

Christ and Antichrist, part 2

Daniel 9:24-27

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In many ways, each one of us is like the prophet Daniel. He was troubled by the happenings in his nation. The future of his country concerned him greatly. His homeland – once the greatest country in the world – was at a low point. And Daniel was trying to discern the destiny of his people. So, in many ways, Daniel was just like us. He needed guidance, and we need guidance. We need to know how to make the next right choices in a land greatly challenged by a slew of wrong choices. And this highlights one of the great privileges that we have as believers: God gives us wisdom through His Word. His Word clears the air so that we can foresee what others cannot. And we learn that we can trust God’s timing.

According to a CNN Travel article¹ published on April 9, 2020, the people in Punjab (a state in India) began to see a sight not seen in thirty years. Due to plant shutdowns during the pandemic, air pollution dropped significantly in the region. And for the first time, people could see what their parents and grandparents had seen: the Himalayan mountain range – one hundred miles away! Our text of Scripture today can have the same effect for us – it can clear the air to help us see into the future. And recent events: pandemics and politics, votes and vaccines, riots and reactions, masks and mayhem, have helped us see our great need for Scriptural guidance. There is confusion all around. But we can use the Scriptures to clear the air and learn to trust God’s timing.

The Timing of Events

In the last message from this text, we found answers about Christ and Antichrist. In this text once again today, we can see the timing of these prophesied events. As Pastor Rodney King made clear in his message from Daniel 9:24, God is fulfilling specific purposes in these 70 weeks (a reference to 490 years). Destinies are determined by the Lord. **“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.”** The next time someone speculates, “What is this world coming to?” a Biblical response would be – it’s coming to a determined end, and God will make a new heaven and a new earth. In the time period stipulated here, the Most High God will “finish transgress, make an end to sins, make reconciliation for iniquity and bring in everlasting righteousness” Now there is something to rejoice about when the rest of the world is rumbling and rioting! In today’s message, we will try to answer the question: “When will these things be?” and learn to trust God’s timing.

Timing: The First Coming of Christ, 25-26a

“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: ...”

Construction of the City

Daniel was told the beginning point of this prophecy: the command to rebuild Jerusalem. From the latter part of verse 25, we learn that this included the street and the wall (which could be translated the “plaza” and the “bulwark” (or “rampart.”) In 1975, Dr. Harold Hoehner noted that “...it is best to take the first word plaza as referring to the interior of the city and the second word trench as referring to a moat

going around the outside of the city. Part of Jerusalem's natural defenses consisted of a great cutting in the rock along the northern wall, which is still visible, for the purpose of building a defense wall."ii Verse 25 described a complete restoration, performed in troubling times.

The Coming of the Savior (Messiah)

Page | 2 Daniel 9:25 was a prophecy, but when did these events begin in history? There are three possibilities:

1. The decree of Cyrus to rebuild the temple (2 Chronicles 36:22-23). (This command resulted in the rebuilding of the temple, not the walls of Jerusalem.)
2. The decree of Darius: According to Ezra 5:3-17, when the Israelites began to rebuild, they were challenged by the people of the land. This caused Darius to review the original decree (according to Ezra 6:1-12). (His decree merely confirmed the previous one about the building of the temple.)
3. The decree of Artaxerxes to Ezra (Ezra 7:20-21). (This decree concerned the rebuilding of the temple.)
4. The decree of Artaxerxes to Nehemiah. As you know, Nehemiah lamented the fact that Jerusalem still lay in rubble (Nehemiah 1). But in chapter 2 of Nehemiah, Artaxerxes issued a decree that Jerusalem would be rebuilt. This was the last decree concerning Jerusalem given by any Persian king. This historic command is the one that best fulfills the wording of Daniel 9:25. Harold Hoehner estimates that this decree was issued in March/April of 444 B.C.

