Michael

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Introduction

Michael is a biblical figure, first mentioned in Dan 10:13. He eventually became quite popular with Jewish pseudepigraphical writers[1] and is mentioned also at Qumran.[2] Within the New Testament, Jude quotes from a pseudepigraphical work--the Assumption of Moses--when referring to Michael.[3] But Michael is not a literary creation of extra-biblical writers. The topic does not lie solely or even primarily in the domain of those who specialize in the study of such documents. Here I examine the biblical references to Michael. In narrowing the scope of the paper in this way I do not ignore the importance of context, but reassert the value of a neglected area of context.

The Term "Archangel"

Five times Michael is mentioned in Scripture by name.[4] He is called the "archangel" (Greek *archaggelos*), however, only once--in Jude 9.

> 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)[5]

The only other New Testament passage that uses the word "archangel" is 1 Thess 4:16.

> 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 Thess 4:16)

Normally the Greek prefix *archi-* refers to one who is a member of the category it modifies. Thus, in the New Testament we find *archiereus* "high priest" (Matt 26:3; Mark 2:26; Luke 3:2; John 11:49; Acts 4:6; Heb 2:17; and elsewhere), *archipoimēn* "Chief Shepherd" (1 Pet 5:4), *archisunagōgos* "synagogue ruler" (Mark 5:22, 35, 36, 38; Luke 8:49; 13:14; Acts 13:15; 18:8, 17), *architektōn* "expert builder" (1 Cor 3:10); *architriklinos* "master of the banquet" (John 2:9, 8). The high priest was a priest, the chief shepherd in secular Greek sources[6] was presumably one of the shepherds, and the synagogue ruler was a synagogue member. Whether the expert builder (possibly "chief engineer") worked with tools himself is unclear and so is the question of whether the master of the banquet could be considered one of the guests.

The question here is whether the "archangel" is actually an angel. Moulton and Milligan caution that *archaggelos*, which is a Greek word, "was coined in Judaism to express a Jewish idea."[7] In Greek the terms *aggelos* "angel" and *archaggelos* "archangel" are quite similar, but in Hebrew the corresponding terms are not. The Hebrew word commonly translated "angel" is *malʾāk*, although in reality it can denote anyone who is sent to bear a message or perform some other task for another party.[8] There is no Hebrew term "archangel." The closest equivalent would be *śar-ṣᵉbāʾ-YHWH* "commander of the army of the Lord," as in Josh 5:14-15, or its

equivalent *śar haṣṣābāʾ* "Prince of the host" in Dan 8:11. In a military context *śar haṣṣābāʾ* means the commanding general responsible for sending others on missions or assignments. He in turn, however, would be sent out by the king. On this analogy the "archangel" could indeed be considered an "angel" in the sense of Hebrew *malʾāk*, but not in the sense of Greek *aggelos*. It is a Hebrew concept clothed in Greek syllables. This is a concept that must be grasped before the biblical roots of the term "archangel" can be correctly understood.

First Group of References

Dan 10 and 12

Michael is called *śar* "prince" in Dan 10:13, 21, and 12:1. These passages, now quoted for the reader's convenience, are discussed in another paper.[9] It is clear, however, that the Michael referred to by Daniel is more than a man.

"Then Michael, one of the chief princes [*ʾaḥad haśśārîm hārîʾšōnîm*], came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia." (Dan 10:13)

"(No one supports me against them except Michael, your prince [*śarkem*].)" (Dan 10:21)

"At that time Michael, the great prince [*haśśar haggādôl*] who protects your people, will arise."

Josh 5

The word *śar* is used to denote a more-than-human personage in Josh 5 as well.[10]

(13) Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?"
(14) "Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the Lord [*śar-ṣᵉbāʾ-YHWH*] I have now come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?" (Josh 5:13-14)

It is important to notice that Joshua's act of worship is not rejected, as it was by the angel that appeared to John in Rev 19:10. Instead an even greater token of respect is demanded. "The commander of the Lord's army replied, 'Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy.' And Joshua did so" (Josh 5:15). Here is our first indication that Michael is also more than an angel.

