

Archangel Michael

By David Feddes

One way to see the greatness and wonder of God as well as his goodness to us is by considering the heavenly beings that he's made. Today we're going to be focusing on the Archangel Michael. I'm going to focus first on Revelation chapter 12:7-9.

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.

Michael is called by several different titles or descriptions in the Bible. He is called "your prince" (Daniel 10:21) when God's people are being spoken of. Michael is also called "the great prince" (Daniel 12:1). Among various princes, Michael is the great prince. In the passage we've just read, he is the general of angels (Revelation 12:7), the commander of the angel forces. And in Jude 1:8, he is called "archangel." The archangel, "archon" is ruler or prince or a governing angel. Whatever title is used, Michael is a stupendously great spirit being.

Archangel Michael

- Ranks as heavenly prince
- Protects God's chosen people
- Leads angel armies under God
- Wins war against Satan's armies
- Triggers distress and deliverance
- Announces Jesus' return

We're going to look at several things about Michael that are revealed in the word of God. First of all, he ranks as a heavenly prince. Another is that he protects God's people. He leads the angel armies. He's under God, of course, so Michael is never the ultimate leader, but he's the one that God has put in command of the angel armies. Not only is he in command, he wins the war against Satan's armies. When the time of end comes and Michael arises to act in full power, it triggers distress such as the world has never seen before, but it also marks the final deliverance of all God's people in the coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead. When Michael arises, he announces the return of the king.

So let's look at some of the passages related to these things, and then we'll come back to this summary overview.

Archangel

Jude speaks of Michael as the archangel: "These dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority and slander glories [*doxas*, sometimes translated "heavenly beings"]. 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 1:8-9)

This passage that calls Michael "the archangel" is baffling and mysterious for a couple of reasons. What's this about Michael arguing or contending with the devil about the body of Moses? The Old Testament doesn't mention that. It simply says that when Moses died, God himself buried Moses and nobody knew exactly where the grave was (Deuteronomy 34:5-6). And yet it seems that when that happened, there was an argument. The devil contended about the body of Moses, and the mighty archangel Michael was involved in contending back.

Satan is the accuser, and it seems that he was contending whether Moses deserved an honorable burial at all. After all, Moses died, which meant he was a sinner. He died before entering the promised land because he had disobeyed God. God had told him on one occasion, "Now you are to speak to that rock, and God will bring water out of the rock for the people." But Moses was in a foul mood, so he yelled at the people and struck the rock with his rod. God did bring water out of the rock, but he said to Moses, "You are not allowed to enter the promised land." Long before that, Moses had also murdered an Egyptian. So when the devil says of Moses, "He's a sinner; he does not deserve an honorable burial," he seems to have a good case.

What does Michael say? Michael does not slander Satan; he does not say anything against him. And in this context in Jude, it seems that there are some people who took angelic or spirit beings very lightly. They were either a joke or they would just speak mockingly or scoff about angels or slander them. The point Jude is making is that even the greatest of spirit beings, Michael, would not mock or slander when he's speaking about the devil. Remember, the devil was once a great and splendid glory. He was a mighty spirit being, and even in his fallen state, there are some things about Satan that are magnificent and weighty and not to be taken lightly. We must not speak lightly about even fallen angels, let alone the glorious angels who remain holy. If you're tempted to take spirit beings lightly, says Jude, don't be such a dunce. When Michael himself was arguing with the devil, he didn't actually bring any kind of argument. He simply said, "The Lord rebuke you." He invoked the greatest of all, God Almighty, and in doing so, Michael won his case. Sure, Moses had sinned in various ways, but God had claimed Moses as his own, and God was going to make provision for Moses' sin, and God had decided to give Moses a decent burial. Satan's objections were not going to go anywhere because God had decided in favor of Moses.

This great archangel Michael takes very seriously the glory and honor of other angels, even the splendor of the fallen angels, and he always calls upon the Lord. You see how humble even the archangel Michael is. He doesn't call on his own authority but on God's when he's dealing with the devil. At any rate, we see Michael's greatness in his title, "the archangel."

Your prince

In another place, Michael is called "your prince." Daniel 10 tells of a vision that Daniel has. He's been troubled about Jerusalem being fallen and the people being in exile. Even though Daniel holds the second highest position in the world as chief of staff to the emperor of Persia, he is heartbroken about what's going on with God's people. He has been fasting and praying for three weeks. Then a being comes to him, a being so overwhelming and so glorious and so splendid that Daniel can't stand in his presence, and he faints.

