

Revelation 1:13-16 in the Navajo Bible

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[Á]ádóó bee hool'iní bá yadaa'áhígíí bitahgi ła' Diné Dzizlǫ́'ii nahojílingo hooltsá, t'áá hazhdiil'éé'go óola sis hajéits'iin gónaa binázt'i'. ¹⁴ Hatsiits'iin áádóó hatsii' aghaałgaiigi át'éego łigai, yasígi át'éego łigai, áádóó hanáa' kọ' dah nídíno'ígíí nahalin; ¹⁵ hakee' éi déédíłjah góne' béesh łitsoii nídoolyíi'go ániidí anállyaago bízdílidígíí nahalin, áádóó tó t'óó ahayóí hadah yíilí nahalingo hwiinéé' diits'a'; ¹⁶ hála' nish'náájí bee sọ' tsosts'idgo dah joojih, áádóó diltłish t'áá ałch'ishjigo deeníinii hazéé'déé' hadzisih, ında jįhonaa'éi bits'ádi'níliíd nahalingo hanii' yíiltsá. (Revelation 1:13-16)¹

[A]nd among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴ His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. ¹⁵ His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. ¹⁶ In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. (Revelation 1:13-16)²

Introduction

In Revelation 1:13-16 John describes the robe, belt, head and hair, eyes, feet, voice, and face of the glorified Christ. When He was born a human baby in Bethlehem Jesus became like us, and yet when He returned to heaven He did so in a glorified body that was in many ways unlike the ones we now have. But when He comes again to take us home, we will once again be like each other. In the Christmas story Jesus became like us. When He comes again, we will become like Him.

This does not mean we go on to become gods, as some suppose. On the contrary, through eternity we retain our humanity, although in glorified bodies. More is true. Through eternity Jesus also retains our humanity. He is the Son of God and the Son of Man. When God gave Him to the human race, it was not a loan (see Isaiah 9:6). As one writer puts it,

The heart of God yearns over His earthly children with a love stronger than death. In giving up His Son, He has poured out to us all heaven in one gift.³

So we have this wonderful description of the glorified Christ in Revelation 1. Does it remind us of anything? Is there another passage that sounds similar to this one? What it reminds me of is Daniel 10:5-6. In that passage a holy Being appears to Daniel. He has the general appearance of a man and Daniel gives us quite a detailed description of His robe, belt,

¹ Navajo Bible quotations are from *Diyin God Bizaad. The Holy Bible in Navajo*. Revised edition. New York: American Bible Society, 2000.

² English Bible quotations not otherwise marked are from *The Holy Bible: New International Version*®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House.

³ Ellen White, *Steps to Christ* (1893), p. 21.

body, face, eyes, arms and legs, and voice. The two passages (Daniel 10, Revelation 1) should be studied together. We do this below.

Text of the Passages

Separate clauses

Let us begin by breaking out the material of Daniel 10:5-6 and Revelation 1:13-16 into separate clauses. This will make it easier to talk about them. See tables 1 and 2.

Table 2 (NIV)
Daniel 10:5-6

Reference	Description
vs. 5a	a man
vs. 5b	dressed in linen,
vs. 5c	with a belt of the finest gold around his waist.
vs. 6a*	His body was like chrysolite,
vs. 6b	his face like lightning,
vs. 6c	his eyes like flaming torches,
vs. 6d	his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze,
vs. 6e	and his voice like the sound of a multitude.

