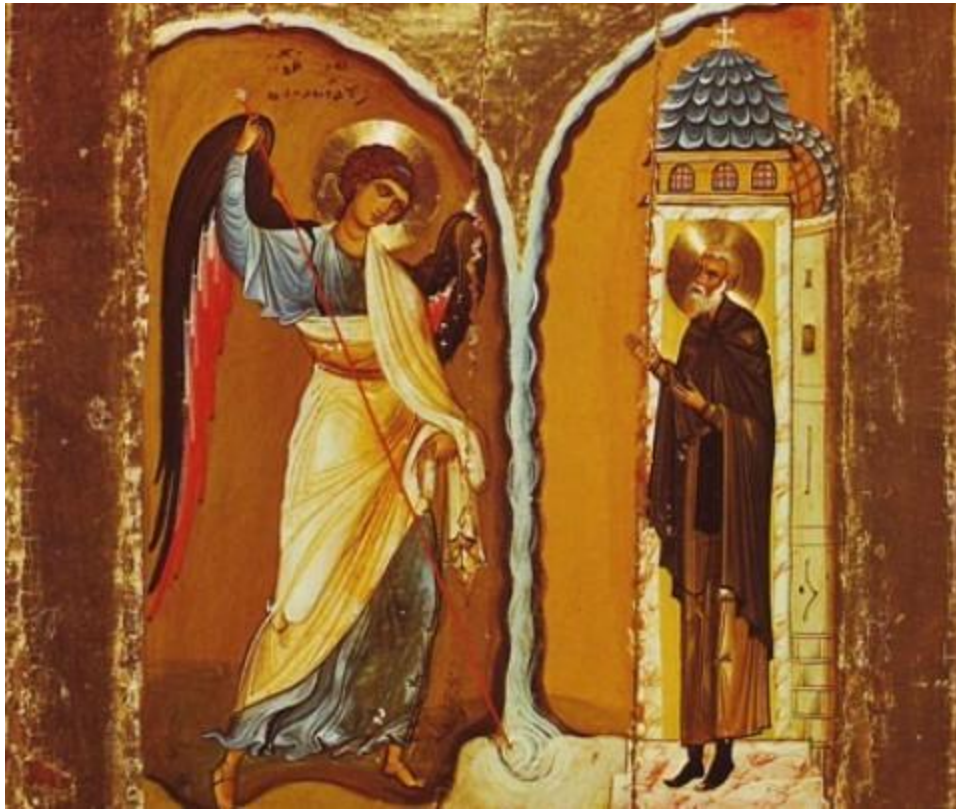


## Miracle at Chonae by Archangel Michael



Michael, the great and chief commander of God's bodiless hosts, both before the incarnation and after, showed compassion and solicitude toward the race of man [Josh. 5:13-15; Dan. 10: 13, 12: 1; Jude 1:9; Rev. 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 the Meander) on the upper part of its course. The city was some ten miles from Laodikeia and thirteen from Hierapolis [Col. 2:1, 4:13, 15,16; Rev. 1: 11]. The three cities formed a single sphere of missionary labor for Epaphras, an inhabitant of Colossae [Col. 1:7, 4:12, 13]. The city originally lay on the main trade route from Ephesus to the Euphrates and the East, at the junction of the highways to Sardis and Pergamon. Colossae was catastrophically weakened in the 7' and 8' centuries with the gradual breakdown of Byzantine power in Asia Minor, leaving the Colossians exposed to Saracen raiders. The remaining population moved to Chonae (the modern Chonas), a fortress about three miles further south, with an impregnable castle upon the steep slope of Mount Cadmus (summit 8,013 ft.). Final destruction came in the 12' century with the Turkish invasion. The site is presently unoccupied.

When the Evangelist John the Theologian went to a city of Asia named Ephesus, between the borders of Ionia and Lydia, he found many people deceived by the error of idolatry. They especially revered Artemis, who in ancient myth was a courageous woman who was a hunter. The Greek pagans of that time named her a goddess and worshipped her with great sacrifices. While the Evangelist John was in the city with Saint Prochoros, he raised his hands to heaven and silently besought God at length with sighs. Behold! The idol of Artemis in her temple toppled, but no one was injured. Then the rest of the temple collapsed. Saint John worked many signs and wonders in that place.