But this spirit being says, "Fear not, Daniel. Your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words." So Daniel's prayers have been getting through, they've been heard, but there was a delay in the answer. The being says, "The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me." The angel speaking to Daniel is so great and magnificent that Daniel faints in his presence, but the angel is helped by an even greater one named Michael. "There is none who contends by my side against these except Michael, your prince" (see Daniel 10:12-13, 21).

Behind the realms of nations and peoples, something is going on in the spirit world. Apparently there is a spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia. Later on Daniel is told that a spirit prince of the kingdom of Greece is coming (Daniel 10:21). Persia is going to fade as a world power, and Greece is going to rise to power, and it's going to have something to do with the mysterious spirit realm, not just who has the biggest armies here on Earth.

Historians write about Xerxes and the forces of Persia, and then they write about the military tactics of people like Alexander the Great, who brought the power of the Greeks and Macedonians to bear on the world. The Bible says that mighty spirit beings are somehow involved in those events, but human historians can't talk about that because we don't have a clue exactly what's going on in the spirit realms. All that the Bible tells us is that there are various spirit princes of various political powers, and then there is "your prince," Michael, the prince of God's people. Sometimes God's people are weak, so you might think that their prince is weak. You would be wrong. Michael is the greatest and mightiest of the princes in the spirit world.

To understand that passage in Daniel, it helps to look at some other passages. "When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God. But Yahweh's portion is his people" (Deuteronomy 32:8-9). God "divided mankind" at the Tower of Babel. He put lesser spirit beings than himself, "sons of God," in charge of various nations. Some of those beings were rebels against God. God judged the nations, divided them, and disinherited them for a time and put them under various angelic powers. But all along, God had a plan to bring the nations back to himself and integrate them with his own people Israel. Meanwhile, various spirit powers had a role in what would happen in those nations, and God had Israel for himself. He appointed Michael as the spirit being with special responsibility for God's people.

Watchers

In Daniel 4, you read about the greatest king in the world, one of the most powerful people the world has ever seen, King Nebuchadnezzar. He had absolute and total control over a vast empire, and his Babylon was a fabulous city. The Hanging Gardens of Babylon were considered one of the seven wonders of the world. This was a great king, and if you didn't believe it, just ask him!

Nebuchadnezzar had a vision. Because the king had become so proud and harsh, he was going to lose his mind and be thrown out of running his empire. As the king described his vision, he said, "Behold, a watcher, a holy one, came down from heaven... The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will" (Daniel 4:13, 17 ESV). This

great and powerful King Nebuchadnezzar seems to rule everything, but there are watchers in God's heavenly council keeping an eye on him. The watchers say to one another, "He's getting too big for his britches, and too many people are suffering under his reign."

Daniel interpreted this vision to the proud king and warned, "You need to turn from your wickedness and do what is right, and turn from oppression and be kind to the needy." Well, Nebuchadnezzar didn't.

A year later, he was strutting around on the roof of his great palace looking over the city, and he said, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built by my power and for the glory of my majesty?" And a voice of one of the watchers came from heaven: "This is what is decreed for you, O Nebuchadnezzar." And all of a sudden the king thought he was a cow, and they put him out to pasture. For seven years he was eating grass and wild plants, and his fingernails grew like claws, and he was a raving maniac.

After seven years of insanity, Nebuchadnezzar says, "I lifted my eyes to heaven, and my sanity returned to me." If you want to get your head on straight, look up! The crazy ex-king looked up, and he got his head on straight again. God restored him to his right mind, and then his kingdom was restored to him.

Now the thing I want to emphasize here is the role of the watchers in all of that. The ones who are called "the watchers" issue a decree. They even are kind enough to say, "Here's the decree, but if you repent, you might be able to avoid what's been decreed." Yet Nebuchadnezzar doesn't learn, so what is decreed happens to him. Even the most powerful man in the world is not immune when the watchers decide it's time for him to lose his power.

War in heaven

Scripture shows that there are mighty spirit beings, sometimes called angels, sometimes called "gods" or "the sons of God," "princes" or "watchers." The good spirits are led by Michael. The bad spirits are led by Satan. Revelation 12 speaks of war in heaven between the two sides.