Table 1 (NIV)
Revelation 1:13-16

Reference	Description
vs. 13a	someone "like a son of man,"
vs. 13b	dressed in a robe that reached down to his feet
vs. 13c	and with a golden sash around his chest.
vs. 14a*	His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow,
vs. 14b	and his eyes were like blazing fire.
vs. 15a	His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace,
vs. 15b	and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters.
vs. 16a*	In his right hand, he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword.
vs. 16b	His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

In tables 1 and 2 certain clauses have an asterisk by the verse number. The asterisk marks clauses that have nothing comparable in the other list. For example, there is nothing in Revelation 1 that corresponds with Daniel 10:6a ("His body was like chrysolite"). Also there is nothing in Daniel 10 that corresponds with Revelation 1:14a ("His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow") or 16a ("In his right hand, he held seven stars, and out of his mouth

came a sharp double-edged sword"). Six clauses ("Son of Man," robe, belt or sash, eyes, hands and feet or just feet, voice) say substantially the same things and do so in the same sequence. The lines with gray background are discussed below.

Clauses comparisons

Below I place the two sets of clauses side by side for easier comparison. Here I use a slightly different system of color coding. Clauses in light gray correspond to each other and occur opposite each other in the same sequence. Lines in dark gray represent the two parts of one clause, which appear out sequence relative to each other. See text exhibits 1 and 2.

Text Exhibit 1 (Navajo)

Daniel 10	Revelation 1
(5a) diné léi'	(13a) ła' Diné Dzizlǫ́'ii nahojílingo hoołtsá,
(5b) éí áłts'óózígo yisdizígíí bee na'at'á'hí ligaii dits'idgo ályaago éé' yee hadít'éego	(13b) <u>t'áá hazhdiil'éego</u>
(5c) Yúfazd'éé' óola sis yee ákászaazgo sizí.	(13c) óola sis hajéits'iin gónaa binázt'i'.
(6a) Bits'íís éí tsé béril wolyéii ńitsooígí ánoolnin;	...
...	(14a) Hatsiits'iin áádóó hatsii' aghaałgaiigi át'éego ligai, yasígi át'éego ligai,
(6b) binii' éí bits'áhodilgish nahalin; ←	(14b) áádóó hanáá' kọ' dah nídíno'ígíí nahalin;
(6c) bináá' éí honooyééł nahalingo dah nídíno' ;	(15a) <u>hakee'</u> éí déedíłjah góne' béesh ńitsoii nidoolyí'go ániidí ánályaago bízdílidígíí nahalin,
(6d) <u>bigaan</u> áádóó <u>bijaád</u> éí béesh ńitsoii bízdílid nahalingo dah nídíno';	(15b) áádóó tó t'óo ahayóí hadah yiilí nahalingo <u>hwiinéé'</u> diits'a' ;
(6e) <u>yáłti'go</u> éí t'óo ahojyóí hahojíł'á nahalingo diits'a' .	(16a) hála' nish'náájí bee sọ' tsosts'idgo dah joojih, áádóó diltłish t'áá ałch'ishjigo deeníinii hazéé'déé' hadzisah,
...	(16b) <u>índa jłhonaa'</u> éí <u>bits'ádi'níłíid</u> nahalingo hanii' yiiltsá.

Text Exhibit 2 (English, NIV)

Dan 10	Rev 1
(5a) a man	(13a) someone "like a son of man ,"
(5b) dressed in linen,	(13b) dressed in a robe that reached down to his feet
(5c) with a <u>belt</u> of the finest gold around his <u>waist</u> .	(13c) and with a golden <u>sash</u> around his <u>chest</u> .
(6a) His body was like chrysolite, (14a) His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow,
(6b) his face like <u>lightning</u> ,	(14b) and his eyes were like <u>blazing fire</u> .
(6c) his eyes like <u>flaming torches</u> ,	(15a) His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace,
(6d) his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze ,	(15b) and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters .
(6e) and his voice like the sound of a multitude	(16a) In his right hand, he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. (16b) His face was like <u>the sun shining in all its brilliance</u> .

The two text exhibits should be read across, comparing e.g. the word *diné* ("man") in Daniel 10:5a with the corresponding term *Diné Dzizlîi'ii* ("Son of Man") in Revelation 1:13a. Terms that appear in bold type are directly comparable. Terms that appear underlined use different words to say the same thing. For example, what Daniel calls a "belt" (Daniel 10:5c) is the same as what John calls a "sash" (Revelation 1:13c). I now comment briefly on each clause in text exhibits 1 and 2.

