

## Christ and Antichrist Daniel 9:24-26

What should you and I do when it appears that evil has triumphed? And when will justice be done? In recent days, the megaphone of the media has been trumpeting the triumph of evil, and declaring it to be very good. Clusters of people are demanding justice – even as they treat their fellow man with injustice to draw attention to their demands for justice! Sounds crazy right? Reacting to reactionaries results in anarchy. Historically, anarchy produces a vacuum that leads to tyranny. And make no mistake: these social and political pressures are fracturing Christian congregations. A recent study found that half of U.S. pastors “frequently hear congregants repeat conspiracy theories.”<sup>i</sup> Whether it is rumors about a super-rich cabal or a crafty conglomeration of politicians, speculation is rampant. Jeremiah the prophet complained, “Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why are they all happy so deal so treacherously?” (Jeremiah 12:1). But four verses later, the Lord pointed to the real problem: “...if in the land of peace you are trusting...” (Jeremiah 12:5). These recent events are God’s providential gifts to help us understand where our trust is placed. If your faith is “in the land of peace,” then you will conclude that the real problem is powerful people. But if your faith is in the Lord, you recognize that we are not waging a war with physical weapons; we are dealing in spiritual warfare to destroy those arguments and opinions that violate God’s glory (2 Corinthians 10:4-6). In other words, if we want to understand conspiracies, we have to consider the big picture, and today’s text helps us do that. It describes Christ and Antichrist.

What is a Christian to do in these days? God used Daniel to give us guidance through his prayer in chapter 9. The passage before us is both miserable and meaningful. But it answers our questions about evil and injustice. In this text, each one of us is presented with a clear choice between the work of Christ and the work of Antichrist.

### *Miserable and Meaningful*

The miserable aspect of this text reveals that “Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself” (9:26). The One who was promised to deliver His people would be put to death. Commentators note that this last phrase indicates that He will have nothing to show for his efforts at His death. As one author wrote, “Thus when Christ died, his earthly ministry seemed to have been in vain. His disciples had deserted him, and from all appearances he had not accomplished what he had set out to do. As Van Groningen says, ‘Their promised royal One, the anointed King given by Yahweh to them as mediator of the covenant, is to be put to death as a pauper.’”<sup>ii</sup>

As we have noted from other passages, Jesus Christ is “the Lord of the letdowns.”<sup>iii</sup> We can see this expressed in Isaiah 53:3, “**He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were *our* faces from him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.**” Was Jesus Christ familiar with the sense that evil had triumphed? Yes, painfully so. Did He face injustice and conspirators? Yes, Matthew 12:14 records, “**But the Pharisees went out and conspired against Him, how to destroy Him.**”

But this passage could be described as “meaningful” as well as “miserable.”

How can it be full of meaning when it describes such misery? This is an important question for every one of us today. All of us know about the painful ravages of evil. All of us can see it wreaking havoc in our society. Many of us know the haunting reality of the consequences of sin.

Daniel was praying for his people, the nation of Israel. He desperately wanted to see them return to the Lord and to be delivered from their miseries – the consequences of their rebellion. He wanted to understand the future of his nation – God’s chosen people. But the Lord revealed to Daniel that another nation would come to, **“destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined”** (9:26). Yes, the city of Jerusalem would be rebuilt (**“the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troubling times”** (9:25). But verse 26 prophesied that it would be destroyed again.

So where is there something meaningful in all of this? It’s meaningful because

- 1.) It describes the God who is in sovereign control. The events of the “70 sevens” described here are “determined” – by God, in advance (9:24).
- 2.) It describes what the sovereign God will accomplish within those “70 sevens.” **“Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.”** (9:24) As you can see, this is an exhaustive list! This passage is not describing an eternal “yin/yang” of dualism (a never-ending battle between good and evil). No, verse 24 prophesies that transgressions will be finished and sins will be brought to an end. And there will be a means of peace-making for the iniquities of the past. This prophecy goes on to predict the ushering in of everlasting righteousness. Now that’s meaningful!

### *Questions about this passage*

This passage is filled to overflowing with the message of the Messiah who is the answer for human miseries. But there are aspects of this passage that are puzzling. In this message and the next message, we will try to work through some of these puzzles. For instance, is this passage to be taken literally, or is it symbolic? Who are the people involved? When will/did these events take place?