The war is triggered by Jesus himself. Revelation 12 begins with a vision of an enormous red dragon, waiting to devour the child of a woman. This woman represents the people of God who are straining to give birth to the Messiah. Although the dragon wants to destroy the child, he fails, and the Christ child is exalted to heaven's throne. Then there is war. Michael and his angels defeat Satan and his angels. The devil is not strong enough, and he is thrown down. Remember Daniel's prayers: a man on his knees for three weeks, that man's prayers on earth somehow move powers in the heavenly realms where there's a battle going on for three weeks. Similarly, when Jesus died on the cross here on earth, he triumphed over spirit powers in the unseen realm and put them to open shame (Colossians 2:15). Because of what Jesus did at the cross, Michael and his angels gained tremendous power against those spirit beings in that other realm, and the great dragon was hurled down. Jesus' victory on Earth triggered victory in the spirit realm.

Great prince will arise

According to Daniel, there is still a future role for Michael. Here the phrase "great prince" is used: "At that time 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" (Daniel 12:1). When the great prince arises, it's going to trigger all-out conflict on Earth.

Revelation 12 says that after the war in heaven where Michael defeats Satan, the devil goes down to earth, and he is filled with fury because his time is short. Then, when Michael arises for the final mop-up operation to get rid of Satan permanently, it triggers a final dreadful response from Satan and from his forces. That sets off intense distress on Earth as this heavenly conflict comes full force to the earthly realm. At that time, "your people... will be delivered."

What's involved in that deliverance? "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever" (Daniel 12:2-3). That's what awaits us. Sometimes the Bible likens the stars to the angels, but it's saying here that when we rise from the dust, we become people who shine with the brightness of the heavens. We are the ones who will lead others to righteousness, and we'll be like the stars forever and ever in our beauty and brilliance and power. All of that is triggered when Michael, the great prince, arises and makes that final move on Earth.

When the Bible speaks of distress and deliverance, it's not just in the Book of Daniel. The New Testament picks up on that. Jesus himself says, "They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matthew 24:30-31). So with the great trumpet call, Jesus comes with all of his mighty angels. Remember, Daniel 12:1 says that "everyone whose name is found written in the book will be delivered." Those written in the book are the same ones whom Jesus calls "his elect," those chosen by God, those whom he has written in his book from before the foundation of the world. At Jesus' return, his mighty angels know who's in that book. For a long time they've been watching over those who are in that book in a more unseen capacity. Then the time comes for the angels to make themselves known fully in all their power and splendor, and then they gather in the elect who are in the book, and they will scatter and cast away those who do not belong to the Lord.

That is what will happen after the great prince Michael arises.

Announcer

Michael will announce the second coming of Christ. "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. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught

up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever" (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

How is that great day announced? It is announced with a loud command of God himself. It is announced with the voice of the archangel. Who's the archangel? We know from Daniel 12:1-3 that Michael will arise, and then the dead will be raised. So the voice of the archangel is the voice of Michael. Christ coming is also announced with and the trumpet call of God. So there are three great announcements: the Lord's loud command, the voice of the archangel Michael, and the trumpet call of God.

By the way, 1 Thessalonians 4:16 is the only verse in Scripture where the word "rapture" or "caught up" is used. I don't think the rapture will be much of a secret. Some Christians think the rapture will be a quiet disappearance of Christians where many people left behind won't know right away what happened. But based on this verse, I don't think the rapture will be a secret disappearance. It's going to be a very noisy appearance. Christ is going to come with great splendor and glory and with an awful lot of noise, with his own command, with the mighty voice of the archangel Michael, with the trumpet call of God.

Those who are dead will rise first. The souls of dead believers have gone to be with the Lord, but when Jesus comes again, their bodies will be the first to be glorified. Then those who belong to Jesus who are still alive are going to have their bodies glorified too. Even if we're alive when Jesus returns, that doesn't mean nothing needs to happen to us. When he comes again, our bodies need to be transformed, set free from sin, and given the glory that he intends for us to have as his sons and daughters. So those who are dead will rise in their splendid bodies, and then those who are still alive will receive their gloriously transformed bodies. Then we'll be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

This doesn't mean that Jesus will come down, rapture his people, and then do a U-turn and go back to heaven. Instead, Jesus will bring heaven to Earth. We rise up to meet him because we want to welcome our king. But then he's going to make all things new.

The upshot is we will be with the Lord forever. Whatever interpretation one has of the specific events of the rapture, it's clear that Jesus is coming again. It's clear that the angels are coming with him. It's clear that the archangel Michael is going to be announcing that coming. So we can look forward with joy to what the Lord is going to do.

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Those are the passages in the Bible about the archangel Michael and his role in God's purposes and plans. We've seen that he **ranks as a heavenly prince**, and we saw that angelic princes have a role sometimes in the governance of nations. Michael's role is in relation to the particular nation of God's chosen people, Israel, and those believers from all nations who become part of the Israel of God by faith.

