

THEOLOGICAL MOTIVES FOR THE USE OF 1 CHRONICLES 16:8-36 AS BACKGROUND FOR REVELATION 14:6-7

WILLEM ALTINK
Mijnsheerenland, The Netherlands

In a previous article I set forth linguistic, contextual, and theological evidence that David's "Psalm of Praise" in 1 Chr 16:8-36 provides the basic OT literary source for the "First Angel's Proclamation" in Rev 14:6-7.¹ The present study focuses more closely on the similarity of theological concerns in the two passages—this, in turn, giving an indication of the theological basis for Revelation's literary use of elements from the Psalm of Thanks in Rev 14:6-7.

The central theological concern in both instances embraces the covenant, as represented by the ark of the covenant. David's Psalm is prepared for, and sung in, the setting of the bringing of the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem after its having remained twenty years in Kearjath-jearim subsequent to its recapture from the Philistines. The section of the book of Revelation in which the proclamation of the first angel occurs is similarly introduced by a reference to "the ark of testimony"—on this occasion, in the "temple in heaven" (11:19).² In the two passages themselves—1 Chr 16:8-36 and Rev 14:6-7—as well as in their broader contexts, there are evidences of this underlying theological motif and of other, related theological affinities between these passages. It is to such evidences that we devote our attention in the present article.

1. *The Ark of Covenant in the Context of David's Psalm of Thanks*

As already noted above, the occasion for David's Psalm of Thanks in 1 Chr 16:8-36 was the bringing of the ark of the covenant

¹Willem Altink, "1 Chronicles 16:8-36 as Literary Source for Revelation 14:6-7," *AUSS* 22 (1984): 187-196.

²It seems clear that Rev 11:19 furnishes the introductory heavenly vision for the major section in Revelation that concludes with 14:20. See Kenneth A. Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation*, 2d ed. (Naples, Fla., 1979), p. 48.

into Jerusalem, "David's own city." Indeed, the Psalm of Thanks is introduced as follows: "That day David first committed to Asaph and his associates this psalm of thanks to the Lord." Thus, 1 Chr 16:8-36 was written with a special focus on the ark—a fact that is further substantiated by statements in 16:37 and 17:1, after the conclusion of the psalm itself.

As we look at the broader context for David's Psalm of Thanks, it is interesting to note that there is a remarkably high frequency of the terms "ark of the covenant" and "ark" (in reference to the ark of the covenant) in chaps. 13-17—second only to the frequency of these terms in the book of Joshua. In these chapters of 1 Chronicles in the LXX the terms *κιβωτός τῆς διαθήκης* ("ark of the covenant") and *κιβωτός* ("ark") occur, in fact, no fewer than thirty-one times.³ Thus, in comparison with the whole of the OT, the emphasis on the ark of the covenant in these chapters is by no means insignificant and is surely more than incidental.

2. *Other Key Terms in the Psalm of Thanks Referring to the Ark of the Covenant*

Apart from the terms "ark of God," "ark of the Lord," and "ark of the covenant" that occur in 1 Chr 16 (see vss. 1, 4, 6, 37), there are other words and expressions in the Psalm of Thanks itself that appear to stand as synonyms for this ark. G. Henton Davies has pointed out, for example, that in the Psalter such terms as "might," "before Yahweh," and "glory, beauty, honor" are at times used in this way.⁴ Although his argument relates to certain psalms in the Psalter, it seems pertinent also for David's Psalm of Thanks in 1 Chr 16.

3. *Redemption and Law*

The basic double feature of the ark of the covenant is its containment of the *Decalogue* and the presence of the *mercy seat*. Thus, law and redemption are two major aspects that stand out clearly in the very existence and function of the ark.

³See Edwin Hatch and Henry A. Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint*, vol. 2 (Graz, 1954), pp. 763-764.

⁴G. Henton Davies, "Ark of the Covenant," *IDB* 1:222-226.