Clauses that Correspond

"Man"; "Son of Man" (Dan 10:5a; Rev 1:13a)

One interesting thing about Jesus' use of the term "Son of Man" is the fact that He uses it at all. "Son of Man" simply means "human." This is something I myself could say, but I don't recall ever saying it. Why should I? Of course I'm human. What else could I be? But in Jesus' case it was worth saying because before He became a Man, He was one with the Father. He was always the Son of God (and remains so), but became the Son of Man by reason of human birth. This contrast between His deity and humanity is one reason why Jesus uses the term "Son of Man" so often, asserting that He is human.

We have something similar to this in Navajo, but with widely different meaning. When someone says, *T'áá diné nishłí*, that doesn't mean, "I'm human [*diné*]," although in the right context *diné* does mean "human." Instead the assertion is, "I'm Navajo [*diné*]." By contrast, when Jesus says He is *Diné Siljí'ii* ("One Who Became a Man"), He's not saying He's Navajo. Instead He's claiming to be one of us – not just those from one ethnic group or another. He Himself was born into a Jewish family, but more importantly He was born into a human family – one with us, i.e., with all of us.

Notice that the wording is not identical in Daniel 10:5 and Revelation 1:13. The one says *diné*, the other *Diné Dzizłí'ii*, but both terms refer to the same holy Being. When Christ appeared to Daniel more than 500 years before His birth in Bethlehem He was not yet the Son of Man, so that is not why Daniel uses the term *diné*. He uses the term because, as this Being stood before him He had the appearance of a man. Consider another passage. "So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak" (Genesis 32:34). But when Jacob quit struggling, "the man said, 'Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome'" (vs. 28). Two verses later Jacob (now Israel) "called the place Peniel, saying, 'It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared'" (vs. 30). So who was Jacob wrestling with – God or man? He was wrestling with the pre-existent Christ. He is called "a man" because to Jacob He looked like a man.

If we think Jesus first came into existence when He was born to Mary in Bethlehem, i.e., that that was His ultimate beginning, how will we ever be able to account for passages such as this one: "And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began" (John 17:5)? Or this one:

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. (Hebrews 1:1-2)

The Bible has much to teach us about Jesus. He fills all of Scripture. If He did not, we would have no reason to study it. What we read, and say, is filled with Christ, or it is empty.

Dressed in linen; robe down to the feet (Dan 10:5b; Rev 1:13b)

In some ancient cultures linen was seen as "a symbol of light and purity."⁴ Unless dyed some other color, linen cloth is white. A similar description is found in the gospels:

There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. (Matthew 17:2)

This description is not so long as the one that appears in Daniel 10, or the one in Revelation 1, but is consistent with both. Daniel probably did not have opportunity to examine closely the robe he describes. So how would he know it was made of linen? Probably because of its color – its whiteness, as mentioned in Matthew 17. By contrast, John speaks only of the fact that Christ's robe reached "down to his feet." He doesn't mention its color. But long things can be white and white things can be long. There is no inherent conflict here. If we want

⁴ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linen>.

contrasts, it will be possible to find them, but that's not what we're looking for. The question is how the two descriptions we're dealing relate to each other. What will help us most is to focus on the similarities.

Gold belt; golden sash (Dan 10:5c; Rev 1:13c)

In Daniel 10:5 the "man dressed in linen" has a gold belt around his waist. In the older languages available to us the Hebrew says *ûmothnāyw ḥ^agūrîm* ("his waist, or loins, were girded about"), and then it mentions the gold belt. The Greek simplifies this description by saying simply, *periezōsmenē* ("he was girt about"), and then the gold belt. This is approximately what the Navajo says: *Yúfazdée' óola sis yee ákászaazgo sizí* ("he was girt about by a belt [made of] gold from Uphaz"). For another reference to Uphaz see Jeremiah 10:9. What this means is "the finest gold" (NIV). Today we would say "24 carat gold." But my point here is that neither the Greek nor the Navajo says where the belt came to, only that the Man was wearing one and that it was made of the purest, finest gold.

