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THE END-TIME ELIJAH

In a few weeks from now it will be 26 years since Mr. Herbert W Armstrong died. Almost half of all people on Earth today were born after Mr. Armstrong's death. I mention this because recently I dealt with a man who still believes very firmly that Mr. Armstrong was the end-time Elijah. Nothing could shake this man's belief on this subject.

Sixteen years ago, in September of 1995, about a week before Joseph W. Tkach Sr died, I wrote an article entitled "Mr. Armstrong was not Elijah". That title speaks for itself. Today that conclusion is still correct. But where that article focused on showing that Mr. Armstrong was NOT Elijah, let's now take a different perspective and see what the Bible does tell us about the end-time Elijah.

Since Jesus Christ's return is still at some point in the future, it means that there is a great likelihood that at the actual time of Christ's second coming 70% or 80% or even more of all people alive at that point will have been born after Mr. Armstrong's death. Yet some Church of God people will still convince themselves that Mr. Armstrong was the end-time Elijah.

Now since Elijah was to come just before the return of Jesus Christ (i.e. "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD"), it really doesn't make sense to claim that a man who died before perhaps 80% or more of all people alive then were even born fulfilled the role of the end-time Elijah.

In plain language:

It really doesn't make any sense at all to claim that Mr. Armstrong, a man who died back in 1986, was the end-time Elijah!

But let's now examine the Scripture that predicts the coming of Elijah.

ONE SINGLE OLD TESTAMENT STATEMENT

There is in fact only one single statement in the entire Old Testament that predicts the coming of Elijah. And that statement is **very strategically placed** in Malachi chapter 4.

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)

These two verses represent the only Old Testament prediction of an Elijah to come.

In our Bibles these two verses represent **the last two verses of the whole Old Testament**. Now amongst the Jews the whole Old Testament is divided into three distinct sections. These sections are known as either "the Law + the Prophets + the Writings" or as "the Law + the Prophets + the Psalms", since the Book of Psalms is the first book in the section of "the Writings".

These three groupings are not necessarily chronological. They are based primarily on authorship and on

priority of subject matter. The criteria for this grouping are as follows: were the books written by Moses (group one), or by various prophets including records of Israel's very early history as a nation (group two), or by various people who were not designated as "prophets" (group three)? [COMMENT: An exception to this approach is the Book of Daniel. While Daniel certainly was a prophet, as per Christ's statement in Matthew 24:15, his Book is included in "the Writings" and not in "the Prophets".]

Thus in the Hebrew canon the last verse in the entire Old Testament is the last verse in 2 Chronicles, which is Book #11 in the "Writings". This last verse reads:

Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which *is* in Judah. Who *is there* among you of all his people? The LORD his God *be* with him, and let him go up. (2 Chronicles 36:23)

This last verse of the entire Old Testament in the Hebrew canon is in fact identical in subject matter to the second verse at the beginning of the Book of Ezra (i.e. Ezra 1:2). So the books of Ezra and Nehemiah (they constitute Book #10 in the Writings) in fact cover a later time than 2 Chronicles 36:23, since they go beyond the time of verse 2 of chapter 1 of Ezra.

However, from a chronological point of view, the Book of Malachi is still a few years later than the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. In fact, without any regard for how the books of the Old Testament are structured together in the canon, the Book of Malachi represents the very last written record of God's revelations until the start of the New Testament.

So the point is this:

Irrespective of how the Old Testament is organized in the Hebrew canon, the fact is that **chronologically Malachi 4:5-6 is God's very last recorded statement in Old Testament times**.

After God had spoken the words in Malachi 4:5-6 there was no further divine revelation until the time of the New Testament. So when Malachi appears as the last book of the Old Testament in our Bibles, that is in fact in agreement with this being the very last book that God inspired before New Testament times.

I could have just said that Malachi 4:5-6 represent the last two verses of the Old Testament. But then someone might very well have responded by saying: yes but in the Hebrew canon 2 Chronicles 36:23 is actually the last verse of the OT. So my point is that **chronologically** Malachi 4:5-6 are really the very last Old Testament verses.

In addition to this, consider how the Old Testament was viewed by Jesus Christ and by the apostles.

Except for one single statement after His resurrection, in which Jesus Christ referred to all three parts of the Old Testament (i.e. Luke 24:44), Jesus Christ always referred to ONLY the Law and the Prophets. For example, in Matthew 5:17 Jesus Christ said "think not that I am come to destroy the Law and the Prophets". He did **not** say "think not that I am come to destroy the Law and the Prophets **and the writings**"! This shows that the Writings were not seen as being on the same level of importance as either the Law or the Prophets.

Now one omission of "the Writings" could perhaps be explained away. But every time Jesus Christ referred to "the Law and the Prophets" in Matthew's Gospel He also did NOT mention "the Writings". See Matthew 7:12, Matthew 11:13 and Matthew 22:40. Furthermore, none of the other references to "the Law and the Prophets" mention "the Writings". Those references are John 1:45; Acts 13:15; Acts 24:14 and Acts 28:23. Even in Romans 3:21 the ex-Pharisee Paul referred to the Old Testament as "the Law

and the Prophets", again omitting any reference to "the Psalms".

This should suffice to show that Malachi really does represent God's last revelations in Old Testament times. So in light of this perspective as well as chronology, exactly what does this statement in Malachi 4:5-6 represent?

Here is the significance of these two verses:

THEY REPRESENT A BRIDGE FROM THE CLOSING OF THE OLD TESTAMENT DIRECTLY TO THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST!

To be quite clear: these verses bypass the first coming of Jesus Christ and the entire New Testament period. They bypass John the Baptist. They lead us DIRECTLY from the Old Testament to "the great and dreadful day of the LORD", an unambiguous reference to the second coming of Jesus Christ. These verses do not focus on either John the Baptist or on Jesus Christ's ministry; they point directly to the end of the age.

These two verses do NOT point to John the Baptist; they point directly to the end-time Elijah. However, we should recognize that **God's revelation** is almost always **progressive**, that **God adds things** to His revelations as time goes by. That is also the case with this very last prophecy in the Old Testament.

So where this passage in Malachi 4:5-6 is unequivocally a reference to the second coming of Jesus Christ and not at all to the first coming, in the New Testament we see **an expanded application attached to these two verses**. Without the statements by the angel Gabriel and then by Jesus Christ it would still have been clear that there is to be an end-time Elijah. But **without these statements by the angel Gabriel and by Jesus Christ it would NOT have been possible to apply these verses to John the Baptist**! In fact, in John 1:23 John the Baptist identified himself with **Isaiah 40:3** ("the voice of him that cries in the wilderness"), which same identification was also made by Matthew (Matthew 3:3) and by Mark (Mark 1:3) and by Luke (Luke 3:4).

So in the Old Testament John the Baptist is clearly identified by Isaiah 40:3, and there was no reason at all to suppose that Malachi 4:5-6 would also apply to John the Baptist. The announcement by the angel Gabriel and the subsequent confirmation by Jesus Christ represent **an added application for these two verses in Malachi 4**. But this added application should not distract us from **the sole focus** of these two verses on the time immediately before the second coming of Jesus Christ.

We'll examine the New Testament application of these verses to John the Baptist. And that application to John the Baptist actually clarifies some of the intended meaning of Malachi 4:5-6. But we should not lose sight of the fact that these verses represent a clear prediction for the time leading up to the second coming of Jesus Christ, thereby bridging the time between the end of the Old Testament and the end of this present age.

Before we examine the meaning of these verses more closely, let's first briefly consider how it came to be that these verses were wrongly applied to Mr. Armstrong.

HOW MALACHI 4:5-6 CAME TO BE WRONGLY APPLIED TO MR. ARMSTRONG

In the 1960's the Church wrongly believed that we were in the time of the end. We believed that the second coming of Christ was imminent. In looking at Malachi 4:5-6 the Church correctly understood that these verses speak about a servant of God in the time just before the second coming, and that these

verses are also connected to the two witnesses of Revelation chapter 11.

Since Mr. Armstrong was the very clear human leader of the Church at that time, therefore Mr. Armstrong was also seen as the only possible choice for the role of Elijah. There was nobody else who could even come close, seen from our understanding at that time. Who were the possible alternatives to Mr. Armstrong for the role of Elijah? There simply weren't any alternatives as far as we could understand.

So we accepted that God had called Mr. Armstrong to fill the role of the end-time Elijah. And while Mr. Armstrong himself was at first a little squeamish about being cast in the role of Elijah, in time Mr. Armstrong himself came to believe that he had indeed been called to fill the role of Elijah.

Of course, the passage of time has shown that we were wrong in this belief. Mr. Armstrong most emphatically had not at any stage been called to fill the role of Elijah. But here is the problem:

In reaching the conclusion that Mr. Armstrong was to fill the role of Elijah it was not our reasoning that had necessarily been wrong. In one sense the reasoning was basically sound: it makes sense to believe that the person who fills the role of Elijah will also be God's leading servant at that point in time. **Our real problem was** NOT so much the line of reasoning as it was **THE PREMISE we had accepted**.

Our real problem was the wrongly assumed premise that in the 1960's we had already entered "the time of the end". THAT PREMISE WAS OUR PROBLEM! And once we had accepted that wrong premise, then Mr. Armstrong was the only possible option for the role of Elijah.

Had Mr. Armstrong and the Church as a whole back in the 1960's clearly understood that the second coming of Jesus Christ was **AT LEAST 50 YEARS INTO THE FUTURE**, then nobody, neither Mr. Armstrong himself nor anybody else, would have concluded that Mr. Armstrong had been called for the role of Elijah. With 50 years or more to go nobody would even remotely have suggested that it was Mr. Armstrong's calling to fill the role of the end-time Elijah.

Wrong premises will always lead us to wrong conclusions. And ascribing the role of the end-time Elijah to Mr. Armstrong was just one of a number of wrong assumptions that resulted from our wrong understanding concerning the time of the end.

Now during the last couple of years of his life, while his health was deteriorating, Mr. Armstrong understood quite clearly that the role of Elijah was not his particular calling. The proof for this understanding by Mr. Armstrong was the fact that he instructed his successor "**to get the Church ready for Christ's return**".

