

Saint Paul in Arabia - Revelation, Mission and Prophecy

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Abstract

Within the Pauline corpus, we can find only one direct (Galatians 1:15-18) and two indirect indications (II Corinthians 11:32-33; Galatians 4:22-26) of Saint Paul's sojourn in "Arabia" (which is the Nabataean realm). For this reason, scholars have tended to decrypt the question concerning the meaning and content of his stay in this area. Thus, we have shown the main three reliable hypothesis regarding this enigmatic episode at the very beginning of the Apostle of Gentiles' Christian activity (which is obviously avoided by Saint Luke in Acts). The first opinion refers to a period of three years which Saint Paul spent in the Arabian Desert, totally dedicated to prayer and meditation, as a beneficiary of a direct revelation of Jesus Christ. The second one is talking especially about the very first beginning of Paul's missionary proclamation outside of *Eretz Israel* and therefore to non-Jews, or more precisely, to the Nabataean Kinsmen. Finally, the third view goes from the Zealous Pharisee Saul to the Prodigious Christian Missionary Paul, as an expected part of a long tradition within Judaism, looking back to particular scriptural and prophetic models, especially Phineas (Numbers 25:7-13) and Elijah (III Kings 18-19). Considering the lack of scriptural information regarding this Pauline autobiographic episode, all of the three theological dimensions could be taken into consideration as a complementary result of nowadays biblical research, which finally talks about a specific period of preparation for the future mission (described by St. Luke in the Acts of Apostles) of the Great Apostle Paul towards the Gentiles.