Exod 3

Joshua's encounter with the "commander of the Lord's army" has a direct parallel in Exod 3. The comparison in the first case was between two words (*śar* "prince" [Dan 10, 12], *śar* "commander" [Josh 5]), but here it is between two virtually identical clauses. Both in Josh 5 and in Exod 3 the person addressed is commanded to remove his sandals.

(1) Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. (2) There the angel of the Lord [*ma8ak YHWH*] appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. (3) So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight--why the bush does not burn up."

(4) When the Lord [*YHWH*] saw that he had gone over to look, God [*ᵉlōhîm*] called to him from within the bush, "Moses, Moses!"

(5) "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." (6) Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God. (Exod 3:1-6)

The pair of clauses referred to are found in Josh 5:15 and Exod 3:5. The English has already been given. Here they are quoted in Hebrew:

šal-naᶜªlēkā mēᶜal raglēkā kî hammāqôm ᵃšer ᵃttâ ᶜōmēd ᶜālāyw qṓdeš hûᵓ (Josh 5:15)

šal-nᵉᶜāleykā mēᶜal raglēykā kî hammāqôm ᵃšer ᵃttâ ᶜōmēd ᶜālāyw ᵓadmat-qōdeš hûᵓ (Exod 3:5)

As regards the identity of the One who speaks, which is the real reason for noting the above similarity, we have the thought-provoking circumstance that the "angel of the Lord" (*ma8ak YHWH*, vs. 2) is Himself "the Lord" (*YHWH*, vs. 4). He is also called "God" (*ᵉlōhîm*) and answers Moses' question regarding the divine Name as follows: "God said to Moses, 'I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: "I AM has sent me to you"'" (Exod 3:14). "I AM" is related linguistically to that most sacred of names--Yahweh.[11] The parallels between the two passages above indicate that the same Being who required Joshua to take off his sandals in Josh 5 required Moses to do so in Exod 3.

John 8

In the New Testament the events of Exod 3 are reenacted, despite the reference to a different patriarch, in John 8. There Jesus says,

"Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad."
(57) "You are not yet fifty years old," the Jews said to him, "and you have seen Abraham!"
(58) "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am." (John 8:56-58)

The "angel of the Lord" had previously declared to Moses, "'I am who I am. . . .'" (Exod 3:14). In John 8 Christ not only quotes the same words and gives them the same meaning, but recreates a similar context for their use. Only the response is different. By quoting these words Christ claimed equality with the One who had originally uttered them--a fact not lost on His hearers, who immediately tried to stone Him (vs. 59).

Summary

Three points have been made so far: (a) Both Michael and the "commander" who confronted Joshua were more-than-human Beings referred to by the term *śar*; (b) both the "commander" who confronted Joshua and the "angel of the Lord" who spoke to Moses asked that the one addressed take off his sandals because the ground before him was holy; and (c)

both the "angel of the Lord" who spoke to Moses, and at a later time Christ, used the words "I am" in a way that constituted an unmistakable claim to deity. Thus, if Michael is the same as the "commander," and the "commander" is the same as the "angel of the Lord," and the "angel of the Lord" is the same as Christ, it follows that Michael must Himself be the same as Christ. This line of argument is now summarized in table 1.

Table 1
Textual Parallels Linking
Michael with Christ

	Dan 11	Josh 5	Exod 3	John 8
1	śar	śar		
2		sandals off	sandals off	
3			"I am"	"I am"

Second Group of References

At the time of Satan's rebellion

From a chronological standpoint, Michael is first mentioned within the New Testament in Rev 12:7. His role is that of commanding an army of angels.