That simple instruction all by itself is proof that Mr. Armstrong understood that he had not filled the role of Elijah, since there is no way that the end-time Elijah of Malachi 4:5-6 will ever have a successor whose job it will be "to get the Church ready"! If the "Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the LORD" ever has to give instructions to his own successor, then he couldn't possibly have been the end-time Elijah. **There is no room for any servant of God to succeed the Elijah** before the second coming of Christ. So when Mr. Armstrong appointed a successor before dying, this was proof that Mr. Armstrong was not Elijah ... and Mr. Armstrong himself knew it!

Now here is the problem for those people who today still believe that Mr. Armstrong was "Elijah". As long as they accept the flawed premise that back in the 1960's, when we came up with this flawed interpretation of Malachi 4:5-6, we had entered the start of the end of this age, so long it will continue to seem logical to them that Mr. Armstrong filled the role of Elijah. **The only way** for such people to **perhaps** grasp that Mr. Armstrong had NOT been called by God to fill the role of Elijah is for such people

to realize that in the 1960's it was **at least 50 years too soon** to expect an end-time Elijah, that it was still at least 50 years before the time of the end would be upon us.

Now you understand how various beliefs are established, right? This process applies to many, if not most beliefs. Here is how it typically goes:

INITIALLY there are very specific reasons or motives why a certain belief or teaching is accepted. Typically those reasons or motives will seem quite logical from the specific perspective from which they are initially accepted. Now **once an idea is accepted, THEN it no longer requires any proof or reasons or justifications**. Once a teaching has been accepted as truth, THEN the reasons for its acceptance actually become irrelevant and immaterial to us. From then onwards **it is simply viewed as a fact** which requires no proof. Rather than being required to prove its validity, at this stage the onus is on those who oppose this teaching; the pressure is on them to prove that it is in fact invalid. The tables have been turned around completely.

Where originally there was a demand for proof before a teaching is accepted as true (i.e. the "don't believe me, believe your own Bible" approach), once it has been accepted, even if wrongly so, then there is suddenly a demand for proof that it is NOT true, and the need for proof that it is supposedly true is totally dispensed with. That is not the way it really should be, but in practice that just happens to be the way it is! The correct approach is that the need for proof is NEVER dispensed with, as far as the things we believe are concerned. When something is right and true, then there is no need to fear any scrutiny of that belief. It is the truth that sets us free.

But in practice we frequently dispense with the requirement of proof for many of the things you and I believe. We accept that what we believe is true without really demanding any proof for its correctness. And if anything, we insist that other people need to PROVE that what we believe as truth is in fact not true at all. And very often we are not really interested in the proof that would call our particular beliefs into question, right? What most people don't realize is that this approach is a part of the system by which the "god of this age" (2 Corinthians 4::4) exercises control over human minds.

This we need to recognize. And this approach is also exemplified by those people who today still insist that Mr. Armstrong filled the role of Elijah. So when you meet people who hold this belief about Mr. Armstrong, realize what you are up against. Logic and soundness of proof will in most cases be ineffective against such people.

Anyway, hopefully you can understand quite clearly that at no stage was it ever Mr. Armstrong's calling to fill the role of the end-time Elijah. Shortly we'll look at another reason why Mr. Armstrong could not possibly have been the end-time Elijah, even if Jesus Christ's return had been in the early 1980' s. That reason may surprise you?

Now let's look at another question.

WHY DID GOD SAY THAT HE WOULD SEND ELIJAH?

We have already looked at Malachi 4:5-6 where God tells us that He will send a specific servant before the second coming of Christ. So we know "what" God will do. But the question is: **WHY** will God send "**Elijah** the prophet"? **Why not send Moses** or Daniel or Isaiah or Hosea? Why Elijah?

It is quite clear that this individual at the end will not literally be the same person as the Elijah in Old Testament times. It is clear that God is only comparing the man He will send just before the second

coming of Christ to the Old Testament prophet Elijah. So the question is: **WHY** would God **compare a man** He planned to send just before the second coming **to Elijah? WHAT is God trying to tell us with this statement?**

Let's start off by looking at Luke's Gospel with the account where the angel Gabriel appeared to Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist. Gabriel's first statement to Zacharias was that he would have a son whom he was to name "John" (Luke 1:13). This means that God was clearly **not** giving John the Baptist **the name "Elijah"**; God gave him the name "John". This tells us that God did NOT want anyone to address John the Baptist as "Elijah".

Now let's continue with Gabriel's message to Zacharias.

And many of the children of Israel **shall he turn** to the Lord their God. (Luke 1:16)

Here Gabriel is revealing the real meaning of the statement that Elijah would "turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers" in the concluding verse of the Old Testament (i.e. in Malachi 4:6). The real meaning of that statement is that Elijah would **turn people back towards God**! And when people turn back towards God, then God also turns back towards those people (e.g. Jeremiah 18:8; Ezekiel 33:14-15; etc.).

The Greek verb which is translated as "turn" in this verse is "**epistrepho**", and one of the meanings of this Greek verb is "**to convert**". And it is repentance that leads to conversion.

To be clear: Malachi 4:6 has nothing whatsoever to do with any church youth programs! It is not a reference to relationships within human families at all, except in a very general way. Gabriel's statement right here reveals that the primary intent of God's statement in Malachi 4:6 was to show that the end-time Elijah was to turn people back towards the true God!

In other words: Malachi 4:6 tells us that unless people turn back towards the true God, God would "come" (that's the 2nd coming of Christ!) and smite the Earth with a curse. That is independent of whether on the individual family level the relationship between fathers and children is straightened out or not. It is **the relationship between God and man** that is the issue in Malachi 4:6; the relationship between man and man (i.e. between fathers and sons) comes a distant second in this instruction for the end-time Elijah.

Next, when Gabriel said that John would turn many of the children of Israel towards the true God, the record shows that all John the Baptist did was preach **a message of repentance**! So the way to fulfill God's instruction regarding "turning hearts" is to preach a message of repentance; i.e. explain true repentance and make clear to people exactly what it is that God is looking for in human beings, explaining the vital importance of establishing a right relationship with God.

Let's continue with Gabriel's statement.

And he shall go before him **in the spirit and power of Elijah**, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. (Luke 1:17)

Here Gabriel clearly links John the Baptist to the Malachi 4:5-6 prophecy! So note! It is not Malachi 4:5-6 that points to John the Baptist. There is nothing in these two verses that even remotely hints at the first coming of Jesus Christ. And without Gabriel's statement here (plus Jesus Christ's later statement) there would be nothing to link John the Baptist to Malachi 4:5-6. It is really a case of Gabriel attaching **an added application** to the Malachi 4 prophecy. And that added application was obviously God-inspired

and God-intended.

But Gabriel did more than just establish an added application for the Malachi 4 prophecy. Gabriel also explained exactly what God means by the statement "I will send you Elijah the prophet". This statement "I will send you Elijah the prophet" really means that God would send a man who would not be Elijah, but who would come with **TWO attributes**: 1) he would come **in the spirit of Elijah**, and 2) he would come **in the power of Elijah**. Note that "the spirit" comes first and "the power" comes second.

Next, note that Gabriel then clearly applied Malachi 4:6 to John the Baptist. And John the Baptist didn't establish any youth programs or any family relationship programs. In fact, John the Baptist himself didn't get too involved in any family relationships. Luke tells us that as John matured so he "was **in the deserts** till the day of his showing unto Israel" (Luke 1:80), hardly the place for developing any family relationships. The point is that **John the Baptist preached repentance**, and **that's all he did**! And John the Baptist fulfilled this Malachi 4:6 instruction by preaching repentance.

So:

It is the preaching of repentance that "turns the hearts of the fathers to the children"; it is the preaching of repentance that "turns the disobedient to the wisdom of the just"; it is the preaching of repentance that "makes ready a people" for the second coming of Christ, as well as for the first coming.

So regarding John the Baptist the angel Gabriel said the following:

1) John the Baptist would "go" immediately before Christ's first coming.

2) John the Baptist would turn people towards God by preaching repentance.

3) John the Baptist would identify disobedience (i.e. "turn the disobedient") by explaining what is right and what is wrong. See Luke 3:2-14 as an example of this.

4) This preaching of repentance would prepare people for the 1st coming of Christ.

5) John the Baptist would do this job "in the spirit of Elijah".

6) John the Baptist would do this job "in the power of Elijah"

As mentioned earlier, we need to ask ourselves: just what is it about the prophet Elijah that God wants to draw our attention to? What is the reason for WHY God said He would send Elijah rather than Moses or some other Old Testament servant of God? The only way for us to answer these questions is to take a close look at the life of the prophet Elijah.

WHAT THE BIBLE TELLS US ABOUT THE PROPHET ELIJAH

Let's look at the things the Bible tells us about Elijah, and then we can ask ourselves: to which of those things is God drawing our attention?

1) **Elijah appears on the scene suddenly**, as if out of nowhere, and without any genealogy. He is immediately pictured in a confrontation with the king, **pronouncing a drought**. That is Elijah's introduction.

And Elijah the Tishbite, *who was* of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, *As* the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, **there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word**. (1 Kings 17:1)

James tells us that this drought was three and one half years long.

Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and **it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months**. (James 5:17)

So the very first verse in the Bible that in any way mentions **Elijah** shows him as someone who **was very confrontational**! Compare Elijah's approach towards King Ahab to the approach of the Prophet Daniel towards King Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4:19), who respectfully addressed Nebuchadnezzar as "my lord". By no stretch of the imagination was Elijah a diplomat. And he didn't seem to be too impressed by men's titles or ranks.

2) Elijah was equally **confrontational with the people in general**. Elijah faced the nation and then said: how long do you vacillate between two opinions? See 1 Kings 18:21. In the process of this confrontation **Elijah called fire down from heaven** and **Elijah pointed out the true God**, to the point where the people ended up being scared out of their wits and then saying "the LORD He is God, the LORD He is God" (1 Kings 18:39).

3) Elijah next **personally killed 450 pagan priests of Baal** with a sword! This act all by itself makes Elijah **the most aggressive individual amongst all the Old Testament prophets**. In this regard the prophet who came closest to Elijah was Samuel, who personally hacked King Agag into pieces (see 1 Samuel 15:32-33). In our setting today Elijah would be labeled (wrongly so!) as a cold-blooded murderer. Here are the relevant verses.

