

Their Prominence (v.4)

VERSE 4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth (οὗτοί εἰσιν αἱ δύο ἐλαῖαι καὶ αἱ δύο λυχνῖαι αἱ ἐνώπιον τοῦ κυρίου τῆς γῆς ἑστῶτες [*pro.nom.m.p. houtos this; "These" + pres.act.ind.3p. eimi + art.w/adj.nom.f.p. duo two + noun nom.f.p. elaia olive tree + conj kai + art.w/adj.nom.f.p. duo two + noun nom.f.p. luchnia lampstand + art.w/perf.act.part.nom.f.p. histemi stand + prep enopion before + art.w/noun gen.m.s. kurios lord + art.w/noun gen.f.s. ge earth*]).

ANALYSIS: VERSE 4

1. The ministry of the two witnesses parallels that of Zerubbabel and Joshua.
2. Zerubbabel was the grandson of King Jehoiachin (Ez. 3:2; Hag. 1:1; Matt. 1:12).
3. Zerubbabel and Joshua were the active leaders during the period of the rebuilding of the 2nd temple following the Babylonian captivity.
4. Zerubbabel returned with main party in 537 BC and laid the foundations of the Temple (Ezr. 3).
5. Ezra records that the work was hindered until 520 BC, when a fresh beginning was made with Zerubbabel and Joshua as the leaders (Ezr. 5-6; Hag. 1-2).
6. In Hag. 1:1; 2:3 Zerubbabel is called "governor."
7. The visions of Zechariah encourage, both these men in their work.
8. The present active indicative of *eimi* ("are") carries the meaning of "represents" here and in 1:20.
9. These two men were to their times what the two witnesses will be to the first three and one half years of the tribulation.
10. The comparison of the two witnesses to two olive trees parallels the comparison of Zerubbabel and Joshua to olive trees in Zech. 4:2,3; 11-14).
11. The oil from the olive tree symbolizes the ministry of God the Holy Spirit as olive oil was used for fuel to light the lights on the lampstand.
12. In Zechariah there was only one lampstand with seven lights, but here we have two lampstands picturing Moses and Elijah respectively.
13. The ministry of God the Holy Spirit is so dynamic in the ministries of these two prophets that they function as lights to the whole world during the first three and one-half years of the tribulation.
14. They act as the interpreters of the events unfolding upon the earth.
15. They will demonstrate the integrity of Bible prophecy after the world is emptied of believers at the Rapture.
16. The lampstand motif suggests a powerful witness to all the world, even though their primary ministry is to prepare the Jewish people for the coming of their Messiah, as John the Baptist did in his day.
17. The source of their light is the ministry of God the Holy Spirit.
18. The message of the two witnesses supplies light to the whole world.
19. Their relationship to God is seen in the phrase "that stand before the Lord of the earth."
20. This guarantees their authority to minister, their success, and their protection during the days of their witness.

Their Protection (v.5)

VERSE 5 And if anyone wants to harm them, fire flows out of their mouth and devours their enemies

(καὶ εἴ τις αὐτοὺς θέλει ἀδικῆσαι πῦρ ἐκπορεύεται ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτῶν καὶ κατεσθίει τοὺς ἐχθροὺς αὐτῶν [*conj kai + part. ei if + pro.nom.m.s. tis any(one) + pro.acc.m.p. autos "them" + pres.act.ind.3s. thelo wish; and they do! + aor.act.infin. adikeo do harm + noun nom.nt.s. pur fire + pres.dep.ind.3s. ekporeuomai proceed; "flows" + prep ek + art.w/noun gen.nt.s. stoma mouth + pro.gen.m.p. autos "their" + conj kai + pres.act.ind.3s. katesthio eat up, devour + art.w/adj.acc.m.p. echthros enemy + pro.gen.m.p. autos "their"]; **so if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this way** [καὶ εἴ τις θελήσῃ αὐτοὺς ἀδικῆσαι, οὕτως δεῖ αὐτὸν ἀποκτανθῆναι [*conj kai + part. ei + pro.nom.m.s. tis any(one)" + aor.act.subj.3s. thelo wish; maybe they will maybe they won't + pro.acc.m.p. autos "them" + aor.act.infin. adekeo do harm + adv houtos this manner; "in this way" + pres.act.ind.3s. die must + pro.acc.m.s. autos him + aor.pass.infin. apokteino kill*]).*

