Who Is Michael The Archangel



By Doug Batchelor

AN AMAZING FACT

When King Humbert of Italy inherited the throne, Naples teetered on the verge of insurrection against the monarchy. Politicians urged violent measures to force the people into submission, but the king did not allow this. Then cholera suddenly broke out in the city, and the dreaded disease raged with fury. The young king, ignoring the warnings of his advisers, left the palace and went alone through Naples' crowded hospitals. Moved with devotion and love for even his disloyal subjects, he ministered to them with his own hand. Many suffering people breathed prayers of gratitude to this young medical servant, not knowing he was the very king they spurned. When the plague was finally checked, many learned the true identity of the noble nurse who had cared for them. Naples then became a conquered city—not by force, but by the love and pity of the monarch it once

refused. From then on, the people of Naples became Humbert's most loyal subjects.

The Michael Enigma

Questions frequently arise in Christian circles about the true identity of the mysterious biblical character known as Michael, sometimes called "Michael the archangel" and "Michael the Great Prince." Some claim that Michael is the highest of the heavenly angels, one of the covering cherubs, or a special messenger like Gabriel. And therefore, he is a created being. Others, such as Bible commentator Matthew Henry, assert that Michael is simply another of the many names for Jesus Himself. Can we know the real identity of this mysterious being? Obviously, the key to deciphering this puzzling question is found in the Scriptures. "For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little" Isaiah 28:10.

A quick look in a Bible concordance reveals that there are 15 references to the name Michael in Scripture. Ten of these are simply people named Michael. In fact, the entry for "Michael" in the lexicon a Greek and/or Hebrew dictionary states, "The name of an archangel and nine Israelites." It is the identity of Michael, the archangel and prince, mentioned in the last five references that we seek in this important study.

The first three of these references to Michael are in the Old Testament book of the prophet Daniel. The last two are mentioned in the New Testament books of Jude and Revelation. With an honest study and comparison of these and other verses, clues quickly emerge that lead us to an inescapable conclusion of Michael's true identity He is none other than Jesus—He is not a created angel or cherub, but this name is another of the many grand titles for God's eternal Son!

At first glance, the Old Testament appears to portray Michael as a prince, and the New Testament describes Him as an archangel. But by looking at other related Scriptures where similar language and wording are used, we will see an interesting pattern emerge. Warning

Before you proceed any further, please carefully read and digest this next thought. Because the word "angel" means messenger, it is used very freely and broadly in Scripture. Sometimes, men are called angels in the Bible 1 Samuel 29:9 Galatians 4:14. And sometimes angels are called men Genesis 32:24. And in other places, as will be soon shown, God Himself is identified as an angel! Of course, even angels are called angels.

Typically, when a person thinks of an angel, they picture one of the many levels of winged, ministering spirits known as angels, seraphim, or cherubim. Unlike Jesus, these celestial beings are created. There are some cults that teach that Jesus, before His earthly incarnation, was really just a powerful angel that had a feud with His wayward fellow angel Lucifer. In turn, this means that Jesus is a created being who has been promoted by the Father and therefore not the eternal God as Christians accept. This study categorically rejects that view. Jesus is, and always has been, God's eternal Son and indeed God Himself. Any comparison made to Jesus as an angel in this study is simply in the classical sense as a greatest messenger of salvation and is in no way intended to diminish from His eternal divinity.

The Key Is in the Name

First, let's consider the meaning of some words and names. In the Greek New Testament, the word "angel" means "messenger," and "arch" means "chief, principle, greatest, or highest." So "archangel" simply means "highest or greatest messenger." The Hebrew name "Michael," found in the Old Testament, means "who is like God" or sometimes it forms a question: "Who is like God?" So the title Michael the archangel can be translated as "The greatest messenger who is God." Whether this name is a question, statement, or a challenge will be clear by further study. One angel did profess to be like God. That covering cherub fallen from the heavenly courts is Lucifer, who became the devil or Satan, by claiming to "be like the most High" Isaiah 14:14. In Revelation 12:7, Satan is opposed by "Michael and his angels" and is cast out of heaven.

