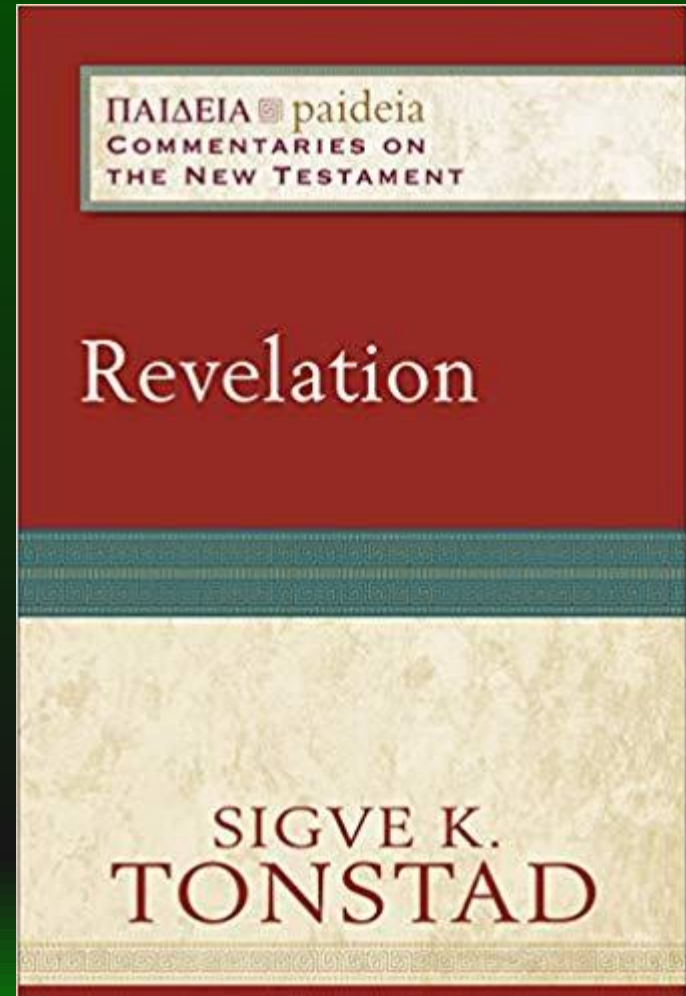


Community and Commission in Revelation

sktonstad@llu.edu

How to Read Revelation

1. Become a re-reader.
2. Pay attention to John's use of the Old Testament.
3. Recognize that God "is not the only one who is at work in this world."



Letter to the *Communities*



I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, "Write in a book what you see and send it to the seven believing communities, to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamum, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea." (Rev. 1:10-11)

Community and Commission

As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches (1:20)

Community and Commission

- T or F The believing community is the end and the means to an end.
- T or F The lampstand, Revelation's symbol for the church, means that the church is defined from the point of view of its mission.
- T or F The church holds the privilege in trust; it can be rescinded or transferred.

Community and Commission

- T or F The church in Revelation is local, first, and universal, second.
- T or F It matters to Jesus what the church teaches and how it lives.
- T or F The quest for relevance in the 21st century begins right here, with the community and the commission.

“Digression” or Time-Out

7 SEALS



1	2	3	4	5	6	TIME- OUT	7
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7 TRUMPETS

1	2	3	4	5	6	TIME- OUT	7
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“Digression” in the Trumpet Sequence

