

Angels and Demons.

(Archangel Michael and the Ministration of Angels)

Question 1—*Who should we understand to be Michael the archangel and why?*

Answer—Mention has been made of Gabriel as the only angel named specifically, Luke 1:19; Dan. 8:16. Yet, there is another “angel” that seems to be named, whose appearance is noted in the books of Daniel and Revelation, named Michael, Dan. 12:1. The Jewish (together with the Romish) writers who say there are four archangels make Michael one of these, *cf.* Jude 9; and the Jews’ claim that to him (*i.e.*, Michael) was committed by God in a special manner the care of their nation, with a superiority not only to the lower ranks of angels, but even to the other three archangels, *cf.* Dan. 10:13. Careful examination, however, has convinced the leading Protestant commentators, from Luther and Calvin down, to assert that this is not the name of a created angel but is a name applied, in prophetic vision, to the Son of God Himself. The chief reasons are these:

First, the name Michael (מִיכָאֵל) is composed of three words which mean “who like God,” or, “who as God,” that is, a question “who is like God?” To this question no created being can that name in its fullness of signification be applied, 1 Chron. 17:20. Yet, there is One Whose Person is the brightness and glory of the Person of the eternal Father, *cf.* Heb. 1:1-3.

Second, the description which Daniel gives of this “angel,” Dan. 10:5, 6, 21; is very much the same as that which is given by the apostle John of the Son of God, Rev. 1:13-17; 2:18.

Third, He is represented as, by His power, casting down the great adversary of God and man, Rev. 12:7-9. Moreover, of this Michael it is prophesied that he will be a deliverer of God’s people from great tribulation which had come upon them, and as causing the resurrection, Dan. 12:1-3. However, these are the God’s peculiar works because there is no voice but His Whose voice is to call to the dead and transfuse life into bodies that have long moldered in the dust, *cf.* John 5:28, 29.

Therefore, Michael can well be understood to be Christ Himself, the Lord of angels, for He is truly like God, being the express image of the Father’s Person, 2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15. He is also the leader and prince of the heavenly host, or army, Josh. 5:13; Isa. 55:4; Heb. 2:10. The confusion has arisen from the word “archangel,” which is used twice, and only in the singular, 1 Thess. 4:16; Jude 9.

In the *first* instance, “archangel” seems to be applied to Christ Himself, as indicating the way in which He is to come, accompanied by the angelic hosts Whose Head and Leader He is, 2 Thess. 1:7. He is to come from heaven with a shout, and that shout is to be His voice at once as God and as Ruler of the heavenly beings, *cf.* Matt. 16:27; 25:31. That seems to be the meaning of the word “archangel,” and in this it is equivalent to the title employed by Daniel calling Him “the great prince” and “one of the chief princes,” or “the first of the chief princes,” or “the head of the angel chiefs” (*’ehad hasarim hari’sônim*; אֶתְּדַרְשָׁן הַשָּׁמַיִם); because He is the Head and Prince of angels, *cf.* Dan. 10:13.

In the *second* instance, “archangel” is joined to the name “Michael,” Jude 9; which is evidently is Christ because what is ascribed here to Michael is attributed to the LORD, in the prophet, Zech. 3:2. His refusal to bring railing accusation against the devil, when contending for the body of Moses, was not a matter of impotence, but of carefulness guarding His identity lest Satan should have known before the time, *cf.* 1 Cor. 2:8; so that He did not reveal His supreme dignity but observed the decorum of angels, *cf.* 2 Pet. 2:10, 11.

Finally, should any think it a strange thing that the second Person in the Godhead should be represented with this angelic title, we often read of an extraordinary Person frequently called “the Angel of the LORD,” “the Angel in Whom the LORD’s name is,” “the Angel of His presence,” and “the Angel of the covenant,” *e.g.*, Gen. 22:11; Ex. 23:20, 21; Isa. 63:9; Mal. 3:1. Early on, this Angel was clearly identified as One Who is not a created being but even the true God, *cf.* Gen. 16:10-13

Question 2—*For what purpose does God use a ministry of angels?*

Answer—The ministry of angels is evident in the various offices assigned to them in the Scriptures:

First, with respect to God, they are represented: 1.) As perpetually occupied in celebrating and adoring Him, wherein we see the so-called Trisagion (Τρισάγιον), thrice holy, anthem of the seraphim around the throne, *e.g.*, Isa. 6:3; which is found repeated in the Revelation of John, together with a heavenly exposition, Rev. 4:8; 7:11, 12. There is also that which we find them singing in unison at the birth of Christ, Luke 2:13, 14; to which duty they were invited by the Highest Authority, *cf.* Ps. 97:7; 148:2. 2.) As yielding Him a holy obedience, promptly and fully, with all due deference, *cf.* Ps. 103:20. Hence, they are said to stand before Him, as attendants and ministers, receiving and executing His commands, *cf.* Dan. 7:10. So, too, they are said to attend His throne as a great host waiting upon His will, *cf.* 1 Kings 22:19.

