

## **THE MIRACLE OF THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL AT COLOSSAE (CHONAE)**

Saint Michael the Holy Archangel, the Great and Commander of God's bodiless hosts, both before the Incarnation and after, showed compassion and solicitude toward the race of man (Joshua 5:13-15; Daniel 10:13, 12:1; Jude 1:9; Revelation 12:71). He bestowed many benefits on earth before the coming of Christ, and afterward he showed even greater care and love toward the Christians.

Colossae was an ancient city of southern Phrygia, the extensive western part of Anatolia, overhanging the Lykos (a tributary of Meander) on the upper part of its source. The city was some ten miles from Laodicea and thirteen from Hierapolis. The three cities formed a single sphere of missionary labour for Epaphras, an inhabitant of Colossae (Colossians 1:7, 4:12, 13). The city originally lay on the main trade route from Ephesus and the East, at the junction of the highways to Sardis and Pergamon.

Saint John the Theologian came to a place called Herotopon, which lies nearby Hierapolis, where he brought the pagan Greeks to the knowledge of the True God. In that place, the Elder John prophesied that at a later time there would be spring forth there a great abundance of holy water in honour of the Archangel Michael, who would perform great miracles and wonders.

There was a certain rich Greek pagan in the city of Laodicea. He had an only daughter who suffered with speechlessness and was dumb from her mother's womb. The father experienced great sorrow concerning this, and would gladly have given her his soul just to behold her speak. One day, he beheld a vision in his sleep. He observed a certain man telling him to go to the holy waters of the Archangel Michael, where his daughter would receive healing, and he himself would gain the salvation of his soul. When the Greek pagan awoke, with fear and trembling, he took his daughter and went to the holy waters of the Archangel. Having arrived, he found many people had gathered who were afflicted with various illnesses. By drinking the water or pouring it over their afflicted bodies, they were delivered from whatever ailment possessed them.

The Greek father, observing all these wonders, asked the people what name they were invoking while drinking or pouring the water over themselves. They said to him, "We utter the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, one in essence, and the chief Commander Michael, the servant of the Trinity". As he heard this, without hesitation, he believed with all his heart. Thus, entreating the God Who is praised in the Holy Trinity and His Archangel Michael, he took up the holy water with faith and gave it to his daughter to drink. Immediately, not only was the girl delivered from the bond of speechlessness, but both father and daughter were loosed from the bond of disbelief. They began in uplifted voices to offer thanksgiving and praise to the True God and to magnify His servant Michael. The Greek nobleman and his daughter, and all those with them, were baptized and became Christians. In thanksgiving, the nobleman built there a costly church, and erected at the site of the sanctified waters a beautiful building with a vaulted roof, so that he might say with the Prophet David, "O Lord, I have loved the beauty of Thy house" (Psalm 25:7).

After the passage of ninety years, a young boy from Hierapolis – named Archippos, after the Apostle – left home for the church of the Archangel. In due course, he became the church's caretaker, living there a life of asceticism and prayer.

Living at that time in the neighbourhood of the holy waters was a multitude of unbelievers who daily witnessed the miracles. Envy and malice mounted in them on account of the miracles and the virtuous manner of life of righteous Archippos. Maddened by the holy man's asceticism and struggles, they devised a plan to destroy the church to its foundation and usher in death for the righteous man. Near

the church of the Archangel, where the holy waters were located, there ran a river named Chryssos. The unbelievers wished to divert the river, so that the deluge might come down upon the holy waters and the church. They believed that by mixing the waters of the river with the holy water they could dissolve its therapeutic power utterly, so that the Christians might not drink and find healing. Having considered how this might be engineered, they cut off the first current of the river that it might flow into the holy waters. But "Who shall tell of the mighty acts of the Lord? Who shall make all His praises to be heard?" (Psalm 105:2) The river, as though it were animate, fearing the grace of the Archangel, straightaway turned far over toward the right part of the church; and there the course of the river remains to this day. The unrelenting pagans, nonetheless, conspired a second time; indeed, something more terrible than before.

