

# IS JESUS THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL?

## PART 1 – A TEACHING OF JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES

### THE ORIGINAL BELIEF: JESUS WAS NEVER MICHAEL

The *Watchtower* magazine of November **1879** on page 4 stated:

His [*Jesus*] *position* is contrasted with that of men and angels, as he is Lord of both, having ‘all power in heaven and earth.’ Hence it is said, ‘Let *all* God’s angels worship him;’ [***that must include Michael, the chief angel; hence, Michael is not the Son of God***] and the reason is, because he has ‘by *inheritance* obtained a more excellent name than they.’ (Bold and italic emphasis ours).

However, this does not mean that the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (WBTS) did not teach that Jesus pre-existed. Indeed they have always promoted a form of Arianism; whereby Jesus pre-existed as a spirit being. (Please see STUDY 13).

### THE CURRENT TEACHING IS ONLY GAINED BY INFERENCES

Likely the change came in the WBTS teaching, on the subject of who Michael was, after its founder Charles Russell had died. The teaching that Michael was the pre-human Jesus is what is currently taught by the WBTS and just as Trinitarians make inferences from certain Scriptures to arrive at the doctrine of the Trinity, so too, with modern-day Jehovah’s Witnesses concerning the teaching that Michael the archangel was the pre-existent Jesus. There is, however, no clear statement in Scripture that Jesus was previously Michael. The WBTS teaching is arrived at by combining the following texts: 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 12:2-12; 19:11-16; John 12:31; Jude 9; and Daniel 10:13, 12:1. So this too is a doctrine from inferences rather than from direct strong connections.

### THE WEAK CONNECTIONS

#### CONCERNING MICHAEL

**Daniel 10:13, 21 and 12:1** inform us that:

- “**Michael** was **one of the foremost** princes ...the prince of you people ... the great prince who is **standing in behalf of** your people.”

**Jude 9** informs us about: **the archangel Michael**.

**Revelation 12:7-10** informs us that: In the war in heaven **Michael** and **his angels fight the dragon** and defeat him. The dragon is thrown to the earth and then the kingdom of God and the authority of Christ come. This is the 5<sup>th</sup> and last mention of Michael.

#### CONCERNING JESUS

Revelation 19:11-16 informs us that: The one “called Faithful and True,” also called “The Word of God,” strikes **the nations** and wars with “**the wild beast** and the **kings** of the earth and their **armies**.” He kills off “**the rest**” with the long sword.

**1 Thessalonians 4:16** informs us that:

- “...the Lord [*Jesus*] himself will descend from heaven with **a commanding call**, with **an archangel’s voice** and with **God’s trumpet**, and those who are dead in union with Christ will rise first.”

## THE ASSUMPTIONS AND INFERENCES MADE BY JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES:

1. That an archangel is a completely different creature to an angel.
2. That there is only one archangel – Michael.
3. That because the name Michael means “who is like God” then Michael must be the pre-human Jesus because that name means “Jehovah is salvation.”
4. That in Daniel 12 it must be Jesus “who is standing in behalf of [*God's*] people.”
5. That because Michael is “the great prince” only he could descend with a commanding call and with an archangel's voice.
6. That only Jesus could defeat the dragon and the connection is made to John 12:31 which informs us that: “now the ruler of this world will be cast out.”
7. That Jesus must be Michael because they both have troops
8. That the Son of God had a pre-human existence. (Please see STUDY 14 “WHEN DID THE SON OF GOD COME INTO EXISTENCE?”)

These eight assumptions will be examined point by point below:

### AN ARCHANGEL IS AN ANGEL

An archangel is an angel but of higher rank and acts as chief over his own body of angels. To illustrate: a chief engineer is still an engineer but in charge of other engineers. Or an alpha-male gorilla is still a gorilla. The idea that an archangel is a different creature to other angels is never stated in the Scriptures.

### THERE IS MORE THAN ONE ARCHANGEL

- “Michael, **one** of the **foremost** (Heb. *rishown*) princes” (Dan. 10:13). Or, as in most translations: “Michael, **one** of the **chief** princes” ESV.