And Elijah said unto them, Take **the prophets of Baal**; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and **Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there**. (1 Kings 18:40)

And Ahab told Jezebel all that **Elijah** had done, and withal **how he had slain all the prophets with the sword**. (1 Kings 19:1)

Now it is easy to gloss over these verses. But consider the fact that killing people with a sword takes a lot more time than pulling the trigger of a gun. And those 450 priests of Baal weren't exactly holding still while Elijah plunged his sword into them or perhaps even chopped off their heads; they would have been terrified to death and struggled frantically as their turn approached. So if Elijah managed to kill one priest of Baal every 12 seconds, or 5 of them every minute, it still would have taken Elijah a solid 90 minutes of non-stop killing with the sword just to kill all 450 of them. That would have been some gruesome 90-minute movie!

Nothing like this had ever happened in living memory. When this was finished all the Israelites would have feared Elijah greatly. How would you feel about being in the presence of a man who had executed 450 men in one go? You wouldn't want to be his buddy, would you? And even if you agreed with what he had done, you'd still be scared of him, wouldn't you?

4) These passages show that **Elijah was a fighter** for God! He **took on the false religion** of his time. He was not just a passive prophet who allowed things to happen to him. Elijah took decisive actions. And there are no examples of Elijah ever "turning the other cheek" when he was attacked or threatened. Elijah always fought back, except for one occasion early on, when he fled for his life from Jezebel (1 Kings 19:3).

5) Elijah's aggressive approach was also revealed when he twice in succession **called fire down from heaven** to consume 51 men in each case (2 Kings 1:10-12), who had been sent by the king to arrest him. **Elijah didn't mess around when he was threatened**; he fought back and destroyed his enemies. And in this instance if the angel of God hadn't told Elijah to cool it and to go along with the third group of soldiers (see 2 Kings 1:15), then Elijah might have called for fire from heaven again. It is very obvious from this account that Elijah was greatly feared by people. From the king on down nobody was really prepared to tangle with Elijah.

6) Elijah was also pretty **blunt** in speaking to royalty. When King Ahab had coveted the vineyard of Naboth, and then later took possession of it, God told Elijah to confront Ahab. God told Elijah the following:

And **thou shalt speak unto him, saying**, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine. (1 Kings 21:19)

And the first thing Elijah then said to Ahab was this:

Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity, and will cut off from Ahab **him that urinates against the wall**, and him that is shut up and left in Israel, (1 Kings 21:21)

Now God actually inspired those words, even as God inspired the same type of penalty for Jeroboam, at the time when Jeroboam's wife disguised herself and sought advice from the prophet Ahijah (see 1 Kings 14:10). That is **a deliberately crass way of speaking** to the king. God could have told Elijah to tell Ahab that "all his males" would be cut off (as some translations try to discreetly word this). But God didn't do that. The Hebrew text here is quite clear and blunt. So God inspired Elijah to **speak in a crass and contemptuous way** to King Ahab. Again, Elijah wasn't exactly diplomatic corps material.

[As an aside, Elijah's blunt and crass way of speaking to Ahab was the one time God actually got through to Ahab, to the point where Ahab actually fasted and "went softly" for a while, so that even God took notice of this expression of remorse (see 1 Kings 21:27-29).]

For that matter, Elijah was even quite blunt in speaking with his own closest followers. We know that in 1 Kings 19:16 God instructed Elijah to appoint Elisha as his own assistant. You would have expected Elijah to be pleased with God providing an assistant for him. But if Elijah was pleased, he most certainly didn't show it. In verse 19 Elijah departs in order to find Elisha, as God had instructed him to do. Now instead of speaking in a friendly tone to Elisha, Elijah simply "passed by him and cast his mantle upon him" (1 Kings 19:19). And then **Elijah just kept on walking** without looking back at Elisha.

Yes, Elisha correctly understood what Elijah was signaling; i.e. it meant "come and follow me as my servant". But it wasn't exactly a very friendly way for Elijah to make this point. There is no reason why Elijah could not have spoken in a kind way to Elisha. And neither was there any reason for Elijah to just keep walking away from Elisha. And when Elisha then ran after Elijah and said that he would indeed follow Elijah and become his servant, all Elijah said was: "**GO BACK AGAIN, FOR WHAT HAVE I TO DO WITH YOU**?" (1 Kings 19:20).So Elijah told Elisha to go back home, in spite of Elijah knowing that God had instructed him to anoint Elisha as his assistant. Elijah was pretty blunt in speaking to even his own closest assistants. This may have made it somewhat hard to work for Elijah?

7) And when it came time for Elijah to die, then "**Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven**" (**2 Kings 2:11**); i.e. God took Elijah up into the clouds. This method for ending the life of Elijah is **utterly unique** for any Old Testament prophet. Nobody else was "taken up into heaven".

[**COMMENT:** Some people, and in years gone by that included me, have at times foolishly claimed that Elijah "still wrote a letter" after he had been taken up by a whirlwind. Someone once taught that at the college, and it was then simply repeated. But that claim is false! That letter from Elijah was written to Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat. It is mentioned in **2 Chronicles 21:12**. Now Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat was already in the SECOND YEAR OF HIS REIGN at the time when Elijah called fire from heaven to destroy the soldiers who had been sent to arrest him. So **after these soldiers had died**, then it says that King Ahaziah also died.

So he died according to the word of the LORD which Elijah had spoken. And Jehoram reigned in his stead **in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat** king of Judah; because he had no son (2 Kings 1:17).

And then IN THE NEXT CHAPTER, **at a later point in time, Elijah is taken up by a whirlwind** (i.e. 2 Kings 2:11). The letter mentioned in 2 Chronicles 21:12 was written BEFORE the time of 2 Kings chapter 2. When Elijah was taken up by a whirlwind, then **that was the end of his life**! Don't be deceived by some ridiculous claim that after Elijah was taken up he supposedly still wrote a letter. That idea is preposterous!]

8) We might note one other point. Elijah was not only blunt in speaking to the king; Elijah was also very **scornful** and **derogatory** and **insulting** and **contemptuous towards the pagan religion**, in this case Baal worship. In the confrontation with the priests of Baal Elijah was sarcastic and downright rude to them. It seems that Elijah didn't think much of religious freedom and respect for other people's beliefs. Notice the key verse in this respect.

And it came to pass at noon, that **Elijah mocked them**, and said, Cry aloud: for he *is* a god; either he is **talking**, or **he is pursuing**, or he is **in a journey**, *or* peradventure he **sleepeth**, and must be awaked. (1 Kings 18:27)

This King James English translation almost makes it sound like Elijah was rather polite in the way he spoke to them. But that wasn't the case at all. **Elijah was deliberately mocking and insulting their religion!** Now the expression translated as "he is pursuing" is deliberately vague. Basically what Elijah said with this expression is: "cry louder because **Baal is probably chasing some hooker** and you need to get his attention"! Elijah showed his contempt for Baal and he was deliberately offensive towards this perverse religion of Baal worship! Don't be confused by this vague statement "he is pursuing".[Sexual promiscuity was also a favorite topic amongst the Greek gods.]

9) This point doesn't involve anything Elijah did. Rather, this point is about a certain foreknowledge. When the day came for Elijah to die by being "taken into heaven by a whirlwind" (2 Kings 2:1), the whole "church" knew in advance that this was the day which would end Elijah's ministry. This chapter shows that Elisha knew this, and also "the sons of the prophets" at Bethel and at Jericho knew this. In a sense we can compare those "sons of the prophets" to the Church in general. So **the entire religious community** of which Elijah was the undisputed leader **knew in advance that this was going to be Elijah's last day**. That is somewhat unusual, since Elijah wasn't sick or ailing in any way.

So let's summarize these points about Elijah.

1) Elijah appears suddenly with the announcement of a three and one half year drought. He has no prior introduction.

2) He is very confrontational and calls down fire from heaven upon his enemies.

3) He personally killed 450 priests of Baal with the sword, a gory scene.

4) He identified the true God and actively fought against the false gods.

5) He didn’t hesitate to destroy his enemies; no turning the other cheek from Elijah.

6) He was blunt and at times even crude in his speech to royalty.

7) He openly showed contempt for pagan religions.

8) At the end of his life Elijah was taken up "by a whirlwind into heaven".

9) Elijah’s followers accurately predicted the day of Elijah’s death.

These are some of the things the Bible tells us about Elijah. And so **the question is:** when God says that He will send Elijah before the second coming of Christ, to which of these traits of Elijah is God trying to draw our attention?

The answer to this question leads us directly to the two witnesses!

THE TWO WITNESSES OF REVELATION 11

Malachi 4:5-6, coupled with Luke 1:17, tells us that before the second coming of Christ God would send someone in the spirit and in the power of Elijah. Revelation 11:3 tells us that before the second coming of Christ God would send "My two witnesses". So **at the very least the end-time Elijah and God’s two witnesses will be contemporaneous**, in both cases doing the work of God. But it is extremely unlikely that they (Elijah and the two witnesses) would both work independently of each other. It is much more likely that **the end-time Elijah is in fact also one of the two witnesses**.

So let’s now notice how God describes His two witnesses.

And **I will give *power*** unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy **a thousand two hundred *and* threescore days**, clothed in sackcloth. (Revelation 11:3)

This is the opening New Testament verse about the two witnesses. And the first things we are told about those two men are:

1) God will give both of them **power**. This is like "**the power of Elijah**".

2) They have a ministry of exactly **three and one half years**. This is the exact same period of time with which Elijah was introduced in the Old Testament (a three and one half year drought).

3) In the sight of God these two men are very **humble**, pictured by being "**clothed in sackcloth**". This is mentioned by God because human beings will see these two men as anything but humble.

God next tells us that these two witnesses were already identified in the Old Testament.

These are the **two olive trees**, and the **two candlesticks** standing before the God of the earth. (Revelation 11:4)

This is a reference to Zechariah 4.

And said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold **a candlestick all *of* gold**, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which *are* upon the top thereof: And **two olive trees by it**, one upon the right *side* of the bowl, and the other upon the left *side* thereof. (Zechariah 4:2-3)

Then said he, **These *are* the two anointed ones**, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth. (Zechariah 4:14)

In round numbers, the Book of Zechariah was written about 80-100 years before the Book of Malachi. So here are the points we should note.

1) At the time of Zechariah God had already decided to send **TWO witnesses** before the second coming of Christ.

2) Approximately 100 years later in the days of Malachi God then said He would send **ONE individual** in the spirit and power of Elijah before the second coming of Christ.

3) Approximately 500 years later (i.e. just before 100 A.D.) God confirmed in the Book of Revelation that He would send **TWO witnesses** before the second coming of Christ.

