

1 CHRONICLES 16:8-36 AS LITERARY SOURCE FOR REVELATION 14:6-7

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That the book of Revelation is replete with OT allusions is generally recognized by NT scholarship. The purpose of the present article is to probe the OT literary background to one such passage in the Apocalypse, Rev 14:6-7.¹

1. *Introductory Observations*

It will be noted that in Rev 14:7, the proclamation of the first angel (in the series of three messages from vs. 6-11) contains four key words or expressions: "fear" (φοβέω), "glory" (δόξα), "judgment" (κρίσις), and "worship" (προσκυνέω).² These four words can be traced back to 1 Chr 16:8-36, David's psalm of thanksgiving at the return of the ark of the covenant and its reinstatement into the tent of worship in Jerusalem (cf. vs. 1-7).

This psalm has parallels in three psalms of the Psalter, which either have drawn upon it or provide the source from which it is constituted: Pss 96 (1 Chr 16:23-33); 105:1-15 (1 Chr 16:8-22); and 106:1, 47-48 (1 Chr 16:34-36). In addition, Ps 29 has a partial parallel with 1 Chr 16:23-33.³ Among these various sections in the Psalter,

¹I am indebted to Steven Thompson of Newbold College (Bracknell, Berkshire, England) for methodological insights that led me to this investigation and for several useful suggestions during the initial stage of my preparation of this article.

²The combination of these four key words can also be found in Rev 11:13-19 and 19:1-10, the only other NT passages where all four do occur in combination.

³It is not of significance for our study whether the three sections in the Psalter provided the sources for 1 Chr 16:8-36, or whether 1 Chr 16:8-36 was the original piece from which materials were taken and placed into separate Psalms. For a discussion of the issues, see, e.g., E. L. Curtis and A. A. Madsen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Chronicles*, ICC (Edinburgh, 1965), pp. 221-224; H. Gese, "Die Entstehung der Büchereinteilung des Psalters," in Josef Schreiner, ed., *Wort, Lied, und Gottesspruch. Beiträge zu Psalmen und Propheten. Festschrift für Joseph*

only Ps 96 contains the four key expressions of Rev 14:7. However, in one case a different Greek word is used in Ps 96 (LXX, Ps 95); and the broader contextual parallels between 1 Chr 16 and Rev 14 are also lacking in Ps 96. For such reasons, 1 Chr 16:8-36 gives the best evidence for being the basic biblical literary background for Rev 14:6-7.⁴ (See further, in Excursus A at the close of this article.)

With regard to extra-biblical sources, there are two passages in the Qumran "War Scroll" (1QM) that have some parallels with Rev 14:6-7, primarily with respect to the occurrence of the four key words or expressions that have been mentioned above. These passages are 1QM 12:6-17 and 19:1-8, with the latter being basically a repetition of the former (with some minor changes). Both of these 1QM passages are so contextually different from 1 Chr 16 and Rev 14:6-7 that they can categorically be dismissed as furnishing the basic literary background for the wording of the latter text. (See further, in Excursus B at the close of this article.)

2. *The Four Key Words*

φοβέω, "fear"

In 1 Chr 16:8-36 and Rev 14:6-7, there is a call to "fear God." The first angel in Rev 14:7 begins his message thus—φοβήθητε τὸν θεόν. In 1 Chr 16:8-36, LXX, two forms of φοβέω occur: φοβερός in vs. 25, within the statement, "Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared" (μέγας κύριος . . . φοβερός . . .); and φοβηθήτω in vs. 30, in the command, "Fear before his presence, all the earth" (φοβηθήτω ἀπὸ προσώπου αὐτοῦ πᾶσα ἡ γῆ).

δόξα, "glory"

As with φοβέω, δόξα is linked with God in the two passages under consideration. The second clause in the angel's proclamation in Rev 14:7 is a command to "give him [God] glory" (δότε αὐτῷ

Ziegler (Würzburg, 1972), 2:61-62; T. C. Butler, "A Forgotten Passage from a Forgotten Era (1 Chr. XVI 8-36)," *VT* 28 (1978): 142-150; and A. E. Hill, "Patchwork Poetry or Reasoned Verse? Connective Structure in I Chronicles 16," *VT* 33 (1983): 97-101.