The Angel of the Lord

The phrase "angel of the Lord" is found 68 times in Scripture. Sometimes it applies to Gabriel who appeared to Daniel, Zacharias, and Mary. But Gabriel is called "an" angel of the Lord (Luke 1:11). He is not referred to as "the" angel of the Lord. Neither is he ever called the archangel. (And while we're on the subject, the popular angel Raphael does not appear anywhere in Scripture.) Gabriel is probably one of the two covering cherubs who flank the throne of God. Remember that he said to Zacharias, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God," (Luke 1:19). Lucifer once held the other position before his fall (Ezekiel 28:14). If the highest rank held by an angel is that of the covering cherubs by the throne of God then who and what is an archangel? And who is this mighty individual identified as "the angel of the Lord" who performs such prominent roles in the redemption of man?

God the Father created all things through Jesus (Hebrews 1:2; Ephesians 3:9). It is not implausible to assume that if Christ came to earth and became a man in His battle against Satan to save human beings, He might also have in some way identified with the angels to protect them from Satan's evil influence in heaven. In fact, there are several references in Scripture to a mysterious being identified as "the angel of the Lord" before Christ's earthly incarnation. Yet each time He is mentioned, there are clues to His identity. Let's review them briefly in the order in which they appear.

Hagar

After Hagar the handmaid of Abraham bore Ishmael, she and the barren Sarah could no longer coexist peacefully. Sarah dealt severely with her now haughty hand- maid until Hagar fled into the desert. "And the angel of the Lord found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness" (Genesis 16:7). The angel told Hagar to go back and submit to Sarah and promised that her son, Ishmael, would be the father of a great nation. When the "angel" disappeared, Hagar "called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest me" (verse 13). It appears Hagar recognized that the "angel of the Lord" who had spoken to her was really God. But keep reading;

it gets clearer!

Abraham

God told Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac on mount Moriah. Just as he was about to plunge the dagger into his son of promise, the angel of the Lord stopped him. "And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, 'Abraham, Abraham:' and he said, 'Here am I.' And he said, 'Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me'" (Genesis 22:11, 12).

It is clear that Abraham was offering his son to God and not to a mere angel. "And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, And said, 'By myself have I sworn,' saith the Lord, 'for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, ... because thou hast obeyed my voice'" (Genesis 22:15-18). In recounting this experience of Abraham in Acts 3:25, Peter also identifies this "angel of the Lord" who made a covenant with the Patriarch as God.

Jacob

While fleeing from his angry brother Esau, Jacob had a dream in which God confirmed the covenant of Abraham to him. After receiving assurance that God would be with him and bring him back safely to his home in Canaan, Jacob vowed to return to God a tithe of all his increase. He set up the stone he had been using for a pil- low and anointed it with oil to solemnize his vow. Then he named the place Beth-el, or house of God, since God had appeared to him there.

Twenty years later, Jacob was on his way back home, not a penniless fugitive, but a wealthy man. God decided to remind Jacob who had really brought him success. Here's how Jacob recounted the story: "And the angel of God spake unto me in a dream, saying, Jacob: And I said, Here am I" (Genesis 31:11). In verse 13, this "angel of God" identifies Himself: "I am the God of Beth-el, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me."

Then, when Jacob wrestled with a heavenly being (Genesis 32:22-32), he was given a new name and blessed him. Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, "For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved" (verse 30). In the New Testament, Jesus is the one who blesses His people and gives them a new name (Matthew 5:3-12; Revelation 2:17). As you can see, it is becoming increas- ingly clear that the angel of the Lord is Jesus Himself.

When Jacob was on his deathbed blessing Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, he used the terms "angel" and "God" interchangeably. "God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads" (Genesis 48:15, 16).

The Scriptures are very clear there is neither a redeemer nor savior but God. "I, even I, am the LORD, And besides Me there is no savior; Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer" (Isaiah 43:11, 14). Once again we see that the angel who redeemed Jacob is another name for our Redeemer, Jesus!

Moses

Moses saw a burning bush that was not consumed. "And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush" (Exodus 3:2). Verse 4 identifies this angel: "God called unto him out of the midst of the bush." And in verse 6 He identifies Himself again. "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." The angel of the Lord identifies Himself as God!