This verse clearly shows that there must be other “chief princes.” The Hebrew word *rishown* means “chief” and is translated in Greek as *arche* and therefore **verse 10 is speaking of “arch-princes.”** With Jude 9 calling him “Michael the archangel” and with Daniel 10:3 clearly showing that Michael is an angel it is clear that he is “**one of the arch-princes**” i.e. ‘**one of the archangels.**’ **This grammatical pattern is no different to when a person introduces himself as “one of Jehovah’s Witnesses.” He or she clearly is one out of millions of other Witnesses.**

Furthermore, the fact that 1 Thessalonians 4:16 speaks of “**an** archangel’s voice” shows that there is more than one archangel. Although only Michael and Gabriel are the only named angels in the Scriptures it was a common Jewish belief that there were seven named archangels, four of whom stood in God’s presence. An examination, in Scripture, of the duties and activities of Gabriel show him also to be an archangel i.e. one who “stands near before God” even though he is not called an archangel.

NOTE: The fact that Jude 9 calls him “Michael the archangel” does not mean that he is the only archangel. Jude is simply referring to that particular archangel, as for example ‘John the mechanic’ is not the only existing mechanic.

BECAUSE THE NAME MICHAEL MEANS “WHO IS LIKE GOD?”  
AND THE NAME JESUS MEANS “JEHOVAH IS SALVATION”  
MUST THEY BE THE SAME PERSON?

The argument that Jesus was previously the archangel Michael because of similarity of the meanings of their names is a false argument because these meanings are not all that close. In the Scriptures, there are **10 humans named Michael** as well as Saul’s daughter Michal whose name also means “Who is Like God.” Yet, having this name hardly means that they were all pre-human Jesus.’ Furthermore, there were **another three Jesus’** in the Bible record as well as Joshua, Jehoshua and Jeshaiiah all of which names have the same meaning of “Jehovah is salvation;” yet again none of these was Michael in a pre-human existence. Certainly there are many other names in the Scriptures of different individuals who have names similar in meaning to that of Jesus and equally glorify God e.g. Jeremiah = “Jehovah Exalts,” Jehoram = Jehovah is Exalted,” and Jehu = “Jehovah is He.” Similarly for Michael e.g. Micaiah = “Who is Like Jehovah?” So the idea that only Michael takes the lead in upholding God’s sovereignty and therefore he must be Jesus who does the same is made completely null and void by these facts.

DERELICTION OF DUTY WHEN JESUS FAILS IN “STANDING IN  
BEHALF” OF GOD’S PEOPLE

➤ “Michael...the great prince who is **standing in behalf** of your people” (**Dan. 12:1**).

The Hebrew Interlinear translates as “*the one protecting over...*” *NASB gives “who stands guard over...”* So if Michael left his post to become Jesus for about 33 years he would have been guilty of dereliction of duty. Nowhere in the Scriptures is it stated that someone else was assigned to protect Israel during this period, something that Jesus certainly wasn’t doing.

“WITH A COMMANDING CALL AND THE VOICE OF AN ARCHANGEL”  
DOES NOT MEAN JESUS IS AN ARCHANGEL

First Thessalonians 4:16 most likely is giving a metaphorical description of the power of Jesus’ voice when he returns e.g. like the roar of a lion. Three point phrases were commonly used in Hebrew for emphasis and intensification. So the phrase “with **a commanding call**, with **an archangel’s voice** and with **God’s trumpet**” works the same way. This would then indicate that Jesus will come with great power and authority as is stated in other Scriptures (Matt 24:30, 31). Or, possibly, *the commanding call*, trumpet and **voice** are literally the voice of an accompanying archangel, indicated by the fact that “the Lord descends **with...**” In either case **Michael is not mentioned**. Furthermore, 1 Thess. 4:13-18 is about a sequence of events rather than about **the nature of Jesus**. The *IVP Bible Background Commentary* states that:

Michael, the chief archangel of Jewish literature, was considered Israel’s guardian angel and thus figures in Jewish texts about the final battle; here Jesus seems to assume Michael’s role on behalf of believers, God’s people p. 593.

However, Jesus cannot possibly actually be Michael for the reasons stated in Hebrews 1 and the further reasons given below.