⁴It must be recognized, of course, that the book of Revelation often has multiple literary sources for a given passage or even a given symbol.

δόξαν). In 1 Chr 16:8-36, the word δόξα occurs four times: “Declare his glory [δόξαν] among the nations” (vs. 24); “glory [δόξα] and majesty are before him” (vs. 27); “ascribe to the Lord the glory [δόξαν] and strength” (vs. 28); and “ascribe to the Lord the glory [δόξαν] due to his name” (vs. 29).

κρίσις/κρίνω, “judgment”/“judge”

The third clause in the angel’s message in Rev 14:7 refers to judgment: “for the hour of his [God’s] judgment has come” (ὅτι ἦλθεν ἡ ὥρα τῆς κρίσεως). This statement is remarkably close to a statement in 1 Chr 16:33—“for he [God] is come to judge the earth” (ὅτι ἦλθε κρίναι τὴν γῆν).

Moreover, the term “judgments” occurs in 1 Chr 16:12, 14—in the expressions, “Remember his [the Lord’s] marvelous works that he has done, his wonders, and the judgments [κρίματα] of his mouth”; and “He is the Lord our God; his judgments [κρίματα] are in all the earth.” It is noteworthy that in each instance “judgment” or “judgments” are ascribed to God.

It is of interest to notice, too, that in David’s psalm of thanksgiving, several aspects of judgment are in view—the historical and local, on the one hand, and the eschatological and universal, on the other. By way of contrast, only the universal dimension is depicted in Rev 14:7. Here all nations, etc., are envisaged in this apocalyptic picture.

προσκυνέω, “worship”

The last of the four key words in Rev 14:7 is “worship”: “Worship [προσκυνήσατε] him who made the heavens. . . .” The same verb is found in 1 Chr 16:29, LXX: “Worship [προσκυνήσατε] the Lord.”

Summary

The foregoing survey concerning the four key words or expressions in Rev 14:7—φοβέω, δόξα, κρίσις, and προσκυνέω—shows that the Apocalypse uses a combination of words (and the related themes) appearing in 1 Chr 16:8-36. This survey is a first, and important, step in the line of evidence that reveals David’s psalm of thanksgiving to be a basic literary source for the language of Rev 14:6-7. To some further evidences in support of this conclusion we now turn.

3. *Other Similarities in Language and Conceptualization Between 1 Chr 16:8-36 and Rev 14:6-7*

Besides the four words discussed above, there is another remarkable similarity in expression between 1 Chr 16:8-36 and Rev 14:7, plus additional similarities that may be noted when comparing the preceding verse in Rev 14 (vs. 6) with the passage in 1 Chronicles.

οὐρανός καὶ γῆ . . . (“*heaven and earth . . .*”)

The concluding command of the first angel’s proclamation in Rev 14:7 is to worship “him who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and springs of water” (τῷ ποιήσαντι τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ πηγὰς ὑδάτων). The words τῷ ποιήσαντι τὸν οὐρανὸν are very close to some phraseology in 1 Chr 16:26: ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν οὐρανοὺς ἐποίησε, “our God made the heavens.”

It should also be noted that in 1 Chr 16:31-32, the triad of “heaven,” “earth,” and “sea” is mentioned, as in Rev 14:7, though in a somewhat different setting: “Let the heaven [ὁ οὐρανός] be glad, and let the earth [ἡ γῆ] rejoice. . . . Let the sea [ἡ θάλασσα] roar, with all that fills it.” (Nevertheless, this statement, though not explicitly referring to creation, is within the general context of the praise of God in vs. 26 because “the Lord made the heavens.”) The one phrase in Rev 14:7 without parallel in 1 Chr 16:8-36 is πηγὰς ὑδάτων, “springs of water.”

On the other hand, 1 Chr 16:32b-33 adds further expressions too: “Let the fields rejoice, and all that is in them; then shall the trees of the forest sing at the presence of the Lord, because he comes to judge the world.” The import of the last clause should not be overlooked when drawing parallels with Rev 14:6-7; for the reference to heaven, earth, sea, etc., in David’s psalm, vss. 26-33, is related to the reference to God’s coming in judgment—just as in the Apocalypse the reference to heaven, earth, sea, and springs of water is also connected with the mention of the coming of God’s judgment.