In his last sermon before he was stoned to death, Stephen agrees with the Exodus account. "And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sinai an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush. When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him, Saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Acts 7:30-32).

Israel

In another instance, the children of Israel were led through the wilderness by God. "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night" (Exodus 13:21). Moses later describes this being that led them this way: "And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them" (Exodus 14:19). Again, "the angel of God" is identified as God.

Balaam

The angel of the Lord again figures prominently in the story of Balaam and his talking donkey. It is this angel who saves the donkey from her merciless master and nearly kills the covetous prophet, who is on his way to curse God's people (Numbers 22:21-35). After Balaam's close brush with death, "the angel of the Lord said unto Balaam, Go with the men: but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shall speak" (verse 35). The next chapter reveals who put the words in the prophet's mouth: "And God met Balaam: ... And the Lord put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, Return unto Balak, and thus shalt thou speak" (Numbers 23:4, 5). Here again, "the angel of the Lord" turns out to be God Himself.

Judges

Now let's move on to the book of Judges, where we read, "And an 'angel of the LORD' came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I sware unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you" (2:1). By now we should recognize a pattern. Just who brought the Israelites out of Egypt and made the covenant with Israel that He would never break—the angel of the Lord or pre-incarnate son of GOD Himself? Yes! The answer is both, one and the same.

Gideon

Gideon has an encounter with the angel of the Lord in the book of Judges. The angel tells Gideon that the Lord is with him. Gideon points to the oppression of Israel by the Midianites as evidence to the contrary. "And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?" (Judges 6:14). Throughout the rest of the narrative, the person speaking to Gideon is identified interchangeably as the Lord, the angel of the Lord, and the angel of God.

Manoah

Samson's mother, the wife of Manoah, was barren. "And the angel of the Lord appeared unto the woman" (Judges 13:3). This angel told her she would bear a son who would deliver the apostate Israelites from their heathen oppressors. She quickly called Manoah, who prayed for another visit from the "man of God." When the angel came the second time, Manoah asked him his name. The King James says that the angel told Manoah that his name was "Secret," with a margin notation that translates it as "Wonderful." This immediately makes us think of Isaiah's familiar prophecy that Jesus would be called, "Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). The name "Wonderful" for the angel of the Lord who

appeared to Manoah connects this "angel" with the coming Messiah who was to be called "Wonderful."

Once again, after seeing this "Wonderful messenger," Manoah declared they had seen God. And Manoah said to his wife, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God!" (Judges 13:22).

No One has Seen the Father

Suddenly we have more leads than we can follow! We can clearly see that "angel of the Lord" is frequently identified to be God Himself. But the Bible states, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1:18). John 6:46 also tells us, "Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father." Obviously, since no man has seen God the Father, all of these Old Testament sightings of God as the "angel of the Lord" must have been Jesus, God the Son, veiling His glory so they could endure His presence without being consumed.

The Angel of the Covenant

One of the most famous messianic prophecies is found in Malachi 3:1: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts."

The messenger of the covenant spoken of here in Malachi is clearly a reference to the advent of Jesus Christ. The word translated as messenger (mal'ak) is the same exact word used in the previous Old Testament passages translated as angel of the Lord. So this would also be a proper translation: "Behold, I will send my angel, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the angel of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. What could be clearer?

Rebuking the Accuser

There is one more important reference in which the angel of the Lord appears in the Old Testament. The prophet Zechariah was given a vision of Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord. Satan is standing at his right hand to resist him. Here we see two adversaries contending over a sinful human being. Joshua's filthy garment symbolizes his sin. (Zechariah 3:3).

In this narrative, the name changes quickly from "the angel of the Lord" (verse 1) to "the Lord" (verse 2), indicating again that they are the same. Then the Lord makes an interesting statement. "And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan" (Zechariah 3:2). There is only one other place in Scripture, Jude 9, where this sen- tence is found—and Michael the archangel speaks it!

In the short epistle of Jude, we witness a vignette similar to Joshua and the angel in Zechariah. "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee" (Jude 1:9). The situations are amazingly parallel: Christ and Satan are contending over the fate of two of God's great human leaders (a living one in the case of Joshua, and a dead one in the case of Moses). The debate is ended abruptly when Jesus says, "The Lord rebuke thee."

