matt. 24:8) that help give birth to the Messianic Age, or Millennium (note the phrase “in that day” repeated in Isaiah 2:11, 17, 20; see also Amos 5:18-20, 8:7ff).

⁷ Some interpreters also point out the similarities between the ministry of these two “witnesses” and that of Moses in the Book of Exodus, where he turned the Nile's waters into “blood” and brought other plagues upon God's enemies (Ex. 7–11; cp. Rev. 11:6). This has led to the suggestion that the two witnesses in Revelation 11 are Elijah and Moses rather than Elijah and Enoch.

⁸ The 1936 Berlin Olympics was the first time in history that events were broadcast live around the world on TV (viewable by the relatively few people who owned sets in those days). Now, in the 21st century, transoceanic cables are supplemented with satellites and live worldwide broadcasts have become routine. Every hour on the hour, live scenes from the Middle East (and many other places) are broadcast around the world.

⁹ There are actually two “beasts” in Revelation—and they're both found in Chapter 13. Many of us believe the first beast (the one “out of the sea,” vv. 1-10) is the Antichrist (or anti-Messiah), a political figure, and the second beast (the one “out of the earth,” vv. 11-17) is the false prophet, a religious leader.

¹⁰ Another example of an anonymous prophet may be Malachi. The Septuagint (a pre-Christian Greek translation of the Hebrew OT, often abbreviated as LXX) interprets the

Hebrew *malachi* (lit., “my messenger”) as a title rather than a proper name. This reflects a very ancient tradition that ascribes the Book of Malachi to an unnamed prophet who simply went by the title “My (or His) Messenger.” See Robert L. Alden, “Malachi: Authorship” in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. 7: Daniel and the Minor Prophets*, Frank Gaebelin, Ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 702.

¹¹ *The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Revelation* by Grant R. Osborne (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 417-418.

¹² For a more complete list of this grouping of views, see *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Book of Revelation* by Robert H. Mounce (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), footnote 80, 217.

¹³ John M. Court, *Myth and History in the Book of Revelation* (London: SPCK, 1979).

¹⁴ We classify Enoch as an OT prophet because Jude says, “Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men . . .” (v. 14, emphasis mine). The fact that Jude quotes from 1 Enoch doesn't mean that it should be regarded as Scripture; it simply means that the portion he quoted was accurate and true. It does *not* mean that everything in 1 Enoch is true and inspired by God.

¹⁵ The only exception to this principle, as far as we know, is the terminal generation, when the Lord returns and we are caught up to be with Him (1 Thess. 4:17). Those of us who are alive when that happens will never experience death (1 Cor. 15:51-54). All previous generations, however, are “appointed” to pass through the veil of physical death.

¹⁶ This raises another question—that is, were Elijah and Enoch glorified (i.e., made immortal) when they were translated to Heaven in the OT? Paul says that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 15:50), so how could they be taken to Heaven without having been glorified and transformed? And if they are now immortal, how could they return to earth later and die? These are valid questions, certainly, and we could devise our own list of possible answers; but instead, we are content to leave such details with God.

¹⁷ *Tikkun olam* (lit., “fixing [the] world”) is an ancient concept in Judaism. The rabbis have long recognized the brokenness of our world and its dire need of repair (e.g., *Babylonian Talmud*, Gittin 4:2 and other passages dealing with family law). The NT addresses this issue with its teaching about the ultimate restoration, restitution, or regeneration of the universe by Messiah Yeshua, who created it in the first place (Col. 1:16).

¹⁸ See “Elijah the Great Forerunner,” Chapter 14 in *The Messiah Texts* by Raphael Patai (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979), 131-44.

¹⁹ God's plan for Israel and the Church in the flow of salvation history is masterfully fleshed out by the Apostle Paul in Romans 9, 10, and 11.

²⁰ We believe the New Covenant supersedes the OT Torah only as a *binding legal covenant regulating a person's relationship to God* (Heb. 8:13), but not as an inspired and authoritative source of teaching and truth for God's people in all ages (Rom. 15:4).

