

Chapter 2 - The Angel of the Lord

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After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai. When he saw this, he was amazed at the sight. As he went over to look more closely, he heard the Lord's voice: 'I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.' Moses trembled with fear and did not dare to look. Then the Lord said to him, 'Take off your sandals; the place where you are standing is holy ground.' ”

– Acts 7:30-33

A Controversial Point

Some readers may consider the following remarks to be blasphemy, but let me say that nothing could be further from the truth. Unfortunately, many people believe that it is slanderous to say that Jesus lived in the form of an angel before He came to Earth. Surprisingly, these same people have no problem accepting the fact that Jesus lived in the even lower form of a man while He was on Earth.

Do not misunderstand my statement that Jesus lived in the *form* of an angel before He came to Earth. Jesus *is not* a created being. He is eternal God, just like the Father is God, and He has existed from time everlasting. (John 1:1-14; Colossians 1:17; 1 Chronicles 16:36) The Bible plainly teaches that Jesus lived in Heaven before He lived on Earth. (John 14:24; 17:5; Hebrews 1:1-3)

Angelic in Form

Consider this possibility: Prior to taking on the form of a man, Jesus lived in Heaven in the form of an angel and the angels called Him “Michael” (which means “One who is like God”). Before we get too involved in this topic, I ask that you prayerfully consider a simple concept about the Godhead. I am not asking you to agree with me, but I would like to present a summary statement first, allowing you to see the big picture before demonstrating from Scripture that Jesus is Michael.

Here is the concept: Three Gods rule over the Universe; the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each God is separate and distinct in His own right. They have the same authority, power and ability, but they function in different roles according to a mutual covenant between themselves.

The role of the Father is universal *focus*. He is the object of worship and the Supreme Ruler of the Universe. (The “out front” position of the Father also makes Him the focus of litigation should a contest over governance arise.)

The role of the Son is to live *among* the created beings as one of them, to faithfully instruct and demonstrate God's love to all beings. The role of the Holy Spirit is to live *within* the soul of each created being, making intimate communion between God and creature simultaneously available

to everyone – everywhere – anytime.

This concept of the Trinity establishes that God is above us (the Father), beside us (the Son) and within us (the Holy Spirit). If this view of the Godhead is correct, the following information about Michael should be easier to understand.

Michael

Jesus is called by many names in the Bible. Each name is like a prism that reflects something new about His marvelous wisdom and ways. Whether He is called “The Word,” “The Lamb of God,” or “The Rose of Sharon,” each name reveals another aspect of His beautiful character. The name “Michael” also reveals something very important about Jesus. It indicates how closely He identified with the angels before He took on the form of a man.

The subject of Christ’s preexistence is important because the disclosure of Jesus, His authority, power, love and humility is a very encompassing subject. To the angels, He is Michael *the* archangel (the prefix *arch* means “over” or “above” all angels). To man, He is Jesus, Savior, King of kings and Lord of lords, the “archman,” if you will. A revealing of all that Jesus is also exposes the other members of the Godhead since the members of the Godhead are one in purpose, plan and action.

The Father and the Holy Spirit are keenly interested in the actions and testimony of Jesus because as “The Word,” He represents them, too. Since Jesus is the Creator/Heir of Earth, He will take possession of Earth at an appointed time. People who trust in Him for salvation should be willing to understand all they can about Him and His ways since He is Lord and Master to all who call on Him.

There is one Archangel in Heaven. Four books in the Bible offer information about Him:

1. “But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you!’ ” (Jude 9) In this text, Michael is identified as *the* archangel. Some people are offended by the idea that Michael, the archangel, is another name for Jesus, the Son of God. Sometimes, a portion of this text is used to prove that Michael is not Jesus because Michael says to the devil, “The Lord rebuke you.” The argument goes like this: “If Michael is Jesus, why would He refer to Himself in the third person?” This objection is not valid. Notice what Zechariah 3:2 says, “The Lord said to Satan, ‘The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you!’ ”

The language of Zechariah 3:2 is identical to Jude 9. In both cases, Michael is speaking of Himself in the third person. He speaks with divine authority in the argument over the body of Moses and ends the argument without slandering the devil. This is Jude’s point in verse nine. Jude contrasts the words of Jesus with men who are like “unreasoning animals,” carelessly slandering celestial beings without realization of their wrong doing. We also know that when the devil tempted Jesus in the wilderness, Jesus did not slander the devil nor rail against him.