This passage raises another valid question. Some people are confused by part of this verse in Jude 1:9 where Michael rebukes the devil. They wonder: If Michael is really another name for Jesus, then why does he invoke the name of the Lord when rebuking Satan? Why not do it Himself as He did when tempted in the wilderness. "Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan" (Matthew 4:10).

In studying the Scriptures and language of Jesus, we quickly see it was a very common practice for Jesus to speak of Himself in the second person, as in Luke 18:8: "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" And if there is still any lingering question, we have this other clear Scripture in Zechariah 3:2, where the Lord does the same thing Michael does in Jude. He invokes His own name when rebuking the devil. "And the LORD said to Satan, 'The LORD rebuke you, Satan!" Perhaps these Scriptures are examples of God the Son, appealing to the name of His Father in rebuking Satan.

Michael the Prince

Michael is mentioned more in Daniel than in any other book in Scripture. (See Daniel 10:13; 10:21; 12:1.) In all three references, He is called a prince—your prince and the great prince. Isaiah's prophecy about the Messiah (Isaiah 9:6) reveals oneof the key names he says that would apply to the Messiah is "Prince of Peace."

There is another verse in Daniel 8:25 where the "Prince of princes" is mentioned. Again, the cosmic conflict is being played out with Christ on one side and the devil on the other, with humanity serving as the battlefield. "Prince of princes" is actually the same term that is translated "prince of the host" in verse 11. This is similar to "Lord of lords" (Psalm 136:3), "God of gods" (Deuteronomy 10:17), and "King of kings" (Revelation 19:16). All these are titles of deity. He is even referred to as "Messiah the Prince" (Daniel 9:25).

Who is this being that the angels call the Great Prince? Let's let the Bible tell us.

Isaiah 9:6: "And his name shall be called ... The Prince of Peace."

Acts 3:14, 15: "But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and ... killed the Prince of life."

Acts 5:30, 31: "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour."

Revelation 1:5: "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth."

These verses clearly echo with three verses in Daniel in which Michael is called a "prince."

Is Michael Only One of Many?

Daniel 10:13 is probably the most difficult verse regarding Michael: "But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me." It appears at first glance that Michael is only "one of" the chief princes. This is an unfortunate translation in the King James. The word "one" comes from the Hebrew word "echad," which is also frequently translated as "first," as in the president's wife being called "first lady." (See Genesis 1:5; 8:13.) This changes the whole meaning of the verse to Michael being first of, greatest or highest of, to the chief of princes—again a reference to Jesus. The prince of the kingdom of Persia who withstood the angel was no doubt the devil who frequently appears working in the shadow of earthly monarchs such as the king of Babylon, the king of Tyre, and the Roman power (Isaiah 14:4, Ezekiel 28:2, Revelation 12:4). And remember that Jesus calls Satan "the prince of this world" (John 12:31).

Daniel 10:21 says, "But I will show thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince." Notice here that the angel refers to Michael as your Prince. Who was Daniel's prince? In the previous chapter, we see the answer. In Daniel 9:25, Daniel's Messiah is called the prince, which is another clear indication of Michael's identity! So Gabriel is saying that Michael the

archangel is Jesus, who knows all the truth of Scripture. Michael Stands Up

The final reference to Michael in Daniel is in chapter 12: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people." Notice here that Michael is not called a great prince but "the great prince." Is there any prince greater then Jesus? He is also identified as the one who "standeth for the children of thy people." This means that He intercedes, defends and even stands as a substitute. Who could this be other then Jesus?

Commenting on this verse, Matthew Henry states: "Michael signifies, 'Who is like God,' and his name, with the title of 'the great Prince,' points out the Divine Savior. Christ stood for the children of our people in their stead as a sacrifice, bore the curse for them, to bear it from them. He stands for them in pleading for them at the throne of grace." Jesus is clearly the one who always stands in our place and for our defense.

Michael standing up is also a reference to the Lord preparing to come. Notice that Michael is so exalted and powerful, his standing launches the great time of trouble. This in turn is followed by the second coming of Jesus and the resurrection (Daniel 12:2).

