

A Close Look at Daniel 9:26, 27: Antichrist's Reign of Terror

by Anthony Buzzard

A flood of light has been thrown on the famous “70 WEEKS” prophecy of Daniel 9 by the German expositor, Keil, in the celebrated *Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament*. Keil was professor of oriental languages as well as biblical exegesis. He believed that Daniel wrote genuine prediction. A detailed analysis of the whole of the 70 WEEKS prophecy is important for an understanding of Matthew 24 (Jesus’ Olivet prophecy, the “anchor of prophecy”) and the book of Revelation. Both these sections of Scripture draw heavily on the material revealed to Daniel. Jesus and Paul assume that we recognize that Daniel provides the basic outline of events destined to happen just before the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom at Jesus’ return. In this study we concentrate on the activity of the “wicked ruler who is to come” (Dan. 9:26).

Keil begins by pointing out (*Comm.* p. 362) that the “ruler who is to come” is a leader “whose coming is known, of whom Daniel has heard that he will come to destroy the people of God.” Does Daniel elsewhere speak of such an evil tyrant of the last days? It is well known that he does. In 7:8 he had already described “another little horn, possessing eyes like a man and a mouth uttering great boasts.” This evil person “will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law [inaugurate a new ‘Messianic’ era?]; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times and half a time” (7:25). This period is taken up again in Revelation 12:14, where it is defined as three and a half years (12:6). Revelation 13:5 reveals that “the Beast” will operate for 42 months. The same period of persecution under the Antichrist is described in Daniel 12:11 as 1290 days, to be dated from the setting up of the Abomination of Desolation (Dan. 11:31; cp. Matt. 24:15).

THE LITTLE HORN OF DANIEL 8

In Daniel 8:9-12 more is said about the final monster of evil. He is to be “a small horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east and toward the Beautiful Land. And it grew up to the stars of heaven and caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall to the earth, and it trampled them down. It even magnified itself to be equal with the Commander of the host; and it removed the regular sacrifice from Him, and the place of the sanctuary was thrown down. And on account of the transgression the host will be given over to the horn along with the regular sacrifice; and it will fling truth to the ground and perform its will and prosper.”

Further details follow in verse 8:23. The tyrant is to arise “*in the latter time*” of the Syrian kingdom which arose out of the divisions of the Greek kingdom of Alexander the Great. Jamieson, Fausset and Brown are right to insist that the reference to the “latter time of their kingdom when the transgressors are come to the full”...does not hold good of the time of Antiochus, but of the closing times of the Christian era” (*Comm.* on Dan. 8:23). This is confirmed by the very clear time markers of 8:17, 19: “The vision pertains to *the time of the end*...the final period of indignation...the appointed *time of the end*.” *This data should lay to rest any doubts that this eighth chapter takes us to the time of the end of the age, just as Daniel’s other prophetic chapters do.* Antiochus IV Epiphanes did not reign at the “acherit” (the closing days) of the Syrian dynasty. He lived a little past the middle of the Syrian period. A major mistake of much traditional exposition of Daniel has been to limit chapter 8 to history, when it has in fact a clear reference to the times just preceding the Kingdom of God to be inaugurated at Jesus’ return.

Of the end-time tyrant Gabriel says: “A king will arise, insolent and skilled in intrigue. And his power will be mighty, but not by his own power, and he will destroy to an extraordinary degree and prosper and perform his will; he will destroy mighty men and the people of the saints. And through his shrewdness he will cause deceit to succeed by his influence; he will magnify himself in his heart, and he will destroy many while they are at ease. He will even oppose the Prince of Princes [i.e. act as anti-Christ], but he will be broken without human agency. And the vision of the evenings and mornings is true. But keep the vision secret, for it pertains to many days in the future” (Dan. 8:23-26).

THE SAME EVIL PRINCE OF DANIEL 9:26

With this information in mind we proceed to Daniel 9:26 where we again find the ultimate evil ruler on the rampage, destroying the sanctuary and God’s people. “The people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And *his* end will come in the flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.”

In the clause “and *his* end will come with the flood,” Keil points out most helpfully that the Hebrew suffix “*his*” “refers simply to the hostile prince, whose end is emphatically placed over against his coming.” Confirmation that this is the most natural rendering may be found in the *Jewish Publication Society Translation of the OT, The (Jewish) Soncino Commentary, The International Critical Commentary*, the Revised Version, and the Jerusalem Bible, as well as the NASV margin.