Fruit from the Harvest



by Violette Berger

One More Soul for Heaven

Michael Campo, CJFM Midwest representative (Chicago), recently visited an elderly woman out of concern for her spiritual condition. Mike writes, “Paul says Jesus is our peace, and I wanted to know what this woman knew about the Prince of Peace.” So he asked her whether or not she had peace with God. Although her response was favorable, it was apparent to Mike that she did not know Jesus—she did not have a personal relationship with Him.

Mike followed with a question about sin, and then decided to share the Gospel message. At the conclusion of their conversation, Mike emphasized the need to verbally confess that Jesus is Lord—the need to repent and believe for forgiveness of sin and salvation. Mike adds, “Much to my surprise (although I really should not have been surprised) God began a good work, she spoke a resounding ‘Yes!’ and once again, hell was depopulated. Hallelujah!”

New Believers, New Blessings

CJFM Pastor Yossi, Kehilat Haderech (The Way Congregation) in Israel, said, “[I am] so excited and thankful to God for every new believing brother and sister in the Lord. God is truly working in our midst in a way that we have never experienced before. In the last year and a half, we have been so fortunate to see the addition of 10 new brothers and sisters, from all age groups! Most of them come to our Shabbat services, even though some of them have difficulties with their families because they come!”

Pastor Yossi has also baptized six new believers—some who were already attending the congregation, and some who came from “outside” the congregation. As a result, he has begun teaching a new course on the “Foundations of Faith.” Pastor Yossi requests that we pray for all of the new believers—that they will be strengthened and built up in their faith. In the last two months, the congregation has also said goodbye to three dear brothers who have gone to be with the Lord. Isaac, who was 80, prayed to receive Yeshua as his Lord and Savior just two months before his death. *“To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven”* (Eccl. 3:1).

God’s Grace

Jenya Drazman, CJFM representative (Toronto), writes about a visit with a woman, “M,” who resides in a Jewish Orthodox nursing home. Even though M had agreed to the visit, she changed her mind when Jenya and M’s friend arrived. M told them that she did not want them there and asked them to leave. M added to Jenya, “I don’t want you to talk to me about Christ!”

Jenya respected the woman’s request, and asked if M had a good Hannukah. M appeared surprised as she said, “Yes.” Jenya observed that although M is only 60 years old, she looks much older due to her health issues. The left side of her face is paralyzed, and she also uses a walker. Jenya continued, asking M whether she also had some latkes (potato pancakes) during Hannukah. As they began to talk about Jewish things, M’s hostility gradually started to melt away. M told Jenya that while she was not comfortable inviting her into her room, she would be willing to visit with her in the lobby.

During their conversation in the lobby, M asked Jenya about her education. When Jenya said linguistics, it sparked M’s interest. She would have loved to have studied etymology, herself. As they discussed different subjects, Jenya quietly prayed that the conversation would turn to the Lord. Suddenly, M mentioned that “there were instances in my life when I felt God divinely intervened and saved me.” One example she mentioned was how God had saved her from being run over by a subway train when she attempted to end her life. When Jenya asked her why she thought God had saved her, M replied, “So that I would speak kind words to people.”

Jenya said that she believed God spared her because He loved her and wanted her to know Him. She then asked M what she thought about the Messiah. M paused, surprised, and asked, “Who is He and what is His name?” Jenya told her that His name is Yeshua, which means “One who saves,” and He is the promised Messiah in the Jewish Scriptures. M whispered to Jenya that she loved the name Yeshua, but did not like

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Bible Questions AND Answers

by DR. GARY HEDRICK

Have a Bible question?

Submit it to Dr. Hedrick at garyh@cjfm.org, or mail it to 611 Broadway, San Antonio, Texas 78215.

(You may even see your question addressed in a future issue of *Messianic Perspectives*.)

QUESTION: *You often talk about a belief known as premillennialism—but that’s such a big word for someone like me who’s never been to seminary! What does it mean? I gather that it has something to do with the future Kingdom on earth, but you make it sound controversial at times. Doesn’t everyone believe in a future Kingdom? And if so, why the controversy?*

ANSWER: Yes, premillennialism is controversial—and you’re correct in saying it has to do with God’s future Kingdom here on earth. The term itself comes from a Latin prefix (pre-) meaning “before” followed by two words (mille + annum) meaning “thousand years.” So a premillennialist is someone who believes the Lord will return “before (the) thousand years.”