In one of the villages of Lydia, Saint John the Theologian met with the Apostle Philip and his sister, Saint Mariamne. They departed with him into the land of Phrygia. There they entered into a city, also known as Hierapolis (Pamukkale), on the borders between Phrygia and Lydia, and they preached Christ. This city, famous for its hot spring and deposits of calcium, was the home of countless idols, which were worshipped by

all the people; and besides these false gods they also had a viper for which they had constructed a special temple. They brought food to this viper and offered up manifold and divers sacrifices thereto. And the foolish people also worshipped other vipers and serpents. Saint Philip and his sister first armed themselves against the viper with prayer, wherein they were aided by Saint John the Theologian, who was with them at the time. And together they slew the viper with prayer, as with a spear, putting it to death through the power of Christ. At length, the pagans crucified Saint Philip, and he received the crown of martyrdom. Christ shook Hierapolis to its foundations with a devastating quake. The profane people of Hierapolis, seized with great terror, repented of their impiety. Failing before the feet of the Apostle John, they begged mercy. He baptized them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and taught them the truth. The substantial ruins of the Church of Saint Philip, on the site of his martyrdom, may still be seen today in Hierapolis.

Thereafter, Saint John determined to go away. He 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 divine Elder John prophesied that at a later time there would spring forth there a great abundance of holy water in honor of the Archangel Michael, who would perform awesome wonders and miracles.

Saint John then left that place and continued preaching the Gospel. Not many days passed before water gushed up out of the earth. Whosoever partook of the water with faith received deliverance from every sickness. In fact, not only the Christians enjoyed this divine favor, but also even unbelieving Greeks, who went and drank from the waters found healing. Hearken to the following account.

There was a certain rich Greek pagan in the city of Laodikeia. 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 favorable vision. In his sleep he observed a certain man telling him to go to the holy waters (Agiasma) of the Archangel Michael; for he would not return embittered. Indeed, he was told that his daughter would receive healing, and that he himself would gain the salvation of his soul. Now he beheld this vision not because he was found worthy (since he was benighted utterly with the impiety of idolatry), but rather because God, Who wishes to save all men and have them come to a full knowledge of the truth, dispensed in His economy this vision, so that through the working of the miracle the Greek pagan would be converted and others, too, would be strengthened in godliness. When that Greek pagan awoke, with fear and trembling, he took along 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. Straightway, only 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 certain of the people what name they were invoking while drinking or pouring the water over themselves that they should find healing. 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 slave 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 that holy water with faith and gave it to his daughter to drink. Immediately-O the wonder!-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. What happened after this? The Greek nobleman and his daughter, and all those with them, were baptized and became Christians; in addition, the nobleman built a costly temple. He also erected at the site of the sanctified waters a beautiful building with vaulted roof, so that he might say with the Prophet David, "O Lord, I have loved the beauty of Thy house [Ps. 25:7]." Hence, after showing much faith and gratitude for the benefaction he received from the archangel, he returned to his own house, glorifying God not only for the wonderworking which he beheld in his daughter, but more so for his own conversion.

After the passage of ninety years, a certain child of Hierapolis, the offshoot of good Orthodox parentage, at ten years old, left for the Church of the Archangel, so as to be directed by divine providence from above. His name was Archippos, after the apostle [Col. 4:17; Phile. 1:2]. He became the church's sexton. Possessed of much self-mastery and other virtues, he was vouchsafed divine gifts. He not only controlled those bodily desires that injure the soul, but also disciplined his body and brought it into bondage by neither partaking of bread nor ever bathing, nor did he give his flesh rest in sleep. He performed all this before arriving at man's estate. He took nourishment once a week, faring on wild herbs without salt. His sole drink was from the holy waters. His only two garments were of a coarse cloth of hair: he wore one, and covered himself with the other at night. Every year he alternated the garments, wearing one and covering himself with the other. This was always the dress of Archippos. He filled his bedding with cut stone. As for where he laid his head, he had another haircloth filled with thorny and prickly

plants. This afforded him little sleep, but just enough to sustain him. He maintained this regimen even into manhood and until the day of his repose. When a soul is possessed of such fear of God and love for those future good things, what we deem a harsh conduct of life, requiring strength beyond nature, is sweetness and repose to such a person. We have as further examples the martyrs and righteous one who underwent all forms of torture, affliction, and straits, enduring all that they might gain the kingdom of the heavens. Let us now return to our account.