Expressions in Rev 14:6

Several expressions in Rev 14:6 deserve notice here because of their use also in 1 Chr 16:8-36, LXX, though in somewhat different ways or contexts. The most striking of these pertains to the proclamation of the gospel to every “nation [ἔθνος], kindred, tongue, and

people [λαόν]" (Rev 14:6), as compared with the phraseology about the wilderness wanderings of ancient Israel (1 Chr 16:20)—"They went from nation to nation [ἀπὸ ἔθνους εἰς ἔθνος], and from one kingdom to another people [λαὸν ἕτερον]." The terms ἔθνος, "nation," and λαός, "people," are obviously key ones here. And it should also be noted that the same is true in 1 Chr 16:24, which furnishes another close parallel to the wording in Rev 14:6. The text in 1 Chr 16:24 reads, "Declare among the nations [ἐξηγεῖσθε ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσι] his [God's] glory, among all the peoples [πᾶσι τοῖς λαοῖς] his marvelous deeds."

A further commonality in expression involves the phrase "eternal gospel" in Rev 14:6 (εὐαγγέλιον αἰώνιον). 1 Chr 16:36 proclaims a beatitude to the Lord "from everlasting to everlasting" (ἀπὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος καὶ ἕως τοῦ αἰῶνος). And although the term εὐαγγέλιον, "gospel," in Rev 14:6 does not occur in 1 Chr 16:8-36, a statement in vs. 23 does provide an interesting point of comparison in thought: "Proclaim his [God's] salvation from day to day" (ἀναγγεῖλατε ἐξ ἡμέρας εἰς ἡμέραν σωτηρίαν αὐτοῦ).

4. Synopsis of 1 Chr 16:23-26 and Rev 14:6-7

The closest parallels structurally between David's psalm of thanksgiving and Rev 14:6-7 may be limited to the section of 1 Chr 16 from vss. 23-26. The parallels here are sufficiently close that a synopsis may be outlined as follows:

| 1 Chr 16 | Rev 14 |
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| vs. 23: "Sing [ᾄσατε] to the Lord, all the earth [πᾶσα ἡ γῆ]; | vs. 3: "And they sing [ᾄδουσιν] . . ." |
| vs. 23: "proclaim . . . his salvation (cont.) [ἀναγγεῖλατε . . . σωτηρίαν αὐτοῦ]. | vs. 6: "Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the eternal gospel to proclaim [εὐαγγεῖσαι εὐαγγέλιον αἰώνιον] |
| vs. 24: "Declare . . . his glory [ἐξηγεῖσθε . . . τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ]* | |
| vs. 24: ". . . among the nations [ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσι] . . . * among all the peoples [ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς λαοῖς] his marvelous deeds." (cont., with some repet.) | vs. 6: "to those who dwell on the earth [τοὺς καθημένους ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς], to every nation [πᾶν ἔθνος] and tribe and language and people [λαόν], saying in a loud voice: |

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|---------|--|--------|--|
| vs. 25: | “... He [God] is to be feared [φοβερός ἐστιν]. . . .” | vs. 7: | “‘Fear God [φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν]: worship him who made the heavens [τῷ ποιήσαντι τὸν οὐρανόν]. . . .’” |
| vs. 26: | “... our God made the heavens [ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν οὐρανοῦς ἐποίησε].” | | |

*In vs. 24, the expression “among the nations” belongs in the ellipsis within the first excerpt, and “Declare” and “his glory” belong within the two ellipses of the second excerpt. Thus, the literal rendering is as follows: “Declare among the nations his glory, among all the peoples his marvelous deeds.”

5. Conclusion

Summary of the Evidence Reviewed

The evidence with regard to the *similarity of key words* (especially the four words φοβέω, δόξα, κρίσις, προσκυνέω), the *use of words*, and the *structure* between 1 Chr 16:8-36 and Rev 14:6-7 strongly suggests that 1 Chr 16:8-36 has been the basic OT literary source for Rev 14:6-7. Another OT passage, Ps 96, though nearly identical to 1 Chr 16:23-33, is lacking in several features wherein there is closeness between the latter passage and Rev 14:6-7. Apart from 1 Chr 16:8-36 and Ps 96, there are no other passages in the OT which have a combination of the four key expressions of Rev 14:7.