Two great rivers gush forth from out of the east: one is called the Lykokastros River, and the other is called Kouphos. They run separately in the direction of the church and then encircle it from afar as an island. Then they converge and travel a long distance, as one river, until they separate in Lycia and pour out into the sea against the Island of Rhodes. The devil, envious of all good, plotted to let loose the waters of these two rivers. He sowed in the minds of his minions that the rivers could be made to flood the church and the holy waters of the Archangel, so that not even a trace might remain. This seemed very plausible to the pagans, because the land where the church stood slopes downward. Thus, by employing the downward tendency of water, they could fulfil their aim. Now, at a distance from the church, there was a massive and high rock. The impious hewed the stone and dug down deep in one place, so that the waters would divert and collect with great force. Then, after they dug huge irrigation ditches and fortified collecting basins, they closed off the area. They dammed the waters that collected by the rock, until they were ready to break the seals of the gates. With malignant glee they anxiously awaited for the water level to rise that they might discharge its mighty power against the church, the sanctified healing waters, and Archippos.

Night and day, men, women, and children laboured to accomplish their murderous desire. The slave of God, Archippos, beheld the madness of the impious. Mindful of how great the peril was that awaited him, he fell prostrate on the bare earth, entreating God and the Archangel Michael that the counsel of the ungodly might prove vain and unworkable against the strength and power of God. Thus, Archippos supplicated night and day. After the passage of ten days, the waters collected in abundance. It was about midnight when the godless broke the gates of the blocked-up waters. They chose that late hour to loose the turbulent waters, so as to surprise Archippos and plunge him into despair when both he and that holy place would be swept away and submerged in the destruction. The impious stood to the left of the church awaiting the outcome. Archippos heard the clamour of the people and the roaring of the approaching waters. With greater fervency, he gave himself over to prayer, reciting the words of the Prophet David, "The rivers have lifted up, O Lord, the rivers have lifted their voices. The rivers will lift up their waves, at the voices of many waters. Wonderful are the surging of the sea, wonderful on high is the Lord. Holiness becometh Thy house, O Lord, unto length of days." (Psalm 92:4-7)

Thus did the Saint pray, and a divine vision was made manifest. He heard a voice descending from out of the heavens and calling him by name, "Archippos!" He was unable to gaze long at the vision of the Archangel, and fell on his face to the ground. Then the one speaking said, "Rise and stand on thy feet and come here outside in order to behold the invincible might of God." Regaining courage then from the voice, he exited and beheld a fiery column which went from earth to heaven. He heard a voice from thence telling him to stand to the left side and not to fear. Then the Archangel raised his right hand and made the sign of the Cross upon the rock, the one above the church, saying, "Up to this point is thy flow". Then, with what appeared as a javelin in his hand, he struck the place mightily and sundered the

rock from the top to the bottom. O Thy power, Christ God! We cry with the Prophet David, "The waters saw Thee, O God, the waters saw Thee and were afraid; the abysses were troubled. Great was the resounding sound of the waters." (Psalm 76:15-16). The waters then halted and stood still as a wall. The Archangel, again, made the sign of the Cross, and said, "Funnel the waters here". A great earthquake occurred, and the waters of the rivers forthwith poured down into that deep ravine. Thus, the Archangel subdued the raging flow and the thundering of the river. This phenomenon may be seen to this day. The rivers pour into the funnel in the rock which lies above the church. Thus this place, formerly called Colossae, from then was named Chonae, a Greek word signifying the funnelling of the rivers in that place.

Archippos, through the assistance of the Archangel Michael, was delivered from a bitter death. With a loud and clear voice he praised and glorified God, and also greatly magnified His minister, the Archangel Michael, Archippos continued living a God-pleasing life in that sacred precinct for seventy years. He was then laid to rest from the labour of his virtues and hastened to his beloved Christ rejoicing, even as the good cultivator sows with godly tears that he might reap the fruits of his toils in the joy of everlasting life.

To the glory of the Trinity and the Chief Commander, Michael, a boundless number of miracles took place daily at the place of the holy waters; which wonders, if we were to describe in detail, should make us appear like him who wishes to count the stars or the sands of the sea. O Supreme Commander of the armies of heaven, we, the unworthy ones, entreat thee, that by thy powers thou dost ever surround us with the protection of the wings of thine immaterial glory!

(Adapted from *The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church: September*. Translated from Greek by Holy Apostles Convent, Buena Vista, Colorado)

#### **Troparion of the Archangel Michael in Tone 4**

O Michael, commander of the heavenly hosts,  
we who are unworthy beseech thee:  
by thy prayers encompass us beneath the wings of thine immaterial glory,  
and faithfully preserve us who fall down and cry out to thee://  
Deliver us from all harm, for thou art the commander of the Powers on high!

#### **Kontakion of the Archangel Michael in Tone 2**

O Michael, commander of God's armies  
and minister of the divine glory,  
prince of the bodiless angels  
and guide of mankind;  
ask for what is good for us, and for great mercy, //  
as the supreme commander of the Bodiless Hosts.