Archippos, now ecclesiarch, with such a mode of life, never ceased to have before his eyes the working out of his salvation, having a heart that is broken and humbled [Ps. 50:171. He ever strove that God might create in him a clean heart and that the meditation of his heart might be pleasing before the Lord, for the Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart. He entreated God, "May my eyes never behold the dainties of this world, nor may my mind be confounded with temporal vanities. Only Thou, O Lord, most compassionate, fill my eyes with spiritual tears; make humble my heart and make straight my steps in Thy law. For what gain have I from this clay body which, on the one hand, today is, but, on the other hand, tomorrow perishes, even as the grass withers with the coming evening? O Lord Almighty, grant me to be striving for the everlasting good and the salvation of the soul."

Such were the daily thoughts and meditations of Archippos, and God hearkened readily to his entreaty. Living at that time in the neighborhood of the holy waters was a multitude of unbelievers who daily witnessed the wonder workings. 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 were speaking evilly of him. Then, one day, those pagans, of one accord, gathered together and, in a maniacal rage, charged against the righteous man. They intended to put him to death and utterly destroy the holy waters. While some were dragging Archippos by force, by the hairs of his head and beard, and beating him with rods and pieces of wood, others were attempting to cover up and choke the course of the holy waters. But, O Thine indescribable judgments, O Christ! A flame emitted there from and frightened all of them so that they left running; thus, they departed unsuccessful.

After this, they devised something worse: a plan to destroy the church to its foundation and usher in death for the righteous man. What did they contrive? Nearby the Church of the Archangel, where the holy waters were located, from the left side, 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 powers 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 [Ps. 105:2]?" The river, as though it were animate, fearing the grace of the archangel, straightway turned far over toward the right part of the Church; and there the course of the river remains to this day, thus certifying the miracle. When those most profane ones beheld their unjust enterprise taking the opposite course from that intended, the words of the Prophet David applied: "The Lord scattereth the plans of the heathens, He setteth aside the devices of the peoples [Ps. 32: 10]. " The unrelenting pagans, nonetheless, conspired a second time; indeed, something more terrible than before, which we shall explain to you from the beginning.

Two great rivers gush forth from out of the east: one is called the Lykokastros River, and the other is called the 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 sloped 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 labored 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 clamor 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 up their voices. The rivers will lift up their waves, at the voices of many waters. Wonderful are the surgings of the sea, wonderful on high is the Lord. Holiness becometh Thy house, O Lord, unto length of days [Ps. 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 flux." 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 [Ps. 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 (XO)vfI)"TO)cyav) the waters here. " A great earthquake occurred and instilled fear. 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, toward the bema (pulpit). Thus this place, formerly called Colossae, from then was named Chonae (XCovat), a Greek word signifying the funneling 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 labor of his virtues and hastened to his beloved Christ rejoicing, even as the good cultivator sows with godly tears that he might reap the fr-uits of his toils in the joy of everlasting life.

To the glory of the Trinity and the chief commander, Michael, a boundless number of wonders 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 prayers thou dost ever surround us with the protection of the wings of thine immaterial glory!

Note:There is an encomium in Greek, "In Clossae of Phrygia, there took place a wonderous event by the all-glorius chief commander Michael...", which is extant in the Athonite monasteries of Great Lavra and Iveron. Having been translated into simpler Greek, it is contained in New Treasure, by Hierodeacon George Sougdoures which was taken and used in the Greek account found in the The Great Synaxaristes.

Source: <http://www.stgeorgegreenville.org/>