Keil maintains that preconceived ideas about a historical fulfillment of the destruction of the evil prince have influenced some translators. They have not wished to render the text “*his* end shall come in the flood,” because Titus, to whom they thought this ought to refer, did not come to his end in AD 70.

However, grammatically and naturally the suffix “his” on the word “end” refers back to its nearest masculine antecedent, the evil prince. The word order of the Hebrew appears as follows: “The city and sanctuary will be destroyed by the people of the prince who is to come; and his end will come in the flood.” Keil concludes after surveying all the evidence that “there remains nothing else than to apply the suffix to the evil prince” — *his* end will come with the flood. The evil leader will perish at the end of a military campaign. He will be destroyed by *the* flood (the Hebrew has the definite article). Now Jesus spoke of the judgment at his Second Coming as a deluge parallel to the cataclysm brought on the world in Noah’s day (Matt. 24:39).

THE FINAL “WEEK” OF YEARS

Daniel 9:26 then states that “to the end there will be war.” Keil is again logical and helpful: “The end is the end of the period in progress, the seventy weeks, and corresponds to ‘the end of all things’ in 7:26 [NASV, margin] and 12:13, ‘the end of the days.’” Keil concludes: “To the end war shall be = *war shall continue during the whole of the last week*” (*Comm.* p. 364). The detail of the translation is critically important. Not only does the evil prince come to his end (Titus did not in AD 70), but war will be a feature of the last — the seventieth — “week” of years. But no war occurred in ca. AD 27-34. The system which places the seventieth “week” in about AD 27-34 cannot be made to fit with the data presented by Daniel 9:26. Nor will it fit the events of AD 70. It is to the future end of the age to which the revelation points.

THE TRANSLATION OF VERSE 27

Verse 27 opens with the personal pronoun “he.” Keil shows that the “he” refers naturally and easily to the evil prince just mentioned. “The connection much more indicates that the (evil) prince is the subject of ‘will confirm,’ since the prince who was to come is named last, and is also the subject in the prefix ‘his end.’ Also the ‘taking away of the sacrifice’ combines itself in a natural way with the destruction of the city and the temple brought about by the prince who is to come. The reference of ‘he will confirm’ to the ungodly leader of an army is therefore according to the context and the parallel passages of this book which have been mentioned [i.e. 8:13, 11:31, 12:11], as well as in harmony with the natural grammatical arrangement of the passage, and it gives also a congruous sense, although by the prince Titus cannot naturally be understood... Therefore the thought is: That ungodly prince shall impose upon the mass of the people a strong covenant that they should follow him and give themselves to him as their God” (*Comm.* pp. 366, 367).

In the light of these facts, we must agree with Keil “that the reference of the words under consideration to the desecration of the temple before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans is untenable” (p. 371). Completing his analysis of Daniel 9:27, Keil concludes that it is natural to link the desolator of verse 27 with the evil prince just mentioned. Furthermore the evil prince is also the subject of the desolation described in the latter half of verse 27, which should be rendered: “On the wings of abomination *he* (the evil ruler) comes desolating,” agreeing in sense with the King James Version: “He shall make it desolate.”

KEIL’S VERSION OF DANIEL 9:26, 27

Keil’s resultant version of the message of Gabriel to Daniel in 9:26, 27 is as follows:

“The city, together with the sanctuary, shall be destroyed by the people of the prince who shall come, who shall find his end in the flood; but war shall continue to the end, since destruction is irrevocably decreed. That prince shall force a strong covenant for one week on the mass of the people, and during half a week he shall take away the service of sacrifice, and borne on the wings of idol abominations [cp. Ps. 18:10, where the true God is also borne on wings] shall carry on a desolating rule, till the firmly decreed judgment shall pour itself upon him as one desolated” (*Comm.* p. 373).