In Revelation 1:13 it says that the belt was "around his chest" (NIV). In Navajo it says, *óola sis hajéits'iin gónaa binázt'i'* ("a golden belt encircled his chest"). There is no difference between "belt" (Daniel) and "sash" (Revelation). Actually, neither the Hebrew nor the Greek says "belt" in Daniel 10:5. It says "the man dressed in linen" was girt about by something made of gold, but the text does not tell us what it was. We can be sure it was a belt (or sash), but that word does not appear. The Navajo is correct, however, when it uses the same word (*sis*) both places, because this shows that the two passages are not trying to contrast two different types of object.

Eyes like flaming torches; like blazing fire
(Dan 10:6c; Rev 1:14b)

The description of the eyes is virtually identical in the two passages. On the one hand we have, *hanáá' kə' dah nídino'ígúí nahalin* ("his eyes were like blazing fire") (Daniel 10:6), and on the other, *bináá' éi honooyéét nahalingo dah nídino'* ("his eyes like flaming torches") (Revelation 1:14).

Arms and legs like bronze; feet like bronze
(Dan 10:6d; Rev 1:15a)

Daniel speaks of the Man's "arms and legs," while John speaks of His "feet." This is not a contrast. In both cases the Navajo speaks of *béesh titsoii bízdílid* (Daniel 10:6), or *béesh titsoii . . . bízdílidígúí* (Revelation 1:15). No difference there.

The Hebrew of Daniel 10:6 says literally, "like an eye of burnished bronze [*k^eén n^hōšet qālāl*]." This is an idiomatic expression meaning "like the appearance of burnished bronze." The eye is here associated with the whole act of seeing. We wouldn't say it this way in Navajo or in English, but it makes good Hebrew. Ezekiel uses the same expression:

Their legs were straight; their feet were like those of a calf and gleamed like burnished bronze [*k^eén n^hōšet qālāl*]. (Ezekiel 1:7)

My Navajo readers will be interested to notice that bronze is not white, i.e., is it the color of most Anglos. Bronze has a ruddy, or reddish, color. I'm not saying Jesus was a Navajo! But as a Jew from the Middle East His coloring might have been similar to that of Native Americans.

I should point out that the Navajo words *nídoolyjį'go ániidí ánályaago* ("newly refined") are interpretive. It is the right interpretation and not the sort of thing that would mislead anyone, but what the Greek actually says is *en kaminō pepurōmenēs* ("burning in a furnace," literal gloss; "glowing in a furnace," NIV).

Voice like a multitude; like rushing water
(Dan 10:6e; Rev 1:15b)

The sound of a multitude of people and the sound of a large quantity of water have much in common. Just as the coloring of Christ's glorified body was rich and full, so was the sound of His voice. Here the Navajo introduces a difference that is not in the English. It has *yátti'go* (a verb, "when He speaks") in Daniel 10:6, but *hwiinée'* (a noun, "His voice") in Revelation 1:15. NIV has "his voice" both places.

Daniel was writing in Hebrew, so that's the original language in the case of Daniel 10:6. The Hebrew says *w^éqôl d^ébārāyw k^éqôl hāmôn* ("and the sound of His words was like the sound of a multitude" [my gloss]). It's easier to do comparisons using the Greek, though, because that's the language in which the New Testament was written. Let me write the Greek of Revelation 1:15 directly under the Greek for Daniel 10:6. Don't skip over this. Look at the words.⁵

kai hē phōnē tōn logōn autou hōs phōnē ochlou (Daniel 10:6)

kai hē phōnē autou hōs phōnē hudatō pollōn (Revelation 1:15)