## CAN ONLY JESUS THROW SATAN OUT OF HEAVEN?

Throughout the book of Revelation a variety of ordinary angels are shown to have significant roles in God's purpose. For instance:

- “...**another angel** emerged from the temple that is in heaven, he, too, having a sharp sickle ... put your sharp sickle in and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, and he **hurled it into the winepress of the anger of God**” (Rev. 14:17).
- This angel is not even described as an archangel so there is no reason why Michael could not be assigned to hurl Satan out of heaven.
- Even the locking away of Satan for the 1,000 years is done by “an angel” (Rev. 20:1).
- Jesus comes onto the time-of-the-end scene in Revelation 19 where his battle is, not with Satan, but with the wild beast, the false prophet and their armies.

## MUST THE EXALTED JESUS BE MICHAEL JUST BECAUSE THEY BOTH HAVE TROOPS OF ANGELS?

The WBTS' book entitled *What does the Bible Teach?* says on p.219:

Since God's Word nowhere indicates that there are two armies of faithful angels in heaven—one headed by Michael and one headed by Jesus—it is logical to conclude that Michael is none other than Jesus Christ in his heavenly role.

- “And war broke out *in heaven*: **Michael and his angels** battled with the dragon, and the dragon and its angels battled ... *Satan...and his angels* were hurled down with him” (Rev. 12:7, 9).

In all of the Scriptures it is only in this passage that Michael is mentioned as having his own angels; whereas Jesus is mentioned as having his own angels in four passages:

- “...but, to YOU who suffer tribulation, relief along with us at the revelation of the Lord **Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels** in a flaming fire, as he brings vengeance upon those who do not know God and **those who do not obey the good** news about our Lord Jesus. These very ones will undergo the judicial punishment of everlasting **destruction** from before the Lord and from the glory of his strength, **at the time he comes to be glorified** in connection with his holy ones and to be regarded in that day with wonder in connection with all those who exercised faith...” (2 Thess. 1:7-10).

The other passages that relate to Jesus in action with his own angels are Revelation 19:14-16; Matthew 16:27; and 24:31 and, along with 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10, they all relate to the same occasion of Jesus' return.

### **A.** DIFFERENCE IN TIME, LOCATION AND SITUATION

So the first thing to recognize is that the passage concerning Michael concerns a different occasion of a different situation in a different location. So comparing this with 2 Thessalonians 2:7-10 we find that:

- Michael is shown to be *in heaven*; whereas Jesus is revealed *from heaven* i.e. descending toward earth.
- Michael is shown to be fighting a war *against Satan*; whereas Jesus comes to *destroy wicked humans*.

- Michael's actions take place *at the beginning of* the approximately 3½ year Great Tribulation; whereas Jesus' actions take place *at the end of* the Great Tribulation (Please see STUDY 4, JESUS DID NOT RETURN IN 1914).

These factors concerning Jesus and his angels are similarly demonstrated in Revelation 19:14-16; Matthew 16:27; and 24:31. So from these factors there is no logical reason to conclude that Michael and Jesus are one and the same person.

### **B.** FAITHFUL ARMIES (PLURAL) OF ANGELS

Secondly, we note that God is called "Jehovah of armies" and therefore He is not restricted to one faithful army. In contradiction of the above quoted WBTS statement from the book *What does the Bible Teach?* Volume 1 of *Insight on the Scriptures* on the subject of 'Army' in relation to angels says:

Heavenly armies in the sense of well-organized multitudes...The expression "Jehovah of armies" occurs 283 times in the Hebrew Scriptures...angelic warriors...Jehovah's invisible armies... p. 176.

So evidently there can be numbers of armies (plural) of faithful angels and it seems that when Jesus returns he does not lead just one army because we read that: "the **armies** of heaven... were following him (Rev. 19:14).

### **C.** DID MICHAEL ONLY HAVE ANGELS AFTER JESUS' RESURRECTION?

Jesus is never shown to have his own angels prior to his resurrection. At his arrest he would have had to ask his Father for help from angels:

- "Do you think that I cannot appeal to *my Father* to supply me with at this moment more than twelve legions of angels" (**Matt. 26:53**).