The Voice of Michael

If we isolate and examine the word "archangel," we see another interesting match. The only other passage in the Bible that uses the word "archangel" is 1 Thessalonians 4:16. And note its context: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first." It is the voice of the archangel that raises the dead in Christ, and the Lord Himself who shouts it. This indicates that they are one and the same. Jesus is the one who shouts with the voice of the archangel, or "greatest messenger," to raise the dead!

Obviously, angels don't have the power to resurrect the dead. Only God who gives life has the power to restore it. "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself. ... Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth" (John 5:26, 28, 29).

In Jude, we see the archangel contending with the devil for the body of Moses, who, incidentally, was resurrected and taken to heaven from whence he appeared on the mount of transfiguration to encourage Christ (Mark 9). In 1 Thessalonians, the apostle Paul describes the resurrection as happening in response to the voice of the archangel. Again we see the parallel between these two verses; both describe the archangel in the act of resurrecting.

Worshiping the Commander

In Revelation, Michael is portrayed as leading the heavenly hosts, or armies, in the war against the rebellious Lucifer that took place. "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels" (Revelation 12:7). Here the term "dragon" is a symbolic name for Satan, the leader of evil (verse 9), so it is very safe to assume that Michael is another emblematic name for Jesus, the embodiment and leader of good. But there is more evidence.

Just as Israel was preparing for its first battle after crossing into the Promised Land, Joshua had an encounter with an unusual warrior. "And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host

of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so" (Joshua 5:13-15). Not only did Joshua worship this being, but the heavenly captain received his worship. If he had been a mere angel, he would have rebuked Joshua just like the angel rebuked John for trying to worship him (see Revelation 19:10; 22:8, 9).

In each case in which the angel of the Lord accepts worship, it is clearly the Son of God. But where regular, created angels are worshiped, they refuse it! Even Jesus reminded Satan in the wilderness, "For it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Luke 4:8).

In fact, all the created angels are commanded to worship Jesus as they did during His first advent. "And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him" (Hebrews 1:6). The devil is infuriated because he knows that someday even he will be compelled to acknowledge Jesus as king and worship Him. "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:10, 11).

Notice the striking connection that even Paul makes between an angel of God and Jesus. "You received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus" (Galatians 4:14). The phrase "Lord of hosts" appears 245 times in the Bible, and it refers to the "commander of God's angelic army." So the "captain of the Lord's host" that Joshua saw was not an angel, but Jesus Himself. That explains why He demanded that Joshua remove his shoes. The place was holy because Jesus was there, just as Jesus' presence at the burning bush made that ground holy for Moses. So Michael, the captain of the Lord's host, or army, is another title for Jesus.

Who is as God!

When Philip asks Jesus to show the disciples the Father, Christ responded: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). Some think that God's Son waited 4,000 years to personally intervene in the affairs of man. Not so! Though it is true that the incarnation occurred 4,000 years after man's fall, God the Son has been personally involved in the history and affairs of His people. This is why Jesus said; "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56). Jesus appeared personally to Abraham when the Patriarch interceded for Lot (Genesis 18:26).

What a wonderful truth that Jesus, God's eternal Son, has ever been actively occupied in watching over, providing for, and protecting His children! He spoke face to face with Abraham and Moses and wrestled with Jacob. He led the Israelites through the wilderness, providing food and water and victory against their enemies.

Remember that the title "Michael the archangel" means "The greatest messenger who is as God." It was Jesus, "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15), who brought the greatest message of hope, the gospel, to our perishing world!

Conclusion

In conclusion, we see this majestic and mysterious being, sometimes called Michael, sometimes the angel of the Lord, sometimes the commander of the Lord's army, veiling His divinity and appearing in the form of a humble angel. Yet this same enigmatic being has the power, authority and attributes that belong only to God. He evicts the devil from heaven; He resurrects the dead; He intercedes for the saints; He judges and then stands,

launching the great time of trouble. He redeems the saints and receives their worship. He offers us a new name.

Now you may know who Michael is, but the devil knows too, and it won't save him. The big question is: Do you know Him as Jesus your personal Lord and savior?

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