Let me use literal glosses here to show how similar the wording is. Daniel says "the sound of His words," while John says "His voice." In English "sound" and "voice" are different words, but not in Greek. In Greek it's more like, "the sound of His words" and "the sound of Him" (i.e., "His sound"). Actually, a better gloss would be, "the voice of His words" and "the voice of Him" (i.e., "His voice"), because "sound" and "voice" are the same word in Greek and *phōnē* is normally translated "voice." So what are the differences between the two clauses? Daniel includes two words that John does not (*tōn logōn* ["of the words"])⁶ and Daniel compares the Man's voice to "the sound a multitude" where John compares it to "the sound of many waters." With these two exceptions the clauses are the same. It's like John was quoting from Daniel. The wording is too close for the similarities to be accidental.

⁵ Here's a key to the Greek words in these two verses: *kai* ("and"), *hē* ("the"), *phōnē* ("voice"), *tōn* ("of the"), *logōn* ("words"), *autou* ("his"), *hōs* ("like"), *phōnē* ("voice"), *ochlou* ("of a multitude" [Daniel]), *hudatō* ("water" [Revelation]), *pollōn* ("many" [Revelation]).

⁶ This is where the Navajo translators get the word *yátti'go* ("speaking"). It's not just sounds of some kind, but the Man's sound when He talks – the sounds He makes when saying words.

Face like lightning; like the sun (Dan 10:6b;
Rev 1:16b)

One other attribute that both writers describe is the face. Daniel says the face of the Man he saw was "like lightning," while John compares it with "the sun shining in all its brilliance." What is lightning like? It's bright! What's the sun like? That's bright too. So again, both writers are saying the same thing.

One difference, that has nothing to do with the choice of words, is that Daniel puts his description of the Man's face after that for His body ("like chrysolite") toward the middle of the section in vs. 6b, while John places his description of the face last, in vs. 16b.

Clauses that Don't Correspond

When I say that certain clauses don't correspond, I don't mean they disagree. Instead, in three cases, there just isn't anything to compare them with. Daniel has one clause that Revelation does not have, and Revelation has two clauses that Daniel doesn't have.

Body (Dan 10:6a)

Daniel describes the body of "the man dressed in linen" as having the appearance of chrysolite. What is chrysolite? In Greek "chrysolite" means "gold stone" (*chrysolion* "gold" + *lithos* "stone"), so the point being made here is the same as what we found earlier concerning the Man's arms and legs. In a later clause (vs. 6d) the Man's hands and feet are "like the gleam of burnished bronze" – a ruddy color. And here, the Man's body is "like chrysolite." In what way? In regard to its color. The Man's coloring was like "burnished bronze" (vs. 6d), like "chrysolite" (vs. 6a). These two materials are not the same, but from them we can gain an idea of what the man looked like. He was not pale. His skin had a healthy glow, like someone with a good tan.

Head and hair (Rev 1:14a)

Text of the passage. The "head and hair" of the glorified Christ are here said to be white. This is a problem, because Daniel has just compared His body with "chrysolite" (vs. 6a) and both Daniel and John have said that His arms and legs, or just feet, were "like bronze" (Daniel 10:6d; Revelation 1:15a). Neither chrysolite nor bronze is white. So how to explain this?

The answer to the problem, like so many others involving Scripture, is already present in the wording of the passage. The text says "head"; it does not say "face." In Greek these are different words (*kephalē* "head," *prosōpon* "face"), just as they are in English and in Navajo (*hatsiits'iin* "one's head," *hanii'* "one's face").

But now we have a different problem. What do we do with the word "and"? His "head and hair" – both – are white. At this point we are missing the writers' intent. This is not what the words mean. The correct sense is, "His head, even His hair," or "His head, i.e., His hair." In this type of construction the two terms joined by "and" do not contrast with each other. They are being used synonymously. This point does not come through clearly in the Navajo, since the word *áádóó* ("and") doesn't have the same flexibility as the Greek. However, even though this

use of "and" doesn't correspond to anything we might say in English or Navajo, in Greek it occurs often enough that here's a special term for it.⁷

Broader comparisons. Notice the similarity between Revelation 1:14 and Isaiah 1:18. Below I quote the passage from Isaiah and then the passage from Revelation, so we can see the similarities more easily.

