

SALVATION IN SYMBOLS & SIGNS

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Corresponds to Program 51

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the NKJV and KJV.

Short Time STUDY GUIDE

We will begin this study by answering a couple of viewer questions.

Question 1—What altar is pictured in Revelation 8:3?

Answer—There are actually two altars in Revelation 8:3.

The first altar mentioned represents the altar of sacrifice that was in the courtyard of the earthly sanctuary. This altar is a symbol of the cross where the Lamb was slain for our sin. It is simply called the “altar.” The Bible identifies this altar in Hebrews:

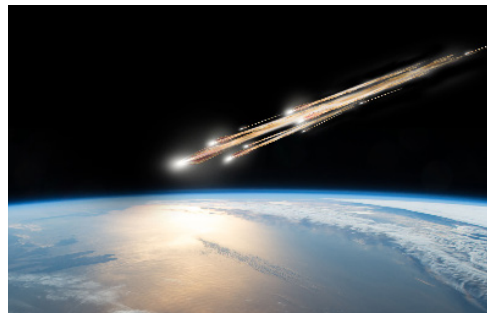
“We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate.” (Hebrews 13:10-12).

The second altar mentioned in Revelation 8:3 is called “the golden altar.” This is the altar of incense that was in the holy place of the sanctuary. When Christ ascended to Heaven, He began His intercessory ministry in the Holy Place of the heavenly Sanctuary. This golden altar of incense represents the intercessory work of Christ as our High Priest in Heaven, beginning in the Holy Place of the heavenly Sanctuary (Exodus 40:26; Hebrews 8:1, 2). This “golden altar” of incense represents Christ applying His perfect salvation merit mingled with our every prayer, rendering our prayers acceptable to God. The Bible identifies Christ’s sacrifice as sweet-smelling incense:

“And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.” (Ephesians 5:2).

Summary of Revelation 8:3-5

The imagery of Revelation 8:3-5 is a symbolic depiction of the sacrifice Christ made for our sins, and of His transition from this earth to the holy place of the heavenly Sanctuary. At His ascension, Christ began His intercessory work as our High Priest offering up the sacrificial merit of His life and death with our prayers. Shortly after Christ began this work, the promised Holy Spirit was poured out upon the praying believers in Jerusalem in the form of “tongues, as of fire” depicted in Revelation 8:5 as “fire from the altar” (Acts 2:3-4; Isaiah 6:1-8).



“...Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.”

REVELATION 12:12

Michael’s Identity

Question 2—Who is Michael in Revelation 12:7-8?

Answer—The Bible is very clear that Christ is God the Son (John 1:1-3; Hebrews 1:1-10). He is also the Creator of all things and therefore not a created being. But who is Michael? Could the name Michael be one of Christ’s many titles? The name means “one who is like God.” Let’s consider if Michael’s activities parallel the activities of Christ. The first verse to consider is in the book of Jude. Note that this verse is the one by which many have concluded that Michael is an angel:

“Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, “The Lord rebuke you” (Jude 1:9).

Before we get into the definition of “archangel” and its use in the Bible, look carefully at the activity that is taking place here. There is only One being who can dispute with the devil over the eternal destiny of Moses or any soul—and it is not an angel.

KEY SCRIPTURES

John 12:31 NOW IS THE JUDGMENT OF THIS WORLD

Revelation 20:2 HE LAID HOLD OF THE DRAGON

2 Corinthians 4:9 PERSECUTED, BUT NOT FORSAKEN

Revelation 21:4 THERE SHALL BE NO MORE DEATH

The word “archangel” comes from a Greek word. Strong’s Concordance 743 defines archangel from the Greek as: ἀρχάγγελος, archaggelos (“ar-khang’-el-os”), meaning archangel, or chief of the angels.

Is Michael a created angel? Is it a correct biblical assumption based on His title? There is no place in the Bible where Michael is called or even described as an angel. The word “arch” means chief. Michael is chief of the angels, not an angel Himself. The fact that Michael is called the chief of the angels does not make Him a created angel any more than the president of the United States’ status as commander-in-chief of the military makes him an enlisted soldier. Michael is the archangel or the “chief of the angels.” He is over them. This truth is further illustrated in the following verse in Revelation:

“And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought,” (Revelation 12:7).

Here is another important truth. There is no place in the Bible where the term “archangel” is applied to an angel. It is not spoken of Lucifer, who was once a covering cherub (Ezekiel 28:14). Neither is it applied to Gabriel, who is the lead angel (Luke 1:19; Daniel 10:21). The term “archangel” is only spoken of Michael.