The similarity between the Hebrew of 1 Chr 16:8-36 and 1QM 12:6-17 (and 1QM 19:1-8), with respect especially to the four key expressions discussed in the second section of this article, suggests that this material in the Qumran literature was possibly built on 1 Chr 16:8-36. But it is sufficiently different in context and structure so as to rule it out as basic background to Rev 14:6-7. I have found no other places in intertestamental Jewish literature where the four key words are connected.

Some observations will now be in order concerning the theological frame of reference to which the language of 1 Chr 16 is put to use in Rev 14:6-7. These observations will necessarily be brief here, but I hope in a later article to elaborate upon the theological implications.

The Theological Frame of Reference

A point of particular interest theologically is the direct relationship of the *ark of the covenant* not only to David’s psalm of thanksgiving, mentioned earlier (cf. 1 Chr 16:1), but also to the scene in

Rev 14:6-7. It has been shown that in the structure of the book of Revelation, the vision of the ark of the covenant seen in heaven (11:19) is a prelude or "victorious vision" for the entire section of Revelation from 12:1 to 14:20.⁵ Thus, there is a striking parallel between the settings or occasions for the similar language used in 1 Chr 16:8-36 and Rev 14:6-7. Both passages are placed within the setting of some sort of manifestation of God's ark of covenant, with its double feature of containment of God's Ten-Commandment *law* and the presence of the *mercy seat*. That the Apocalypse thus draws attention to the ark of the covenant by employing vocabulary of 1 Chr 16:8-36 finds further illumination in Rev 14:12, where "the commandments of God" and "the faith of Jesus" are mentioned. This indicates that the three angels' messages stress both the "everlasting gospel" (cf. Rev 14:6) and the "commandments of God" (note the implications in all three messages in vs. 6-11).

The use of 1 Chr 16:8-36 (with its focus on the ark of the covenant) in Rev 14:6-7 brings to view several interesting theological themes which correlate with the context of Rev 14 and with the entire book of Revelation. Such theological themes include the following:

1. The divine *redemptive* activity—reflected in 1 Chr 16 and inherent in the focus of the three angels' messages of Rev 14:6-11 and in the term "everlasting gospel" in the first message (vs. 6).
2. The importance of God as Creator.
3. The idea of covenant. (Cf. 1 Chr 16:15, 17 and the covenantal form of the letters to the seven churches in Revelation,⁶ as well as the covenantal structure for the whole book of Revelation.⁷)
4. The emphasis on judgment.
5. The connection between judgment and the commandments of God as a basis for judgment.
6. The sanctuary as the center of worship, the place from which judgments proceed, and the place where fear of Yahweh is expressed.
7. The universal scope of God's love and power.

⁵Cf. K. A. Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation*, 2d ed. (Naples, Florida, 1979), p. 48. Cf. also the outline on p. 51 and the diagram on p. 52.

⁶W. H. Shea, "The Covenantal Form of the Letters to the Seven Churches," *AUSS* 21 (1983): 71-84.

⁷K. A. Strand, "A Further Note on the Covenantal Form in the Book of Revelation," *AUSS* 21 (1983): 251-264.

All the foregoing themes are intertwined and closely linked together in Rev 14:6-7. This fact becomes more evident, clear, and meaningful by making reference to this passage's OT background literary source, 1 Chr 16:8-36, with which it has significant thematic affinities in addition to the language and structural similarities that we have noted.

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EXCURSUS A

1 CHRONICLES 16:23-33 AND PSALM 96 AS POTENTIAL BACKGROUND SOURCES FOR REVELATION 14:6-7

1 Chr 16:23-33 and Ps 96 (LXX, Ps 95) are closely parallel, a fact already noted at the outset of the discussion in the main article, above. I have opted for the former, rather than the latter, as the basic OT literary source for Rev 14:6-7, on both linguistic and contextual grounds.