Let's get back to the account about the two witnesses in Revelation 11.

And **if any man will hurt them**, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he **must in this manner be killed**. (Revelation11:5)

So these two witnesses are **just as aggressive and confrontational as Elijah** had been! When Elijah felt threatened by the soldiers the king had sent, Elijah called fire from heaven and those soldiers were killed. Likewise, when these two witnesses are in any way threatened **they too will call for the death of all those who want to hurt them**. In their case the fire "proceeds out of their mouth", meaning that they speak and their enemies are killed, without necessarily fire literally coming down from heaven. Not exactly very friendly dudes, are they?

But that's only the start.

These have **power to shut heaven**, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over **waters to turn them to blood**, and to smite the earth with **all plagues**, as often as they will. (Revelation 11:6)

"The days of their prophecy" are equal to 1260 days or three and one half years. And for that entire three and one half year period they will have the power to call for a drought. And so it seems that, just as with Elijah, **calling for a drought will be their introduction**! Perhaps 1 Kings 17:1 could be applied to the two witnesses as follows:

"*As* the Eternal God of Israel lives, before whom **we** stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to **our** word."

They will be doing exactly what Elijah had done! In addition to this power to call for a drought, these two witnesses can also cause **all kinds of plagues "as often as they will"**.

These two witnesses are just as aggressive and confrontational as was the prophet Elijah. They will be unlike any of God's other servants in New Testament times. And even in the Old Testament we have to go back all the way to the time of Elijah before we find any servant of God whose conduct even

approaches the way those two witnesses will conduct themselves.

They will be seen as extremely mean and evil, because, after all, only a mean and evil person would call for a drought and then still turn some of the remaining water (certain storage dams?) into blood. These two witnesses will certainly be responsible for many people dying. And like Elijah, when they are attacked they will assuredly not be turning the other cheek. In fact, to the world at large their conduct will seem to be very un-Christian like. And nobody will want to mess with them, any more than back in Elijah's time anyone was prepared to tangle with Elijah. Like Elijah, they too will be greatly feared by people in general. People will feel greatly tormented by these two men (Revelation 11:10) for reasons which will later become obvious.

The public image God's servants may have usually has nothing to do with their actual standing in the sight of God. And while **Elijah** had been feared and persecuted, he had in fact been **very zealous for God** (see 1 Kings 19:10, 14). And so likewise with the two witnesses, their conduct will be nothing other than an unmitigated zeal for God and God's work. The fact that the world will judge their conduct to be evil is inconsequential.

We all know what will happen to the two witnesses at the end of their ministry; they will be killed. And then their bodies will lie in the streets for public display. And then after three and one half days "**they ascend up to heaven in a cloud**" (Revelation 11:12). The only other person who at the end of his life also ascended "up to heaven" (obviously excluding Jesus Christ) was **Elijah**.

This is **a very, very powerful association between Elijah and the two witnesses**. It shows that God deals with the two witnesses in the same way that God dealt with Elijah.

Now we are ready to see **WHY** God had Elijah go "by a whirlwind into heaven". Do you understand that reason? When God took Elijah up into heaven by a whirlwind, God was already foreshadowing what God was planning to do at the time of the first resurrection! At the first resurrection people will rise up into the air **as if** by a whirlwind. And the only other people who are shown doing this are the two witnesses (who are then followed by or simultaneously with all the people in the first resurrection).

So consider this:

God ended Elijah's life in a way that points directly to the two witnesses at the second coming of Jesus Christ. Then, when God at the end of the Old Testament period said that He would send Elijah, God once again focused exclusively on the second coming of Jesus Christ. Then at the transfiguration in Matthew 17:3 Elijah is shown together with Moses in a vision to be there at the time after Jesus Christ has returned and established the kingdom of God. And in Revelation 11:12 the two witnesses are shown in the same type of relationship with Jesus Christ that is shown for Moses and Elijah in the transfiguration vision. Recall that the two witnesses are the two olive trees "upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side thereof" (Zechariah 4:11). Both of these instances (i.e. Zechariah 4:11 and Matthew 17:3) portray a close working relationship with Jesus Christ in the kingdom of God.

And as a last point: when the day dawns on which the two witnesses will be killed, everyone in the Church will know in advance: this is the day on which they will die! That is because on the day before "**they will have finished their testimony**" (Revelation 11:7). And as with Elijah's last day, when on that day one church member says to another member: "do you know that the two witnesses will die today?", that member will reply: "yes, I know that, hold you your peace" (see 2 Kings 2:3).

To summarize this section about the two witnesses: it should be quite clear that the things that happened in the life of Elijah foreshadow the things that will happen in the lives of **BOTH WITNESSES** at the

second coming of Christ. At no stage, in either Zechariah 4 or in Revelation 11, is one of the two witnesses singled out for special attention. And neither do these accounts identify either one of the two witnesses by name. Elijah's life and ministry in a remarkable way foreshadowed the ministry of the two witnesses.

Before we now look at why Malachi 4 refers to only one individual, where Zechariah 4 and Revelation 11 refer to two individuals, let's examine the expression "in the spirit and power of Elijah".

IN THE POWER OF ELIJAH

This is the second attribute for the end-time Elijah. But I want to deal with it first because it is easier and more obvious to explain. Then we'll deal with the other attribute.

God very clearly gave Elijah a great deal of power. Elijah called for a three and one half year drought. At Elijah's intercession God also resurrected the widow's son (1 Kings 17:21-22). And Elijah called fire from heaven on three occasions. Elijah also divided the waters of the river with his mantle (2 Kings 2:8). These miraculous actions were all performed **by the power of God's Spirit**.

So when we are told that someone at the end would come "**in the power of Elijah**", then this tells us that God would give that individual **the power to perform miracles**.

That's the easy part to understand. Now let's move on.

IN THE SPIRIT OF ELIJAH

The expression "in the spirit of Elijah" is not a reference to the Holy Spirit! The Spirit of God is NOT the same as the spirit of any man! **God's Spirit is NEVER identified as the spirit of any man.** So what is meant by the expression "in the spirit of Elijah".

The expression "in the spirit and power of Elijah" in Luke 1:17 is a translation of the Greek expression "**en pneumati kai dunamei Eliou**". The Greek noun "pneuma" literally means "breath" or "wind", and it has a range of meanings. In the New Testament this Greek word is used to mean not only "spirit", but also to convey meanings like "**breath**, **wind**, **character**, **moral qualities**", etc.

In plain language: the expression "**in the spirit of Elijah**" means: with **the character** and **zeal** and **attitude** and **uncompromising commitment** and **dedication** and **vehement determination** of Elijah!

So when we put the whole expression together, here is what we have:

1) **IN THE POWER** OF ELIJAH = **WHAT Elijah did**, i.e. miracles.

2) **IN THE SPIRIT** OF ELIJAH = **HOW Elijah did it**, i.e. his attitude and approach.

In other words, someone coming "in the spirit of Elijah" is going to do the God-given job with the same type of attitude and approach that Elijah had towards the job God had given him. So it is very likely that the end-time Elijah will likewise be somewhat **aggressive** and **confrontational** and **blunt** and **seemingly merciless** towards all opposition, with an **undisguised contempt** for all religions that are under the control of "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4). Like Elijah in Ahab's days so also the

end-time Elijah will **despise compromise**.

Now since the expression "in the spirit" comes before the expression "in the power", even so the end-time Elijah will already have the attitude and approach of Elijah before God ever gives him "the power of Elijah". Without that character and attitude already in place God wouldn't give "the power of Elijah" to His end-time servant.

Earlier I mentioned that there was one more reason why Mr. Armstrong could not possibly have been the end-time Elijah. Are you beginning to understand this additional reason?

Stated very plainly: Mr. Herbert Armstrong was far too much of a gentleman to be capable of filling the role of the end-time Elijah. Very few people seem to understand that the end-time Elijah will be **one really mean hombre**, at least as far as the world is concerned! And I suspect that even many people in God's Church will feel that way, once the ministry of the end-time Elijah gets under way. Now Mr. Armstrong simply didn't have that type of personality or disposition. When dealing with "important" people in this world, Mr. Armstrong was always very tactful and diplomatic. I know that because I heard the descriptions of a number of his visits out of his own mouth back in the late 60's and early 70's, and in one instance (i.e. in Namibia) I was even present when Mr. Armstrong addressed the leaders of a new nation. And Mr. Armstrong's approach was invariably as different from Elijah's approach as day is from night.

Mr. Armstrong was tactful like the Prophet Daniel in his dealings with Nebuchadnezzar; but Mr. Armstrong would not have been capable of personally killing 450 men with a sword, with blood splattering all over his clothes in that process. Mr. Armstrong was dedicated to God, yes; but he just didn't have that type of character of fighting back and **destroying those who wanted to harm him** (i.e. like Elijah did). Mr. Armstrong was much more inclined to turn the other cheek. And that's good! But for the end-time Elijah God is looking for "a different spirit", one that is best described as "the spirit of Elijah".

Earlier I mentioned that in his attitude and approach Elijah was unlike any of God's other prophets in the Old Testament. And for a very specific job at the end of this age God is looking for a very specific character and attitude, one that wasn't necessarily needed for doing God's work in other circumstances. Other servants of God also performed miracles. So it is not necessarily "the power of Elijah" which will set the end-time Elijah apart from God's other servants through the ages. It is really "the spirit of Elijah", a very specific character and attitude, which God is looking for in the man God will send "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD".

It is not a fault or weakness that Mr. Armstrong was just too nice a man to fill that role. The vast majority of God's servants, including men like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, didn't have that type of mind either. Elijah was unique in Old Testament times; he did the gruesome work himself.

Let me give you one other insight into Elijah's disposition. There is no indication that GOD actually instructed Elijah to kill all of the priests of Baal! I suspect that this was a decision that Elijah himself made! Think about that! You doubt that I am right on this matter? Well, then consider that **God largely leaves it up to the two witnesses themselves to decide WHATEVER PLAGUES THEY THEMSELVES CHOOSE TO IMPOSE ON HUMANITY! GOD LARGELY LEAVES THAT UP TO THEM**!

That's what Revelation 11 tells us.

These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth **with all plagues, as often as they will**. (Revelation 11:6)

Apart from giving a few hints in verses 5-6, God is basically saying: **it's their call**!