Redemption

Taking a closer look at 1 Chr 16:8-36 and Rev 14:6-7, we find a parallel between the two in the motif of mercy and redemption: In the Psalm of Thanks, there are statements such as these, for example: "He [Yahweh] remembers his covenant for ever; . . . to you will I [Yahweh] give the land of Canaan as the portion you will inherit. When they [Israel] were but few in number, few indeed and strangers in it, they wandered from nation to nation. . . . He allowed no man to oppress them; for their sakes he rebuked kings: do not touch my anointed ones; do my prophets no harm" (1 Chr 16:15, 18-22). The same motif is underscored by the call to "remember the wonders he [Yahweh] has done" (vs. 12).

The connection with covenant (and the ark of the covenant) must not be overlooked here. Also, it is important to note that the LXX term for the ark's cover, "mercy seat" (ἰλαστήριον), is the very same word used in the NT with respect to Christ's redemptive sacrifice: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified freely by his grace and redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement [ἰλαστήριον] through faith in his blood" (Rom 3:23-25; cf. also Heb 9:5).⁵ Thus, the mercy-seat in the Israelite tabernacle became a type of the redemptive mission of Jesus—which is the heart of the "everlasting gospel" (in addition to Rom 3 and other references in the Pauline epistles, cf. Luke 2:10-11, 30-32, 39; 4:18-19; John 3:14-18; Rev 1:5-6; 5:6-10; et al.).

Another theme which points to the redemptive motif represented by the ark of the covenant is that of divine judgment. In both Rev 14:6-7 and 1 Chr 16:8-36, the joy of gospel ("good news") is connected with judgment: The proclamation of the "eternal gospel" by the first angel includes the statement that "the hour of his [God's] judgment has come" (Rev 14:7), while in the Psalm of Thanks there is reference to "singing for joy before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth" (1 Chr 16:33). Judgment for the believer is *basically good news*, inasmuch as it assures deliverance. As stated by W. Schneider,

⁵In the LXX, all the occurrences of ἰλαστήριον refer to the mercy-seat. See Exod 25:17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22; 31:7; 35:11; 37:6, 7, 8, 9; Lev 16:2, 13, 14, 15; Num 7:89; Ezek 43:14, 17, 20; Amos 9:1.

“He who judges brings salvation, peace and deliverance, especially to the persecuted and oppressed (cf. Deut. 10:18).”⁶

The Law

Aside from the “mercy-seat” cover on the ark of the covenant, the other main feature of the ark to which we have referred is the Ten-Commandment law of God that was placed inside it. In this connection, the four key words of Rev 14:6-7 treated in my earlier study—“glory,” “fear,” “judgment,” and “worship”—have a correlating significance, to which we may give brief attention here.

“*Glory.*” In the OT the term “glory” (כְּבוֹד) is used for the revelation of God himself. As stated by S. Aalen, it “expresses itself above all in salvation history, i.e. in God’s great acts (Exod. 14:17 f.; Ps. 96:3), and especially in God’s presence in the sanctuary (Exod. 40:34 f.; 1 Ki. 8:10 f.; Ps. 26:8).”⁷ And W. Dyrness has pointed out that “it [glory] rested in particular where God was to be worshiped, in the temple.”⁸ In 1 Sam 4:21, the loss of the ark of God to the Philistines meant that “the glory was departed from Israel” (vs. 21). The event was reflected in the name Ichabod (אִי-כְבוֹד, “Where is glory?”). Dyrness also points out that in biblical use, the term “glory” has a double meaning: “The idea of glory is used in the double sense of showing respect (or glorifying) and of that which inspires such respect.”⁹ This double meaning of glory (glory “from” God, and glory “to” God) fits well with the overall concept regarding the ark of the covenant, where the love *from* God (his presence) meets man’s love *to* God (in keeping his commandments).

“*Fear.*” In referring to the biblical term “fear,” W. Mundle states: “God’s grace and favour do not abolish the solemnity of the address [to fear]. It demands man’s total obedience.”¹⁰ Fearing God is not merely a feeling or a certain state of the mind, but is expressed in one’s action. The fear of God and the commandments are linked

⁶W. Schneider, “κρίμα,” *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (hereinafter *NIDNTT*), ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1975), 2:363.

⁷S. Aalen, “δόξα,” *NIDNTT*, 2:45.

⁸W. Dyrness, *Themes in Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill., 1979), p. 43.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 42.