Speaking to Lucifer, Jesus said, “Do not put the Lord your God [me] to the test.” (Matthew 4:7, insertion mine.) Jesus knew who He was. So did the devil and he retreated.

2. “For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16) Before we examine the details of this verse, we need to consider two other texts. Notice what Jesus said about Himself, “I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.” (John 5:25) Whose voice did Jesus say the dead will hear at the resurrection? Jesus also said, “For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.” (John 6:40)

These three texts harmonize only if the archangel is Jesus Himself. The Lord Himself *will speak with the authority of the archangel* and call the dead to life. When Jesus comes in glory, all of the angels will be with Him. (Matthew 25:31) The dead will hear His voice at the last day. Some people try to ignore the weight of textual evidence by saying the archangel joins with the Lord in raising the dead. Why does Almighty God need an archangel to help Him raise the dead? Jesus alone has the keys to the grave and He alone has the authority to redeem man! (Revelation 1:18; 5:9)

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:16 again and notice how Paul connects two important themes. First, the Lord Himself is the Redeemer coming down from Heaven to gather up His saints. Second, the Lord Himself is also the archangel, Michael, leading Heaven’s angelic host. Paul merges two perspectives about Jesus in this text. From man’s point of view, Jesus is the Redeemer. From the angel’s point of view, Michael, the archangel, is the Commander-In-Chief who leads the heavenly host. In other words, Jesus has great authority rising from both identities – He is the Redeemer of man and Commander-in-Chief of angels.

3. “At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people – everyone whose name is found written in the book – will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.” (Daniel 12:1,2)

These verses reveal two impressive facts. First, the Great Tribulation commences when Michael *stands up*. This suggests that at the present time, Michael must be seated and Scripture verifies this point, “. . . We do have such a high priest, who *sat down* at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man.” (Hebrews 8:1-2, italics mine.)

In other words, when Michael stands up, His work of intercession at the right hand of the Father (Hebrews 7:25) will be finished and a time of distress will then begin on Earth. Do not overlook the fact that Michael is the great *prince* who protects His people. It is well known that a prince becomes a king when the kingdom is actually handed over to him. The same is true for Jesus. At the present time He is “a prince in waiting”– waiting for Earth to become His dominion. (Hebrews 1:13; Revelation 11:17)

According to the Bible, the Father will hand over the kingdom to Jesus during the Great Tribulation, at the time of the seventh trumpet. (Revelation 11:15-19) His first action (as King of kings) will be to pour out seven bowls of vengeance upon the wicked people of Earth. (Revelation 15 and 16) Therefore, when Jesus appears in the clouds of glory He will appropriately wear the title, "King of kings and Lord of lords." (Revelation 19:16)

The second impressive fact found in Daniel 12:1-2 is that Michael, the archangel, is associated with a resurrection of the righteous. (Paul confirms this point in 1 Thessalonians 4:16.) Yet what makes the book of Daniel so amazing is that it was written about 600 years *before* Paul even appeared on the scene.

From Daniel's perspective, Michael had not become "Jesus" yet! When studying the Old Testament, keep in mind that the name "Jesus" was not associated with the second member of the Godhead. This did not happen until He was born to Mary. These texts from Daniel suggest that Michael is actually Jesus and His position in Heaven is "Archangel."

One text in Daniel is sometimes used to support the idea that Michael is not Jesus. "But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia." (Daniel 10:13) This text describes an event when Gabriel needed Michael's help to overcome the devil's influence over the king of Persia. At first, it may seem strange that Michael is called "*one* of the chief princes," especially if He is *the* archangel.