The Kingdom of God has both literal (earthly) and spiritual aspects. The literal awaits its future fulfillment, but the spiritual is a present reality—*Melech Yeshua* (King Jesus) rules and reigns in the hearts of His people now! He spoke about both aspects (literal and spiritual) when He said, “*My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here*” (John 18:36). Note the critical “now” in the last clause; it’s the Greek participle *nun* and it signifies present time. The Lord was saying that at the present time, His Kingdom is not a literal, earthly reality. But someday it will be!

Literal and spiritual realities aren’t necessarily mutually exclusive—especially when talking about the Kingdom of God.

The thousand-year period alluded to in Revelation 20 is the Messianic Age. At long last, the Branch, the Stem of Jesse (both references to the Messiah) will rule the earth with righteousness and justice (Isa. 11:1-10). Christian theologians call this period the Millennium. It’s a major theme in the OT (although its thousand-year duration isn’t mentioned there)—especially in the Book of Isaiah (e.g., see Chapters 2, 4, 9, 11, and many others).

HaAdon Yeshua (the Lord Jesus) prayed to His Father, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10, KJV). The coming earthly Kingdom will be, in a sense, Heaven on earth. It’s when the Kingdom that has always existed in the hearts of believers is extended over the whole earth. It will be a time when “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea” (Isa. 11:9). We will reign as co-regents with the Messiah (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 20:6). God, in the person of His Son, will dwell here among us as our Immanuel (lit., “God with us”).

Not everyone believes in a coming, earthly Kingdom, however. In fact, most seminaries and denominations today don’t. That’s why premillennialism—along with many other aspects of God’s Word—is controversial.

The chart on the next page summarizes the four major prophetic systems in 21st-century Christian theology. They are categorized according to the way they interpret the Book of Revelation. 



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THE FOUR MAJOR PROPHETIC SYSTEMS¹

PROPHETIC VIEW	BASIC IDEA	MAIN ADVOCATES	EVALUATION
<p>PREMILLENNIALISM (ancient chiliasm²)</p> <p>The futurist (not yet fulfilled) view of the Book of Revelation</p>	<p>Anticipates a literal return of Messiah Jesus to establish a 1,000-year Kingdom with its seat of government in Jerusalem. This view is based largely on a literal interpretation of promises God made to Israel (through Abraham, David, and others) in the OT, regarding those promises as essentially unconditional.</p>	<p>The Apostles, the early (first century) Church, many of the early Fathers, the Anabaptists of the Reformation era, and later, C.H. Spurgeon in 19th-century England. Today, its constituency in the US and Canada consists mainly of conservative evangelicals. It is not widely held in Europe.</p>	<p>The strength of the futurist view is that it's based on the natural and unforced meaning of the OT promises. We believe its objective method (as opposed to a looser, subjective allegorical approach) is more conducive to the accurate, contextualized interpretation of the prophetic texts.</p>
<p>AMILLENNIALISM</p> <p>The idealist (allegorical) view of the Book of Revelation</p>	<p>Typically dismisses the idea of a literal Kingdom as a "carnal" myth based on primitive Jewish notions, and a misplaced emphasis on the Abrahamic and Davidic promises. Ethnic Israel is no longer relevant. The Kingdom is symbolic and exists now in the Church. The promises God formerly made to Israel now belong to the Church.</p>	<p>After starting out as a chiliast/millenarian (<i>City of God</i>, XX.7), Augustine (c. AD 400) changed his mind and became the first major proponent of this view. Calvin later embraced it, as did others. Today it is the dominant view in Christendom.</p>	<p>When you view the Bible through a symbolic (rather than literal-historical) grid, you can make it say almost anything. This approach tends to create a disconnect between a prophetic text and its intended meaning. Also, "The wedding of pagan philosophy to Christian theology has never created a fruitful union" (Paige Patterson).</p>
<p>POSTMILLENNIALISM</p> <p>The historicist (panoramic history) view of the Book of Revelation</p>	<p>Says that the Messiah will return after the Church succeeds in transforming the world into an earthly Kingdom. Our quest, then, is to "Christianize" the world so the Lord can return.</p>	<p>Proponents have included Martin Luther, John Wycliffe, and most of the Reformers other than the Anabaptists. Many 19th- and early 20th-century Bible believers (like the Southern Baptist B.H. Carroll) were postmillennialists.</p>	<p>This view rapidly lost favor in the 20th century after two world wars, but has resurged in recent decades in modified forms like those found in the "reconstructionist" and "dominionist" movements.</p>
<p>PRETERISM</p> <p>The preterist (past history) view of the Book of Revelation</p>	<p>Insists that the Second Coming prophecies were largely fulfilled in AD 70 when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. Consistent (or "full") preterists also reject future resurrections and judgments.</p>	<p>Many preterists recognize that their system was developed by a Spanish Jesuit named Alcasar in the late 16th and early 17th centuries—and it has had adherents in Roman Catholicism since that time. More recently, some Protestants (like R.C. Sproul) have adopted it in a modified form known as "partial preterism."</p>	<p>Preterists regard Matthew 24 and the Book of Revelation as past history with little or no relevance to our present or future. Many Bible believers consider consistent (or "full") preterism a heresy due to the extreme difficulty in reconciling its tenets with Scriptures like 1 Corinthians 15:12 and 2 Timothy 2:16-18.</p>