However, although it is only in Revelation 12 that Michael is spoken of as being with his angels, it is clear that he had them with himself at least back to the time of Moses' death (Jude 9) because he is called an "archangel" i.e. one who is chief over angels and is one of the angelic "foremost princes" (Dan. 10:13, 14).

#### SUMMARY

So for the WBTS to say that: "God's Word nowhere indicates that there are two armies of faithful angels in heaven" is a significant assumption and it is clearly, from this, *not* "logical to conclude that Michael is none other than Jesus Christ in his heavenly role." The entire WBTS statement is trying to force a connection which simply isn't there. It is an assumption that can be compared to saying that Moses and Joshua were the same person because they were both leaders of ancient Israel. Simply a common factor about two people cannot be used to make them into the same person. Furthermore, Part 2 of this study shows that Jesus was never an angel and therefore never an archangel.

#### AN ASSUMPTION THAT THERE WAS A PRE-HUMAN EXISTENCE

It is axiomatic that one cannot be pre-human and human and still be the same person. Literal pre-existence is not taught in the Scriptures although a number of individuals were foreordained i.e. were in existence in God's thoughts before they came into literal existence. The idea of literal pre-existence is of pagan origin, in particular from Greek mythology. It is properly termed incarnation (enfleshment) which turns a spirit person into human flesh. (Please see STUDY 14 "WHEN DID THE SON OF GOD COME INTO EXISTENCE"?).

## PART 2 – WHY JESUS CANNOT BE MICHAEL

1. Just as the gospel accounts never record Jesus calling himself ‘God,’ so too, he never calls himself ‘Michael’ and never says that he previously was Michael or an archangel.
2. Nowhere in Scripture is Michael called “the Son of God” as though he were unique in this respect. Nevertheless, as with all other angels, he was one of “the sons of God” (Gen. 6:2; Job 1:6, 2:1, and 38:7).
3. Nowhere in Scripture is there even a hint that Michael left heaven to become Jesus.
4. Nowhere in Scripture is there even a hint that Jesus, in going to heaven, resumed a supposed identity as Michael. He is always called by combinations of the terms *Jesus* and *Christ* after his arrival in heaven. The WBTS argument that the post-ascension retaining of the name *Jesus* to show his identity with the Son of God on earth is extremely weak.
5. Throughout the Christian Greek Scriptures Jesus is called “a man” i.e. ‘a human being’ both on earth and in heaven.
6. The early parts of the Gospel accounts of Matthew, Luke and John are about the origin of Jesus. These would all be the perfect places to reveal that an archangel was about to leave or had left heaven to take on human form. However, none of these writers took this perfect opportunity. In saying that “the word became flesh” (John 1:14) John could have made it clear by naming Michael if “the word” really was Michael. However, even Jesus isn’t directly mentioned until verse 17.

### ANGELS CANNOT DIE - BUT JESUS DIED

As shown earlier, an archangel is an angel but of higher rank and acts as chief over his own body of angels. However, contrary to WBTS teaching angels are immortal. So:

#### *MICHAEL IS IMMORTAL*

➤ “...those [*i.e. resurrected Christians*]...neither marry...**neither** can they **die anymore**, for they are like the angels” (Luke 20:35, 36).

Just as “Christ...**dies no more**” (Rom. 6:9) because he was granted immortality so too God’s *holy* angels (Mark 8:38) were earlier granted immortality and cannot die. This implies that Michael, too, had been granted immortality before Jesus’ time. Since immortal beings have no need of procreation to replace their kind they do not need marriage.

NOTE: Similar to the KJV the NWT has failed to include the word “for” which gives the reason why resurrected Christians will no longer marry, namely, “**because** they can no longer die.”

ESV renders as: “...**for** they cannot die any more, because they are equal to angels.”

NJB renders as: “...**because** they can no longer die, for they are the same as angels.”

#### *AS A MORTAL JESUS WAS ALWAYS SUBJECT TO DEATH AND DIED*

➤ “...Christ...**dies no more**...death is *no longer* master over him” (Rom. 6:9).

In contrast to the angels, Jesus, before his resurrection was always subject to death and, of course, he died a real death. So it is impossible that an immortal Michael, an angel, could become a mortal human and then **die on the execution stake**. Jesus was only granted immortality at his resurrection when he became “the firstborn from the dead” (Col 1:18, Rev 1:5). These facts indicate that Jesus could never have previously been Michael.