However, this use of language can be easily harmonized if the reader can accept two concepts. First, Jesus lived among the angels as "one" of them, just like He lived among men as "one" of us. In other words, Michael looked like the other chief princes of Heaven. Second, in Heaven's administrative order, the highest rank is that of a servant leader. Jesus said, "The greatest among you will be your servant." (Matthew 23:11) For example, when Jesus lived on Earth, did He awe the multitudes with His glory?

Did He lord His divine authority over mortals or rule from an exalted throne? Did He surround Himself with an entourage of 10,000 servants? The answer to each question is "No." Even though Jesus is Almighty God, He chose to subject Himself to the Father, the Plan of Salvation, and even death itself.

He lived as a humble servant of man and Michael lived the same way in Heaven among the angels. Servant leadership is the highest order in God's kingdom and Gabriel refers to Michael as one of the chief princes because He functioned as that. Keep this parallel in mind: From man's perspective, Jesus *appeared* to be one of us and from the angel's perspective, Michael *appeared* to be one of them.

4. "And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven." (Revelation 12:7,8) I believe this war took place on Resurrection Sunday. This text describes Michael and His angels fighting against Satan and his angels. Michael and Satan are commanders, each having an army of angels. Lucifer is the Prince of Darkness and sin. Michael

is the Prince of Righteousness and light.

This battle on Resurrection Sunday had a long history that preceded it. Before Lucifer sinned, Michael was the *archangel*, the ruler over all angels. When one-third of the angels defected and joined Lucifer in rebellion against Christ, Satan became the self-appointed *archangel* over his followers. Thus, the great controversy between Christ and Satan is actually a contest between two powerful archangels who were once best of friends. *It is interesting to note that each time the name Michael is used in the Bible, it is used in the context of an angelic conflict between the devil and Jesus.*

After examining the four texts in the Bible that refer to Michael, the evidence indicates that Michael is Jesus. But continue reading because there is better evidence still to come!

Michael, the Angel of the Lord, is Jehovah

Many people are surprised to learn that in the Old Testament, Jesus is often identified as “the angel of the Lord.” Three excellent examples follow. Pay careful attention to who is speaking in each text. When Abraham was about to slay Isaac as a sacrifice, the Bible says, “But the angel of the Lord called out to him from Heaven, ‘Abraham! Abraham! . . . Do not lay a hand on the boy,’ he said.

The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from Heaven a second time and said . . . ‘I swear by myself, declares the Lord [Jehovah], that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on Earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.’ ” (Selections from Genesis 22:11-18, insertion mine.)

Did you notice in these verses that “the angel of the Lord” is actually God, the Lord Jehovah?

The second example is even more illuminating. One day when Moses was tending his sheep, he noticed a bush blazing with flames of fire. “There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within the bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, ‘I will go over and see this strange sight – why the bush does not burn up.’ When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, ‘Moses! Moses!’ And Moses said ‘Here I am.’ ‘Do not come any closer,’ God said. ‘Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.’ Then he said, ‘I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.’ ” (Exodus 3:2-6)

Did you notice again that “the angel of the Lord” is actually God?

The third text removes all doubt. “The angel of the Lord went up from Gilgal to Bokim and said, ‘I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land that I swore to give to your forefathers. I said, ‘I will never break my covenant with you, and you shall not make a covenant with the

people of this land, but you shall break down their altars. Yet you have disobeyed me. Why have you done this?

Now therefore I tell you that I will not drive them out before you; they will be thorns in your sides and their gods will be a snare to you.' When the angel of the Lord had spoken these things to all the Israelites, the people wept aloud, and they called that place Bokim. There they offered sacrifices to the Lord." (Judges 2:1-5)

I have to ask again, who is "the angel of the Lord?" There is only one angel who is God, has the authority of God and speaks for God. His name is Michael. He is the archangel. He was with the Israelites day and night and provided for all their needs, including their food and water.