8:6–9:21 First six trumpets

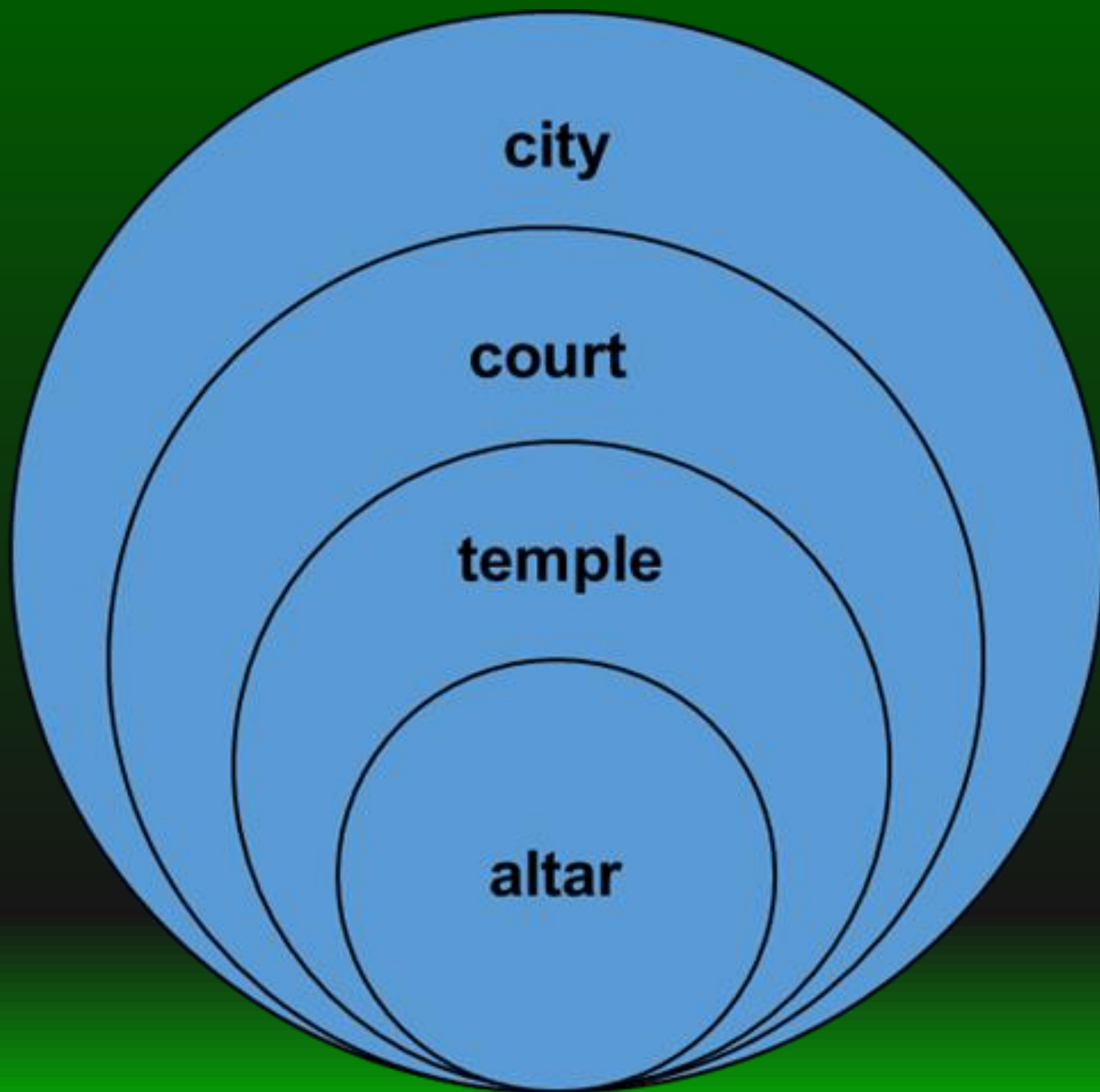
10:1–11:14 “Digression”

- **Mission (10:1-11)**

- **Method (11:1-14)**

The Temple of God and ‘Those Who Worship There’

Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, “Come and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample over the holy city for forty-two months” (11:1-2).



How to Read

- 1. Become a re-reader.**
- 2. Pay attention to John's use of the Old Testament.**
- 3. Recognize that God "is not the only one who is at work in this world."**

OT Background

- When he brought me there, a man was there, whose appearance shone like bronze, with a linen cord and a measuring reed in his hand; and he was standing in the gateway (Ezek. 40:3).
- I looked up and saw a man with a measuring line in his hand. Then I asked, “Where are you going?” He answered me, “To measure Jerusalem, to see what is its width and what is its length” (Zech. 2:1-2)

Aborted Assignment

Then the angel who talked with me came forward, and another angel came forward to meet him, and said to him, “Run, say to that young man: Jerusalem shall be inhabited like villages without walls, because of the multitude of people and animals in it. For I will be a wall of fire all around it, says the LORD, and I will be the glory within it” (Zech. 2:3-5).

Mission and Method

TEXT

Revelation: “*measure*”

Zechariah: “don’t
measure”

MEANING

- Inclusive (a “big tent” conception)
- Protected (but not with walls, fences, or accounting sheets)
 - Spiritual structure

Commission

And I will grant my two witnesses [*martys*] authority to forth-tell [*propheteuō*] for one thousand two hundred sixty days, wearing sackcloth (11:3).

- “Witness” (1:5; 2:13; 3:14; 11:3; 17:6; 1:2, 9; 6:9; 11:7; 12:11, 17; 19:2; 20:4)
- “Prophecy” (10:11; 11:3)

Identity of Witnesses

These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth (11:4).

- As for the mystery of ...the seven golden lampstands:the seven lampstands are the seven churches (1:20).
- “The two witnesses” are the church commissioned.

How

I said to the angel who talked with me, “What are these, my lord?” Then the angel who talked with me answered me, “Do you not know what these are?” I said, “No, my lord.” He said to me, “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the LORD of hosts” (Zech. 4:4-6).

Method of the Witnesses

And if anyone wants to harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes; anyone who wants to harm them must be killed in this manner (11:5).

- Don't rush to conclusions!

«Fire»

- “Is not my word like fire, says the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?” (Jer. 23:29)
- “Behold, I am making my words in your mouth a fire, and this people wood, and the fire shall devour them” (Jer. 5:14)
- “If I say, ‘I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name,’ then within me there is something like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I am weary holding it in, and I cannot” (Jer. 20:9).

Mandate of the Witnesses

They have authority to shut the sky, so that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying, and they have authority over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every kind of plague, as often as they desire (11:6).