The following linguistic considerations may be noted: (a) φοβήθητω (1 Chr 16:30; cf. φοβήθητε in Rev 14:7) is lacking in Ps 96, which has σαλευθήτω instead (vs. 9); (b) the phrase ὅτι ἦλθε κρίναι τὴν γῆν (1 Chr 16:33) is closer to ὅτι ἦλθεν ἡ ὥρα τῆς κρίσεως (Rev 14:7) than is ὅτι ἔρχεται κρίναι τὴν γῆν (Ps 96:13); (c) one phrase in Rev 14:6, "to every nation, tribe, language and people" (πᾶν ἔθνος καὶ φυλὴν καὶ γλῶσσαν καὶ λαὸν), has no parallel in Ps 96, but can be traced back to 1 Chr 16:20: "from nation to nation, and from one kingdom to another people" (ἀπὸ ἔθνους εἰς ἔθνος καὶ ἀπὸ βασιλείας εἰς λαὸν ἕτερον). (It is of interest to note, as well, that another phrase within the general context of Rev 14:6-7—namely "into ages of ages" [εἰς αἰῶνας αἰώνων] in the third angel's message in vs. 11—has a parallel in the last words of the passage in 1 Chr 16 [ἀπὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος καὶ ἕως τοῦ αἰῶνος, vs. 36], but cannot be traced back to Ps 96.)

In addition to such linguistic considerations, the common motifs in the broader contexts for 1 Chr 16:8-36 and Rev 14:6-7 would suggest a connection between the two passages. Ps 96 does not (nor should it be expected to) provide detail regarding a background setting; but for both David's psalm

of thanksgiving and the apocalyptic first angel's message, such background is in view. And it is pertinent that the broader contextual setting of Rev 14:6-7 has striking parallels to the contextual setting of 1 Chr 16:8-36, as I have briefly indicated in the concluding section of my main article.

EXCURSUS B

THE FOUR KEY EXPRESSIONS IN 1QM 12:6-17

Although 1QM 12:6-17 uses the four basic key expressions or terms appearing in Rev 14:7, to which I have called attention in the main article, above, this 1QM passage is contextually and structurally so different from Rev 14 that it cannot seriously be considered as a background to Rev 14:7. Nevertheless, it may be of interest to notice these four key expressions as they occur in 1QM 12:6-17, as compared with their occurrence in 1 Chr 16:8-36 in the Hebrew text.

1. "Fear." The Hebrew term for "to be feared" in 1 Chr 16:25 is נִרְאָה (LXX, φοβερός), and is *apparently* also used in 1QM 12:6, where there is an unfortunate break in the text: [נִרְאָה]. The term for "fear" (imperative) in 1 Chr 16:30 is הִילֵךְ (LXX, φοβηθήτω; cf. φοβηθήτε in Rev 14:7). In 1QM 12:10, 13, there are also occurrences of הִילֵךְ, but with a different meaning than "fear."

2. "Glory." The Hebrew terms for "glory" in 1 Chr 16:8-36 are כְּבוֹד (vss. 24, 28, 29) and הוֹד (vs. 27). 1QM 12:6-17 has multiple occurrences of כְּבוֹד, such as in "the glory of your [God's] kingship" (line 6), "the King of glory" (line 7), and "Man of glory" (line 9).

3. "Judge"/"Judgment(s)." Forms of שָׁפֵט and מִשְׁפָּט are used in 1 Chr 16:33 (לְשָׁפוֹט, "judge"; κρίναι in LXX) and 16:12, 14 (וּמִשְׁפָּטֵי-פִיהוּ and מִשְׁפָּטֵי, "judgments"; κρίματα in LXX). 1QM 12:10 also uses מִשְׁפָּט in the context of the activity of the "King of glory"/"Man of glory" (lines 7 and 9).

4. "Worship." The Hebrew term for "worship"/"tribute"/"obeisance" occurs in 1QM 12:13, as well as in 1 Chr 16:29: "Worship [הִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ] the Lord" in the latter text; "their [the nations'] kings should give you [Zion] tribute [וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ] and serve you" in the 1QM passage. It is striking that the "tribute" in the War-Scroll depiction relates to a subservience to "Zion" (see line 12),

rather than worship to God, thus setting up a contrasting rather than paralleling usage.

It may be that 1 Chr 16:8-36 furnished some of the literary background to 1QM 12:6-17 and its parallel in 19:1-8. If so, the context into which the terminology has been set in the 1QM material is nevertheless so strikingly different from the basic motifs that are common to 1 Chr 16 and Rev 14 that this Qumran material may, as suggested earlier, be readily dismissed from consideration as literary background for Rev 14:6-7.