

Arm of the Lord - Study Notes

Main Passage: John 12:37-38

Title: The Arm of the Lord

Summary of the Message:

The Arm of the Lord is an Old Testament title for Jesus in the Old Testament. The reason we recognize this is because the Arm of the Lord is distinguished from the Father the same way Jesus is, does the things only God can do, and is directly identified by the New Testament authors as who the prophets were referring to when this title came up.

Main Points:

1. The Arm of the Lord is distinguished from the Father the same way Jesus is.
2. The Arm of the Lord is equal to the Father the same way Jesus is.
3. The Arm of the Lord is described doing all of the things Jesus is credited for.

Key Topics: Deity of Christ, Trinity, Prophecy

Key Passages: Isaiah 40:10, Revelation 22:12, Isaiah 48:12-13

Series: Topical

Book: John

+Titles, Themes, Symbols, Illustrations. There is never a time where the Bible requires us more to use our brains than when it comes to understanding the difference between a theme and an actual individual. There's obviously the easy route of continuing to read for more information. But there's also the challenge of remembering trends that keep coming up time and time again throughout the Bible that can be so subtle that if you blinked you'd miss them, yet be so clear the moment they're pointed out to you. The Arm of the Lord is one of these trends. Anyone reading the references to this would consider it an anthropomorphism, or giving something that isn't human, like God, human traits like having a right hand. We all affirm that God isn't a physical being with any arms, let alone a right one.

John 4:24 says that God is Spirit. The literal interpretation doesn't work. So why is it that the Bible is filled with all of these references to the Lord's Right Hand or the Arm of the Lord doing things? If not a symbol, they may describe it culturally as being a theme to describe God acting in power. Since the days before toilet paper afforded people only a bucket of water and their left hand, we can see why the right hand would be specified. Yet even then, this arm of the Lord is treated as if it's separate from God, and still doing the same things only God does. There's even Jewish traditions that have a title for this called the Metatron. Not Megatron, but Metatron. The being who is distinguished from YHVH yet bears YHVH's name uniquely from the rest of creation. The Targums even call this character the Logos, or Word. If I haven't given away the goal of this message already, my goal in pointing out a small handful out of a mountain of passages and how they're referenced in the New Testament as applying to Jesus, my goal is to make a biblical case that the Arm of the Lord is actually an Old Testament title for Jesus for the following reasons;

1. The Arm is distinguished from the Father the same way Jesus is.
 2. The Arm shares exclusive divine traits with the Father the same way Jesus does.
 3. The Arm does the same things Jesus is given credit for.
- If it acts like a duck, is described like a duck, and does what a duck does, it's probably a duck.

Point 1: The Difference Between The Arm of the Lord and God

Isaiah 40:10-11: *Behold, the Lord God shall come with a strong hand, And His arm shall rule for Him; Behold, His reward is with Him, And His work before Him. He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, And carry them in His bosom, And gently lead those who are with young.*

+The Lord God is prophesied as coming to His people, but His Arm will be the one that rules for Him. He illustrates this by describing His rule by having His reward with Him, feeding them like a shepherd does their sheep, and doing so with the tenderness needed for dealing with the young and weak. This is quoted word for word in Revelation 22:12-13, but we'll get to that more in a moment. Right now, notice that the Arm of the Lord is ruling for or on behalf of the Lord God. This is the same way Jesus describes being sent by the Father to shepherd His people.

Key Terms: Being Sent, Ruling, and Being a Shepherd to His People

John 20:21: *So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."*

-Jesus was sent by the Father. And He's even acknowledging this post-resurrection. That's important because it's the habit of cults to make a distinction between what Jesus thought about Himself before as a mere human and somehow becoming more of what He always was after the cross. The fact is there is still a subordination of authority within the Trinity as the Son submits to the Father.

John 10:11-18: *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd. "Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."*

-Repeating the point made regarding His authority coming from the Father, Jesus even illustrates Himself with the exact same language used to describe Isaiah's prophecy about the Arm of the Lord and what the Lord would send Him to do.

+Conclusion: Using the same language as Isaiah and being described the same way as the one being sent by the Lord, Jesus and the Arm of the Lord are both distinguished from the Lord God by being sent by Him.

Point 2: The Deity of the Arm of the Lord

Isaiah 52:9-10: *Break forth into joy, sing together, You waste places of Jerusalem! For the Lord has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord has made bare His holy arm In the eyes of all the nations; And all the ends of the earth shall see The salvation of our God.*

-Isaiah prophesies leading into the famous Isaiah 53 Suffering servant passage that Israel is going to see the salvation of their God. And how is this comfort, this cause for singing revealed? The Lord laying bare His Holy Arm.

Isaiah 45:20-21: *“Assemble yourselves and come; Draw near together, You who have escaped from the nations. They have no knowledge, Who carry the wood of their carved image, And pray to a god that cannot save. Tell and bring forth your case; Yes, let them take counsel together. Who has declared this from ancient time? Who has told it from that time? Have not I, the Lord? And there is no other God besides Me, A just God and a Savior; There is none besides Me.*

-Isaiah makes a point in contrast to idols that cannot save, that there is one God and only one Savior. So from an Old Testament framework, if someone is called Savior or is credited with saving God's people, it's something that exclusively belongs to God. And the New Testament agrees.

1 Timothy 1:1: *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope,*

+With this in mind, open to the first page of the New Testament and notice how Matthew reports why Jesus was given that name.

Matthew 1:21-23: *And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.”*

+So which is it Matthew? Is the Baby's name Jesus, meaning God our Savior, or Immanuel, meaning God with us? It's almost as if Matthew understood that to call someone Savior means to call them God.

Titus 1:4: *To Titus, a true son in our common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.*

Point 3: The Arm of the Lord and Jesus

John 12:37-41: *But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke: “Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of*

the Lord been revealed?" Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again: "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, Lest they should see with their eyes, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them." These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him.

+John makes a lot of citations. He references Isaiah 53:1 in reference to the Arm of the Lord, I mean Jesus not being believed despite performing signs. He references Isaiah 6:9-10 regarding He and Isaiah's ministries being legitimately from God but still ignored to reveal what's going on in their hearts. But there's another passage in this that throws this whole question as to who Jesus and the Arm of the Lord are. "These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him. When did Isaiah see Jesus' glory? Go to the start of the chapter he just quoted.

Isaiah 6:1-5: In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!" And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The Lord of hosts."

+Why is John claiming Isaiah saw Jesus in the same breath he refers to Jesus as the Arm of the Lord? I thought Isaiah saw the Lord? The answer is that He did.

To recap:

1. The Arm of the Lord is not the Father. He was sent by the Father. Just like Jesus.
2. The Arm of the Lord is God, because He's does the sort of things only God does. Just like Jesus.
3. The Arm of the Lord is Jesus, because every time He is brought up, He's doing everything Jesus did and will do.

Isaiah 44:6: "Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, And his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: 'I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God.

Revelation 22:12-13: *“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.”*

Isaiah 40:10-11: *Behold, the Lord God shall come with a strong hand, And His arm shall rule for Him; Behold, His reward is with Him, And His work before Him. He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, And carry them in His bosom, And gently lead those who are with young.*