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## *Is the Archangel Michael a manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ?*

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Michael the Archangel is identified three times in Daniel (10.13,21; 12.1), once in Revelation (12.7) and once in Jude (9) where his unique title is conferred.

In Daniel, he is described as 'one of the chief princes', and 'the great prince'. In Revelation he is described as the captain of the heavenly angelic hosts in their fierce conflict with Satan and his armies. In Daniel, he supports and sustains the angelic messenger sent to reveal Daniel's last prophecy in his conflict with demonic lords of Persia and Greece.

Some commentators claim Michael is a manifestation of the Lord Jesus in a theophany, a preincarnate appearance. What is the evidence?

First, it is important to emphasise that there is a razor sharp difference between created angels and the Uncreated Word of God. Hebrews 1:4-14 makes this abundantly plain. The worship of created angels is an exceedingly serious sin, Romans 1.25, Colossians 2.18. Even John the Apostle dazzled and amazed by the brightness of the beings before him needs to reprove twice for coming dangerously close to it ! (Rev.19.10 and 22.9)

However there is a mysterious though easily proven phenomenon in the Old Testament, where One Angel or Messenger is indeed worshipped! There are many occasions, though perhaps not in every single occurrence (eg Isa. 37.36 and in Gk. Acts 12.23), where the term the Angel of the Lord (Heb. מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה) indicates the Son of God, Who is worshipped, prayed to and treated as Yahveh, in a way that would be completely inappropriate, idolatrous and dangerous if applied to a mere created angel. Jacob describes Him as his Redeemer (Gen.48.16), Isaiah describes Him as the Angel of His Presence, again in reference to redemption, love, pity and salvation (Isa.63.9), Moses speaks of Him Who dwells in the thornbush of Sinai, showing good favour (Deut.33.16), when the Angel of the Lord spoke with God's voice, saying, 'I am the God of your father' (Acts.7.30-32, Ex.3.4,6,8), and Hosea describes Jacob's angelic encounter at Peniel as a direct experience of God (Hos. 12.3-5), as does Jacob (Gen.32.30). His Name though asked for is kept secret *not* to be revealed, not yet (Gen.32.29, Judg.13.18). More information on these mysterious and important events is [found here](#), and also [here](#) and [here](#). [Rabbinic Jews are in particular danger of angel worship as a logical consequence of denying the Sonship of the Messiah \(Micah 5.2\)](#).



Indeed *all* the angels must and will themselves prostrate before and worship the Messiah to the glory of His Father, even the fallen ones!

Phil.2.9-11, Heb.1.6, Eph.1.19-22, Ps.97.7 etc.

The question here is focused on Michael - was this archangel also another title of the Angel of the Lord or is he another figure from the highest ranking created angels. The question may seem abstruse but it has some weighty implications.

It is suggested that in Daniel 10.13 that the phrase 'one of the chief princes' is better translated as 'first of the chief princes'. Is the word here an ordinal or a numeral? The Hebrew is Echad (אֶחָד) which generally is used as a numeral, though it may be used as an ordinal. The more

natural word to use for first would have been the ordinary ordinal for first (ראשון).

The title archangel also used in 1 Thess. 4.16 '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.' The same idea is expressed in 1 Cor.15.52. 'In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.' Here again it seems to make the identification with Christ less likely. The head of the congregation did not usually blow the sacred trumpets, a minister did (Exod.10.8, Numb.31.6, Josh.6.4, 1 Chron.15.24).

Moses, David and Solomon never blew the trumpet themselves, their heralds did it for them. We are very familiar with ordinary angels bearing trumpets, but it is usually the task of a delegated servant, not the King Himself.



The reference in Jude 9 to Michael refusing to rebuke Satan directly is an allusion to Zechariah 3.2, where the Angel of the Lord uses the same words, 'The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan'. Yet the circumstances are clearly very different. In the former the dispute is over Moses' body, in the latter over the High Priest Joshua's living being. In Joshua's case the situation is immediately resolved and Satan's case destroyed, in the former case it is unclear precisely what the outcome is. Most important of all in Zechariah, it is the LORD who speaks to Satan, the LORD in the person of the Angel of the LORD. In Jude however, the Archangel defers the matter to the LORD for handling later.

There is again weak grounds for identifying the Archangel and The Angel of the LORD, ie the Theophany of the Redeemer here. The example in Jude is given to shame the godless into more modesty in speaking evil of things they don't understand, and indicates Michael's deference to his Master's judgement, such deference though is not needed or used in Joshua's case.

It is claimed that Michael's modesty is compatible with Saviour's modesty when faced with Satanic assault in the wilderness. There is certainly humility and a strong dependence not on His own intrinsic authority but on the power of the written Word of God. However the Lord Jesus does directly confront and reprove Satan, in a way Michael avoids, 'get thee hence' (Mt. 4.10) or 'get thee behind me, Satan' (Lk.4.8), or more colloquially, 'scram' or 'get out of My sight'.

