

Messianic Prophecies in Isaiah #9: The Messiah as the “Arm of the Lord”

The Messiah as the Arm of the LORD

Isa. 40:9-11 – “... say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold, the Lord GOD will come **with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him**; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.”

Isa. 51:9 – “Awake, awake, put on strength, **O arm of the Lord ...**”

Isa. 52:10 – “The LORD **hath 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.”

Isa. 53 – “Who hath believed our report? and to whom is **the arm of the Lord** revealed?”

The term “arm of the LORD” is a metaphor. Christ is not literally an arm, but the word is used to describe his work. Arms are how we interact with, and manipulate the things around us. Arms let us eat and dress, write, use tools, drive, do work, lift, pull, push, or pound things. It is how we translate our will to some effect. Likewise with God in his triune nature – the Father wills, the Spirit moves and empowers, the Son brings things to pass.

The term “arm of the LORD” is used to describe God actively moving in the earth, similar to the way we describe power and action with terms like “the long arm of the law”, “flexing his muscles”, weapons as an extension of power through the arms, an arm of the government, etc. The dictionary says “arm” or “hand” can be used to describe power, might, strength, or authority. Kings or legislatures pass laws, but enforcement is in “the arm of the law”, through police, KGB, FBI, IRS, etc.

“Arm” can also refer to comfort and protection, which is why Isa. 40 combines the idea of a ruling Messiah and a shepherd with the young of the flock.

God actively moves in the earth and describes it as being done by “his holy arm”. When he determines something to be done, it just doesn’t happen by itself. He speaks it, but he uses others by empowering them with the Spirit. e.g. Moses, Samson, Elijah, Elisha. He uses angels or even demons to bring his will to pass. The last plague on Egypt was a destroying angel. He sent a lying spirit to the mouth of Ahab’s false prophets. An angel was sent to stir the waters for healing, in the pool by the sheep market (Jn. 5). Angels are sent to bring plagues, and ultimately, to reap the earth.

How do we see Christ as the Arm of the LORD?

In creation, the Father spoke the universe into existence, but somehow it was the Son of God who accomplished it as “the arm of the LORD”.

John 1:1-3 – “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”

Eph. 3:9 – “... which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.”

Col. 1:16-17 – “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.”

Heb. 1:2 – “Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.”

In various OT appearances of the preincarnate Christ, he was the arm of the LORD.

Gen. 16:7-13 – The “angel of the LORD” appeared to Hagar when she had fled from Sarai, and told her “I will multiply thy seed exceedingly” and predicted the birth of Ishmael. Verse 13 – “And she called the name of the LORD that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?”

Gen. 22:15-18 – After sacrificing the ram instead of Isaac, “the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, And said, By myself I have sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, ...”

Gen. 32:24-32 – Jacob wrestled with “a man” all night, and would not let him go. The man blessed him and changed his name from Jacob to Israel. Verse 30 – “And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.”

Josh. 5:13-15 – Joshua saw a man with a drawn sword, and he asked “Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come.” Joshua fell down and worshipped, and the captain of the LORD’s host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy.”

Jdg. 2:1 – “And an angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you.”

In his time on earth, Christ was the arm of the LORD.

From beginning to end, Christ ministered to people as the arm of the Lord. He touched them and they were healed, lepers cleansed, blind eyes opened, dead raised, physical substances were changed (wine) or multiplied (fish and loaves), etc. In all this, he said, “I must do the works of him that sent me”.

In his Second Coming, Christ is the arm of the LORD.

Zech. 14:1-9 and Rev. 19:11 – 20:15 – While not using the term “arm of the Lord”, it is strikingly appropriate in this description of his Second Coming. He returns from heaven to Jerusalem on a white horse with the armies of heaven, treading the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God, defeats the combined armies of the earth; casts the beast (Antichrist) and false prophet into the lake of fire; binds Satan for a thousand years in the bottomless pit; reigns with his saints for a thousand years upon earth; allows a final rebellion instigated by the release of Satan, makes a complete and total overthrow, followed by the casting of Satan and Hades into the lake of fire; causes a resurrection of the unrighteous dead, and makes all to stand before the great white throne before consigning lost souls to the lake of fire.

How does this apply to us?

Now that Christ has ascended to heaven, it is we who are left here on earth to do his will as his representatives and ambassadors. He tells us to heal the sick and cast out demons, and do works of compassion and mercy. We are the body of Christ, and we stretch forth our arms as extensions of his, speaking in his name. Christ is still doing the works, but he is doing them through us as we yield ourselves to him in holy obedience.

Eph. 1:22-23 – “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

Ac. 4:29-30 – “And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.”

Ac. 5:12 – “And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people”