Today we calculate a year as 365 days, but it is more likely that the people of Israel were calculating using 360 days = 1 year.ⁱⁱⁱ (Dr. Hoehner noted that Sir Robert Anderson had designated "the 360 day year" as a "prophetic year.") And Hoehner wrote, "Using the prophetic year the calculation would be as follows. Multiplying the sixty-nine weeks by seven years for each week by 360 days gives a total of 173,880 days. The difference between 444 B.C. and A.D. 33 then is 476 solar years. By multiplying 476 by 365.24219879 or by 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes, 45.975 seconds, one comes to 173,855 days, 6 hours, 52 minutes, 44 seconds, or 173,855 days. This leaves only 25 days to be accounted for between 444 B.C. and A.D. 33. By adding the 25 days to March 5 (of 444 B.C.), one comes to March 30 (or A.D. 33) which was Nisan 10 in A.D. 33. This is the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem."^{iv} God's prophecies came true. From the decree to rebuild until Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem was exactly what the Lord told Daniel.

The Crucifixion of the Savior (Messiah)

Verse 26 prophesied that Messiah would be cut off. As you know, days after the Triumphal Entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem (John 12:12-19), the priests and crowds cried out, "Crucify Him!" (John 19:5-15) declaring, "We have no king but Caesar!" As you know, Jesus Christ was put to death for the sins of mankind. But He did not remain as a captive to death; He defeated death and rose again from the grave. During our own day of pandemics and political upheaval, people are afraid. According to Hebrews 2:15 people spend their entire lifetime in bondage to the fear of death. But Jesus defeated death. He rose again to show us that He is our trailblazer, the Way, the Truth and the Life, and truly no one comes to God the Father but by Jesus Christ (John 14:6). How should we apply the blessed truth of Daniel 9:25-26? Simple this: you can trust God's timing.

Timing: Antichrist – his agents and activities, 26b-27a

“... and the people of the prince that shall come shall 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. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate...”

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As we noted in the last message, “the prince that shall come” is the Antichrist. The “people of the prince that shall come destroy the city and the sanctuary” is a reference to the Romans who destroyed Jerusalem again in 70 A.D. The spirit of antichrist has been at work for thousands of years. As John wrote in 1 John 4:3, **“And every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that *spirit* of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.”** Two thousand years ago, the Scriptures noted that the spirit of Antichrist was already at work.

In recent years, there has been a lot of talk about conspiracy theories. Whether it was “the vast right wing conspiracy theory” (popularized by Hillary Clinton),^v or the unfounded “Trump-Russia conspiracy theory” propounded by Robert Mueller^{vi}, naïve people believed it. More recently, the media is publicizing the so-called “Q-Anon conspiracy theory”^{vii} and insisting that we ought to fear its followers. Still others maintain that politicians and pharmaceutical makers are conspiring against the populace. Some say, “It’s not a theory, I can quote from the conspirators!” Part of the question here is whether you believe these people – even conspirators – have as much power as they say that they have. For instance, in his (2003) Memoirs^{viii}, David Rockefeller wrote, *“For more than a century, ideological extremists at either end of the political spectrum have seized upon well-publicized incidents such as my encounter with Castro to attack the Rockefeller family for the inordinate influence they claim we wield over American political and economic institutions. Some even believe we are part of a secret cabal working against the best interests of the United States, characterizing my family and me as ‘internationalists’ and of conspiring with others around the world to build a more integrated global political and economic structure — one world, if you will. If that is the charge, I stand guilty, and I am proud of it.”*^{ix} If you accept for the moment that he wrote this, you are still faced with this question: “Is he deceiving himself?” In other words, do Rockefeller and his co-conspirators wield the kind of power they really believe they have?

