

Jude 1:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.

Analysis

Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee. This verse provides striking contrast to the false teachers' arrogance. "Michael the archangel" (Greek *ho Michaēl* *ho archangelos*, ὁ Μιχαὴλ ὁ ἀρχάγγελος) is the highest-ranking angel, commander of heavenly armies (Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1; Revelation 12:7). "Contending" (Greek *diakrinomenos*, *διακρινόμενος*) means disputing, arguing legally.

The dispute concerned "the body of Moses"—an incident not recorded in canonical Scripture but found in Jewish tradition (Testament of Moses/Assumption of Moses). Apparently Satan claimed rights to Moses' body, perhaps because Moses murdered the Egyptian (Exodus 2:12) or because Satan rules death (Hebrews 2:14). Despite Satan's rebellion and Michael's superior authority, Michael "durst not bring a railing accusation" (Greek *ouk etolmēsen krisin epenegkein blasphēmias*, *οὐκ ἐτόλμησεν κρίσιν ἐπενεγκεῖν βλασφημίας*)—didn't dare pronounce slanderous judgment.

Instead, Michael said simply, "The Lord rebuke thee" (Greek *epitimasai soi kyrios*, *ἐπιτιμήσαι σοι κύριος*)—may the Lord rebuke you. This echoes Zechariah 3:2 where the Lord rebukes Satan. Michael deferred to God's authority rather than pronouncing his own condemnation. The point: if Michael showed such restraint

toward the devil, how much more should humans avoid presumptuous condemnation of spiritual beings?

Historical Context

Jude's reference to non-canonical Jewish literature (Assumption of Moses) troubled some early Christians and contributed to debates over Jude's canonicity. However, quoting extrabiblical sources doesn't endorse everything in those sources—Paul quoted pagan poets (Acts 17:28, Titus 1:12) without endorsing paganism. Jude uses a story his readers knew to illustrate truth, under the Spirit's inspiration.

Jewish apocalyptic literature extensively discussed angelic hierarchies and cosmic spiritual warfare. Michael appears as Israel's guardian angel and Satan's opponent. The struggle over Moses' body reflects broader themes of contested authority over the dead and Satan's role as accuser. Deuteronomy 34:6 notes God buried Moses in an unknown location, possibly to prevent idolatrous veneration.

The early church inherited Judaism's awareness of spiritual realities—angels and demons aren't myths but real beings. Paul's teaching on spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:12) assumes this worldview. However, Christians must avoid both extremes: denial of spiritual warfare (Enlightenment rationalism) and unhealthy fascination with demonic powers (medieval superstition, modern occultism). Scripture provides necessary truth while forbidding speculation.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What does Michael's restraint teach about humility and proper boundaries in spiritual warfare?
2. How can believers engage spiritual realities biblically without falling into either skepticism or superstition?
3. What's the difference between legitimate spiritual authority and the presumptuous arrogance of false teachers?

Interlinear Text

ὁ δὲ Μιχαὴλ ὁ ἀρχάγγελος ὅτε τῷ διαβόλῳ
G3588 Yet Michael G3588 the archangel G3588 when G3753 with the devil
G1161 G3413 G743 G3753 G1228

διακρινόμενος διελέγετο περὶ τοῦ Μωσέως σώματος οὐκ
contending he disputed about G3588 of Moses the body not
G1252 G1256 G4012 G3475 G4983 G3756

ἐτόλμησεν κρίσιν ἐπενεγκεῖν βλασφημίας ἀλλ' εἶπεν
durst accusation bring against him a railing but said
G5111 G2920 G2018 G988 G235 G2036

Ἐπιτιμήσαι σοι Κύριος.
rebuke thee The Lord
G2008 G4671 G2962

Additional Cross-References

Zechariah 3:2 (References Lord): And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?

Revelation 12:7 (Parallel theme): And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

2 Peter 2:11 (References Lord): Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord.

Deuteronomy 34:6 (Parallel theme): And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.

Daniel 12:1 (Parallel theme): And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.

Daniel 10:21 (Parallel theme): But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince.

1 Thessalonians 4:16 (References Lord): For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

Daniel 10:13 (Parallel theme): But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.

1 Peter 3:9 (Evil): Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

Mark 15:29 (Parallel theme): And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days,