> (7) And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. (8) But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. (9) The great dragon was hurled down--that ancient serpent called the devil or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. (Rev 12:7-9)

When Eve first sinned (Gen 3:1) she was beguiled by the same "primeval serpent" that had just been cast out of heaven. The fall of Adam and Eve in Gen 3 provides a point before which the events of Rev 12:9 must have happened. But notice that if the dragon was "hurled to the earth," there had to be an earth for him to be hurled to. The creation of the world in Gen 1 therefore represents a point after which the events of Rev 12:9 must have happened. First the world was made (Gen 1), then Satan was cast down into it (Rev 12), then Adam and Eve sinned (Gen 3). The point here is that Satan's rebellion and expulsion from heaven--and along with it the above reference to Michael--are related to the beginning of earth's history. At this time there was a major conflict in heaven and its main protagonists are said to have been Michael and Satan.

At the time of Christ's ministry on earth

Beginning of ministry. In Rev 12 the "dragon" is said to be another name for Satan. Michael is not described further, but we see the same two parties in opposition again. In Matt 4:1-11 the Commander of the armies of heaven does not allow the rebellion merely to continue with a change of venue, but pursues Satan to the earth. It is especially interesting that one of the three temptations in the wilderness should have to do with command of the angels.[12]

(5) Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. (6) "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: '"He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" (7) Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" (Matt 4:5-7)

End of ministry. At the end of Christ's ministry, just before His death on the cross, His authority over the angels is again brought to view. In Matt 26:52-54 Christ is being captured for trial and Peter tries to mount a physical defense.

(52) "Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. (53) Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? (54) But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?" (Matt 26:52-54)

With the defection of Judas there were fewer than 12 disciples. Christ here asserts that He could easily have angels for defenders instead of men, more than 12 instead of fewer than 12, and that if He were to take that approach He would be dealing in legions instead of single individuals. He was being taken captive not because physical help was unavailable, but because it was irrelevant.[13]

At the time of the second coming

Christ's command of the armies of heaven is referred to also in Rev 19:11-16. The setting for this passage is the end of earth's history as He returns in glory to end the long war and rescue His faithful people.

(11) I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. (12) His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one but he himself knows. (13) He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. (14) The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. (15) Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. (16) On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. (Rev 19:11-16)

The Rider on the white horse, the "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS," is called "Faithful and True," "the Word of God." There can be no doubt that John is here describing Jesus Christ. I would suggest that he is also describing the "commander of the army of the Lord," seen by Joshua in Josh 5:14, and the "angel of the Lord," seen by Moses in Exod 3:5. Christ leads and commands all the armies of heaven. He leads and commands the church. Leading and commanding is a role He has consistently occupied throughout Scripture.

Discussion

The reference to Rev 19 does not take us away from our topic, but brings the discussion full circle. The events of Rev 19 provide the closest parallel in the New Testament for those at the end of Dan 11 and the beginning of Dan 12.

"At that 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." (Dan 12:1)

Here is the context for the passage quoted earlier from 1 Thess 4. When Michael stands up (Dan 12:1), what He does is come to earth as the Rider on a white horse (Rev 19:11). When He gets here He rescues the living saints and raises the dead. Thus, Paul writes that:

> . . . 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 Thess 4:16)

In this passage the Jerusalem Bible attempts to separate what the "archangel" does from the "Lord himself" does, thus:

> At the trumpet of God, the voice of the archangel will call out the command and the Lord himself will come down from heaven; . . . (1 Thess 4:16, JB)

But there is a question what command the "archangel" issues. If it is the command for the "Lord himself" to come down from heaven, one would expect the roles to be reversed. If it is the command for the dead to be raised, then that is no less problematic--if the "archangel" is merely the highest of the angels. I suggest that the Lord's "loud command" and the "voice of the archangel" cannot be separated, but are one and the same. The "archangel" is not the highest angel but the One who commands the highest angels. This idea is confirmed when we compare 1 Thess 4:16 with John 5:25, which says:

> "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)

This passage in turn must be compared with John 6:39. "And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day." In case there is any question about who does the raising, we should broaden the comparison to include vss. 40 ("and I will raise him up at the last day"), 44 ("and I will raise him up at the last day"), and 54 ("and I will raise him up at the last day"). In 1 Thess 4:16 the voice of the Archangel raises the righteous dead; in John 5:25; 6:39, 40, 44, and 54 it is the voice of Christ who raises the righteous dead. They are not raised twice. They are not raised once by two different holy Beings. Michael is Christ.