K'ad hágo haa'íshá' d'íi baa nídiit'íił, ní Bóhólníihii. Azhá nihibaa'hági át'éii éi t'áá íiyisí lichxíi' nidi, **yas nahalingo łigai** dooleet; azhá diłhiłgo lichxíi' nidi **aghaalłaiigi át'éego łigai** doo. (Isaiah 1:18)

"Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be **as white as snow**; though they are red as crimson, they shall be **like wool**." (Isaiah 1:18)

Hatsiits'iin áádóó hatsii' **aghaalłaiigi át'éego łigai, yasígi át'éego łigai**, (Revelation 1:14)

His head and hair were white **like wool, as white as snow**, and his eyes were like blazing fire. (Revelation 1:14)

Stars and sword (Rev 1:16a)

Stars. In Revelation 1 Christ walks among the seven lampstands – each with its little flame on top. In chapters 2-3 the stars are said to be in His hand.

"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands: (Revelation 2:1)

"To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. (Revelation 3:1)

This lampstand imagery is drawn from the ancient Jewish sanctuary, where a lampstand with seven branches stood in the first apartment (or room) of the sanctuary. Here the lampstands represent the seven churches of Asia.

The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels [or messengers, or witness] of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches. (Revelation 1:20)

There is some nice imagery here. Jesus both walks among the churches and holds them in His hand. He is both among us as our Friend and over us as our Lord – bearing us up, protecting us. To Christians He is "the First and the Last," "the Beginning and the End" (see Revelation 1:17; 2:8; 22:6, 13).

⁷ It's called "epexegetical *kai*." This again is where "and" (*kai*) is used to show that two things are considered the same, not that they're different and we're taking both of them.

Sword. The idea of a sword coming out of Christ's mouth is repeated in four other passages of Revelation. I quote these now in both Navajo and English.

Pérgamasgi da'oodlání álah nádleehii bidiyingo naal'a'í kót'éego bich'í' ak'e'íłchí: **Diltłish t'áá ałch'ishjigo deeníinii** dah yootłílii kóní: (Revelation 2:12)

"To the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has **the sharp, double-edged sword.**" (Revelation 2:12)

Éí baą ákódaat'éhígú łahgo át'éego baąh tsíndahidohkeesgo bits'áhókááh. Doo ákódaat'íígóó t'áá k'ad tsíłgo nihaa deesháál, áko **shizéé'dóó diltłish** bee hach'í' anaa' hodeeshłeel. (Revelation 2:16)

"Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with **the sword of my mouth.**" (Revelation 2:16)

Diltłish deeníinii bizéé'déé' hadzisiho ał'aa dine'é bił dah nidahaz'áágóó yee yik'eh didoodleel áádóó béesh hał yee yinant'aa doo; ch'il na'at'ł'o'ii bee yiljizhii bee Diyin God Aláahgo Ayóó'ábóodziilii t'óó báhádzidgo bibee até'él'íinii yaąh haidoonih. (Revelation 19:15)

Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. (Revelation 19:15)

Áko łí' yik'i dah sidáii **bizéé'déé' diltłish hadzisihi** bee dine'é daadziihígú nidaaztseed, índá dabits'í'ígú nidaat'a'ii t'áá át'é nídeineesdáá'. (Revelation 19:21)

The rest of them were killed with **the sword that came out of the mouth** of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh. (Revelation 19:21)

What is the sword in these verses? An important clue is already waiting for us in the text. Because this sword comes out of Christ's mouth it would be reasonable to suppose that it has to do with something He says. Just as He is the Word of God and in union with the Father created all things, so His own word is powerful. It destroys His opponents by reproving them for their sins. It becomes effective through the faith of those who believe Him. The sword is Christ's word, which is no different from God's word – the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. The Father and the Son are not saying different things. Note in passing that the sword imagery we find in Revelation 1:16 is used only within the book of Revelation.