OT Figures («Dream Team»)

- No rain (1 Kings 17:1).
- Turning water into blood (Exod. 17:7).

Wait a Minute

OLD TESTAMENT

- Elijah (1 Kings 17:1)
- Moses (Exod. 7:17-20)
 - “Song of Moses” (Deut. 31:19, 22; 32:1).

REVELATION

- Who performs miracles like Elijah (13:13)?
- Who turns water into blood (8:8; 16:3)?
- Community and commission: Whose “song” do they sing (1-45:2-4)?

Defeat of the Witnesses

When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the bottomless pit will make war on them and win over them and kill them, and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city that is prophetically called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified (11:7-8).

Context of the Witness

- Testimony is given in the context of conflict.
- Witnesses to go down to defeat.
- To lie unburied in the street is a sign of dishonor.

‘Where Their Lord Was Crucified’

- Sodom and Egypt are the great ‘secular cities’ of the Old Testament.
- Was ‘their Lord,’ meaning Jesus, crucified in ‘the secular city’?
- ‘Sodom and Egypt,’ symbols of ‘the secular city,’ are applied to the most religious city.
 - Think *ideology*, not *location*.
 - Think theology, not history.

Defeat and Humiliation

And they—from the peoples and tribes and languages and nations—shall gaze at their body for three and a half days, and they refuse to let the dead bodies be placed in a tomb. And the inhabitants of the earth will rejoice over them and be delighted and exchange presents with each other, because these two prophets had exasperated the inhabitants of the earth (9-10).

Resurrection of the Witnesses

But after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and those who saw them were terrified (11:11, NRSV).

- “*Fobos*”
 1. “*terrified*” – a negative association
 2. “*feeling of respect*” – a positive association

Ascension of the Witnesses

Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here!" And they went up to heaven in a cloud while their enemies watched them (11:12).

- As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven (2 Ki 2:11).

Impact of the Witnesses

At that moment there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and *the rest expressed heartfelt feelings of respect (feared) and gave glory to the God of heaven* (11:13, translation mine).

- He said in a loud voice, “*Fear God and give him glory*” (14:7).

Story of the Two Witnesses

- Witnessing community (church)
 - Suffering, death and humiliation
 - Resurrection
 - Ascension
- Have we seen this story before?

Jesus and the Two Witnesses

JESUS

- **Witness**
- **War**
- **Death (defeat)**
- **Resurrection**
- **Ascension**

CHURCH

- **Witness**
- **War**
- **Death (defeat)**
- **Resurrection**
- **Ascension**

Visions of Community and Commission

Community: the peoples and tribes and languages and nations will gaze at the dead bodies of the two witnesses (11:9)

Commission: Then I saw another angel flying in midheaven, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth-- to every nation and tribe and language and people (14:6).

Embodiment and Proclamation

REVELATION 14:6-12

“Fear God and give him
glory” (14:7)

REVELATION 11:1-14

immense respect came upon
those who saw them (11:11;
trans. mine)

the rest *expressed sentiments
of respect and gave glory to
the God of heaven* (11:13,
trans. mine).

Proclamation and Embodiment

REVELATION 14:6-12

- Loud voice in mid-heaven
- Eternally valid message (“good news”)
- to those who dwell on the earth
- to every nation and tribe and language and people
- “fear God and give God glory”

REVELATION 11:1-14

- loud voice from heaven
- Enacted and embodied “good news”
- those who dwell on the earth
- to the peoples and tribes and language and nations
- “feared and gave glory to the God of heaven”

“Witness of Jesus”

- The believing community, by embodiment and proclamation, safeguards the witness [*martyria*] of Jesus (1:2, 9; 6:9; 12:17; 14:12; 19:10; 20:4)
 - Think *ideology*, not *location*.
 - Think *theology*, not *history*.
 - Think *embodied* witness, his and ours.
- There is no plan B, alternative prescription or 21st century novelty.

“Three Angels’ Message”

- T or F** Revelation 11 and 14 are aware of each other and should be read together.
- T or F** These passages show the importance of becoming a re-reader.
- T or F** Both passages depict community and commission.

“Three Angels’ Message”

- T or F** In Revelation 11, the story of Jesus is embodied in the community.
- T or F** “Proclamation” is incomplete without embodiment.
- T or F** The commissioned community in Revelation suffers and loses.

How to Read

1. Become a re-reader. The three angels (14:6-12) and the two witnesses (11:3-14).
2. John's use of the OT. Story of the two witnesses (11:3-14).
3. Recognize that God "is not the only one who is at work in this world." The beast from the abyss and the war he wages (11:7; 9:1-21; 12:7-12).

Paradox and Reversal

“The reason why, in the final period of world history, God will not deliver his faithful people by the slaughter of their enemies, as he did in the days of Moses, Elijah and Esther, but instead will allow them to be slaughtered by their enemies, is that this is the way the nations will be brought to repentance and faith, and the sovereignty over them transferred from the beast to the kingdom of God.” -- Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 283)