ANALYSIS: VERSE 5

1. Their ability to sustain their ministry for 1260 days is extraordinary, even supernatural.
2. As the angel continues his presentation of information relative to this segment of John's visions, he observes that any and all attempts to neutralize the ministry of these two prophets will be met by a fiery death initiated by the word or mouth of the these men.
3. The first part of verse 5 assumes the actuality of the desire on the part of those who are antagonistic and capable of rendering extreme prejudice against a target.
4. The Greek presents us with a first class condition of actual fact in the first part of the verse.
5. The last part of the verse presents a third class condition of potentiality.
6. In other words some people will attempt to realize their desire only to be turned into ashes by the fire proceeding from the mouth of these two men.
7. The last half of the verse recognizes that lots and lots of people will want them dead but will have neither the means, the opportunity, nor the courage to proceed with their mental attitude murder.
8. Verse 5a views those who are actual perpetrators; while verse 5b views the desire of all negative volition with respect to these two most hated individuals.
9. They will be universally hated but only a tiny fraction of this number will actually attempt to harm them.
10. For this group the prescribed many of death is fire which falls upon said individuals upon the command of the one or both of the witnesses.
11. It will be revealed to them when any such attempts are about to be made.
12. Even remote attempts will be foiled by fire falling upon the perpetrators.
13. Obviously after a short time one would think that these attempts would taper off, but maybe not, considering the times, and the arrogance of man.
14. "Fire" alludes to Elijah's treatment of Ahaziah's messengers, though here it comes from the witnesses' mouths rather than from heaven (2Kgs. 1:10-14).
15. Again, this illustrates God's ability to protect His own under highly vulnerable conditions.

Supernatural Displays (v.6)

VERSE 6 **These have the power to shut up the sky** (οὗτοι ἔχουσιν τὴν ἐξουσίαν κλείσαι τὸν οὐρανόν [*pro.nom.m.p. houtos* “These” + *pres.act.ind.3p. echo have* + *art.w/noun acc.f.s. exousia authority; power* + *aor.act.infin. kleio shut, lock* + *art.w/noun ouranos heaven; sky*], **so that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying** [ἵνα μὴ ὑετὸς βρέχη τὰς ἡμέρας τῆς προφητείας αὐτῶν [*conj hina of purpose* + *neg me* + *noun nom.m.s. huetos rain* + *pres.act.subj.3s. brecho make wet, moisten; rain* + *art.w/noun acc.f.p. hemera day* + *art.w/noun gen.f.s. propheta prophecy; prophesying*]; **and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood** [καὶ ἐξουσίαν ἔχουσιν ἐπὶ τῶν ὑδάτων στρέφειν αὐτὰ εἰς αἷμα [*conj kai* + *noun acc.f.s. exousia authority; power* + *pres.act.ind.3p. echo have* + *prep epi upon* + *art.w/noun gen.nt.p. hudor water* + *pres.act.infin. strepho turn, change* + *pro.acc.nt.p. autos* “them” + *prep eis into* + *noun acc.nt.s. hima blood*], **and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire** [καὶ πατάξαι τὴν γῆν ἐν πάσῃ πληγῇ ὅσάκις ἔαν θελήσωσιν [*conj kai* + *aor.act.infin. patasso stike, hit* + *art.w/noun acc.f.s. ge earth* + *prep en in; “with”* + *adj.instr.f.s. pas all; “every”* + *noun instr.f.s. plege blow, stroke; “plague”* + *conj hosakis as often as; 3x; also at 1Cor.11:25 & 26* + *part. ean* + *aor.act.subj.3p. thelo desire, wish*]).