¹⁰W. Mundle, “φόβος,” *NIDNTT*, 1: 622.

together. As Mundle further states, "The fear of God is the first essential motive in the laws of the Pentateuch (Lev. 19:14, 32; Deut. 13:11; 17:13 etc.)."¹¹

"Judgment." We have noted in the previous section of this article the relation of the judgment theme to that of redemption. It is important at this juncture to note, as well, its connection to the concept of law. In both 1 Chr 16:8-36 and Rev 14:6-7 there is an obvious link between judgment and God's commandments: For instance, 1 Chr 16:33 states: "They will sing for joy before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth." This is a reference in which, as we have already noticed, judgment is correlated with the ark of the covenant. In Rev 14:6-7, the call is sent forth to "fear God . . . because the hour of his judgment has come." In the same general context, we find an explicit reference to God's commandments: "This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints, who keep God's commandments and have the faith of Jesus" (vs. 12).¹²

"Worship." The original meaning of "worship" (προσκυνέω) is "to kiss." In the ancient Greek world, one prostrated oneself on the ground in order to worship a deity. This heathen worship was connected with images; but "the God of Israel is worshipped without images and therefore is not within the grasp of the worshipper. Προσκυνέω retains its physical sense of bending, however, except that this is understood as bowing to the will of the exalted One (cf. Exod. 12:17f.)."¹³ Moreover, the root concept of προσκυνέω as "kissing [the soil]" (or in the biblical context, "bending [to the will of God]") indicates a connection between worship and God's commandments, in that a person's attitude in worship expresses itself foremost in willingness to do the will of God (i.e., to keep his commandments). H. Schönweiss and C. Brown have put it nicely, in stating that "man's relation to God is expressed principally in worship, and above all in prayer. The call to conversion can therefore be put in the form: 'Worship God!' i.e. recognize him in all

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Another link between judgment and the commandments is the fact that divine judgment proceeds from the sanctuary, where the commandments were; cf. 1 Kgs 22:19; Ps. 9:4, 7, 8, 11; 76:8, 9; 102:19, 20; Micah 1:3-5; Ezek 1:8-10; Mal 3:1-5; Isa 18:4; Amos 1:2; Rev 7:15; 11:19; 14:15, 17; 15:5, 6, 8; 16:1, 17.

¹³H. Schönweiss and C. Brown, "προσκυνέω," *NIDNTT* 2: 876.

his power and glory as creator and judge, acknowledge his exclusive sovereign rights and claim upon you (Rev. 14:7)."¹⁴

In the book of Revelation προσκυνέω has a high frequency of occurrences: 24 times of the NT total of 59! Those who "remain faithful to Jesus" (Rev 14:12) are those who worship Jesus in spirit and truth (cf. John 4:22-24), who are not deceived or intimidated by the dragon of Rev 12 and the two beasts of Rev 13. It is not accidental that the main section of the book of Revelation in which the message of 14:6-7 occurs is *introduced* by a vision of the "ark of the testimony" in "the temple in heaven" (11:19). Nor is it coincidental that the "commandments of God" are specifically mentioned in conjunction with the "testimony of Jesus" in identifying God's loyal "remnant"—those against whom the dragon manifests special wrath (12:17).

The Creation Motif and the Law of God. In addition to the occurrence of the four key-words, "glory," "fear," "judgment," and "worship," a further connecting link between the Decalog and the message of Rev 14:6-7 is the mention of God as Creator: "Worship him, who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water" (Rev 14:7). A marginal note to Rev 14:7 in Nestle-Aland's Greek edition of the NT refers to Exod 20:11 ("the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, . . ."), a part of the Sabbath commandment in the Decalog.¹⁵

4. *Paralleling Aspects of the Covenantal Form in 1 Chronicles 16 and Revelation 14*

Recent articles in *AUSS* have drawn attention to the occurrence of a covenantal form, similar to that of the ancient Hittite suzerainty treaties, in the seven letters to the seven churches in Revelation¹⁶ and in the entire book of Revelation.¹⁷ The two authors of these articles—W. H. Shea and K. A. Strand—refer to the work of George Mendenhall, who pioneered the study of the Hittite suzerainty-treaty formu-

¹⁴Ibid., 2: 877.