¹ This chart is loosely based on Paige Patterson's analysis of "The Revelation" in *The Criswell Study Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1979), 1477.

² Chiliasm (literally, "thousand-ism") is an ancient term for historic premillennialism, which affirmed the teaching of a future, 1,000-year Kingdom of God on earth, but wasn't as finely nuanced as modern dispensational premillennialism (with its teaching of a pre-Trib rapture). Philip Schaff, the famous historian, said that chiliasm was the "prominent" view in the early Church (*History of the Christian Church, Vol. II: Second Period—Ante-Nicene Christianity* [AD 100 – 311], Chapter 12). Other competing systems didn't arise until later.

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“Christ.” Jenya confirmed that she could always say “Yeshua the Messiah” instead of “Jesus Christ” since they both refer to the same Person.

M then told Jenya, “I trust you now. We can visit in my room.” There, M confided to Jenya that she really wanted to be saved and have assurance that she would be in Heaven when she died—to have the assurance that Orthodox Judaism could not give her. She was also concerned about retaining her Jewishness if she believed in Yeshua. Jenya assured her that she, too, is Jewish and did not stop being Jewish after believing in Yeshua. Jenya said, “He is more Jewish than anyone—He is the promised Jewish Messiah.”

M expressed her concerns about trying to be a good person, but failing, and feared demons or other people would keep her out of Heaven. As Jenya continued to share the Gospel message of salvation and grace with her, M finally admitted that it would not be easy living in an Orthodox Jewish facility and believing in Yeshua, but she wanted to do it anyway. M joyfully prayed with Jenya to receive *Yeshua haMashiach* as her Lord and Savior. Jenya recounts, “M said that I can visit her anytime. I am looking forward to it!”

“And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:16-17).

Praises to the Lord!

John Kanter, CJFM Southwest representative (Dallas)—for the 46 people who came to salvation last year; for the ongoing discipleship of a new believer from a Muslim background; for the privilege of mentoring an aspiring preacher; for the church that will be hosting his new monthly Messianic fellowship, Olive Tree Fellowship.

CJFM worker, Ruth N. (Israel)—for the generous outpouring of monetary gifts from Switzerland, Germany, England, the USA, and Australia to help those in need; for the letters of gratitude and blessings from the recipients; for the privilege of leading a weekly women’s Bible study comprised of both Jewish and Arab believers, and non-believers.

Rob Styler, CJFM director of missions (Phoenix)—for the privilege of teaching the Bible through his performances of Bible stories in churches and venues worldwide; for the way God is reaching people through the stories.

CJFM missionary Eric Chabot (Columbus, OH)—for the outreaches on the Ohio State University campus resulting in many discussions with Jewish and non-Jewish students; for being the only visible outreach to Jewish students on one of the largest campuses in the nation; for the privilege of discipling several young men; for the interest in their weekly apologetics and evangelism ministry on OSU’s campus. 