The same Michael the Archangel in Revelation 12.7-8 seems to wage a lengthy campaign against Satan and his hosts in the Heavenly places, 'there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not'. Does this really sound like the Son of God? We are told the final confrontation will be one breath in duration, just one glimpse, when Satan's power is subdued instantly, 'the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming' (2 Thess.2.8).

Michael's name (מִיכָאֵל), 'Who is like God' is not nearly as strong as the 'theophoric' names that carry Yahveh's Name in action, like Jehoshua (Yahveh saves), Jehoshaphat (Yahveh judges), or Jehoiada (Yahveh knows). It is quite compatible with a servant's status, indeed it tends to suggest a servant who reflects the glory of his Master, rather than the Master Himself. The equivalent name Micaiah (מִיכָיָהוּ) for Yahveh as opposed to El (אֱלֹהִים) in Micha-El is only ever used by a faithful prophet and servant. Michal (מִיכָל) is its female equivalent.

'Your Prince', used in Daniel 10.21 is an exalted expression which sounds somewhat like your King or your Monarch, which could point to Christ.

However the same expression is used of the spiritual Principality over Persia and over Greece.

That Israel had a non-Divine, particular guardian other than the preincarnate Saviour is clear from some expressions.

For example in Exodus 33.1-2 makes clear, in His indignation, the LORD plans to withdraw His own presence from the people, and send a mere angel before them into Canaan. This was symbolised by the withdrawal of the Tabernacle (as yet a prototype of the Tabernacle of Assembly) from the people 'afar off from the camp' (v.7). This evil news rightly caused mourning amongst the people (v.3) and causes Moses to plead for the LORD's real presence and help (v.13) and then God's gracious promise to restore it.

There is also the destroying Angel of Death in Egypt, who executed the Lord's judgement on all the firstborn, Exod.13.23, Heb.11.28. he also seems to have been responsible for the plague of the murmurers in 1 Cor.10.10. How could this have been the Lamb?

When Solomon executed his enemies, he sent the chief of his host, Benaiah (1 Kings 2.25, 29-34, 46), he did not personally wield the sword - would the Lord Jesus really do otherwise?

In Thessalonians, we are given the impression it is delegated angels at the command of their King who will be the avengers of the Lord's people (2 Thess.1.8), and who sever the wicked from the just (Matt 13.49), or remove the godless pretenders (Matt 22.13, 25.30).

The same mighty avenger seems to be referred to in Ex 23.20-23

'Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared.'

Even though his title is capitalised in the KJV, though of course not in the Hebrew text, the reference to his fierce vengeance on his own people seems unlikely to refer to the Saviour.

'Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him\*.' (v 21) The allusion to v 23 of this chapter 23, 'For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off' seems unmistakable in the later passage that speaks of the non Divine angel, one who is distinct from the Divine Presence:

'And I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite'

(Ex.33.2)

Are not both much more likely to be references to a national guardian angel, of supreme power and authority, sufficient even to be trusted with the Conquest of Canaan, but not Divine, not uncreated and certainly not the Messiah?

Is this angel not Michael the Archangel, the princely authority over Israel, yet under the command of His King, a herald, an executioner, and jealous guardian of the law's sanctity? The Angel of the LORD, the Word, unnamed in the Tenach (Prov.30.4), the Redeemer of Israel, the Holy One and her Saviour, is

Michael's Lord, and altogether distinct.

\*Some are impressed that the description of the angel by the phrase 'for my name is in im', is a clear indication of Deity. The Hebrew expression 'in his inward'(בְּקִרְבּוֹ) has been seen to strengthen this impression. Yet many passages use the same word inward to describe the relation of God to His people without conferring Deity (Josh 3.10; 4.6, Ps 46.5, Isa 12.6, Jer 14.9, Ho 11.9, Zep 3.5). It is used of the wisdom of God being in Solomon (1 Ki 3.28), and of the Holy Spirit being in His people (Isa 63.11, Eze 36.27), as it is of the new spirit that accompanies conversion (Eze 11.19; 36.26).

Again in Numbers 6.27 and many other texts, God speaks of how His name is placed upon the children of Israel or in one text on the nations, but again this scarcely indicates true Deity (2Ch 7.14; Isa.43.2; 65.1; Am 9.12).

Should we infer Paul is divine because as minister he to is selected to 'bear My name'? (Ac 9.15) The Lord's Temple is spoke many times of as the place where His Name is put, for example in 1 Kings 9.3 'I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put my name there for ever', but does this Deify the Temple? Of course not! (1Ki 5.5; 8.18,19; 9.7; 2 Ki.23.27; 2 Chr.7.16; Jer.7.10,11,14,30; 32.34; 34.15). The same may be said of Jerusalem, the City of His Name, chosen 'that my name might be therein' (1Ki 8.16), and many other texts confirm the status of the city as special, holy and dedicated like an angel, an archangel, but does this prove the city is as God Himself? (1 Ki 11.36; 2 Ki 21.4,7; 2Ch 6.5; 2Ch 33.4,7; Ne 1.9; Jer 25.29).

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