

ISSUES IN THE GREAT CONTROVERSY

The book of Revelation (especially chs. 4-21) center around the war in heaven, described in ch. 12 (a chapter that is the center of the Book of Revelation).

The issue in this war is identified by the one personal name found in chs. 4-21: Michael. In Hebrew Michael is made up of three words: *mi* (who?), *chi* (like), *el* (God). The name is thus a question: Who is like God? The answer to that in Revelation is: "the Lamb."

[Michael is the name Jesus bore in eternity before this world was created. He joined with Lucifer, the covering cherub (see Ezek. 28:14) as co-Light Bearer, taking the truth about God to the angels and other beings. He became as an angel to the angels and is described in Jude 9 as Michael the Archangel.]

In contrast, Revelation 13 identifies a false trinity; three creatures are worshiped in the chapter:

Dragon	because he gives his authority to the beast
Beast	"who is like the beast and who can fight against it?"
Image to the beast	parallels the false prophet of Rev. 16:13.

The dragon represents the false view of God the Father (who gave His authority to His Son). The beast represents the false view of Christ (who is Michael) and claims that the issue in the great controversy is not "Who is like God" but rather "Who is like the beast?" The two questions are different: "Who is like God?" is answered by the Lamb and thus refers to "Who is like God in character?" The question "Who is like the beast?" is extended by "who can fight against it?" and thus refers to an issue of power. "Who is equal to the beast?" rather than "Who is like the beast in character?" Thus we realize that the issues in the great controversy center around the questions raised by Satan over the character and government of God. Satan has tried to downplay these issues by misrepresenting the great controversy as a power struggle. Yet the questions have never really been over His power, but rather over His character (cf. James 2:19). In Genesis 3:1-5, we have an example of Satan's lies about God by which he convinced Eve to sin. He portrayed God as selfish, restrictive, arbitrary, severe, and as having lied regarding sin and its consequences. It is these issues over which the great controversy will be played out. Revelation 13 highlights the side of Satan as employing compulsion, the spectacular, anything to gain power and supremacy. By contrast, the Lamb is the answer to the question, "Who is like God?" And the Lamb never coerces His followers. He only uses freedom, love, and truth by which to convince us of the rightness of His ways.