Are you beginning to understand WHY at least one of them will have to have "the spirit of Elijah"? Without that spirit the job is simply not going to be done as God wants it done! But anyway, the indications in Revelation 11 are that **BOTH OF THEM will have** the attitude that is best identified as **"the spirit of Elijah**".

Similarly, I don't believe that it was originally God's idea for Elijah to call down fire from heaven to consume the soldiers. I believe that idea originated in the mind of Elijah, and God simply backed him up, because Elijah was acting in faith!

So when Elijah himself originated the idea to kill all 450 priests of Baal, that shows a certain disposition. And God approved of that decision, which was nothing more than an expression of Elijah's zeal for God. That's like Phinehas, who thrust a spear through a man and woman who were having sex (see Numbers 25:7-8). It wasn't God's idea for Phinehas to do this; the idea originated in the mind of Phinehas. But God very strongly approved, as the subsequent verses show.

It is one thing for a man to carry out God's instructions regarding the pouring out of plagues. A number of servants of God in the Old Testament pronounced plagues or penalties in God's name. But it is something altogether different for a servant of God himself to think up specific plagues that will meet with God's approval, and to impose those on humanity! Even Moses didn't do that! As I said, it takes a somewhat aggressive, but converted, hombre to do that type of thing. And **Mr. Armstrong would never have filled that bill**! Can you now see that?

Consider one other point. The type of disposition that is best described by the expression "the spirit of Elijah" is not something that God's Spirit imparts to a man. That type of character and disposition has to come from the man himself, and it is something that God will then utilize! There are many different ways in which a zeal for God can be manifested, and this specific attitude is only one of those many ways.

By now you may perhaps be saying: I think you are wrong because God predicted that type of "spirit" for John the Baptist. That proves that this attitude or disposition must come from God, doesn't it? Okay, let's look at John the Baptist again.

JOHN THE BAPTIST AND "THE SPIRIT OF ELIJAH"

Before the birth of John the Baptist the angel Gabriel clearly said:

And **he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah**, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. (Luke 1:17)

This is a clear expression of God's intentions for the ministry of John the Baptist. This is **what God WANTED John to do**!

Now there is no question that **John the Baptist** was a faithful servant of God who **did the job** God had given him to do. And **Jesus Christ gave John full credit** for the job John had done (Matthew 11:7-11). And John was not easily shaken! However, it is also clear that "John did no miracle" (John 10:41). This means that John the Baptist did **NOT** really perform his ministry "**in the power of Elijah**", as God had intended! And the reason why John the Baptist didn't perform his ministry "in the power of Elijah" was because **John only partly had "the spirit of Elijah"**. That "spirit" surfaced when John addressed the

crowds who came to him for baptism as "**you generation of vipers**" (Luke 3:7), and that "spirit" was also evident when **John reproved King Herod** (Luke 3:19).

Here is the point:

John the Baptist did the job God gave him to do. But he did it without fully utilizing the tools God had put at his disposal. He didn't utilize those tools fully because John simply didn't have that type of personality; he was vastly different from the original Elijah. He was just as committed to God, and just as dedicated to doing the job he had been given; but he didn't have the type of personality that Elijah had had.

To state this very plainly:

When God sent Gabriel to say that John the Baptist would go before Jesus Christ "in the spirit and power of Elijah", I believe that **God made provision for John the Baptist to perform miracles to deal with those who would oppose him**, and that God had hoped that John would be even more blunt and more direct and more confrontational in dealing with people than John actually was. That type of conduct would have gotten people's attention even more in preparing for the ministry of Jesus Christ.

But John just didn't have that type of personality. However, was there any reason why John the Baptist should NOT have called fire from heaven when Herod sent his soldiers to arrest John? **Why didn't John ask God to turn Herod's men into scorched tortillas?** WHY NOT? That's what Elijah would have done, because that's what Elijah had done! And THAT would have been an expression of "the spirit and the power of Elijah"! But John wasn't a fighter, like Elijah had been.

Here's one point that very few people in God's Church have understood.

When God calls a man to do a job, then that usually falls into one of two options. **EITHER** God commissions the man to take a "**THUS SAYS THE LORD**" message to certain people; **OR** God instructs the man to do a specific job while **leaving many of the details up to the man himself**!

With this second option God is testing that particular man while at the same time a job is getting done. God frequently leaves it up to the man concerned to decide HOW to do the job, because how the man does it reveals his character and commitment and zeal to God.

This has been God's approach right from the start. When God told Adam to name all the animals, God gave Adam the latitude to make a number of binding decisions. God left this in Adam's hands. Likewise, when Elisha on his deathbed told King Joash of Israel to "smite upon the ground" (2 Kings 13:18), Elisha wanted Joash to smite the ground at least five or six times, but Elisha didn't tell Joash this. It was up to Joash to decide how often to smite the ground, BEFORE he was told the significance of that smiting. Joash could have hit the ground 20 or more times, until Elisha would finally have stopped him. But he didn't! Look at the different judges and their conduct (Book of Judges) to see the latitude of actions that God will work with or around. All of them had different "spirits" and that manifested in different forms of conduct.

When Elijah faced arrest by the king's men he called fire from heaven. Other servants of God (Jeremiah, John the Baptist, etc.) meekly submitted to being arrested. The point is: how God intervenes for His servants frequently depends on those servants themselves. They were NOT all predestined to die as martyrs. And if Elijah would have had a different spirit, then he too would probably have ended up as a martyr. But he didn't end up as a martyr because he had a certain spirit.

Now there is a fine line between someone arrogantly calling for God's intervention to impress people (or

even himself?) on the one hand, and on the other hand a man calling for God's powerful intervention to deal with a very specific problem or crisis. God is not mocked! And under no circumstances will God ever comply with some request that is motivated by a desire to impress people, because that kind of motivation would amount to tempting God (see Matthew 4:7). But **when the life of a servant of God is being threatened in any way, then God is always available to help**. But the kind of help God will provide will largely depend on "the spirit" of that particular servant.

Revelation 11 makes clear that God leaves many of the details regarding which plagues to call for up to the two witnesses themselves. And this would imply that God was likewise leaving many of the details regarding HOW John the Baptist would function "in the spirit and power of Elijah" up to John himself. If John would have had a different spirit, then some of the details in John's life would also have turned out differently. Jesus Christ's death was foreordained, but for most of God's servants the mode of death was not foreordained at all. For most servants of God their mode of death depended on their spirit and how they lived their lives and how they carried out their God-given responsibilities.

But in summary: while it had been God's intent that John the Baptist would do his God-given job "in the spirit and power of Elijah", in practice it turned out that John did the job to a large degree without utilizing either the spirit or the power of Elijah.

Let's notice Jesus Christ's comments in this regard. This is recorded in Matthew 11.

John the Baptist was already in prison and a little discouraged by the way life had gone for him. So he sent two of his students to Jesus Christ (Matthew 11:2). Jesus Christ concluded His message to John with the admonition "blessed is he who shall not be offended in Me" (Matthew 11:6). Then Jesus Christ started to speak to the multitudes about John. In so doing Jesus Christ quoted Malachi 3:1 in reference to John. Then Christ said::

Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: **notwithstanding** he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. (Matthew 11:11)

Two things are contrasted in this verse. First of all, this is a reference to the responsibility to which John had been called. It is not a reference to any position for which John or anyone else had actually qualified. The first statement in this verse shows the supreme importance God Himself placed on the responsibility which had been entrusted to John, to go before the first coming of Jesus Christ. The second statement in this verse places the importance of any calling in this life on a vastly lower level than actually being granted a part in the Kingdom of God. It is a comparison intended to show that no matter how important any position may seem to be in this life, **it is really insignificant** when compared to even the smallest part in the future God has planned for His Family.

So in this verse Jesus Christ does not tell us what position John the Baptist will have in the yet future Kingdom of God; Jesus Christ only tells us about the importance of John's calling in this life.

Now notice the next verse.

And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and **the violent take it by force**. (Matthew 11:12)

John the Baptist only started half a year before Jesus Christ. So the expression "from the days of John the Baptist until now" refers to nothing more than "the last couple of years". That's all. So when Christ said "the kingdom of heaven suffers violence", He was saying: both John and I have met with violent opposition. The expression "the violent take it by force" creates the wrong impression. The Greek verb translated as "**take it by force**" really means: **TO SNATCH AWAY, TO PLUNDER**.

The point is: **the violent are the bad people in this scenario**! And they don't actually get into the Kingdom of God themselves, at least not in the first resurrection, which is what Christ had in mind here. **The violent really "snatch away" the opportunity** to be in God's Kingdom from those who are heading for the Kingdom of God, though in this specific verse the focus is on just two people.

This is a verse that has been universally misunderstood!

Jesus Christ was speaking about John the Baptist, who had become insecure enough to actually send his own students to Jesus Christ, to ask Christ if He really was the Messiah. **That's a staggering question**, considering that John himself had been the one to identify Jesus Christ as "the Lamb of God" (John 1:29). What were the prospects of eternal life for John the Baptist **if he didn't shake off this doubt and insecurity**? Unless John resolutely put out all these doubts, it didn't look very good for John, did it?

So Jesus Christ **first** presented **a warning** for John: be sure you don't become offended in Me (**Matthew 11:6**). **Next**, Jesus Christ **continued with that warning** by saying that EVEN THOUGH John had been given this incredibly high responsibility to go before Christ's first coming, that high calling didn't amount to anything at all **unless** John actually made it INTO the Kingdom of God, something that was by no means a foregone conclusion (**Matthew 11:11**). **Then** Jesus Christ pointed out **THE PRESSURE of violence** that both He and John the Baptist had to contend with (Matthew 11:12).

Christ's veiled warning was that Satan was trying to take away both, His (Christ's) chance and John the Baptist's chance to actually BE IN THE KINGDOM! Satan used violence (i.e. being arrested and facing his own imminent death) to try to snatch away John's opportunity to be in God's Kingdom. And Satan used violence (and would use it later at the crucifixion) to try to get Jesus Christ to lose out on being resurrected into God's Kingdom. This verse refers to Satan's tactic to instill the fear of pain and death in people (Hebrews 2:15).

MATTHEW 11:12 REFERS ONLY TO JOHN THE BAPTIST AND TO JESUS CHRIST! THAT'S ALL!

That is what the expression "from John until today" means! This verse is speaking about only two people. And it is speaking about **the violent** (i.e. **the bad guys**) trying to **take away** the hope of the Kingdom of God from John the Baptist and from Jesus Christ.