¹⁵Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece* (Stuttgart, 1927).

¹⁶W. H. Shea, "The Covenantal Form of the Letters to the Seven Churches," *AUSS* 21 (1983): 71-84.

¹⁷K. A. Strand, "A Further Note on the Covenantal Form in the Book of Revelation," *AUSS* 21 (1983): 251-264.

lary as it was reflected in ancient Israel.¹⁸ Five of the most basic elements in that particular formulary are the following:¹⁹ (1) *preamble*, in which the king as author of the covenant mentioned his name, titles, attributes, etc.; (2) *historical prologue*, which looked back upon the earlier relationship between the two parties of the covenant; (3) the *stipulations*, mentioning the obligations of the vassal; (4) the *witnesses*, which were the gods of the two parties in the extra-biblical treaties, but were other elements in monotheistic Yahwism; and (5) the *blessings and curses*, pertaining to the matter of the vassal's future obedience or disobedience to the covenant.

Interestingly, elements of these five basic aspects of the formulary can also be found in both 1 Chr 16:8-36 and Rev 14:6-7—albeit, not in a clearcut sequence (which was not necessarily even the case with regard to the Hittite examples themselves). The occurrence of this kind of covenantal language in both of these passages is in harmony with the focus of these passages on the centrality of the covenant concept, including its tangible expression in the ark of the covenant. Below, I highlight some of the common aspects, dealing first with David's Psalm of Thanks and then the message of the "first angel" in Rev 14.

1 CHRONICLES 16:

Preamble

"Lord" (vs. 8)

"He is the Lord our God" (vs. 14)

"For great is the Lord" (vs. 25)

"The Lord made the heavens" (vs. 26)

"God our Saviour" (vs. 35)

"God of Israel" (vs. 36)

Historical Prologue

"Tell of all his wonderful acts" (vs. 9)

"Remember the wonders he has done, miracles and judgments he pronounced" (vs. 12)

¹⁸G. E. Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Pittsburgh, Pa., 1955).

¹⁹The following summary is from Shea, p. 72.

“The covenant he made with Abraham, the oath he swore to Isaac, he confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as an everlasting covenant: . . .”(vss. 16-18)

“He allowed no man to oppress them, for their sake he rebuked kings” (vs. 21)

Stipulations

“Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name” (vs. 8)

“Make known among the nations what he has done” (vs. 8)

“Sing to him,” “sing praise to him” (vs. 9)

“Tell of all his wonderful acts” (vs. 9)

“Glory in his name” (vs. 10)

“Look to the Lord” (vs. 11)

“Declare his glory” (vs. 24)

“Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength” (vs. 28)

“Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to his name” (vs. 29)

“Bring an offering and come before him” (vs. 29)

“Worship the Lord” (vs. 29)

“Give thanks to the Lord” (vs. 34)

Witnesses

“Let the *heavens* rejoice, let the *earth* be glad” (vs. 31)

“Let the *sea* resound (vs. 32)

“Let the *fields* be jubilant and *everything* in them” (vs. 32)

“The *trees of the forest* will sing” (vs. 33)

Blessings and Curses

“He remembers his covenant forever” (vs. 15)

“His love endures forever” (vs. 34)

REVELATION 14

Preamble

“Lamb” (vss. 1, 4, 5)

“God” (vs. 7)

“Him, who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water” (vs. 7)

Historical Prologue

Eternal gospel (vs. 6): i.e., what Christ has done to save mankind (cf. the background in 13:8 and 14:1-5 concerning the Lamb’s redemptive work)

Stipulations

“Fear God” (vs. 7)

“Give him glory” (vs. 7)

“Worship him” (vs. 7)

Obedience to God’s commandments (vs. 12)

Faith of Jesus (vs. 12)

Witnesses

Three angels (vss. 6, 8, 9)

Heavens, earth, sea and the springs of water (vs. 7)

The Spirit (vs. 13)

Blessings and Curses

“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on . . . they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them” (vs. 13)

“If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image or for anyone who receives the mark of his name” (vss. 9-11).

