

changed gospel resulting in "classes" of Christians based on certain dates calculated alongside their "Gentile times" chronology. In this way error has been heaped upon error with grave consequences for those putting their trust in these things.

The current Watchtower makes it clear that they are not repentant in all of this. It appears that they are preparing Jehovah's Witnesses for yet another failed

prediction and giving them the word as to how to respond when this matter comes up, namely, that it is better to prophesy error due to "over-eagerness to see God's purposes accomplished" (page 18, par. 14), than to be spiritually asleep. In this way the Watchtower Society places the Witnesses on the horns of a false dilemma. It is nothing more than flawed human logic that has been allowed to supplant sound biblical truth. □

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## ***Is Michael the "Great Prince" Jesus Christ?***

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The Watchtower, December 15, 1984 has a fourpage article: "'Michael the Great Prince,' \_\_\_ \Vhb Is He'?" The final paragraph gives the publisher's answer to the question raised in the title: "Hence, the fact that Michael is the archangel, chief of the angels, the fact that he stands up to rule as King, and the fact that he takes the lead in casting Satan out of heaven at the time of the birth of God's Kingdom all lead us to just one conclusion: 'Michael the Great Prince' is none other than Jesus Christ himself-Daniel 12: 1." (Page 29, par. 7)

The evidence presented by the Society regarding the identification of Michael the archangel as being "none other than Jesus Christ himself," is all circumstantial evidence. While circumstantial evidence is not to be ignored, care must be taken not to read into that evidence more than it suggests. That the Society is guilty of doing this in this article will be demonstrated. Once a premise is laid, any number of conclusions may be reached or "proved" as true. However, if the premise is faulty then conclusions based on that premise will also be faulty. It is submitted here that the premise presented in the above named article is very faulty due to the fact that it is founded on a number of assumptions and misuse of the Bible.

In the second paragraph on page 26, the Society states that most religions "view Michael as one of several archangels, as if there were more than one archangel. In view of this, is the teaching of Jehovah's Witnesses correct? What does the Bible say about Michael?" This is an excellent question because for one to conclude, with no reservations, that Jesus Christ and Michael the archangel are one and the same the Bible would have to be most specific. Just how specific and direct is the Bible on this matter? Or, as *The Watchtower* put it: "What does the Bible say about Michael?"

The first mention of Michael is Daniello: 13. After an extended period of fasting, the prophet Daniel is visited by an angel who reassures him that his words have been heard and that he has come in response to Daniel's prayers: "But the prince of the royal realm of Persia was standing in opposition to me for twenty-one days, and look! Michael, one of the foremost princes, came to help me; and I, for my part, remained there beside the kings of Persia." -Daniello: 13 *NW*. "However, I shall tell you the things noted down in the writing of truth, and there is no one holding strongly with me in these things but Michael, the prince of you people." -Daniel 10:21 *NW*

If we limit ourselves to just what the Scriptures above say we can rightly conclude that Michael was a powerful, angelic being-"one of the foremost princes." He was also a patron of the Jewish people in exile-"the prince of you people." *The Watchtower*, however, goes far beyond these conclusions in their interpretation of these verses:

"Since Michael is also a champion of God's people, we have reason to identify him with the unnamed angel that God sent ahead of the Israelites hundreds of years before: 'Here I am, sending an angel ahead of you to keep you on the road and to bring you into the place that I have prepared. Watch yourself because of him and obey his voice. Do not behave rebelliously against him, for he will not pardon your transgression; because my name is in him.'" -Exodus 23:20, 21 (Page 27, par. 1)

Was Michael the "unnamed angel" referred to in Exodus 23? The Bible does not say. To insist that it was Michael is nothing more than an assumption. They then proceed to link the "unnamed angel" with the Son of God: "Is there anything here to make us believe that Michael and Jesus Christ are the same person? Well, Jesus is called 'the Word,' (John 1: 1) He is God's

spokesman. This angelic messenger, too, was clearly God's chief spokesman to the Israelites." (Page 27, par. 3)

The only connection between Jesus Christ, Michael and the unnamed angel is that they all speak authoritatively for God. How does that lead us to conclude that they must all be one and the same? When any of the loyal angels act or speak, do they not do so with the full authority of the God who sent them? Without any direct evidence *The Watchtower* has identified Michael as Jesus Christ and established the premise for what it further says. All of this is based on assumptive reasoning which is not a sound basis for establishing a Scriptural teaching. If we limit ourselves to what the Scriptures say and avoid reading into them things they do not say, we can avoid relying on human reasoning and logic. The latter are the real basis for the Society's conclusions regarding the identity of Michael.