In the last message<sup>iv</sup>, Pastor Rodney King helped us to work through verse 24, and its many purpose statements. In this message, we will consider the questions about the people involved in this passage. In the next message, we will look more carefully at timing (which is hotly debated).

### **People**

- Who or what is “the most Holy” in Daniel 9:24?
- Who is the Messiah? (9:25-26) And will these things happen literally?
- Who are “the people of the prince who shall come?” (9:26)

### **Timing**

- What is the meaning of the “70 sevens” (sometimes translated as “weeks”)?
- When was the commandment or decree to rebuild Jerusalem? (9:25)
- If the passage is literal, then when was Jerusalem destroyed a second time? (9:26)

### 1. Who or what is “the most Holy” in Daniel 9:24?

The purposes listed in verse 24 are not necessarily in chronological order. But among them is the comment, “and to anoint the most Holy.” To whom or to what does this refer? It is probably a reference to the rebuilding of the temple, but it is not possible to be dogmatic. If this was the prophecy, it was certainly fulfilled through the ministry of Ezra, Haggai and Zechariah.

### 2. Who is the Messiah (9:25-26)?

**“Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself ...”**(9:25-26a)

As we noted, we will plan to get into the timing of these verses in the next message. But the verses refer to “the Messiah the Prince” and “Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself.” There is no question that this refers to the Messiah (who is referred to as “the Christ” in the New Testament). One commentator wrote, “Jesus is called the “Anointed One” (Messiah, i.e., Christ) because he was anointed by the Holy Spirit to do his work. He is both priest and king (cf. Zech 6:13; Ps 110:4; Matt 27:11; Heb 4:14–15; 5:6). He is called the “ruler” because he is the king of the universe and someday will personally rule the earth from his throne in Jerusalem.”<sup>v</sup> This is the prophecy of the Promised One, the Messiah – the One whom Israel had longed for since He was first mentioned in Genesis 3:15. This makes the comment in verse 26 even more tragic: **“Messiah be cut off, but not for himself ...”** Isaiah 53:8 predicted, **“For He was cut off out of the land of the living: For the transgression of my people was He stricken.”** Jesus Christ was not put to death for His sin, for He was sinless. But Isaiah wrote, “He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people.”

Throughout his agonizing prayer, Daniel had prayed about the twisted transgressions of his people. Their iniquity and rebellion against the infinite, righteous God was breathtaking. Yet in God’s gracious providence, the death of the Messiah was the means by which God would “make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness ...” (9:24). This brings every one of us to the point of decision, illustrated by the two thieves on the cross in Luke 23:39-43. Should we be like the one thief who railed against Jesus and demanded relief without confessing his sin and repenting? Or should we be like the other thief who railed against Jesus but repented in the fear of God? The second man confessed that he was a sinner receiving the just punishment for his sins, but that Jesus was the sinless King who alone could deliver him. Those who would be like the second thief can rejoice in Christ’s promise to him: “Today you shall be with me in paradise.”

### 3. Who are “the people of the prince who shall come?” (9:26)

“The prince who shall come” refers to the coming world ruler who will make a treaty with the nation of Israel (according to Daniel 9:27). We have identified this man before as “the little horn” of Daniel 7. We noted that <sup>vii</sup>“In Daniel’s vision, a little horn (that was apparently part of the original ten) rooted out three of the original horns. This indicates that this little horn (whom we would identify as the Antichrist) would defeat three nations, or take them over by diplomacy. The horn (which itself is a symbol for power) is characterized as having eyes and the ability to speak great things. Like Hitler, this powerful person will have the ability to sway crowds with his evil rhetoric.” In Daniel 7:7-8, he is closely connected with the fourth

savage beast, a powerful and horrible monster that is the Roman Empire.<sup>vii</sup> In a manner that we have yet to fully discover, the coming Antichrist is associated with the areas dominated by the Roman Empire.