Relationships. The two parts of this clause should be studied together. The church is what Christ uses to convey His word, because it is through the church that His word is proclaimed. That is how people hear it – through reading the Scriptures, as preserved and translated by the church, and through proclamation. This word brings light to people's minds (that's the part about "stars") and it exerts a powerful influence on people's lives whenever it is believed and obeyed (the "sword") (see Hebrews 4:12).⁸

⁸ There are other references to swords in Revelation, but they are not related to the imagery of Revelation 1:16. See Revelation 6:4, 8; 13:10, 14.

We now see why this particular clause should appear in Revelation but not in Daniel. In Daniel's time there was no church. God had a people then (the Jewish people), but they were not primarily vehicles of proclamation. They avoided Gentiles in order to remain uncorrupted by them. But the church is not so. The primary task of the church is to proclaim the gospel. Its mandate is to "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). This work is accomplished through its faithfulness to the written word of the Old and New Testaments. There is power in God's word – and light.

Discussion

The two descriptions preserved for us in Daniel 10 and Revelation 1 are strikingly similar. I once mentioned this fact to the members of a study group from another church denomination and suggested that, if the descriptions are the same, perhaps they have the same holy Being in view. Perhaps both descriptions portray Christ. The leader of the group objected to this, because during Daniel's lifetime Jesus had not yet been born. In one way he was right, of course, but in another way, quite wrong. Notice how Paul describes Christ in Philippians 2:5-11.

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross! ⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5-11)

Where does the sequence begin, according to Paul, and how many parts does it have? Notice carefully that Paul does not begin with Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. Merely being here and then going from earth to heaven would be a two-part sequence. But what Paul says is not a two-part sequence. Instead, he begins with the pre-existent Christ sharing the glory of the Father from all eternity (vs. 6). This is followed by His human birth and humble submission, leading to His death on the cross (vss. 7-8). Then He returns to the Father (vs. 9-11). This is different from saying He goes to the Father. Instead He goes *back* to the Father. He comes from heaven, to earth, then returns to heaven. This is a three-part sequence which begins and ends in heaven, with a brief interim period here on earth. This is not something we want to get wrong. It is an important point.

Christ's life did not begin here. For that matter, it did not begin anywhere. The Bible teaches that the Son is co-eternal with the Father (see Micah 5:2; John 1:2).⁹ You might not think this makes sense, but that's why Christianity is a revealed religion. If Christianity were merely an exercise in common sense or human reasoning, we could have figured all of this out by ourselves. As it is, some parts might defy explanation, but were revealed by God.

If what Paul says is true, why would it be so difficult for the pre-existent Son of God to appear to Daniel in the glory He had with the Father before the world began (see John 17:5)?

⁹ "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose goings out [*ûmôšāʾôtāyw*] are from of old, from days of eternity [*miqqédem mîmê ʿôlām*]" (Micah 5:2, margin).

Would that be some difficult thing? I submit that both descriptions have Christ in view – one (Daniel 10) in the timeframe of Philippians 2:6, the other (Revelation 1) in the timeframe of Philippians 2:9-11.

Conclusion

We have much to learn about Jesus. As Christians we know He is our Friend and Savior, our Lord and Master, one with the Father by sharing with Him all the attributes of deity. But is there nothing more to learn about Him? Is there no possibility of knowing Him better?

One can study for different reasons. One of these is to find the way of salvation, and this is good. But we need to guard ourselves, because the Jews also studied the Scriptures with the goal of securing God's favor. Talking to Jewish leaders Jesus said, "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life" (John 5:39-40). These people wanted life, but did not want the life Giver. Whatever our starting point, the one must lead to the other. So if we start by searching the Bible for salvation, having found it let us go further and come to know the One who saves us. "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3). One part of knowing Jesus is recognizing Him when we see Him.