The next mention of Michael is in Daniel 12: 1 "And during that time Michael will stand up, the great prince who is standing in behalf of the sons of your people." Attention is focused by *The Watchtower* on the expression "Michael will stand up" with considerable significance. And what is that significance? They answer: "Well, in other parts of this same prophecy, the term 'stand up,' means that the person assumes authority to rule as a king. (Daniel 11 :3,4,7,20,2 I) Hence, when Michael 'stands up' he too, starts to rule as a king. Consider the implications of this. Before Daniel died, the last Jewish king, Zedekiah, had been deposed. There would be no Jewish king for centuries to come. Daniel's prophecy showed that one day in the future God's people would once again have a king-Michael." (Page 27, pars. 5,6)

Does the expression "stands up" mean "the person assumes authority to rule as a king"? No, it does not. To "stand" or "stand up" in these verses and the broader context of Daniel simply means to act or take a position. The term is not used as a synonym for enthronement. Those kings who are said to "stand up" are clearly identified as kings. Because someone is said to "stand up" does not warrant our concluding he or they are thus made kings unless the context tells us so. Otherwise, to be consistent, we would have to say that all those who are said to "stand up" are kings if that is what the expression is intended to mean.

Consider the following with that thought in mind: " And the king of the south will embitter himself and will

have to go forth and fight with him (that is) with the king of the north; and he will certainly have a *large crowd stand up*. And the crowd will actually be given into the hand of that one. "-Daniel 11: 11 *NW*. Are we to conclude that this large crowd all became kings because they "stand up"? Hardly.

To conclude that Michael's "standing up in behalf of the sons of your people" (Daniel 12: 1) proves that he is the king of promise (Ezekiel 21: 25-27) is premised on assumptive reasoning-not sound biblical exegesis. The Bible tells us nothing about Michael being made a king nor does it imply such a thing. His standing up on behalf of God's people is self-explanatory. He stands up or acts on behalf of and in defense of the people of God.

Albert Barnes, in his *Notes on the Old Testament* offers the following comments on Daniel 12: 1 regarding Michael's "standing up" for God's people:

"That is, he shall interpose; he shall come forth to render aid. This does not mean necessarily that he would visibly appear, but that he would in fact interpose. In the time of great distress and trouble, there would be supernatural or angelic aid rendered to the people of God."

Having made Michael a king, the Watchtower Society applies Daniel 7: 13, 14 to him: "I kept on beholding in the visions of the night, and .see there! ~with the clouds of the heavens someone like a son of man happened to be coming; and to the Ancient of Days he gained access, and they brought him up close even before that One. And to him there were given rulership and dignity and kingdom that the peoples, national groups and languages should all serve even him. His rulership is an indefinitely lasting rulership that will not pass away, and his kingdom one that will not be brought to ruin." -Daniel 7: 13, 14 *NW*.

There is nothing to suggest in the context that this should be applied to Michael. All the prophetic scriptures regarding the everlasting kingdom focus on Jesus Christ as king and priest. When did Jesus Christ begin his reign as King-Priest? That he would reign as both Priest and King is clearly shown in Psalm 110: 1-4. The apostle Peter quotes from this Psalm in his speech on the day of Pentecost and applies the fulfillment as taking place at Jesus' resurrection and ascension to heaven. (Acts 2:29-36) It was at this time that he began his reign as King-Priest "in the midst of his enemies. "

This reign would continue until all his enemies were put down. During this day of salvation he has proved himself a conquering monarch and has already broken the power of Satan over God's people by his death and resurrection. The apostle Paul shows that the final conquest comes at the Lord's return to raise the dead and judge the human race: "For just as in Adam all are dying, so also in the Christ all will be made alive. But each one in his own rank. Christ the first-fruits, afterward those who belong to the Christ during his presence. Next, the end, when he hands over the kingdom to his God and Father, when he has brought to nothing all government and all authority and power. For he must rule as king until God has put all enemies under his feet. As the last enemy, death is to be brought to nothing." -1 Corinthians 15:22-26

When the Lord manifests himself as judge of the living and the dead he will ultimately climax his reign by destroying the "last enemy, death." All through the gospel age he has ruled as King-Priest after the order of Melchizedek. (Psalm 110:4) The Watchtower Society, while acknowledging that Jesus Christ has functioned as high priest since his resurrection and has ruled as king over his congregation they deny that he has also ruled over the world-at-large. However the Scriptures make no such distinction. His authority has not been limited just to his congregation. He has ruled *in the midst of his enemies* as well-those who recognize neither his priesthood or kingship. The world's failure to recognize his sovereignty doesn't change the fact that he exercises all authority.