When we correctly understand Matthew 11:12, then we should realize that in this verse Jesus Christ was simply expanding on the warning which He had given to John in verse 6. John was in a certain amount of danger of having his part in the Kingdom of God snatched away by violence, the same pressure which Jesus Christ also faced. Satan tries to get us to break our commitment to God by getting us to fear pain and death. And we know what will happen to the fearful, right? See Revelation 21:8.

Consider that all of Matthew 11:1-19 is strictly about John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. Verse 12 doesn't suddenly bring some other category of people into the picture, who will also be in God's Kingdom. No, verse 12 is still only about John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. You also have that exact same focus on only John the Baptist and Jesus Christ in verses 16-19.

So let's continue in Matthew's account.

For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. (Matthew 11:13)

That's right. Just like Malachi 4:5-6 forms a bridge from the Old Testament to the second coming of Christ, so John the Baptist formed the bridge between the Old Testament and the first coming of Christ.

Now let's look at verse 14.

And if ye will receive *it*, this is Elijah, which was for to come. (Matthew 11:14)

In this verse the Greek verb "**thelo**" is translated as: "(if) **you will** (receive it)". This verb expresses primarily **a wish**, and it implies **making a choice or decision**.

So consider this: Before the birth of John the Baptist the angel Gabriel made a matter-of-fact statement that John "shall go before Christ in the spirit and power of Elijah". Now after John the Baptist had concluded his ministry and was in prison facing death, then Jesus Christ said: "**IF YOU CHOOSE TO ACCEPT IT**, this is Elijah which was to come".

Christ made no reference to either "the spirit" or "the power" of Elijah. Christ could here have made a dogmatic statement about John, but He didn't. Christ only made a conditional statement. This is in line with John the Baptist being an added secondary application for the prophecy in Malachi 4:5-6. But the main focus of that prophecy was never on John the Baptist; it was always on the end-time Elijah.

Now before you become too concerned about John the Baptist, I will tell you that there is **a happy ending**.

In Matthew 14:8-12 we have the death of John the Baptist. So Jesus Christ's comments about John in Matthew chapter 17 were spoken **after John had died**. So let's have a look over there.

But I say unto you, That **Elijah is come already**, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of **John the Baptist**. (Matthew 17:12-13)

These words, spoken after John's death, show that John the Baptist did hold fast and that he did NOT take offence at Jesus Christ, and that he therefore will indeed be in God's Kingdom. Jesus Christ's warning did have its desired effect on John.

However, there is no evidence that John the Baptist ever made use of "the power of Elijah" and it seems he made only limited use of "the spirit of Elijah". That was due to John's own personality and disposition, not to any lack of dedication or commitment.

"The spirit of Elijah" is not really something that God can give to a person. That "spirit" really has to originate with that person himself, an expression of that person's mind and character. This brings us to Elisha. So let's have a look at his situation.

ELISHA'S REQUEST FOR A DOUBLE PORTION

I assume that at this stage you have a clear understanding of what is meant by "the spirit of Elijah". Now when the time came for Elijah to be taken up into the clouds, Elisha was the one who would take over. We are all familiar with Elisha's request at that time, right? Here it is.

And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, **Ask what I shall do for thee**, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, **let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me**. And he said, **Thou hast asked a hard thing**: *nevertheless*, if thou see me *when I am* taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be *so*. (2 Kings 2:9-10)

Elisha's request here is also a request for "**YOUR** spirit" and not a request for God's Holy Spirit. Besides that, it would be utterly absurd for anyone to say: "I want to have twice as much of God's Holy Spirit as you have". So in no way could Elisha's request have been a request for some supposed "double portion" of God's Spirit.

Here is the situation: By this time Elisha had been working as Elijah's assistant for perhaps a decade or longer. Elisha knew firsthand what "the spirit of Elijah" was like. He had seen Elijah in action time and time again. He fully understood Elijah's personality and the motivations for his no-nonsense and uncompromising approach. He also understood that God fully approved of Elijah's confrontational opposition to anything pagan, wanting to see it demolished!

But Elisha also knew that he himself was not really like that. He was gentler and more inclined to try to reason with people instead of wanting to see all opposition just blotted out by fire from heaven. Elisha was a more approachable man than Elijah. But having been Elijah's personal assistant for so long, it seems clear from this request that **Elisha actually wanted to be more like Elijah**, probably thinking that if he were more like Elijah then he would be a more effective servant of God.

So he asked for a double portion of **Elijah's** spirit, his attitude and zeal and his whole approach to doing the work of God. His desire was to become a more useful and effective servant of God.

What Elisha at that point in time did not realize, though Elijah himself appears to have understood this quite clearly, is that **this was really an impossible request**! That is why Elijah said "you have asked a hard thing". The point is that "the spirit of Elijah" was not something that God had given to Elijah! That spirit was really something that Elijah himself had generated, based on the personality he had and the way his character had developed. That spirit was really **an expression of Elijah's identity**! As we have already discussed, God had desired for John the Baptist to have that spirit of Elijah, and in practice it turned out that John the Baptist really only had a small measure of Elijah's spirit (attitude, etc.). And the spirit of Elijah wasn't really something that God could give to Elisha. However, Elisha's request for the spirit of Elijah showed that Elisha was certainly willing to try to adopt and implement the attitude he had seen in Elijah over the years.

Here's how this then developed.

Elisha's strength was that he was always a willing helper of the people. People freely came to Elisha for help with their problems, something they had been reluctant to do with Elijah. Now very soon after Elijah had been taken up, within the same chapter, we have the account of a large group of children mocking Elisha, who happened to be bald. And in this instance Elisha responded as Elijah would have done with that type of provocation: Elisha cursed these children (2 Kings 2:24). **THIS WAS THE DECIDING MOMENT REGARDING "A DOUBLE PORTION" OF ELIJAH'S SPIRIT!**

Cursing the youngsters who mocked and insulted him was an expression of "the spirit of Elijah". In other words, **that's how Elijah would have responded** to that type of insulting behavior. However, Elijah would have been more specific in what he wanted God to do to those youngsters. And Elisha had cursed them because from experience he knew that Elijah would not have taken that kind of treatment lying down. But Elisha himself didn't have any specific punishment in mind for those rebellious kids. So he just pronounced a general curse on them.

And so **God helped out Elisha**! Did you know that? God was quite agreeable to Elisha having the spirit of Elijah, something that wasn't really natural for Elisha himself. So when Elisha just pronounced a general curse on these young people, **God decided to kick-start Elisha's transition to "the spirit of Elijah"** by showing Elisha: if you want to see the people who attack you punished, I'm with you all the way. So how about two bears killing 42 of those youngsters **for a start**? In future feel free to be more

specific in how you want Me to deal with those who oppose you.

Can you understand **the significance of this seemingly harsh action** almost immediately after Elisha had asked for a double portion of Elijah's spirit?

This was the deciding moment as to whether Elisha would REALLY have a double portion of Elijah's spirit or not. To have that spirit required Elisha's own active participation and involvement; that spirit couldn't just be given to him by fiat!

So how did things turn out after this event? What does the record show?

The record shows that Elisha went on to be one of the most powerful servants of God in the whole Old Testament. He becomes a personal advisor to the kings of Israel. He acts with mercy and compassion for widows and poor people. He raises a child from death. He cures Naaman's leprosy. And he treats the Syrian army which had been specifically sent to capture him with mercy. He is respected by both, the kings of Israel and Ben-hadad, the king of Syria. King Joash of Israel wept when Elisha was dying and addressed Elisha as "my father", hardly something that any king of Israel would ever have done with Elijah. And even when he punished Gehazi's covetousness by conferring on him the leprosy of Naaman, Elisha did so with a heavy heart. As Elisha said to Gehazi: "**went not my heart with you** when the man turned again ..." (2 Kings 5:26).

Do you see what happened with Elisha?

I suspect that once Elisha thought about the 42 children who had died because he, Elisha, had cursed them "in the spirit of Elijah", he decided that the spirit of Elijah wasn't really for him! And so we never again have an example of Elisha acting aggressively and in a provocative and confrontational manner.

The greatest example in this regard is how Elisha dealt with the army that had been sent to capture him. That's recorded in 2 Kings chapter 6. Elijah would not have thought twice about turning that whole army into burnt tortillas. Even the king of Israel was prepared to kill all of them. But Elisha not only let them go; he even instructed the king of Israel to first feed that whole army. This account all by itself makes absolutely clear that Elisha did NOT have the spirit of Elijah, let alone a double portion of that spirit. And all of the other things that are recorded about Elisha only confirm this conclusion.

ELISHA WAS A VERY POWERFUL SERVANT OF GOD! BUT HE DID NOT HAVE "THE SPIRIT OF ELIJAH"!

As with John the Baptist, so once again we see that having the spirit of Elijah is not something that God can somehow give to a man.

Every single one of us human beings has his or her own spirit. And the spirit we have is basically unique, being an expression of **our own personal character and our own approach to things**: to life, to life's situations, to obedience to God, to relationships with other people, to any commitments we have or make, towards self-interests, to dealing with conflicts, etc. Our own spirit is really an expression of our whole identity as an individual, of **who and what we are**, even as "the spirit of Elijah" is an expression of what the man Elijah was like as an individual.

So when God says that He will send someone "in the spirit of Elijah", God is saying that He will send someone whose views and perspectives in specific areas of life will be basically the same as they were for Elijah in those same specific areas.

If God wanted to do so, God could change a lamb into a lion. But God cannot change a man who has the

personality of a lamb into a man who will have the personality of a lion. The personality is always under the control of the man himself, and God will NEVER impose a specific personality on any man, because it is that personality that defines the identity of that man!

If God were ever to impose a specific personality on any man, then that man would no longer be a free moral agent. That's one of the lessons of the Book of Judges. Even though God told Gideon and Barak that He would be with them, they still initially both lacked courage, unlike David who had full courage and faith in God from the word go. So God worked with Gideon and Barak, taking their personalities into account. But God couldn't "give them" the same spirit that David innately had. God worked with their respective "spirits".