THE KING OF THE NORTH, THE ASSYRIAN, AND PAUL’S VIEW OF THE ANTICHRIST

Students of the Bible should compare the last words of Gabriel with the very similar prediction of Isaiah 10:23: “For a complete destruction, one that is decreed, shall the Lord of Hosts execute in the midst of the land.” The same end-time language appears in Isaiah 28:22, which speaks of “a decisive destruction on all the earth.” In Isaiah 10:23 the Assyrian is the object of God’s judgment. Strikingly, when Paul describes the ruin of the Man of Sin (II Thess. 2:8) he appeals to Isaiah 11:4 (the LXX has “the wicked one”), where once again it is the Assyrian (Isa. 10:24ff.) who comes under judgment. It would be reasonable to anticipate that the Antichristian tyrant will arise in Syria or Iraq, the area of the ancient Assyrian empire. In Daniel 11 the same evil figure is the King of the North and he comes to “his end” in Daniel 11:45 in the holy land, just before the resurrection (Dan. 12:2). Note also that *the Assyrian* meets his doom by being thrown into the lake of fire — Isaiah 30:31-33 (historically this never happened to the ruler of Assyria). In the New Testament it is *the Beast* whose fate is to be burned in the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20). The equation of the Assyrian of Isaiah 30 and the Beast of Revelation 13, 17 and 19 is remarkable. The final period of the tyrant’s career ends precisely 1290 days after he sets up the Abomination of Desolation (Dan. 11:31, cp. 12:11). This critically important time reference should prevent commentators from trying to stretch the events of Daniel 11:31ff over centuries!

All of this material was well known to Jesus, who did not believe, as so many commentators do, that the predictions of Daniel 8 and 11 were exhausted in the career of Antiochus Epiphanes (2nd century BC). The latter did not appear at the end of the line of Syrian kings as Daniel 8:23 says the evil tyrant will. Nor did Antiochus “come to his end” in the holy land as the wicked king of Daniel 11:45 does.

Nor, of course, was the tribulation instigated by Antiochus followed by the resurrection of the dead! (Dan. 12:1-2). Moreover, the AD 70 tribulation was not followed by the arrival of Jesus "immediately" afterwards (Matt. 24:29). There is no gap between the desolation of the Temple and the return of Jesus in power and glory (Matt. 24:15-31). Daniel's vision, though it may deal with Antiochus as a "sketch" of the future blasphemer, goes far beyond anything recorded in the 2nd century BC. This was clear to Jesus who predicted his own return in glory "*immediately after the great tribulation*" (Matt. 24:29) triggered by the setting up of the Abomination of Desolation (Matt. 24:15, 21; Dan. 11:31; 12:11).

We conclude that the events of Daniel 9:26, 27 belong in the last "seven" of years predicted by Gabriel. The Abomination of Desolation is a feature of that last "week." In Matthew 24 Jesus places the Abomination of Desolation in the future *just before his return*. Therefore Daniel's seventieth "week" must still be unfulfilled. This apocalyptic interpretation of Daniel's seventieth week is the one found in the gospels on the lips of Jesus and thus commands absolute authority. The same end-time view of the Abomination is found in the second-century writings of Irenaeus. The point we are making may be usefully summarized as follows:

**"JESUS PUTS THE ABOMINABLE HORROR IN THE FUTURE YET,
IN DANIEL'S 70th WEEK THE ABOMINATION WILL BE SET.
THAT THE 70th WEEK IS FUTURE, THEREFORE, LET US NOT FORGET."**

APPENDIX: Daniel 9:26, "his end"

A Key to Understanding

New Jerusalem Bible: Daniel 9:26 And after the sixty-two weeks an Anointed One put to death without his...city and sanctuary ruined by a prince who is to come. **The end of that prince will be catastrophe** and, until the end, there will be war and all the devastation decreed.

Einheitsübersetzung, 1980: Daniel 9:26 Nach den zweiundsechzig Wochen wird ein Gesalbter umgebracht, aber ohne (Richterspruch). Das Volk eines Fürsten, der kommen wird, bringt Verderben über die Stadt und das Heiligtum. **Er findet sein Ende in der Flut**; bis zum Ende werden Krieg und Verwüstung herrschen, wie es längst beschlossen ist.

(Translation: "He will find his end in the flood.")

French Jerusalem Bible: Daniel 9:26 Et après les 62 semaines, un messie supprimé, et il n'y a pas pour lui... la ville et le sanctuaire détruits par **un prince qui viendra**. **Sa fin** sera dans le cataclysme et, jusqu'à la fin, la guerre et les désastres décrétés.

(Translation: "...a prince who will come. His end will be in the cataclysm.")

Traduction Oecumenique de la Bible, 1988: Daniel 9:26 Et après soixante-deux septénaires, un oint sera retranché, mais non pas pour lui-même. Quant à la ville et au sanctuaire, le peuple d'un **chef à venir les détruira**; **mais sa fin viendra** dans un déferlement, et jusqu'à la fin de la guerre seront décrétées des dévastations.

(Translation: "...a prince to come will destroy them, but his end will come...")