The Watchtower Society sets forth October 1, 1914 (when he supposedly returned invisibly) as the beginning of the Lord's reign in the midst of his enemies. But this is based on nothing more substantial than their date-setting legacy inherited from Charles T. Russell's 19th-century speculations up-dated because the outworking of history proved them untrue.

In the inspired Christian Writings Michael is called the archangel. (Jude 9) *The Watchtower* says the following about this: "We learn from Jude that Michael has the post of archangel. In fact he was *the* archangel, since no other archangel is mentioned in the Bible, nor does the Bible use 'archangel' in the plural. 'Archangel' means 'Chief of the angels.' (*Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*). Among God's spirit servants, only two names are associated with authority over angels: Michael and Jesus Christ. (Matthew 16:27; 25:31, 2 Thessalonians 1:7) This,

too, argues that Jesus and Michael are the same." (Page 28, par. 2).

For the record, the Bible does not say there is but one archangel. What we know for sure is that there is only one named in scripture. We remember that Michael was called "one of the chief princes" -not the chief prince. There could be more archangels but the Bible is silent about this just as it is silent as to saying there is but one. When the Lord returns he is accompanied by the heavenly hosts including any archangels there may be. (2 Thess. 1:7) The scripture at 1 Thessalonians 4:16 speaks of the Lord descending from heaven "with a commanding call, with *an* (not *the*) archangel's voice and with God's trumpet, and those who are dead in union with Christ will rise first"

This picturesque language depicts the power invested in the conquering Lord. On this *The Watchtower* says: "only an archangel can call with an archangel's voice!" (Page 28, par. 4)~ If that be the case then they ought to conclude that he is God because he comes with "God's trumpet." With the same logic one could say: "only God can have God's trumpet! "

In conclusion *The Watchtower* deals with the objection by some of ranking the glorified Lord with the angels. They point to Hebrews 1:4 and write:

"However, this describes his situation after his having been here on earth. He was still the archangel and 'the beginning of the creation by God.' (Revelation 3:14) But he became better than the angels. The 'more excellent name' or position is something he did not possess before coming to earth." (Page 29, par. 6)

The pre-human one who became Jesus Christ is said to have been the one through whom God created all things. (Hebrews 1:2) All things would include angels. This means he existed *before* the angels. His position alongside the Father was a unique one. He is not presented in Scripture as the first of many but, rather, as a one and only. (John 1:1-3) From the beginning his ranking has been *above* the angels. This one was made a little lower than angels when he was made flesh and then exalted above the angels once more upon his resurrection with an even greater name.

The first chapter of Hebrews, including verse 4, shows that the writer is arguing for the vast superiority of the Son of God over any angel. He is not ranked with angels but with God and is called "the perfect copy of his (God's) nature." (Hebrews 1:3 *Jerusalem Bible*)

The Society says that God told Michael the archangel to "sit at my right hand" but the writer of Hebrews contradicts this by saying: "God has never said to any angel: 'Sit at my right hand and I will make your enemies a footstool for you.' The truth is they are all spirits whose work: is service, sent to help those who will be heirs of salvation." -Hebrews 1: 13, 14 *Jerusalem Bible*.

Consider also the fact that Michael, the archangel, was in existence when the prophecy recorded at Psalms 110:14 was given. If God had Michael in mind at the time he inspired David to write this psalm he was saying these things about an angel-Michael! But the writer of the letter of Hebrews specifically says that God never spoke these words to an angel!

There is a uniqueness about the Word made flesh which separates him from creation. We are told that "by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities. All things were, created by him and for him." -Col 1: 16 *MV*. The *New World Translation* inserts the word [other] four times in verses 16 and 17 but the word other is not found in the Greek: text. In their passion to be different the directors of the Watchtower Society seem compelled to conjure up radical concepts to put themselves at odds with all other Christian teachers. In their quest to be different they have often fallen victim of sectarianism, the very thing they condemn in others. Such teachings unnecessarily divides the body of Christ .□