Conclusion

The controversy between good and evil is personal as well as philosophical in nature. Its major protagonists are Christ and Satan, called Michael and Satan in Rev 12:7 and 9. Daniel saw many events that we, with benefit of hindsight, can recognize in history. But he himself did

not recognize them. At one point he says: "I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, 'My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?'" (Dan 12:8).[14] There were those who at a later time wrote using Daniel's terms and his general eschatological manner, but without any understanding of the profound meaning behind them. The book was sealed to them (Dan 12:9) because the events it described extended into the distant future (Dan 8:26; 10:14). It would be unreasonable to expect anyone living 20 decades after Daniel to understand events that would not take place until 20 centuries after Daniel. The literary output of such individuals could not be expected to be free from distortions. And distortions were indeed introduced.

A good example of the above principle involves the intertestamental popularity of Michael. Michael is not a pseudepigraphical figure borrowed by biblical writers, but a biblical figure borrowed by pseudepigraphical writers. And the full meaning of His nature and work were not hidden merely because they were future.

> (41) "While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, (42) 'What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?' 'The son of David,' they replied. (43) He said to them, 'How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, called him "Lord"? For he says, "The Lord said to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.'" (45) If then David calls him "Lord," how can he be his son?' (46) No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions." (Matt 22:41-45)

The Pharisees gave an eloquent answer on this occasion. They said nothing further. The fact is that Christ confronts us, in the uniqueness of His person, with a level of mystery that we cannot merely speak up and explain. The Word of God was offered to the world in silent eloquence, as a fact and not a proposition. He is (John 8:58). That is God's explanation to mankind.

When the biblical setting for the term "Michael" is taken fully into account, it is evident that this is merely one in a long series of names for Christ. Here is the neglected biblical context for the term.

Note: All Scripture quotations in this paper, except when noted otherwise, are from the Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright (c) 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. The present research is based in part on Frank W. Hardy, "An Historicist Perspective on Daniel 11" (M.A. thesis, Andrews University, 1983), pp. 123-26.

[1]D. S. Russell, in his book *The Method & Message of Jewish Apocalyptic: 200 BC - AD 100* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), mentions Michael in connection with six pseudepigraphical works. These are: 1 Enoch (Ethiopic Enoch) (170-64 B.C. [Charles], 164 B.C. ff. [Rowley]), p. 51 (see pp. 201, 243, 256, 343); the Testament of Levi (109-7 B.C. [Charles], Essene origin [Philolenko], Christian origin [de Jonge]), pp. 56-57 (see p. 299); the Life of Adam and Eve (before A.D. 70), pp. 59 (see p. 256); the Testament of Abraham (second century A.D. [James]), p. 60 (see pp. 167, 169); 2 Enoch (Slavonic Enoch) (first century A.D., possibly seventh century A.D.), p. 61 (see p. 378); and 3 Baruch (the Greek Apocalypse of Baruch) (second century A.D.), p. 65 (see p. 66). A seventh document--the Assumption of Moses (ibid., pp. 58-59)--is dealt with separately in n. 3, below. The above list is not intended to be a complete list of pseudepigraphical references to Michael.

[2]The "War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness" (1QM) is based on the prophecy of Daniel, and especially on its fourth and final vision. Direct lexical comparisons between these two documents include the terms: Kittim (1QM cols. 1, 11, 15-19; Dan 11:30);

king of the North (col. 1; Dan 11:40); Edom, Moab, and Ammon (col. 1; Dan 11:41); Gabriel (col. 9; Dan 8:16; 9:21); and Michael (cols. 9, 17; Dan 10:13, 21; 12:1)--all but one of which (Gabriel) occurs in Dan 10, 11, or 12. Other clear allusions to Daniel by the author of the War Rule are shown in the following table:

1QM	Dan 7	Dan 9	Dan 11	Dan 12
Col. 1		9:24	11:43-44	12:1
Col. 10			11:33	
Col. 12				12:1
Col. 13			11:35,45	12:1
Col. 14			11:35	12:2
Col. 15	7:9-10			12:1
Col. 16			11:25	
Col. 17			11:25,33-35	

In addition, A. Mertens (*Das Buch Daniel im Lichte der Texte vom Toten Meer* [Stuttgart, 1971], p. 61) would add 1QM col. 13, line 10, as a veiled reference to Michael: "Den Fürsten des Lichtes hast du [von vordem] verordnet zu unserer Hilfe"--translated, "And the Prince of Light Thou hast appointed from ancient times to come to our support; . . ." by Geza Vermes (*The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 2nd ed. [Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1975], p. 141).

[3]The Assumption of Moses, quoted in Jude 9, was written between A.D. 6 and 30 (Russell, "Jewish Apocalyptic," p. 58), A.D. 7 and 30 (R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, 2 vols. [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913], vol. 2: *Pseudepigrapha*, p. 411), or A.D. 7 and 29 (ibid., p. 407). According to R. H. Charles it is actually two documents--a Testament of Moses (commonly called the "Assumption of Moses") and an Assumption of Moses properly so called. The Testament of Moses originally contained some 1100 stichs, and the Assumption of Moses 1400 (ibid., p. 407). Only about half of the first document (the Testament, i.e., "Assumption") has survived and the second document (the Assumption proper) not at all (Russell, p. 59). Of the five biblical references to Michael, that in Jude is the only one that quotes a non-biblical source. The source that it quotes, however, is not the extant Testament, which breaks off at a point before Moses' death, but the Assumption proper (Charles, p. 408).

[4]Ten different people had the name Michael in the Old Testament (Num 13:13; 1 Chr 5:13, 14; 6:40; 7:3; 8:16; 12:20; 27:18; 2 Chr 21:2; Ezra 8:8). And it is a claim of the present paper that the more-than-human Michael mentioned three times by Daniel appears throughout Scripture under a variety of different names. But the name Michael and the more-than-human personage that Daniel refers to by means of it come together in only five passages (Dan 10:13, 21; 12:1; Jude 9; Rev 12:7).

[5]Cf. Deut 34:6.

[6]See James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), p. 82.

[7]Ibid.

[8]See Hardy, "What Does the Hebrew Word $mal\bar{\jmath}\bar{a}k$ Mean?" *Historicism* No. 5/Jan 86, p. 19.

[9]See Hardy, "Two Words for 'Prince' in Dan 10-12," in this issue of *Historicism*.

[10]The extra-human nature of the "commander" in Josh 5:13-15 is indicated by contextual factors rather than the writer's choice of words. It is not just that the word $śar$ is used in both sets of passages, but that the term is used there to denote a more-than-human figure. One evidence of this fact is that the One who addresses Joshua as "commander of the army of the Lord" in Josh 5:14 addresses him as "the Lord [$YHWH$]" Himself in Josh 6:2.

[11]Neither the original pronunciation nor the meaning of the divine name Yahweh is clearly known. As nearly as can be determined, its meaning has to do with the idea of self-existence. Thus, Moses is addressed by the Self-Existent One, the I AM (Greek ho en).

[12]Here it seems that the roles of Father and Son are reversed. The Father commands the angels (vs. 6) and the Son is called """the Lord your God""" (vs. 7). But roles can be reversed only when they can be separated. Neither the unity nor the distinctness of the Members of the trinity should receive exclusive emphasis when considering this passage.

[13]Christ's words "'Do you think I cannot'" (*ē dokeis hoti ou dunamai*) in vs. 53 are significant. The nature of Peter's defense revealed love for his Master, but also a lack of faith.

[14]For discussion see Hardy, "A Chiastic Outline for Dan 12:5-13," *Historicism* No. 1/Jan 85, p. 38.