Please bear in mind that “the mystery of iniquity (lawlessness)” was already at work in his day (2 Thessalonians 2:7-9). That passage includes a description of the Antichrist, and his remarkable ability to deceive. (Part of his deception will be causing people to believe that he has more power than he really has.) And this highlights the real issue for us: Are we going to get caught up in modern conspiracy theories while we ignore the massive conspiracy described in Psalm 2? The psalmist wrote, **“Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision”**(Psalm 2:1-4). How does the Lord treat the puny, pompous potentates who conspire against Him? He laughs them to scorn. Couldn’t we do the same? When I was in school, I would hear tall tales retold by my fellow students. That evening at home when I would tell my father what I had heard during the day, Dad would always look at me in surprise and say, “And you believed it?!” When we hear Christian people repeating these conspiracy theories today, we can almost hear our

Heavenly Father asking, "And you believed it?!" In short, the Lord instructed Isaiah to preach to the people: don't follow the way of others. Don't call "conspiracy" what they call "conspiracy" and don't fear what they fear; but fear the Lord instead (Isaiah 8:11-2). Look at what the apostles did in Acts 4:23-31; follow their lead. The fear of God is our greatest fortress. Let's trust Him and trust His timing.

Page | 4 As we have sung our paraphrase of Psalm 2 together, with one mind and one voice we have reminded each of God's ultimate triumph. Do you believe **"...that the most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever he will, and sets up over it the basest of men?"** (Daniel 4:17). If you believe that, then let's not spend another moment worrying about puny conspiracy theories. But keep your eyes on the Scripture as it tells you about Satan's conspirator, the Antichrist. That conspiracy will last until "the consummation" (the Second Coming of Jesus Christ). Daniel's 70th week will begin when the Antichrist enters into a treaty with Israel. But halfway through that week (at the midpoint of three and a half years), he will turn against Israel. Daniel's 70th week is the seven years period that scholars have described as The Tribulation. (Depending on which author you read, some of them also refer to the last three and half years as "The Great Tribulation.") This period has been determined by God as the period when He will bring Israel back to faith in Him. This is in direct answer to Daniel's prayer.

Timing: The Second Coming of Christ, 27b

"...he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate[r]."

But make no mistake. The conspiratorial Antichrist will wreak havoc and make people desolate. The Hebrew wording could be translated "on the wing of abominations," indicating just how fast his fury will spread. He will be "the desolator" but at "the consummation" – the Second Coming of Christ – the Antichrist will be made desolate! Will you trust in God's timing? In this passage, you have seen how God's prophecy (concerning the first coming of the Messiah) was fulfilled literally. In the midst of this pandemic, you have seen how the entire world can be controlled and galvanized into action. But God has promised that the Antichrist will come. The Tribulation will begin with his covenant and come to an end at the Second Coming of Christ? Are you ready? Embrace Jesus Christ today as the One whose sacrifice can save you from your sins.

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ⁱ Rob Picheta, "People in India can see the Himalayas for the first time in 'decades,' as the lockdown eases air pollution" CNN Travel, April 9, 2020, accessed at <https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/himalayas-visible-lockdown-india-scli-intl/index.html>

ⁱⁱ Harold W. Hoehner, "Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ Part VI: Daniel's Seventy Weeks and New Testament Chronology" *Bibliotheca Sacra*, BSAC 132:525 (Jan 1975), p.52-53

ⁱⁱⁱ Hoehner, p. 63. As Hoehner notes, "outside the prophetic literature the 360-day year is used one other time in the Bible. Genesis 7:11 states that the flood began on the seventeenth day of the second month. According to Genesis 8:4 the flood ended on the seventeenth day of the seventh month, exactly five months later. Genesis 7:24 and 8:3 state that the duration of the flood was 150 days. Hence five months equals 150 days or each month equals thirty days."

^{iv} Hoehner, p. 64

^v "Vast Right Wing Conspiracy" https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vast_right-wing_conspiracy

^{vi} Aaron Mate, "The Mueller Report Indicts the Trump-Russia Conspiracy Theory" *The Nation*, April 26, 2019, accessed at <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/russiagate-trump-mueller-report-no-collusion/>

^{vii} Brett Forest, "What Is QAnon? What We Know About the Conspiracy-Theory Group" *Wall Street Journal*, February 4, 2021, accessed at <https://www.wsj.com/articles/what-is-qanon-what-we-know-about-the-conspiracy-theory-11597694801>

^{viii} Accessed at https://www.google.com/books/edition/Memoirs/cKk_DwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1

^{ix} David Rockefeller quote accessed at https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/David_Rockefeller