

Encomium on the two Great Archangels Michael and Gabriel - 2 (Saint Nicodemus the Hagiorite)

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



Secondly, God created the perceptible world in six days. He bedecked the heavens with the multitude of stars and the suns; He adorned the earth with all manner of plants and animals; He filled the air with the sweet trilling of the birds. Finally, He made people, placed them in Paradise and told them to observe His divine commandment. Alas, they broke His commandment and were exiled from the Paradise of delight and sent into this world of tears. Here, too, God employed Michael and Gabriel, the outstanding servants of His providence and judgement. Once Adam had been exiled, Michael felt sorry for him and showed him how to till the earth, since he did not know how to do so, how to sow, to harvest and generally how to run his exhausting life, from preparing food to making clothes, as is the opinion of some of the teachers of the Church.



Michael continued to care for and protect all the Forefathers before the Law: Seth, Enos, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the twelve Patriarchs. Sometimes he brought them to knowledge of the one true God; at others he chastised and punished those who opposed Him. He was the instructor and guide of the children of Israel, going before and alongside them, defeating the alien nations who fought against Him, and bringing them to the promised land.

Here, too, we should admire the majesty of Michael. Because the nations were divided among the Angels, and one looked after one and another another. The Israelites, however, were not under the care of an Angel, but of God Himself, as Moses says in his hymn: "When the Most High divided the nations, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the nations according to the numbers of the angels of God. And His people Jacob became the portion of the Lord" (*Deut.* 32, 8-9). But God often told Moses that He would appoint an overseer for Israel in place of Himself: His Angel, Michael, according to the teachers of the Church.

This, according to Dionysios the Areopagite, is why theology calls Michael the leader of the Jewish people. Do you see the providence? Do you see that, for the Jews, Michael was in God's stead? Do you see that Michael was the invisible intermediary and servant through whom God gave the Law to Moses on Sinai? Because if, as Paul says, the Law was given by Angels ("for since the message spoken by the angels was binding" (*Heb.* 2, 2) and "Why, then, was the law given

at all? It... was given through angels and entrusted to a mediator". (*Gal. 3, 19*), how much more was it given by Michael?

Gabriel was also present, sometimes to bring glad tidings of birth to many sterile women, both before the Law and after it, and at others to interpret the Prophets, the revelations and visions they saw, and, in this way to lead them in the faith of the Messiah Who was to come. Gabriel is mentioned by name in the Scriptures, clearly revealing to the Prophet Daniel not only how Christ would be born and crucified, but how many years later this was to happen [*Daniel 9*].

Finally, the two Archangels appear united in Daniel's prophecy which is read at Vespers on the eve of the Feast, which says: Daniel fasted for three weeks in Babylon and entreated God to liberate the Jews from their enslavement to the idolaters, that is the Persians and Babylonians. The Angel Gabriel offered Daniel's petition to God. The Angel who was responsible for these idolaters resisted and hindered the liberation of the Israelites,- not with bad intent, but, as Jerome interprets this, because many of the pagans mixed with Jews and came to believe in the true God. It may also be that he resisted because God had not revealed the liberation of the Jews to him. Be that as it may, the Archangel Michael came and helped Gabriel and so the people of Israel were liberated.

At last, the moment came for the Son of God to come into the world, in order to carry out the great and exceptional task of the salvation of humankind. And in this, too, God employed His special servants, the two Archangels, but with this difference: Gabriel came first, then Michael. Because Gabriel, whose name, according to Saint Proclus, means "God and Person", was to be the first servant of the Word, the God/Man. This is why the mystery was revealed only to God-pleasing Gabriel, as we mentioned earlier.

He was sent to the Queen of All and Ever-Virgin Mary and brought her the glad tidings, addressing her with the message that saved the world: "Hail, you who are full of grace, the Lord is with you" (*Luke 1, 28*). Gabriel himself announced to the shepherds the joyous nativity of the incarnate Master (cf. *Luke 2, 9*), led the Magi with the star (*Matth. 2, 2-9*), announced to the Myrrh-bearers the glad message of the Resurrection of the Saviour (*Matth. 28, 5*). And at the Ascension, having descended from heaven, he foretold to the apostles the second coming of the ascended Christ (cf. *Acts 1,10-11*).

Some believe that Michael was the Angel who strengthened and fortified Jesus when He was in anguish over the Passion, as Saint Luke says: "An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him" (22, 43), coming to this conclusion

from his name, since Michael means “strength of God”. Together with Gabriel, he announced the joyful news of the Resurrection to the Myrrh-bearers, as Saint John the Damascan writes in the Canon for the Archangels. Together with Gabriel, he foretold to the Disciples the coming of the ascended Christ (cf. *Acts* 1,10-11). It was he, they say, who liberated the Apostle Peter from prison (cf. *Acts* 12, 7), and who punished Herod with sickness, filling him with worms so that he died (cf. *Acts* 12, 23). With what I have told you, I have shown that Michael and Gabriel were the two important servants of the great energies and works of God...

As long as we live, most merciful Chief Captains of God, keep us safe from the stumbling-blocks, the wickednesses and temptations of all our visible and invisible enemies. At the hour of our death, one on the right, the other on the left, help us sinners, covering us with your wings of gold, so that our souls may not see the ominous sight of the evil demons. And when you have taken us, bring us to the eternal and lambent tabernacles of the Kingdom of Heaven, that, with you, we may glorify the one Triune Godhead, to Whom belong glory, honour and worship, unto the ages of ages, Amen.