5. *Conclusion*

Both the text of 1 Chr 16:8-36 and its context point to the ark of the covenant, as is also true with regard to Rev 14:6-12 and its context (including, in the latter case, the explicit mention of the ark in Rev 11:19). The two-faceted aspect of the ark—gospel and law—is manifested in both passages. And moreover, five basic components

of the ancient covenant formulary—preamble, historical prologue, stipulations, witnesses, blessings and curses—can be traced in both 1 Chr 16 and Rev 14. Thus, the attention that is drawn to the *ark* itself (with the mercy seat and Decalog as integral to it), plus the occurrence of elements of the covenant formulary, in both 1 Chr 16:8-36 and Rev 14:6-7 (and their contexts) reveals a common underlying motif and a motivational basis for the use of the former passage as background for the latter—namely, the centrality of the ark of the covenant.

It should be mentioned, in concluding this study, that the use of David's Psalm of Thanks as background imagery for Rev 14:6-7 is fully in line with "typological usage" in the NT—a usage which takes into account basic theological concerns of the OT root passage. The following "Excursus" will treat briefly the matters of "Typology" and "Theology of the Chronicler."

EXCURSUS

NOTES ON TYPOLOGY AND THE THEOLOGY OF THE CHRONICLER

1. *Typology*

The nature of biblical typology has aptly been described as follows: "God's manifestations in the past—His great redemptive activities—will repeat themselves in greater fulfillments yet to come and of which those former experiences were, in a sense, a foretaste and promise."²⁰ This definition is applicable to David's Psalm of Thanks in 1 Chr 16:8-36 in the following sense: That Psalm deals with the restoration of proper Yahweh worship on a *local* scale at a time when the ark of the covenant that had earlier been recaptured from the Philistines was brought to Jerusalem,

²⁰Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation*, p. 22; cf. R. M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical τύπος Structures*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, 2 (Berrien Springs, Mich., 1981). Dyrness, pp. 145-146, underlines the typological realities within Scripture by pointing out that "the cult [in the OT] was at the same time typical. That is, it was prospective, pointing in its very limitations to what would be real in the future. OT worship was heavy with its future."

whereas the message of the first angel in Rev 14:6-7 is a call also to restoration of proper Yahweh worship—but now on a *universal* scale. A further point of interest is that whereas 1 Chr 16:8-36 and its context focus on the ark of the earthly tabernacle, the context for Rev 14:6-7 directs attention to “God’s temple in heaven” as the locus for the “ark of his [God’s] covenant” in that vision (Rev 11:19).²¹

2. *Theology of the Chronicler*

The books of 1 and 2 Chronicles were written around 400 B.C., at a time when the Israelite nation was endeavoring to re-establish itself after the Babylonian exile. Where or how could the people find strength for the tasks before them? “The answer given by the Chronicler,” Dyrness points out, “is that the rebuilding must be restoration. Only by recalling the covenant forms that David received from Moses and that were most perfectly realized in the temple worship could God be properly honored.”²² Thus, in the midst of the danger of syncretism, the Chronicler calls for a return to the covenant relationship. D. N. Freedman points out that “the author is above all a legitimist, and he is concerned with the divinely appointed institutions and duly authorized personnel which administer them in behalf of the people of Israel. Thus, his interest focuses on the kingdom of Judah, its capital city Jerusalem, and at the very center the temple.”²³

In considering the paralleling motifs between David’s Psalm of Thanks and Rev. 14, we may further suggest, in the light of the above, that when John draws on material from 1 Chr 16:8-36, he is in reality touching on the very central issues in the theology of Chronicles—namely, restoration of the covenant and restoration of Yahweh worship. This is, of course, in harmony with the observations made immediately above in our discussion of “Typology,” and is the conclusion that is obvious from the evidence presented in the main article. We may reiterate, in closing, that in harmony with NT applications of OT materials, the details as given in Rev 14:6-7 (and its context) have been broadened from a *local* to a *universal* scale.

²¹Cf. Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation*, p. 48, and also the outline on p. 51 and the diagram on p. 52.

²²Dyrness, p. 121.

²³D. N. Freedman, “The Chronicler’s Purpose,” *CBQ* 23 (1961): 436.