

Michael Study Aid

or Who is Michael the Archangel?

Today's culture has come to believe in and nearly worship spiritualistic beings. Angelology has become the context of TV shows, movies, novels, art, even knick-knack collections. In fact, as of 2009, over 55% of Americans (including 1 in 5 of those who are non-religious) believe in angels and that good and bad angels are actively engaged in our world.

These current depictions of angels, however, often present us with a non-Biblical understanding which can be confusing and misleading. So let's go back to the Bible to get the correct understanding.

First of all, angels are created beings (Col. 1:16) and as such are not to be worshiped (Col. 2:18; Rev. 19:10). In fact, angels of God refuse the worship of men (Rev. 22:8, 9). They are God's messengers to those who shall be heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:13, 14). The Hebrew word, *Mal'akh* translated "*ángelos*" (or *angel*) in the Septuagint simply means "messenger" or one who brings us a message. Biblically, angelic beings are constantly bringing messages as seen in the stories of Abraham, Lot, Daniel, Zachariah, Mary, and the shepherds of Bethlehem. It is for this reason that these heavenly couriers of messages to mankind are called "angels."

At times, the nature of the message or the particular circumstance is such that, One higher than the angels delivers the message personally. This being is identified as the "archangel." This "angel" is actually named, Michael, and He is the focus of this study sheet.

Who is Michael the Archangel?

Some people suppose that Michael the archangel is just like any other angel, others believe He is Christ Himself. While Michael's exact identity is not of salvific relevance, it is an interesting question. A comparison of scriptures will give us a fairly good idea of this unique being's identity.

Michael is referred to in the book of Jude as the archangel. And one might at first conclude that He is a created being, as are the angels in general. Other Scripture references, however, indicate His real status as supreme leader of the angelic hosts. Certainly all would agree Christ is indeed the overarching leader of the angels. But is there Biblical evidence that Christ takes on the title of angel?

Throughout the Bible we find numerous names associated with God or Christ. Here are just a handful of examples:

Branch – Zach 3:8

Carpenter - Mark 6:3

Fountain - Zach 13:1

Light of the World - John 8:12; 9:5

Potentate - 1 Tim 6:15

Root of David - Rev 22:16

Way - John 14:6

Bread of Life - John 6:35,48

Cornerstone - Eph 2:20

Governor - Mat 2:6

Passover Lamb - 1 Cor 5:7

Priest - Hebrews 4:15

Shepherd - 1 Pet 2:25

Vine - John 15:1

Bridegroom - Mat 9:15

Foundation - Isa 28:16

Guide - Psalm 48:14

Physician - Mat 9:12

Rock - Deut 32:4

Stone - Isa 28:16

While all these are indeed 'names' of God, we do not believe that God is in actuality any of these things. While an attribute of His character may be reflected in the life-giving fountain, we do not believe that He is a fountain, any more than we believe Him to be a rock, a root, a vine or loaf of bread. These 'names' were assumed to help our finite minds grasp an aspect of who God is or what He does. Given the vast characteristics that God assigns to Himself, it seems plausible that God or Christ could call Himself an 'angel' without actually being a created angel.

The following Biblical references will help us clarify the identity of Michael the Archangel. The Old Testament makes record of a divine Being who is called the "angel of the Lord" (Ex. 3:2), the "angel of

God" (Ex. 14:19), and the "angel of his presence" (Isa. 63:9), "messenger of the covenant" (Mal. 3:1); also "an Angel" (Ex. 23:20), "mine Angel" (verse 23), and "his angel" (Dan. 3:28).

The "*Angel of the Lord*" appears to Gideon (Judges 6:11-22). The "angel of the Lord" (verse 11) is equated with "the Lord" (verse 14); and "Gideon built an altar there unto the Lord" (verse 24). Remember worship of angels is not permitted according to Scripture (Col. 2:18; Rev. 19:10; 22:8, 9). This is an important difference between Christ and angels.

This same "*Angel of the Lord*" is also manifested to Manoah, the father of Sampson (Judges 13:3-21). Manoah's wife refers to the "angel of the Lord" (verse 3) that she had seen as "a man of God" (verse 6), and Manoah said they had "seen God" (verse 22). Again in Zech. 3:1-6, Joshua finds that the "*angel of the Lord*" causes iniquity to pass away, and gives a change of raiment, or righteousness (verse 4). In each of these instances the *Angel of the Lord* assumes the prerogative of Deity by accepting worship and forgiving sin.