ANALYSIS: VERSE 6

1. In addition to the God-given ability to protect themselves against all would-be killers with fire, these two men are granted power to inflict plagues around the earth during the three and one half years of their ministry.
2. The power to shut up heaven and stop necessary rain from falling parallels what Elijah accomplished through prayer (1Kgs. 17:1, 7; 18:1; Jam. 5:17).
3. The background is the drought of Elijah’s day, which according to Luke 4:25 and Jam. 5:17 lasted three and one half years.
4. Apparently this drought will correspond to the first half of the tribulation.
5. We are not told which area(s) of the earth will be affected by this judgment.
6. If the words “no rain falls in the days of their prophecy” then it may be that this includes the entire world, which is hard to fathom.
7. In Elijah’s day the drought was restricted to the people of Israel.
8. God so affected the normal weather patterns that Israel for a full three and one half years did not receive so much as a local shower!
9. A localized drought of this duration would garner attention, but a world-wide drought would be an astounding manifestation of divine displeasure.
10. However, the statement in v. 6a may simply suggest that these two men have the power to override earth’s regular weather patterns thus affecting different places around the world for whatever time periods.

11. This part of the verse may simply mean that during the 1260 days of their prophesying they have the ability to override rainfall here and there around the world.
12. The phrase “during” the days of their prophesying” is an accusative of extent of time and covers the entire period of their prophetic office, which as we know constitutes the first half of the tribulation, beginning with the day of the Rapture, the very day of their resuscitation and appearance before mankind.
13. In addition to this hate-generating phenomenon, the two have the ability (God-given) to turn water into blood (something we see in connection with the 2nd trumpet judgment coming early in the 2nd half of the trib; cf. Rev. 8:7,8 and in the 3rd bowl judgment coming at the very end; Rev. 16:4) and to strike the earth with a variety of plagues.
14. The second half of this verse alludes to the ministry of Moses in Egypt before Pharaoh (Ex. 7:17-21; 9:14; 11:10; 1Sam. 4:8).
15. The first nine plagues over Egypt, of which the first was contamination of the Nile, the life source of the glory that was Egypt’s, were all short-lived, in that each was suspended upon the promise of the Pharaoh.
16. The tenth plague resulted in the release of Israel from slavery.
17. The plagues unleashed by the two witnesses will bring upon humanity God’s wrath in accord with the very purpose for the tribulation.
18. These two anti-celebrities will bring misery upon humanity during the days of their prophesying.
19. In turn they will garner universal hatred.
20. It must be kept in mind that they will minister during the phase of the tribulation that is comparatively tame.
21. Or put another way, most of what they say and do will take place before the rider on the red horse appears (2nd seal judgment) bringing nuclear annihilation to commercial Babylon (a.k.a. USA).
22. This means that the misery these two unleash will not be overshadowed by the hell on earth scenario that begins with the 2nd seal.
23. If the US is destroyed in one hour of one day around the third year of the tribulation, then most of what the two witnesses accomplish with respect to the wrath of God will not be overshadowed by the judgments beginning with the 2nd seal.
24. The first seal is the rider on the white horse which has been identified as US imperialism after the Rapture.
25. American warmongering under the guise of spreading democracy will be completely shut down via the Bear.
26. The power of these two “time-travelers” will greatly exceed what they accomplished under God during their illustrious careers.
27. The phrase “as often as they desire” or “whenever they wish” suggests this fact.
28. Moses had to wait for a divine command before he could inflict the next plague, but these two are under no such restraint.
29. They are granted much more freedom to exercise the supernatural.

Their Martyrdom (v.7)

VERSE 7 **When they have finished their testimony** (καὶ ὅταν τελέσωσιν τὴν μαρτυρίαν αὐτῶν [*conj kai + adv hotan when + aor.act.subj.3p. teleo complete + art.w/noun*])

acc.f.s. marturia witness, testimony], **the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them** [τὸ θηρίον τὸ ἀναβαῖνον ἐκ τῆς ἀβύσσου ποιήσει μετ’ αὐτῶν πόλεμον [*art.w/noun nom.nt.s. therion beast, wild animal* + *art.w/pres.act.part.nom.nt.s. anabaino ascend* + *prep ek* + *art.w/noun abl.f.s. abussos abyss* + *fut.act.ind.3s. poieo make* + *prep meta with* + *pro.gen.m.p. autos “them”*], **and overcome them and kill them** [καὶ νικήσει αὐτοὺς καὶ ἀποκτενεῖ αὐτούς [*conj kai* + *fut.act.ind.3s. nikao prevail, overcome, conquer* + *conj kai* + *fut.act.ind.3s. anokteino kill* + *pro.gen.m.p. autos*]].

