

## Paul and the Prophets

### Daniel and Paul

In chapter 10 of Daniel, the angel Gabriel provides the seer with the secret of the end of days. Daniel's vision of the angel is much more detailed than any account of Paul's vision, but the emphasis on light is a common element, as Gabriel is described as clothed in linen and girdled with gold, "his body like gold stone of Tarshish, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like dazzling polished brass, and the sound of his words like the sound of a roar" (Daniel 10:6). Like Rabbi Paul's, this vision was fearsome.

As compared to Acts' narrative about what happened on the road to Damascus, the very next sentence in Daniel is truly striking (Daniel 10:7):

And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, and the men that were with me did not see the vision. But a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves.

That corresponds to what Acts narrates about Paul's companions (Acts 9:7), so frightened they are "speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no one."

This description directly contradicts a speech Acts attributes to Paul later in the book (22:9): that speech agrees Paul's companions were frightened, but that they *saw the light*, and *did not hear* the voice. How can a book, edited with considerable sophistication, say one thing about an experience, and then its opposite? Obviously, Acts is more comfortable about the subjectivity of Paul's revelation than are some literally-minded Christians in the

modern period. The point of both Acts and Daniel is that the companions do not fully share the experience, although they know an apocalypse is going on.

As a matter of fact, Acts provides a *third* description of the Paul's apocalypse (26:13-18), attributed to Paul in a speech before King Herod Agrippa II. Here Paul addresses a fellow Jew as well as a ruler designated directly by Rome. We might expect this to be the most accurate account of the three, and the fact is that it is closest to Daniel 10, because Rabbi Paul refers to what he personally saw and heard, while his fellow travelers simply collapsed in a heap on the ground.

1 Corinthians 14:5

I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more that you should prophesy; because the one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, apart from -- unless he interprets, that the congregation receives construction.

2 Corinthians 12:2-4

I know a person in Christ, fourteen years ago, whether in body I don't know, whether out of the body, I don't know -- God knows -- someone carried away to the third heaven. I also know that this someone -- whether in body or apart from the body I don't know -- God knows -- was carried away into Paradise and heard unutterable expressions that it is not appropriate for a person to speak.

The Revelation to John 1:9-19

I, John - your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and endurance that are in Jesus - was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the witness

of Jesus. I was in Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a sound, great as a trumpet, saying, What you see, write in a scroll, and send to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice which was speaking with me, and turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands like a son of man, clothed in a long robe and girded around the breast with a gold cincture, and his head and his hair were white like white wool, like snow, and his eyes like a flame of fire. And his feet were like burnished bronze fired in a furnace, and his voice as the sound of many waters, and having in his right hand seven stars, and from his mouth a sharp, double-edged sword came out, and his aspect appeared like the sun in its might. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as if dead, and he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Do not fear, I am the first and the last and the living one. And I was dead, and see: I am living for ever and ever, and I have the keys of death and of Hades." Write, then, what you see and what is and what is about to be after these things.