Other instances of a divine 'angel' include the "Angel" who appeared to Jacob (Hosea 12:4) in the form of a man (Gen. 32:24). This Angel blessed Jacob (verse 29) and Jacob said, "I have seen God face to face" (verse 30). The "*Angel of His Presence*" saved and redeemed God's people (Isa. 63:9), again something Deity alone can do (cf. Isa. 43:11; 44:6). In Ex. 23:23, a being God simply calls, "Mine Angel" could pardon transgression and God's "name is in him" (verse 21). Again forgiveness of sin is the prerogative of God (Mark 2:7), therefore it seems inevitable that the Angelic being referenced in each of these instances is a member of the Godhead.

In the book of Daniel we find direct reference to Michael the great Prince. The expression "Prince of princes" occurs only once in the Bible—Daniel 8:25. In vision Daniel sees an opposing power magnifying himself even to the prince of the host. An angel explains to Daniel that this power is going to "stand up against the Prince of princes." The "prince of the host" and "the Prince of princes" refers to the same Being. Based on other similar Biblical expressions, they are clearly understood to be another title for Deity. For example, Psalm 136:3 speaks of the "Lord of lords," Deuteronomy 10:17 of the "God of gods," and Revelation 19:16 of the "King of kings."

New Testament writers also take up this thought and apply the terminology of Daniel to Jesus Christ. He is Declared to be "the Prince of life" (Acts 3:15); "a Prince" and "a Saviour" (Acts 5:31); and "the prince of the kings of the earth" (Rev. 1:5). This Prince, or Messiah shares the same titles as Michael.

The ancient Jews knew Michael to be the angel or prince who had special charge of the nation of Israel. The very best Jewish writers concur that the name "Michael" is the same as the title "Messiah." It is held by them that the few passages of scripture that refer to Michael can be most satisfactorily explained on this supposition.

As a side note, in Jewish writings, Michael is recognized as the Advocate of Israel: He prevented Isaac's being sacrificed (*Yalkut Reubeni*, section Wayera); wrestled with Jacob (*Targum*, Gen. 32:25); was Advocate when Israel deserved death at the Red Sea (*Exodus Rabbah*, 18:5); led Israel during the forty years in the wilderness (Abravanel to Ex. 23:20); gave Moses the tables of stone (*Apoc. Moses*, 1); instructed Moses at Sinai (*Bk. Jubilees*, i. 27, ii. 1); destroyed the army of Sennacherib (*Midr. Exod.* 18:5); was one of the angels who visited Abraham (*Yoma*, 37^a; *Shebu'oth*, 351^b footnote); was Israel's guardian angel (*Yoma*. 77^a); and ministers in the heavenly sanctuary (*Menahoth*, 110^a).

Now that we have established that the term "angel" can in fact be used for a divine personage and that Michael can indeed be another name for Jesus, we must now turn our attention to the term "archangel." Jude 9 calls Michael the Archangel. "Arch" is from the Greek prefix *archi*, but related words such as *arche* and *archon* should also be considered. *Arche* means beginning and can also involve the ideas of rule and authority. In the KJV, *arche* is translated as "rule" (1 Cor. 15:24); "principality" (Eph. 1:21);

and "first principles" (Heb. 5:12). *Archon* means "prince," "ruler." *Arche* and *archon* are used at times in relation to the word *Lord* as in the term "Angel of the Lord." *Arche* is used Messianically in Isaiah 9:6 where the Septuagint (Bagster's translation) renders it as "government" in the expression, "whose government (*arche*) is upon his (Messiah's) shoulder. In the New Testament, Jesus is called "the beginning" (*arche*) (Col. 1:18), also the "Alpha and Omega, the beginning (*arche*)" (Rev. 21:6; see also Rev. 22:13). *Archon* is often rendered "ruler," "prince," et cetera. But once in the New Testament, *archon* is used in relation to Jesus "the prince (*archon*) of the kings of the earth" (Rev. 1:5). *Archon* is sometimes used Messianically in the Old Testament and so refers to Christ. He is "a prince (*archon*) and commander to the Gentiles" (Isa. 55:4, LXX, Bagster's translation); He is the One that is "to be a ruler (*archon*) of Israel" (Micah 5:2, LXX, Bagster's translation).