So regarding the end-time Elijah:

If God didn't impose the spirit of Elijah on either Elisha or on John the Baptist, then God will also not impose the spirit of Elijah on any man at the end of this age. It is the man himself who has to have that attitude and approach and commitment towards doing God's will that Elijah had. And then God will use that man. I believe that **both witnesses will have "the spirit and power of Elijah"** in the way they will approach the job God will give them. I see no indication in Revelation 11 that one of the two witnesses will have any less of the spirit of Elijah than the other one. But they themselves will have to have that type of "spirit" to start with; it is not a spirit that God will somehow give them.

Now while there will be two witnesses with that spirit of Elijah, yet in Malachi 4 God only referred to one man as coming in the spirit and power of Elijah.

So how are we to understand this? Will there be any distinctions between the two witnesses which could identify one of them as "the end-time Elijah", when very clearly both of them will have the spirit and power of Elijah?

The answer to this question is found in Matthew chapter 17.

ELIJAH WILL RESTORE ALL THINGS

You are familiar with the story of the transfiguration. This took place after John the Baptist had been killed. When Peter, James and John asked Jesus Christ about Elijah, here is how Christ answered this question.

And Jesus answered and said unto them, **Elijah** truly **shall** first come, and **restore all things**. (Matthew 17:11)

First of all this shows that after John's death the coming of Elijah was still in the future. So this statement in verse 11 does not in any way refer to John the Baptist.

Next, the Greek expression here translated as "**and restore all things**" is "**kai apokatastesei panta**". The Greek adjective "panta" here means "all things". The Greek verb "apokathistemi" is used 8 times in the New Testament. Those 8 uses are as follows:

In **4 places** this word is used to refer to **HEALING** (i.e. Matthew 12:13; Mark 3:5; 8:25; Luke 6:10). In these verses it has the meaning "**to make whole again**".

In **2 places** it is used to refer to **Elijah "restoring" all things** (Matthew 17:11; Mark 9:12).

In **Acts 1:6** it refers to **the Kingdom being "restored"**.

In **Hebrews 13:19** it refers to **Paul being "restored" to the Church**, i.e. being freed.

The meaning of this Greek word is thus quite consistent. So when Jesus Christ said that "Elijah shall restore all things", He was saying:

Elijah shall restore certain things to a former state, analogous to healing someone from an illness, or like giving back something that had been lost or taken away.

Now I don't believe that Jesus Christ was in the habit of exaggerating. And Matthew 17:11 is a pretty big statement. So how are we to understand it?

I suspect that the statement "Elijah shall restore all things" has **an application in two areas**, a primary area of responsibility, and a secondary area.

1) The **primary** area in which Elijah will "restore all things" is in the matter of **restoring truth and understanding that has been lost**. This is an area in which God's servants throughout the ages, including Mr. Armstrong, have always been involved. Teaching God's people always involves providing some information and understanding that God's people at that point were not aware of. What will set the restoration of truth and understanding by the end-time Elijah apart from all previous occasions of restoration is the scale and magnitude of that restoration. It will be the wrapping up of that process, **restoring all the knowledge that had been known at any previous time since Adam's creation**, restoring whatever previously lost information is still missing. Obviously that requires God to give such knowledge and understanding to that end-time Elijah, as per Amos 3:7.

Now the purpose of that restoration of all previously understood knowledge is "**to get things back to square one**", so that as far as **available understanding** will be concerned, Jesus Christ's rule over this Earth can start at the point where Adam and Eve were before they sinned, combined with all the knowledge that God had chosen to reveal at one time or another since Adam's creation. That's the primary meaning of "restoring all things". And that is a preparatory requirement for Jesus Christ's second coming. That is what the Apostle Peter was speaking about in Acts chapter 3.

And **He shall send Jesus Christ**, which before was preached unto you: **Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution (restoration!) of all things**, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets **since the world began**. (Acts 3:20-21)

It seems to me that Jesus Christ will not return until that process of restoring all previously understood knowledge has been more or less completed. It will be a restoration of all the knowledge that God has revealed since the time of Adam (the Greek here means "since the beginning of the age").

2) I suspect that a **secondary** area of application of the statement "Elijah shall restore all things" involves restoration on the physical level. That process will start with the sixth seal of Revelation, commonly referred to as "the heavenly signs", and it will continue through the first six Trumpet Plagues, at which time the two witnesses are killed. All those events will not be simply random expressions of God's anger, as if God were somehow just wildly lashing out at the Earth. All of those physical events have a specific purpose, which is to initiate the process of the restoration of this whole planet, to the point where Jesus Christ will then set up the Kingdom of God.

The heavenly signs will in all likelihood initiate the restoration of the heavens to the point where the perfect monthly and annual cycles will be restored. **The Trumpet Plagues** that severely damage the land and the sea and all fresh water sources will initiate the process of removing all the poisons we

human beings have dumped into the soil and the ground water and the air and the oceans. This is a prerequisite for restoring the land to the conditions that existed before man polluted everything.

Now the end-time Elijah will not be doing any of those things; God will be the One doing these things. But the end-time Elijah's part in that process, together with the other one of the two witnesses, will be to announce to the world what is actually happening, and to predict each of these Trumpet Plagues, much like God used Moses to predict to Pharaoh all of the plagues in Egypt that culminated in Israel's exodus from Egypt. So in the sense of announcing these things before God brings them to pass Elijah will also be involved in initiating the process that will ultimately lead to restoring this Earth on the physical level.

Now here is something we need to understand quite clearly!

1) As far as exercising the power of Elijah is concerned (i.e. **bringing penalties and curses upon certain people or lands**), that can certainly be done simultaneously by two individuals working in cooperation with one another. Both would have the spirit and power of Elijah. **That work can be done by two people without any conflicts of operation**. In this matter it is easy for the two witnesses to both do this work. And either one of the two witnesses could be used to announce the next Trumpet Plague.

2) But as far as "**restoring truth and understanding that has been lost**" is concerned, that can **only** be done **by ONE man**. That type of activity cannot be done simultaneously by two or more individuals.

RESTORING LOST TRUTH AND UNDERSTANDING CAN ONLY BE DONE BY ONE INDIVIDUAL AT A TIME!

Two or more individuals trying at the same time to restore lost truths will only produce chaos and confusion! That's just the way it is! And there is a reason for this!

The restoration of truth and understanding (regarding God's plan and God's dealings with mankind, etc.) has nothing to do with skill or intelligence. It has everything to do with God revealing His secrets to His servants; it has everything to do with God through His Holy Spirit giving understanding to the people to whom God chooses to give understanding (1 Corinthians 2:11). In this way God fully controls which man He will use to restore any lost understanding.

And as far as providing understanding is concerned, God has always worked through **only one man at a time**. Once God had selected Moses, then new understanding was not going to come from other people like Miriam and Aaron (Numbers 12) and Korah and Dathan and Abiram (Numbers 16). And when God selected Samuel, then God was not going to work through someone else at the same time. And even though Elisha worked with Elijah for a decade or longer, Elisha never featured in any religious responsibility until Elijah had died. Likewise, when God revealed new understanding to Daniel, God did not at the same time also reveal new understanding to any of Daniel's three friends, who were also extremely faithful men, willing to face death. And when God in New Testament times used the Apostle Peter to reveal new understanding amongst the Jews who came into the Church, God used the Apostle Paul to reveal new understanding amongst the non-Jews who came into the Church. The Apostle Paul was very much aware of this division in areas of responsibility. Paul did not build on "another man's foundation" (Romans 15:20). Paul again referred to this division of areas of responsibility between himself and Peter in Galatians 2:8.

The point is: It never works when "new understanding" is simultaneously coming from two different people!

THE CHURCH'S RECENT HISTORY

Let's talk plainly about the recent history of the Church. And let's keep this principle in mind. If we can understand this principle correctly, then it will explain some of the problems that the Church has experienced in our age.

Back in the late 1920's God started to work with Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, gradually revealing to him more and more things that had been lost before his time. God was clearly using Mr. Armstrong to raise up a new era of the Church. **All new understanding came through Mr. Armstrong**, because God gives new understanding to only one man at a time. In the late 1940's Mr. Armstrong established Ambassador College, and he himself was the only Bible teacher.

In December 1952 Mr. Armstrong ordained five men as evangelists, and in February 1953 he ordained two more men as evangelists. Unfortunately there was an undeniable spirit of competition amongst these men, not only amongst themselves, but also subtly competing with Mr. Armstrong. Yes, all of these seven very young evangelists fully accepted Mr. Armstrong's leadership. But they were subtly competing in wanting to also originate "new understanding", as if that would somehow validate their status as evangelists.

THIS WAS AN UNFORTUNATE AND VERY SERIOUS MISTAKE!

When one of these young evangelists came up with "new understanding" in one area and another of these evangelists came up with "new understanding" in another area, then **CONFUSION HAD ENTERED THE CHURCH**! Exactly through which man was God working? All of them?

Each one of them lobbied (for lack of a better word) Mr. Armstrong for acceptance of the new understanding he personally had introduced. A fair amount of such "new understanding" cast Mr. Armstrong himself in a flattering light, for example: claiming that Mr. Armstrong was an apostle, that he was Elijah, that he was the leader of the two witnesses, etc. All of these new ideas Mr. Armstrong initially rejected, but in time he allowed himself to be talked into accepting these things. That was kind of like allowing himself to eat something when God had said that he shouldn't eat anything at all (see the account in 1 Kings 13:11-24 which explains this parallel).

AND THE PROCESS OF GOD REVEALING NEW UNDERSTANDING THROUGH ONE MAN AT A TIME HAD BEEN HIJACKED!

Yes, I know that in time Mr. Armstrong himself basically endorsed all the new teachings these evangelists came up with (church government, etc.). But the point is that they first had to talk Mr. Armstrong into accepting their new understanding. **They had in effect become co-equal to Mr. Armstrong in originating new understanding for the Church of God.** After all, they were "evangelists".

In truth **these evangelists had introduced** a lot of "understanding" into the Church that the passage of time has proved to be "**false understanding**"! Many of the problems in the Church today can be traced back to wrong understanding introduced into the Church by those evangelists.

From the time of Moses onwards, right up to the time of Mr. Armstrong, God had always revealed new understanding to His people **through only one man at a time**! And when God did at one point work through two men more or less simultaneously (i.e. Peter and Paul), then God made sure that **these two men worked in distinctly different areas**, because when they did work in the same area, then problems arose. To be specific: when Peter came to Antioch, which was in Paul's area of responsibility, then these two men had a major confrontation. As Paul said about that incident: "**I WITHSTOOD HIM TO**

THE FACE" (Galatians 2:11), continuing to say that he then publicly corrected the Apostle Peter (verse 14). It was an unpleasant confrontation.