Bible en Francais Courant, 1997: Daniel 9:26 A la fin de ces soixante-deux périodes, un homme consacré sera tué sans que personne le défende. Puis un chef viendra avec son armée et détruira la ville et le sanctuaire. Toutefois **ce chef finira** sous le déferlement de la colère divine. **Mais jusqu'à sa mort** il mènera une guerre dévastatrice, comme cela a été décidé.

(Translation: "However this ruler will come to his end....")

Above we made mention of the translation in some versions: "The people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and sanctuary and ITS END will come in the flood" (Dan. 9:26).

Keil (*Commentary on Daniel*) translates, as does RV, Jerusalem Bible, Jewish Publication Society OT, International Critical Commentary on Daniel, Peake's Commentary etc., "And HIS end will come in the flood." The reference is taken to be to the evil prince who is to come who destroys the city and sanctuary.

Keil says: "The suffix 'HIS' refers simply to the hostile prince whose end is emphatically placed in contrast to his coming. Preconceived views as to the historical interpretation of the prophecy lie at the foundation of all other references" (*Comm. on Daniel*, p. 363). In other words, translations which avoid the reference to the wicked prince ("his end") do so because they think that the prophecy ought to refer to the Roman invasion of AD 70. Titus did not come to "his end" in that event.

A.A. Bevan, [A Short Commentary on the Book of Daniel](#): "The city and the sanctuary shall go to ruin together with the Prince that shall come, and his end shall be in a flood of destruction."

Now this is no small matter. If the translation "HIS end" is correct, Daniel 9:26 cannot possibly have been fulfilled in AD 70 (the traditional evangelical view), because Titus did not come to his end in that episode.

I think that the translation "HIS (not 'its') END" is right for these reasons:

- 1) It is supported by commentaries that deal with the detail of the language minutely (Keil is typical of these).
- 2) The nearest singular masculine antecedent for the reference his/its end is the prince and his people, NOT THE CITY OR SANCTUARY.
- 3) If the city and sanctuary were meant (and these words are further away), the text should read "their end."
- 4) The Hebrew HIS END has a masculine singular suffix and cannot agree with the city which is feminine, OR WITH THE PLURAL CITY AND SANCTUARY.
- 5) Most significant of all, the Hebrew word for end (*ketz*) never in 70 occurrences refers to the *destruction of a thing*. It refers to the end of a period of time and often to the end of the life, i.e. lifetime, of a PERSON. Even in Daniel alone, 11:45 speaks of HIS END, meaning the end of the final ruler (an obvious parallel with our verse in 9:26). Daniel is told to go to the END (i.e., of his life) in Daniel 12:13. In addition the end of human life is one of the main meanings of KETZ (Jer. 51:13, "your end" = end of your days; Lam. 4:18, "Our end" drew near = our days were finished, Job 6:11: "my end" = end of my life; Ps. 39:4, "my end" = extent of my days; also Genesis 6:13, "the end of all flesh.").
- 6) *Brown Driver and Briggs Lexicon of the Hebrew Bible* renders "kitzo" as "his end" (p. 893).
- 7) Driver in his commentary (*Cambridge Bible for Schools*) renders "his end."
- 8) The Jewish Publication Society translation has "his end."

I believe therefore that Keil is right when he says that the translation "ITS END," i.e. the city's end, is incorrect. The right translation, based on the immediate context (the antecedent is the prince) and the consistent meaning of KETZ which never refers to the ruin or destruction of a thing, but the end of a period of TIME and especially the end of human life, is "he will come to HIS END [DEATH]." Daniel 9:26 thus refers to a future antichrist.

I maintain, therefore, with many commentators that Daniel 9:26 cannot be a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 since Titus, the leader of the attack, did not come to HIS END in that event. But the evil ruler will come to HIS END (Dan. 11:45) in the holy land just before the resurrection (Dan. 12:2).

For further confirmation I wrote to a distinguished Hebraist, under whose teaching I sat at the University of Jerusalem in 1970. Dr. Muraoka said: "Since the words 'city and sanctuary' are of mixed genders [one feminine and the other masculine] it would be difficult to know what the impersonal referent of the pronoun is. I think that the interpretation you propose is the most obvious."

I note also the comment in *Lange's Commentary on Daniel*:

"The suffix in "his end" [1] doubtless refers to the prince... The subject of "he shall confirm a covenant" is beyond all question 'the [evil] prince,' which governs the preceding sentence as a logical subject, and is finally included in 'his end,' and is the prominent subject of consideration from verse 26b."

[1] Strangely, Lange thinks that "his end" means "the end inflicted by the prince" rather than his own death.