In these respects, we must consider the wings attributed to them, whereby with two they covered their faces, denoting their supreme reverence toward God, and with two they covered their “feet,” intimating their desire for greater holiness (for they cover those “parts” which modesty requires to be covered in men and designates their weakness relative to God, *cf.* Job 4:18), and with the last two wings they fly showing their speed and zeal in performing the divine commands, *cf.* Isa. 6:2.

Additionally, here, too, we must understand their ministry to Christ as their Head and Lord, in adoring Him, which they did from the beginning and continue to perform, *cf.* Heb. 1:6; Rev. 5:11, 12. Moreover, the actual ministry in which they have engage for Him: 1.) In His conception, Luke 1:26-38. 2.) In His birth, Luke 2:9-15. 3.) At His temptation, Matt. 4:11; Mark 1:13. 4.) During the agony of His passion, Luke 22:43. 5.) At His resurrection, Matt. 28:2-7. 6.) At His ascension, Acts 1:10, 11. And, finally, 7.) At the Last Day, they shall attend His second coming, 2 Thess. 1:7.

Second, in respect to themselves, as they are a well-ordered society, they undoubtedly perform various mutual duties to each other, by a mutual communication of things to be known or to be done. Hence, for example, they are said to cry one to another, as if stirring each other up to celebrate the praises of God, *e.g.*, Isa. 6:3. Elsewhere they are introduced as speaking to each other, *cf.* Zech. 2:3, 4; Rev. 7:2.

Third, in respect to the world, as the office of angels is made to consist in defending and conserving created things and their order, Ps. 104:4. Thus, when David sinned against the Lord in the unwarranted numbering of the people, of the three evils which were submitted to him, famine, destruction by his enemies and pestilence, he preferred to fall immediately into the hand of God, *cf.* 2 Sam. 24:15, 16. So, this ministration of angels Christ, the mediatorial King, uses in the government of His kingdom of nature, *cf.* Ezek. 1:13. Nor did this cease with His coming in the flesh for the angels are said to be ascending and descending upon Jacob’s ladder, which is an image of the incarnation and divinity of our Lord and His mediatorial work which should engage the angels as ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, *cf.* John 1:51; Heb. 1:14. Thus, when king Herod, after making a speech which called for the applause of the people, listened complacently to their ascription of divinity to him, an angel was the agent which moved nature against him, *cf.* Acts 12:23. Moreover, during the lifetime of Christ, there was in Jerusalem a pool wherein an angel troubled the waters to excite curative effects, *cf.* John 5:3, 4. In neither of these accounts was the angel visible, yet we see the angelic agency by which nature is moved to its accomplishment, *cf.* 1 Chron. 21:14-18. Thus, in the case of Daniel in the lion’s den, the mouths of the lions were shut by angels, Dan. 6:22. So, in Revelation, we are told of angels having power over fire and angels over the waters, all to the ministering of the mediatorial kingdom of Christ, *cf.* Rev. 14:18; 16:5.

Fourth, in respect to God’s providential government of the world, these angels are seen in the employ of the Mediator, King Jesus, ruling over individuals and nations, Ps. 103:20. So, Peter indicates that they occupy a supervising position over the affairs of men and their governments, even bringing reports to God of this administration confining themselves to the statement of facts without railing, *cf.* 2 Pet. 2:11. Nor is this idea peculiar to the New Testament but reflects what appears to be a constant theme in the Old

Testament, *cf.* 1 Kings 22:19. We are even told that there was a day, or set time, in which the angels came to present themselves to give this account, *cf.* Job 1:6, 7.

Thus, in Zechariah's prophecy, we meet with passages descriptive of the providential government of God, as conducted by the ministration of angels, *cf.* Zech. 6:1-6. For this reason, angels are called the Lord's chariots, being the agents through which He carries out His decreed plan, *cf.* Ps. 68:17. By them, He goes forth to execute His providential will throughout the earth, *cf.* Ezek. 1:5-25; 11:22-25. In the Revelation, the chariot with the red horse represents the execution of His vengeance through bloody conquerors wasting nations; the chariot with the black horse signifies the dreadful judgments of famine and pestilence; the chariot with the white horse signifies removal of these judgments; the chariot with the grisled horse denotes dispensations which mingle wrath and mercy, *cf.* Rev. 6:1-8. The angel interprets these as the four winds, or spirits, of heaven sent forth from God to execute His purposes, *cf.* Zech 4:8-10; 1 Kings 22:19-23; Job 1:6; Luke 1:18-20.

The apostle Paul makes an assertion which implies that the angels are careful observers of the world, especially the affairs of the church, *cf.* 1 Cor. 4:9. As these angels gaze upon us and note our travails, they are also noted as being near unto us, in our assemblies, *cf.* 1 Cor. 11:10; both administering and taking an account of the affairs which transpire amongst the people of God, *cf.* 1 Tim. 5:21.