The prophet Daniel gives us clear evidence of the true identity of Michael. He describes Michael as “the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people” (Daniel 12:1). So Biblical evidence now reveals that Michael is the “great prince” who stands up for believers. (This lines up with what we saw in Jude where Michael is contending with the devil for the body of Moses). We might still insist that angels stand up for believers, but no angel is ever identified as the “great prince.” The combination of this title and the activity of standing for believers can refer to only One, and that is Christ, the only One who is equal with God and can be called the great Prince who stands for believers.

Daniel uses this “prince” terminology in several verses throughout his book. If we take a closer look at these verses and the person and activity they describe, we will find that they identify the work and person of Christ. Daniel describes Christ as “the Prince of princes” and the “Messiah the Prince” (Daniel 8:25; 9:25).

One of Daniel’s verses has the angel Gabriel calling Michael: “one of the chief princes” and “your prince” (Daniel 10:13, 21). This first verse has Michael helping Gabriel against the forces of evil and prevailing, as only Christ can. The Bible elsewhere describes Jesus in this same Princely term:

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder: and His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).

The term “archangel” is only used two times in the New Testament, the first time in relation to Michael, as noted earlier in the book of Jude. The second mention is in the context of the second coming of Christ:

“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first” (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

Notice this second use speaks of the “voice of the archangel” in connection with the resurrection. According to John 5:25, 28 Jesus says that His voice will bring the dead forth from the tomb:

“Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live” (John 5:25).

“Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice” (John 5:28).

The Bible says that the saints are resurrected by the voice of the archangel (the chief of the angels). Jesus says that His voice resurrects them. There is no contradiction here. Michael is Jesus, He is the chief of the angels—they are His angels—but that does not make Jesus an angel. Jesus Christ is God the Son. This clear Biblical identity of Michael in no way undermines the divinity of Christ. To reiterate, being the archangel does not make Christ a created being, any more than being a man makes Him less than God, nor taking the form of a dove made the Holy Spirit a bird, or appearing as a burning bush made God some kind of plant (see Philippians 2:5-9; Matthew 3:16; Exodus 3:4).

SHORT TIME

Revelation 12:12

When we compare the phrase “cast out,” found in John 12:31, 32, we find in this verse that the cross has revealed the self-sacrificing, other-centered love of God. It draws all to Calvary to witness the truth about God (John 17:3; 14:9). In this revelation, salvation has finally come through the promised Seed of the woman, Jesus Christ. The devil has been unmasked before the entire unfallen universe as a liar and murderer (John 8:44). God’s character is vindicated. The questions about God’s love, justice, and mercy are resolved by the cross, where we see the perfect blend of God’s justice and mercy.

In this context, the devil has just a short time before his final, full demise (Revelation 20). The only reason his existence continues is for our sake. Fallen man, as well as unfallen worlds, need to see the truth about God. We also must have the opportunity to understand God’s love in the context of His mercy and justice. Since the devil’s time is short and understanding God’s love at Calvary is vital for our salvation, the entire focus of the devil is Planet Earth and obscuring that love (2 Corinthians 4:1-12). The devil knows that his time is almost up, his

deceptive power is limited, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ is powerful. So even though it seems like there is a lot left to cover in Revelation's last 11 chapters, there isn't much prophetic history there except for the 1,000 years that we will be in Heaven. Soon, very soon, this entire diversion from God's original purpose will be over. Sin, evil, pain, suffering, and death will be destroyed (Revelation 21:1-4).

Revelation 12 is, in a sense, a summary of the entire Bible. The entire great controversy between Christ and the devil is "juiced down" in this one chapter. Revelation chapters 12-14 are really where the final events play out in the context of a summary of prophetic history, from the fall of Lucifer in Heaven to his final personal appearance as an angel of light pretending to be Christ (2 Corinthians 11:15).

Throughout prophetic history, the devil has been working through earthly powers, as noted in his attempt to destroy the infant Jesus through Herod (Matthew 2). In the very last deception, the devil throws off these earthly powers and comes in person as a false Christ (antichrist) performing miracles, teaching Bible truths, and claiming to have changed God's Ten Commandments, specifically the Seventh-day Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. Once he lays down this final deception, probation closes and the real Christ returns. That's why

the next 6 chapters of the book of Revelation are judgments from God.

- Revelation 15: The close of probation and preparation for the seven last plagues
- Revelation 16: The seven last plagues
- Revelation 17: Judgments on the harlot
- Revelation 18: Final salvation call to all the world before the judgments on Babylon
- Revelation 19: Judgments
- Revelation 20: Judgments conclude
- Revelation 21 and 22: New Heaven and New Earth

Final Movements:

Revelation chapters 12-14 give us a clear picture of the final players in the prophetic picture before the second coming of Jesus. Three major players bring all the kings of the earth into one final masterpiece of deception that will test God's people and bring a final end to sin and its consequences. As we continue to explore this final deception, its three main players will come clearly to the forefront. And we can be thankful that it will be just a short time before Jesus returns. Amen. ★