Another Greek word with the same prefix *archi* is *archegos* derived from *archi* and *hegeomai* or *ago*—"to lead," et cetera. *Archegos* as found in the Septuagint is generally rendered by Bagster's translation as "head," "captain," "chief," "ruler," "prince," et cetera. The New Testament only uses it in reference to the Lord. He is referred to as captain—"The captain [*archegos*] of their salvation" (Heb. 2:10); as author—"The author [*archegos*] . . . of our faith" (Heb. 12:2, margin, "beginner"); as Prince—"A Prince [*archegos*] and a Saviour" (Acts 5: 31); and "the Prince [*archegos*] of life" (Acts 3:15, margin, "author"). The study of the above Greek words shows that at times they have been applied to Christ and that *archegos* in its use in the New Testament is in every instance applied to Jesus.

It then seems apparent that the divine Son of God, takes as one of His titles "Michael the archangel." He is indeed the leader of the angelic hosts. But this does not in any way detract from His deity, any more than when He became man and took our flesh. The being who appeared to Joshua as "captain of the host of the Lord" was a divine being, whom Joshua worshiped (Joshua 5:14). Thus the hosts of the Lord are under command of a divine being worthy of worship, and whose presence makes a place holy (verse 15). This Divine Being could have been none other than Jesus Christ.

In writing to the Thessalonians, Paul speaks of the "voice of the archangel" and associates it with the resurrection of the saints. Another reference to Michael as leader of the angelic host is seen in Revelation 12:7-10. Many scholars through the centuries have applied this to Satan's rebellion when there was war in heaven. Michael and His angels fought against the dragon and his angels. Here is the beginning of the great controversy between the forces of righteousness and of evil. In this passage Michael and Satan are placed in contrast. If Michael is the leader of the angelic hosts, then we see here the first battle in the great conflict between Christ and Satan. There is good reason for this concept, for we read that it was through "the power of his Christ" that "the accuser of our brethren" was cast down (Rev. 12:10). Victory for the saints is possible only through our risen Lord. It was Christ who triumphed over Satan in the first encounter. And it is through Christ that we overcome in the continuing encounters against the devil and his evil hosts.

In summery, Michael exercises the same prerogatives as God. The terms used concerning Christ are similar to those used for Michael: Jesus is called "Prince of princes," "prince of the host," "Messiah the Prince," and the "Prince of life." Michael, is called "your prince," and the "great prince." The "archangel" is used in connection with Michael, just as *archegos* and *archon* are used in connection with Christ. Thus Christ is the *archegos*—the "captain", (Heb. 2:10); the "author" (Heb. 12:2); the "Prince" (Acts 3:15).

From what we have studied it seems entirely plausible that Michael is synonymous with Jesus Christ. But this in no way implies He is a created being. He is God, of the same substance as the Father—coequal, coexistent, and coeternal with God the Father. There never was a time when Christ did not exist. He is God forevermore, His life being "original, unborrowed, and underived." In fact, the name *Michael* means "he who is like God."

Synopsis

- Jude 9 calls Michael, the archangel. Therefore Michael is the archangel making the titles synonymous.
- 1 Thessalonians 4:16 the dead in Christ rise at the voice of the archangel. In John. 5: 25-29 (especially verse 25) the dead in Christ rise at the voice of Jesus.
- Revelation 12:7 says “Michael and *his* angels” indicating that Michael is in charge of the angels
- Joshua 5: 13-15 relates a personal interaction with the commander of the Lord’s army who allows Joshua to worship Him. He even commands, “take off your sandals, for where you stand is holy ground.” This compares to the command given to Moses at the burning bush by the “I AM” (Exodus 3:4-5) who we know to be Jesus (John 8:58.)
- Revelation 19:10 The created angels do not accept worship, but say, “worship God.”
- Daniel 10:21 refers to “Michael your prince” and Daniel 12:1 calls “Michael...the great prince.” In Daniel 9: 25 Jesus is called, “Messiah the prince.”
- Jude 9 notes that Michael the archangel does not bring railing accusations against Satan but says simply, "The Lord rebuke you." Zachariah 3:1-2 shows a similar instance where the Angel of the LORD, later stated to be “the LORD” said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan.”
- Exodus 3: 2, 4, 13-15 also states that “the angel of the lord” is the “I am.” And in John 8:57-58 Jesus calls Himself the “I am.”

The information presented in this article is derived from personal Biblical study; *Questions on Doctrine*, Adventist Classic Library, Andrews University Press, Berrien Springs, MI 2003; also, Wikipedia articles <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angel>.