The Bible speaks of spirit princes affecting nations, but if you read Revelations 2 and 3, the messages of Jesus to the seven churches, how does each of those begin? "To the angel of the church in _____ write... Some people interpret that to mean that this is a message for the pastor. The word translated "angel" can mean also mean "messenger," so pastor is a possible interpretation. But many scholars think "the angel of the church in _____" means the angel or the watcher who has responsibility for that church. We shouldn't get too speculative. It may be that there is an angel of the church of Monee or even the angel of Family of Faith. Is that farfetched? It's common to think that each person has a guardian angel, so why not a great spirit being with special responsibility for a particular church? Revelation 2-3 certainly sounds like an angel has been assigned to each church.

Whatever the case might be with that, we know that spirit beings have a role in the affairs of nations, and especially Michael in the affairs of God's people. It is encouraging to know that there is one like that who **protects God's chosen people**. Even when Michael might seem low profile for a while, he is working on our behalf behind the scenes, and when he arises in full power, all of the enemies will be fleeing.

Michael **leads angel armies under God**. Michael must be a very, very great angel, because his angelic subordinates are so overwhelming that humans collapse in their presence. Michael is even greater than they are, so don't mess with Michael!

Michael doesn't just command the angel armies. He wins! He **wins the war against Satan's armies**. The Bible says the devil "was not strong enough" (Revelation 12:8). Satan is no wimp; he is mighty and terrible. But he is no match for Michael. We sometimes give too much credit to the devil and to the demons. We talk more about Satan than we do about Michael, and more about the demons than we do about the angels. That's a mistake. Yes, there are fallen angels, but there are also the angels who love God and are loyal to him and whom God commissions to be our helpers and our defenders.

I like the picture drawn on an envelope by a prisoner who became a Christian. It shows a tug of war. On one side of the rope are demons: gritting their teeth, gripping the rope with both hands, sweating, leaning and pulling with all their might. On the other side of the rope stand angels: calm, smiling, relaxed, each holding the rope with just one hand. How can angels hold their ground so easily against demons who are working so hard? Behind the angels, holding their end of the rope, is an enormous hand, the hand of the Lord himself.

Satan's power (at most) compares to the power of Michael, the chief angel. Satan is strong, but his power compared to God's is less than a fly compared to an elephant. God against Satan is not an even match. Even if it was just Satan and the fallen angels against Michael and the faithful angels, it would not be an even match. There are more angels who didn't fall than who did.

What's more, mighty Michael is greater than any angel who fell. So even if it were just a contest between the might of fallen angels against good angels, the good angels would have the upper hand. But they have the upper hand in the ultimate sense: the hand of God is holding their side of the rope. So when Michael is contending with the devil, he simply says, "The Lord rebuke you," and that takes care of it.

That artwork of a prisoner on an envelope pictures a truth that the poet John Milton described in his epic *Paradise Lost*. There is a tremendous scene where for three days the demons are fighting against the angels. Each of the first two days seems to end in a draw. Neither side wins a decisive victory. On the third day, God sent forth the Son of God, and at his appearance all the demons flee in terror. Milton then adds one of my favorite lines: "Yet half his strength he put not forth." Just a fraction of Christ's strength is too much for Satan and all of the fallen angels combined.

We know that the great Michael will prevail not just because of his greatness but because of the greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ. When Michael does arise near the end of time and exert more power here on Earth against Satan, he **triggers distress and tribulation** such as the world has never seen.

But there will be a wonderful and glorious deliverance when the voice of the archangel Michael **announces Jesus' return**, sounding along with God's cry of command and the sound of God's trumpet. Michael and the holy angels will gather God's elect from the four winds to be glorified and share with Christ in the new creation forever.

So what?

- We have friends in high places.
- God sends help when we pray.
- War is fierce, but victory is sure.
- Michael is too strong for Satan.
- Jesus infinitely surpasses Michael.
- Get ready for a glorious future!

I'm almost embarrassed to ask, "So what?" But maybe some of us are so brain dead that we don't see what difference it makes for us to know about Archangel Michael. Why does it matter? Why pay attention to any of this? Well, I'll just remind you of a few reasons.

We have friends in very, very, very high places. We have, of course, the great God himself. We also have God's great heavenly council and those who serve him, led by mighty Michael. Isn't it encouraging to know that?