ANALYSIS: VERSE 7

1. Every God ordained ministry has an agenda, a starting point, and a conclusion.
2. The extent of the ministry of the two witnesses is exactly 1260 days bringing humanity to the midpoint of the seven year tribulation.
3. Their ministry begins on the same day as the Rapture of the Church.
4. It concludes 1260 days later with their arrest and martyrdom.
5. The agenda is defined by the dispensation, the spiritual gift within, and the particulars of any given niche.
6. The ministry of the two witnesses is defined as to time frame, extent of days, message, audience, and the exhibition of the miraculous.
7. The primary aspect of their ministry is communication with special emphasis on prophecy.
8. In this verse the content is designated as “testimony.”
9. They bear testimony to the unfolding plan of God as it pertains to the times.
10. They will faithfully discharge their duty and willingly suffer abuse and martyrdom.
11. They know this going in and apply as they did during their respective lifetimes.
12. Communicators are enjoined to “fulfill your ministry” (2Tim. 4:5; verb is aor.imper. of *pleroo*; cp. 4:17).
13. The verb here is *teleo* which means to complete a task.
14. In the history of a completed ministry there are a many steps and a variety of challenges (cf. Acts 13:25 “And while John was completing (impf.act.ind. *pleroo*) his course (noun *dromos* racecourse), he kept saying, ‘What do you suppose that I am? I am not *He*. But behold, there comes One after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.”
15. Those who would complete their ministry/course must be willing to sacrifice all to see that goal realized (cf. Acts 13:25 “But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish (aor.act.infin.; *teleo* same as in Rev. 11:7) my course and the ministry which I have received from the Lord Jesus, to testify of the gospel of the grace of God.”
16. The admonition to fulfill one’s ministry is before all who have received this calling (cf. Col. 4:17 “And say to Archippus, “Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.”; cf. 1Tim. 1:12; 2Tim.4:5).
17. In Rev.11:7 the phrase reads “When they had finished their testimony.”
18. The content is the witness of truth within the tribulation.
19. Their testimony will include all that is part of the completed canon of Scripture with special emphasis on the Apocalypse.
20. The wrath producing miracles that proceed from their announcements are designed to capture the attention of the whole world as well as administer a portion of the wrath stored up for the nations.