## THE SCRIPTURES DIFFERENTIATE JESUS FROM ALL ANGELS

Throughout Hebrews chapters 1 and 2 angels, and therefore archangels, are compared with the exalted Jesus and are shown to be inferior. This comparison must, of course, include the archangel Michael:

### *JESUS IS SUPERIOR TO ALL ANGELS – INCLUDING ARCHANGELS*

- “So he [*the Son*] **has become** better than the *angels*, as he **has inherited** a more excellent name than they” (**Heb. 1:4**).

If Jesus was not better than the angels before his exaltation, he could not previously have been an archangel, because such an angel would be in charge of a body of angels. (see 1 Peter 3:22).

### *MICHAEL COULD NOT BE CALLED “MY SON”*

- “...to **which one of the angels** did he *ever* say: ‘You are my **Son**’” (**Heb. 1:5**).

Therefore things said to the Son were never said to Michael — an angel. God has never addressed any angel as *my son*. So Michael was never the Only-begotten Son i.e. the uniquely begotten Son. This clearly shows that Jesus and Michael are different persons.

### *MICHAEL IS A PUBLIC SERVANT – JESUS IS KING*

- “...with reference to the angels” as “**public servants**”... *is contrasted with* ...“but with reference to the Son: God is your throne forever and ever, and the **sceptre of your kingdom** is the sceptre of uprightness...” (**Heb. 1:7, 8**).

So although being in charge of other angels, it is evident that Michael is a public servant as specifically shown in Daniel 10:13; 12:1.

### *NO ARCHANGEL SITS AT GOD’S RIGHT HAND*

- “But with reference to **which one of the angels** has he ever said: ‘**sit at my right hand**, until I place your enemies as a stool for your feet’” (**Heb. 1:13**).

In contrast to this fact that **no** angel, and therefore **no archangel**, sits at God’s right hand, Jesus does currently sit at God’s right hand (Matt. 22:44; Acts 2:33, 34). It is clear that an archangel is simply an angel in a superior position to that of other angels. This, again, clearly shows that Jesus and Michael are different persons.

### *NO ARCHANGEL HAS THE EARTH SUBJECTED TO HIM*

- “For it is not to angels that He has *subjected the inhabited earth to come*....What is man...or the Son of Man...You...have **appointed him** over the works of Your hands; You have put all things **in subjection** under **his feet**” (**Heb. 2:5-7**).

So Michael is not to have the inhabited earth brought into subjection to himself. This is reserved for Jesus the Son of Man. If the author of Hebrews thought that Jesus is the archangel why does he labour to prove that Jesus is superior to angels, to Moses, to Joshua and to Levi? All he needed to say was that Jesus is the archangel, thereby, automatically making him superior.

### *ARCHANGELS WERE ONLY EVER SUBJECT TO JESUS’ AFTER HIS RESURRECTION*

- “...through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He is at God’s right hand, for he went his way to heaven; and **the angels** and authorities and powers **were made subject to him**”  
(**1 Pet. 3:21, 22**).

This means that Jesus never held authority over angels until after his resurrection and so could not previously have been an archangel. This was why he would have had to ask his Father for 12 legions of angels if needed at the occasion of his arrest (Matt. 26:53).

However, some may argue that Jesus simply resumed his previous authority over the angels and that this text simply doesn't mention it; yet neither do the rest of the Scriptures. So there is no indication in any Scripture that Jesus previously held authority over any angel. In fact, because Michael is an angel this verse shows that even he is now subject to Christ Jesus.

#### JESUS DIFFERENTIATES HIMSELF FROM THE ANGELS

- “Concerning that day and hour, nobody knows, neither **the angels** of the heavens **nor the Son**” (Matt. 24: 36). So Michael, who is indeed of the category of angel, lacks this knowledge just as “**the Son**” does.