Learning about Michael also teaches us that **God sends help when we pray**. Daniel prayed and fasted for weeks, but things seemed to be just as distressing. Three weeks later, an angel showed up. That angel had been fighting all along, and Michael had been fighting all along. It took three weeks for them to battle their way through enemy spirits. We don't understand all that goes on in the spirit realm, but we do know that prayers here on earth are heard in heaven and set things into motion in the spirit realm. Not only were angels being sent to help Daniel, but maybe Daniel was

helping them by his prayers. Maybe his three weeks of fasting and prayer were giving added strength from the Lord to the angels. God answers prayer and sends help when we pray.

War is fierce, because victory is sure. The devil is furious. Why? Not because he's winning, but because he knows that his time is short. He's living on borrowed time. He and his fallen angels have already lost to Michael and his angels. Now the defeated dragon takes out his rage on God's people living on earth. So when Satan's attacks become fierce, don't give up or give in. The attack is fierce exactly because he knows he's already been defeated. There are still mop-up battles that are very fierce, but Satan's power was broken when Christ triumphed at the cross. Michael and his angels triumphed in the spirit realm already at that time of Jesus' victory.

Michael is too strong for Satan. It's a big mistake to ignore Satan and the demons. It's also a big mistake to think as though God and Satan are opposites but equal. Satan is not even equal to Michael in power, let alone equal to God. If Michael is too strong for Satan, then God is certainly too strong for Satan. We ought not to exaggerate Satan's power to such a degree that we think he's a counterpart to God.

Jesus infinitely surpasses Michael. There is more difference between God and Michael than between an elephant and a mosquito, because there's an infinite difference between God and Michael. Even the mightiest and most magnificent of angels is almost nothing compared to the God who made him. There are folks who pray to angels. Colossians 2 warns against the error of worshiping angels. If you actually see a beautiful and mighty angel, you might feel tempted to worship. But the Bible says you don't worship angels, you worship God. You don't pray to angels, you don't pray to saints, you don't pray to Mary, you pray to God.

Also, don't say that Jesus is Michael come to us in a different form. That's the disastrous error of the Jehovah's Witnesses, that Jesus is actually just the greatest of angels. That might seem like a nice thing to say about a carpenter, that he's the greatest of angels come to live among us. But GOD, not Michael, came to live among us. The one far greater than Michael came to live among us, and we praise and worship him.

A final thing to remember in all this: **Get ready for a glorious future!** When God shouts his command for all the world to hear, when Archangel Michael makes his announcement, when the trumpet of the Lord sounds and time shall be no more, it is too late to switch sides. You don't get to be on the side of Lucifer and the demons and then say, "Oopsie daisy!" when they turn out to be the losers. That's not how it works. You must turn to the Lord Jesus Christ now. You must choose the side of the angels now. When Christ comes with his angels, it will be too late to switch sides. If you're not already following the Lord Jesus Christ, knowing about Michael is one more reason to follow the one who is greater than Michael, to get ready to meet him face to face. Because when we see that face, the Bible says the kings of the Earth will want the rocks to cover them and they'll want to hide in caves because that face is one they cannot face. So get ready for that.

If you are ready to meet Jesus, one of the supreme pleasures will be to see his face and reign with him forever. His brilliance is going to be shining from us. When the great prince Michael arises, then the great king, God himself, Jesus Christ, comes again. Multitudes who lie in the dust will

arise, some to shame and everlasting contempt, but others will shine like the brightness of the heavens and shine like the stars forever and ever.

Get ready for a glorious future to be with Jesus, to be with the saints who lived throughout history, to be with Michael and the watchers and the great "sons of God" or "gods" in the heavenly council, the cherubim, to be with the millions upon millions of angels, some who have watched over you your whole life and you didn't even know it, but get ready to know them, to rejoice in them. What a future it is going to be, and it never ends. It never ends. We will be with the Lord forever. Therefore, says the Scripture to people who just lost loved ones, comfort one another with these words.

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Michael

- Your prince (Daniel 10:21)
- The great prince (Daniel 12:1)
- General of angels (Rev 12:7)
- Archangel (Jude 1:8)

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Sons and peoples

When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God. But Yahweh's portion is his people. (Deuteronomy 32:8-9)

Watchers

Behold, a watcher, a holy one, came down from heaven... The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will. (Daniel 4:13, 17)

War in heaven

There was war in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back.... And the great dragon was thrown down, the ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan. (Revelation 12:7-9)

Great prince

At that time 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. (Daniel 12:1)

Deliverance

Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. (Daniel 12:2-3)

Jesus' return

They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (Matthew 24:30-31)

Announcer

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. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. (1 Th 4:16)

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