21. The principal target, if not the sole target, of their message is the Jewish people.
22. It is prophesied of Elijah that he would make a reappearance to prepare the Jewish people for the coming of their Messiah, just as John the Baptist did at the 1st Advent (cf. Mal. 4:5 “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD.”).
23. We know that the tribulation is the period when God will remove Israel’s long standing blindness with respect to their true Messiah (2Cor. 3:15-16; cp. Jn. 12:37-43).
24. The message of these two men will probably be confined to the hearing of Jews in the land.
25. What the Gentiles hear is the pronouncements of plagues against the nations, which in itself serves as a witness and a sign of Christ’s coming.
26. Their teaching ministry accounts for the conversion of the 144,000 and the Jewish believers who flee the land and go into hiding for the remainder of the period (cf. Rev. 12:13-17).
27. Also, this explains the revival of truth-centered worship in the newly constructed temple as per verses 1 and 2.
28. The wording here clearly indicates a point in the latter days when they will have achieved their specific assignment.
29. For the first time and somewhat abruptly “the beast” enters discussion.
30. The noun *therion* translated “beast” refers to a dangerous animal, not inclusive of carnivores.
31. Whereas the noun *zoon* previously encountered and sometimes translated “beast” lacks the dangerous connotation (Rev. 4:7ff.) of the term used in this verse.
32. Such an animal is always a threat to others especially in its natural environs.
33. In Daniel chapter seven the “four great beasts coming up from the sea” represents four world powers or kingdoms that are opposed to God but are used to serve His purposes.
34. This noun occurs 46 times in 36 verses in the NT.
35. The first occurrence is Matt. 1:13 “And he was there in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan; and He was with the wild beasts (art.w/gen.nt.p.), and the angels were ministering to Him.”
36. Other references outside Revelation include Acts 11:6; 28:4, 5 (poisonous snake); Titus 1:12 (people); Heb. 12:20; Jam. 3:7 (domestication).
37. It is used one time in Revelation of dangerous animals (6:8) in connection with the 4th seal and the rider on the ashen horse.
38. Otherwise the term is used in Revelation of either the ruler who heads up the ten nation confederation of Revelation chapters 13 and 17 or it is used of the political entity he leads as in Rev. 13:1 and 2.
39. But in 13:3 the identity narrows to refer to the man or ruler himself.
40. Here the reference is to the individual who is commonly referred to as the Antichrist.
41. Of particular interest in this opening reference to the archenemy of the truth is a reference to his origins.
42. Here we have the first clue as to this individual’s identity.
43. He is said to “ascend out of the abyss” which statement agrees with Rev. 17 verse 8 where we have a paragraph (vv. 8-14) that enables us to arrive at a very high degree of certainty as to exactly who this man is!
44. Here for the first time we learn that “the beast” will “come up out of the abyss.”
45. The “abyss” is used in reference to the underworld of the departed dead.
46. The term occurs 9x in the NT: Lk. 8:31; Rom. 10:7; Rev. 9:1, 2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3.

47. The occurrence in Luke has the demons that possessed the crazed man from the tombs entreating Jesus not to send them “into the abyss.”
48. In Rom 10:7 the term occurs in connection with a statement by Paul that the righteousness associated with saving faith is not to be found in the abyss below.
49. The abyss refers to a realm that is beneath us.
50. In Revelation chapter 9 it is the place where demon spirits are released to torment humanity for five months in connection with the fifth trumpet judgment.
51. In Revelation 20 verses 1 and 3 it the place where Satan will be imprisoned during the 1000 years of the millennium.
52. So clearly, the beast is a man who is brought back from the dead during the seven year tribulation.
53. No other reasonable meaning can be deduced from the statement found in this verse.
54. The beast or the antichrist will be a resuscitated unbeliever who had a life on earth prior to his second life during the tribulation.
55. This reappearance parallels the resuscitation of the two witnesses.
56. The verb “comes up” (*anabaino*) is used in connection with Christ’s ascent from the underworld following His resurrection (Eph. 4:9)
57. His ascent followed His descent.
58. His ascent went from the center of earth all the way to the 3rd heaven (Eph. 4:8-10).
59. His purpose in descending and ascending was to bring the souls of all OT believers out of Sheol-Paradise and relocate them in heaven proper.
60. Prior to this event the underworld was divided into Paradise where all believers went at death and Torments where all unbelievers go at death (cf. Lk. 16).
61. It also has a compartment where the fallen spirits of Genesis 6 were placed for their part in the attempt to frustrate the incarnation (cf. 1Pet. 3:19; Jude 1:6).
62. The individual designated here as “the beast” entered this realm as an unbeliever when he died in ancient times.
63. God will bring him out of the abyss and give him the capacity to live and function in the modern world at a very high level.
64. This God will also do for Moses and Elijah.
65. He will be brought up at the outset of the tribulation or at the very same time the two witnesses appear on the scene.
66. Three future indicatives state the beast’s approach to the two witnesses.
67. “He will make war” indicates he will devise a strategy to neutralize these two prophets.
68. This he will begin to do sometime in the first three and one half years.
69. He will be unsuccessful until the time of their prophesying is fulfilled.
70. At the midpoint of the tribulation he will finally be permitted to “overcome them.”
71. The final term “kill” has to do with the martyrdom of Moses and Elijah under the permissive will at the hands of Antichrist.
72. Nevertheless, these two men accomplish exactly what they were sent to do and so it is for all adjusted martyrs.