Notice what Paul wrote, "They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ." (1 Corinthians 10:4) After reviewing these verses, the mystery is easy to solve. The angel of the Lord is God. He is the Archangel and His name is Michael, which means "One who is like God."

Michael/Jesus

When Michael was born to Mary, the Father gave Him an earthly name. The birth of Jesus was a profound miracle. Michael became Jesus. This transition says much about the role of servant leader in God's order because Jesus stooped even lower in the order of creation to become a man. Paul was overwhelmed with the submission of Jesus. He quotes a song by David (Psalm 8:4,5) saying, "What is man that you are mindful of him, [even] the son of man that you care for him?

You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor and put everything under his feet . . ." "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone." (Hebrews 2:6-9, insertion mine.)

Jesus may appear to be a man – Michael may appear to be an angel – but He is none other than a member of the Godhead dwelling among His created beings. This may be hard to comprehend, but Jesus left Heaven to live among sinful men for the express purpose of revealing the marvelous ways and unfathomable love of the Godhead.

The Bible is dedicated to revealing the love which the Godhead has for man and understanding Jesus Christ is the only means through which this revelation can occur. In other words, the truth about God begins and ends with the Word, i.e., Jesus. No wonder He is called the Alpha and the Omega. At the end of sin's drama, just before the wicked are destroyed, God will show everyone – including all fallen angels and all mankind – the fullness of all that Jesus really is.

After Earth is purified, the King of kings and Lord of lords is going to do a very amazing thing. Paul says, "Then the end [of sin's drama] will come, when he [Jesus] hands over the kingdom

to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power . . . When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all." (1 Corinthians 15:24,28, insertions mine.)

Can you believe this? After conquering sin and destroying evil, after receiving the Earth as an inheritance, after redeeming billions of saints, Jesus returns all that He has to the Father so He can live with humanity as one of them. What a servant leader!

Think about this. Michael/Jesus has the same power, authority and glory as the Father, but He humbled Himself to live among the angels as one of them. Then, when sin entered the universe He stooped even lower to live as a man. Even more, He was willing to be cursed and bear the shame of the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. (Hebrew 12:2)

He was willing to perish for eternity if it meant that sinners could have the possibility of eternal life. To His glory, He succeeded in His rescue of humankind and was exalted to the highest position in all the universe. Then, in one act of incomprehensible love, a victorious Jesus returns His crown and great possessions to Father God so He may live among His people.

The kingdom of God is all about serving others. Jesus said, ". . . Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:26-28) "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." (John 13:14,15)

Closing Thoughts

One of the saddest verses in the Bible is found in John 1:11. "He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him." Reflect for a moment how it must have been when Michael bent down on His knees to affectionately create Adam out of the soil of the Earth. (Genesis 2:7; Hebrews 1:1-3) Later, He personally spoke with Abraham, sharing with him God's plans for a future nation dedicated to His purposes.

He personally spoke with Moses and cancelled Pharaoh's authority, delivering the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage. Tenderly, He watched over Israel, feeding them with angels' food – manna from Heaven. True to His word, He gave them the promised land and prosperity which had peaked during the reigns of David and Solomon. He sent Nebuchadnezzar to destroy His temple, but He later sent Cyrus to free His people. After all He had done, His own people totally rejected and crucified Him.

John says, "He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him." The story of His rejection, of course, does not end with the Jews. It continues among the Gentiles, even to the last generation. What have you done about Jesus Christ? Do you believe His words? Do you love Him and do you want to be a part of the kingdom He represents? Have you accepted His authority as the Lord of your life? Are you willing to reflect His character and be one of His representatives on Earth?

Are you willing to do what He asks? Are you willing to become what He wants you to be? Are you willing to go where He commands? If your answer is, "Not right now," then when will it be? If you surrender your will to the yoke of Christ, you have the Son, and those who have the Son have life! (1 John 5:12) If you surrender your life to Him, He will clothe you with His righteousness. Surrender is the first step toward Heaven.

Think of it! All who surrender to the Son will have the privilege of embracing this most wonderful person who is fully God, who is the archangel, Michael and who is the man, Jesus!