#### JESUS HAS AUTHORITY TO REBUKE WHEREAS MICHAEL DOES NOT

##### **Jesus:**

At the temptation in the wilderness Jesus used the Scriptures to **rebuke Satan** (Luke 4:1-13). Later he rebuked demons and Peter:

- “Then Jesus rebuked it, and **the demon** came out of him...” (Matt. 17:18).
- “He [*Jesus*] turned... rebuked **Peter**, and said: ‘Get behind me **Satan...**’” (Mark 8:3).

##### **Michael:**

- “But when Michael the archangel...did not dare bring a judgment against him [*the Devil*] in abusive terms, but said: ‘May **Jehovah rebuke you**’” (Jude 9).

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#### APPENDIX

#### JESUS WAS NOT THE ANGEL THAT APPEARED TO JOSHUA

There is no linguistic or logical connection between *the angel* who appeared to Joshua as: “**the prince** of the army of Jehovah” in *Joshua 5:14* and “Messiah **the Leader**” in *Daniel 9:25*. Two different Hebrew words are used. Only by assumption could any connection be made.

##### *JESUS WAS NEVER AN ANGEL*

- “...with reference to the angels”... *is contrasted with* ...“but with reference to the Son” (Heb. 1:7, 8).
- “So he [*the Son*] **has become** better than the *angels*, as he **has inherited** a more excellent name than they ... to which one of the **angels** did he *ever* say: ‘You are my **Son**’” (Heb. 1:4, 5).
- “For it is **not to angels** that He has *subjected the inhabited earth to come* ... What is man...or **the Son of Man**...You...have **appointed him** over the works of Your hands; You have put all things **in subjection** under **his feet**” (Heb. 2:5-7).

Therefore things said to the Son were never said to any angel. God has never addressed an angel as *my son*. So no angel was ever the Only-begotten Son i.e. the uniquely begotten Son of Man to whom the earth will be subjected and not to any angel.



## THE RAINBOWED ANGEL OF REVELATION 10:1 IS NOT CHRIST

Hebrews chapter 1 shows the great difference between all angels and Christ. The rainbowed angel is described as “*another strong angel.*” Earlier a strong angel is noted in Revelation 5:2. The description in Revelation 10:1 is not the same as the description of Christ in Revelation 1:13-16. The differences are that Jesus has:

A golden sash.  
Eyes that are flames of fire.  
A voice like the sound of many waters.  
A sharp 2 edged sword protruding from his mouth.  
He holds 7 stars.

The only similarity with the angel is that he has a face like the sun, (*yet the woman of chapter 12 and the angel of 19:17 are also associated with the sun*). This angel’s appearance displays the glory of God and Christ and he is likely a special angelic herald of Christ, but he cannot actually be Christ. Again the WBTS has assumed that because there is a similarity the two must be the same person. This is not sensible thinking.

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Because Michael is “**one of** the foremost princes” (Dan. 10:13) we can see through the false assumptions that Michael is the only archangel and that he is a completely different creature to other angels. After removing these false assumptions from our minds it becomes clear from the biblical record that:

- In the letter to the Hebrews no archangel ever sits at God’s right hand, or has the earth made subject to him, or is called by God “my son” – all privileges granted only to Jesus.
- The letter to the Hebrews shows that Michael (a public servant) is contrasted with Jesus (now king), and Jesus “**has inherited** a name more excellent than” the name Michael and so making him superior to Michael.
- Also, whereas Michael has authority over other angels at least as far back as Daniel’s time, Jesus has such authority only after his exaltation to God’s right hand.
- In Matthew 24:36 Jesus differentiates himself as “the Son” from the angels and therefore is differentiated from any archangel.
- Jesus never says that he previously was Michael or an archangel.
- Michael is never called “the Son of God.”
- No Scripture even hints that Michael left heaven to become Jesus.
- No Scripture even hints that Jesus resumed a supposed identity as Michael.
- Jesus is called “a man” rather than an archangel after his exaltation to God’s right hand.
- In the birth narratives in Matthew and Luke there is no mention of an archangel becoming the human Jesus. These narratives show that Jesus only came into existence at his birth.

- Contrary to WBTS teaching, archangels cannot die (Luke 20:36) whereas Jesus obviously died.

In conjunction with the fact that Jesus did not have a pre-human existence (please see STUDIES 13 and 14) it is evident from the Scriptures that Jesus and Michael are two entirely different persons.

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