This would be an appropriate time to consider what the Scripture says about the Antichrist. It's important to remember this, because Paul made it plain that "the mystery of iniquity" (or lawlessness) associated with the Antichrist was already at work in his day! (2 Thessalonians 2:1-10). That continues today. This is the biggest conspiracy that we need to keep in mind. This is the conspiracy of Antichrist against the Lord Jesus Christ. Here is what the Bible says about the Antichrist:

- According to 1 John 2:15-20, many apostates (those who have departed from the faith) are like the final Antichrist. These deny that Jesus is the Christ, 1 John 2:22. This is the spirit of Antichrist.
- You can recognize the spirit of antichrist by the teaching that denies the incarnation of Christ (that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh). See 2 John 7.
- As we noted, this is the little Gentile horn from revived Roman Empire. See Revelation 13:1. He is make a treaty with Israel (Daniel 9:27) which he will break after three and a half years (Daniel 12:7, Revelation 12:14; 13:5).
- Empowered by the Devil, the Antichrist will experience some sort of miraculous healing, and appear to rise from the dead to cause people to worship the Devil and himself (Revelation 13:2-4, 14). See 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10.
- He is the man of sin, the son of perdition (2 Thessalonians 2:3), whose number is "the number of man" 666 (Revelation 13:16-18). He will require all who want to do business to take this mark.
- By sitting in the Jerusalem temple, he will present himself as a god to be worshiped (2 Thessalonians 2:4, Daniel 11:45) speaking against God. See Matthew 24:15-19, Daniel 11:36-37.
- Like the false christs and false prophets before him, he will do signs and wonders to deceive people (Mark 13:22).
- But make no mistake, this is the beast who arises from the pit who is temporarily given the power to destroy God's witnesses (Revelation 11:7).
- The Antichrist will overcome the saints and have power over the nations (Revelation 13:7-8).
- Though he will conquer many nations by diplomacy and force (Revelation 6:1-2, Daniel 11:38-44), he will be greatly alarmed by news out of the east and north. This seems to demonstrate that he will not have absolute power, even though he is empowered by Satan!
- The Antichrist is part of what we might call "the unholy trinity" (with Satan and the false prophet). With the demons they will call all nations together for the battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:12-16).
- His days are numbered. God has already predicted his end. He will be utterly destroyed by Christ (Daniel 2:34-35, 11:36, 45, 2 Thessalonians 2:8-9, Revelation 19:11-21).
- The Antichrist will be tormented in the Lake of Fire for all eternity (Revelation 19:20, 20:10)

When you read what the Scripture says about the Antichrist, it seems that evil triumphs – for a time. The false prophet will trumpet the triumph of his evil. Injustice will seem to prevail worldwide. But then the Lord God will completely fulfill His commitment in Daniel 9:24, **“Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.”** By God's grace the finished work of Jesus Christ made reconciliation for the iniquity of sinners like you and me. His death for sinners paid for their deliverance

from sin and its penalty. Those who reject Christ are already choosing the spirit and deception of Antichrist. It's time to confess your sin and call upon Christ with repentance. As He did with that thief on the cross, Christ will show you His saving power.

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<sup>i</sup> Leah MarieAnn Klett, "Nearly half of US pastors 'frequently' hear congregants repeat conspiracy theories, poll finds" The Christian Post, January 27, 2021, accessed at <https://www.christianpost.com/news/half-of-us-pastors-hear-members-repeat-conspiracy-theories-poll.html> To better understand these conspiracy rumors, see Kevin Bauder, "Christianity and the Alt-Right" Proclaim and Defend, January 26, 2021, accessed at <https://www.proclaimanddefend.org/2021/01/26/christianity-and-the-alt-right/>

<sup>ii</sup> Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, vol. 18, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 267–268. Citing Van Groningen, *Messianic Revelation in the Old Testament*, 836<sup>ii</sup>

<sup>iii</sup> Lord of the Letdowns March 19, 2015, accessed at <https://www.cbfindlay.org/the-lord-of-the-letdowns/>

<sup>iv</sup> Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week, January 24, 2021 accessed at <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=12521162236108>

<sup>v</sup> Miller p. 264.

<sup>vi</sup> Earthly Kingdoms and the Everlasting Kingdom, November 15, 2020, accessed at <https://www.cbfindlay.org/earthly-kingdoms-and-the-everlasting-kingdom/>

<sup>vii</sup> Ibid.