Two men simultaneously explaining new truth always creates problems! [Can you see the enormous problems we have today, when there are literally dozens of people claiming to have some or other "new truth"?]

So when the evangelists in the Church from the 1950's onwards also originated new understanding, then **this flew in the face of how God had always revealed new understanding for over 3000 years before this time**. New understanding had always come through only one man at a time, and from the 1950's onwards this process was hijacked!

And hijacking this process of new understanding coming through only one man at a time opened the doors for today hundreds, if not thousands, of people thinking THEY have the correct understanding of whatever the subject may be. When we really understand this correctly, then we should be able to see that the evangelists in the 1950's opened the door for today "every man doing that which is right in his own eyes" (like Judges 21:25).

Let's get back to Elijah "restoring all things".

"ELIJAH" APPLIES TO ONE OF THE TWO WITNESSES

The aggressive, confrontational and uncompromising way in which the two witnesses will do the job God has given them to do is proof that both of them will have the spirit and attitude and zeal of Elijah. And the fact that both of them will smite the Earth with plagues is proof that both of them will also have the power of Elijah.

But in Matthew 17:11 **Jesus Christ ADDED a new responsibility** to the Malachi 4:5-6 prophecy regarding Elijah. There was nothing in the original prophecy about "restoring" anything. The reference to "turning hearts" in that original prophecy was simply code language for the concept of repentance.

So when Jesus Christ in Matthew 17:11 added that Elijah would "restore all things", then Jesus Christ was presenting the one factor that will establish some kind of distinction between the two witnesses. **Only one of them will be involved in restoring lost truth** and understanding, and that one will be the end-time Elijah. As in all previous ages, God will restore lost truth through only one man at a time. So the other witness is not really involved in "restoring all things". This one difference between them does not in any way diminish the position or responsibility of that other witness.

We should also consider another point in this regard.

The reason why the end-time Elijah will have to restore truth and understanding is also based on there being a falling away from the truth before the ministry of the two witnesses will start. As the Apostle Paul explained:

Let no man deceive you by any means: for ***that day shall not come*****, except there come a falling away first**, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; (2 Thessalonians 2:3)

That "**falling away**" is something that would occur **after Mr. Armstrong's death**, and it is currently in the process of still occurring. A falling away inevitably necessitates a considerable amount of restoring. Truth and understanding are lost in a falling away, and those things need to be restored before Christ will

return. This is one more very powerful proof that Mr. Armstrong could not possibly have been the end-time Elijah, since he obviously could not restore the things that were lost after his own death.

From the perspective of 1985 you might well have been able to say: look at all these teachings that Mr. Armstrong was used to restore in the Church. But from the perspective of 2011 all we can say is: look at all the things that have been lost since Mr. Armstrong died. This later perspective changes the whole picture.

The important key to a correct understanding here is:

When Jesus Christ in Matthew 17:11 said that Elijah would restore all things, THEN THERE CANNOT BE ANY ROOM FOR ANY THINGS TO BE LOST AGAIN AFTER THAT END-TIME ELIJAH'S RESTORATION! If there is enough time for more things to be lost AFTER there was a restoration of some things, then that restoration of "some things" could not possibly have been the final restoration in which the end-time Elijah will be involved. So on this count once again Mr. Armstrong could not possibly have been the end-time Elijah.

At any rate, I suspect that the witness who will be used to restore all things is the one who is specifically referenced by the Malachi 4:5-6 prophecy. However, I also believe that **the description in Luke 1:17** ("in the spirit and power of Elijah") **must surely apply to both of the two witnesses**. Revelation 11 gives no hint whatsoever that these attributes, that are best described as "the spirit of Elijah", apply any less to one of the two witnesses than they apply to the other one. After all, Zechariah 4:11 shows both witnesses in an equal relationship with Jesus Christ; both of them are pictured as standing right next to Christ (Zechariah 4:14).

Now if you can understand the things I have discussed about the end-time Elijah, what does God want you to do with this information?

"I DON'T WANT YOU TO PLAY WITH SATAN!"

One of the all-time favorite pastimes for many people in God's Church has been the striving to know who the two witnesses will be, and who will be Elijah? And those people typically think they are entitled to speculate on the identities for these individuals. They view such speculations as "fun".

Let me ask you a question:

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT GOD WANTS YOU TO TRY TO GUESS WHO THE TWO WITNESSES WILL BE?

For that matter, do you really believe that God wants you to try to guess anything that God is going to do at some point in the future? WHY would God possibly want you to guess the identities of certain men, when God has chosen to not yet reveal those identities?

However, there is a "god" who desperately wants you to try to guess the identities for Elijah and for the two witnesses. That is the "god of this present age", more commonly known as Satan. Yes, Satan absolutely loves it when you try to put names to Elijah and to the two witnesses. Now why would Satan love for you to engage in these speculations?

Satan knows that **it is extremely presumptuous** for anyone to try to second-guess God! God does not in the least like it when we try to second-guess Him. And so Satan tries to tempt and to provoke us into playing the guessing game, a game in which Satan has always been the one and only dealer. And even as you wouldn't get a fair deal if Satan was the dealer in a game of blackjack, even so you will never get

a fair deal if you play the "guess who will be Elijah or the two witnesses" game with Satan.

Satan's aim is always to make sure that you will lose, because there is a chance that it will ruin your life, which is Satan's ultimate goal. You can't win, because Satan never includes the names of the real people who will fill these positions in the deck he is dealing from. Satan can't include the names of the real people in his deck, because Satan doesn't know who they will be, since God has not yet revealed this. Satan's "guess who" game is always played with a deficient deck, from which two or three cards are missing.

You know James 4:7 and 1 Peter 5:8-9. In these verses **God says to us: I DON'T WANT YOU TO PLAY WITH SATAN!**

Now the first person who ever suggested that Mr. Armstrong was Elijah received that inside scoop directly **from Satan**. The first person who ever claimed that Mr. Armstrong was one of the two witnesses likewise received that "valuable tip" directly **from Satan**. And the damage this has caused is still being played out in some people's lives today.

Every religious nut who has ever claimed to be one of the two witnesses, and there have been many of these, was intoxicated by **Satan's** "guess who" game. Anyone who spends time trying to figure out who these individuals will be is **playing with Satan**. And every conceivable name you could possibly think of to fill these positions will be suggested to you by Satan dealing cards to you from his deficient deck.

Understand this!

God is not going to "suggest" any names to you at all, not even a single one, UNTIL God Himself is ready to reveal the identities of these men.

Now the original Elijah appeared very abruptly on the scene with the announcement of a drought. And Revelation 11:6 seems to imply that the two witnesses will likewise start their ministry with the proclamation of a drought. Until that happens we should very carefully avoid playing this "guess who" game with Satan. Any speculations regarding the identities of these individuals plays right into Satan's hand, something which God does not want any of us to do.

The record is quite clear:

Thus far **Satan has won every single time**, without any exceptions, when people have been enticed to play this "guess who" game with him. Satan always wins. So far every single guess at who will be Elijah or the two witnesses has been wrong. Thus far nobody has ever guessed the correct answers because the correct answers are not yet available.

But a lot of "gamers" have paid a heavy price. That's always the case, isn't it? People think: "I can handle gambling because I know when to stop". But when they finally stop, they are stone-broke and their lives are ruined. And when people gamble in Satan's "guess who" game the end-results are the same; **they are spiritually stone-broke** and their lives are in a mess. By that time many principles of basic Christian living have been forfeited, and there is no light shining in their lives (Matthew 5:16). The only hope they have left is to continue gambling with the delusion that sooner or later they must surely hit the jackpot. But they never do get it right. They have become spiritual addicts. And that is sad.

And that is why God instructs us not to play with Satan!

In this article we have examined those things about the end-time Elijah that are revealed in the Bible. God has already revealed what that man will be like, because we can see what Elijah in the Old

Testament was like. God has already revealed what that end-time Elijah will do, because God has revealed what the two witnesses will do, and their actions very closely parallel the actions of Elijah in Old Testament times. But as to the identity of the end-time Elijah, that is something which God at this time still reserves for Himself. And therefore we need to be on guard against being enticed by Satan to play his "guess who" game with him.

There is one last point we should still consider.

DON'T USE THE NAME "ELIJAH" FOR THAT END-TIME MAN

Throughout this article I have used the expression "the end-time Elijah". I have done that for convenience and in order to avoid any ambiguities. When I use that expression, you know exactly which individual I am speaking about, i.e. the man referred to in Malachi 4:5-6.

However, strictly speaking there will be no "end-time Elijah"! John the Baptist wasn't really Elijah. And the end-time individual will also not really be Elijah; he will have his own identity. God very clearly instructed Zacharias to name his son "John"! That is because God did not want anyone to address John the Baptist as "Elijah". And likewise, God does not really want anyone to address that end-time servant as "Elijah"! That end-time individual will have his own name, and his own name is not to be replaced by the name "Elijah. He is not really to be referred to as "Elijah".

When God gave the Malachi 4:5-6 prophecy, God did not intend that to be some kind of title for some servant of God in the future. It is not to be a title at all!

When God said that He would send "Elijah the prophet", the intention was to describe the attitude and the activities of that end-time servant. That is clear from the angel Gabriel's statement in Luke 1:17, that the focus is on "**the spirit** and **the power** of Elijah". As I mentioned earlier, the statement that God would send Elijah is intended to tell us two things: WHAT that individual will do, and WITH WHAT KIND OF PERSPECTIVE AND ATTITUDE he will do those things.

That is the information God wanted to convey with this reference to a specific individual before the second coming of Christ. Once this has been understood, then there is no need for any further references to "Elijah".

And anyway, as we should be able to understand, "that spirit" and "that power" will surely apply to both witnesses of Revelation 11.

God has never handed out titles that apply to this life to any of His servants. What God has always done is use words that describe the activities and duties of certain individuals. The words "priest" and "prophet" and "apostle" and "evangelist" and "pastor" and "elder" and "teacher", etc., all describe specific duties and responsibilities for those individuals. But it was never God's intention that these words would be used as titles within the framework of some hierarchy of titles.

So likewise the word "Elijah" in reference to someone at the end is intended to describe certain duties and responsibilities. That's all. And don't allow Satan to entice you to play with him.

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