

Written Assignment

"The Prophecy of Daniel's Seventy Sevens (Weeks)"

FOR

Daniel/Revelation

347

with

Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost

*In Partial Fulfillment
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Daniel/Revelation

by

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Daniel's Seventy Sevens (Weeks)



"Follow Me, and I Will Make You a Fisher of Men."

As we come to chapter nine of the Book of Daniel we are presented with one of the most well known prophecies in the Bible, and one of the most misunderstood.

It is referred to as "**The Prophecy of Daniel's Seventy Sevens (Weeks)**," and is recorded in Daniel 9:24-27. It will be the purpose of this paper to treat the various meanings and interpretations of this tremendous prophecy, and arrive at the true meaning as delivered to Daniel by the angel Gabriel, who seems to be the chief angelic spokesman of Almighty God. As we shall see, this prophecy concerns God's divine program for His covenanted people Israel from Daniel's day right on through until its consummation in the promised kingdom under the rule of Messiah. It should be noted and emphasized from the outset that "this prophecy, then, is concerned not with world history or church history, but with the history of Israel and the city of Jerusalem

(J. Dwight Pentecost. *B. K. C.*, Walvoord and Zuck, p. 1361).

I. Background

Daniel had been residing as a captive in Babylon for some 67 years, since he had been exiled in 605 B.C. by King Nebuchadnezzar. He had also witnessed the overthrow of the Babylonian Kingdom by the Medo-Persian alliance. Daniel was advanced in age, probably around 83 years old, but he continued to obey and study God's Word. It had come to Daniel's attention:

"In the first year of Darius son of Ahasuerus, by birth a Mede, who became

king over the realm of the Chaldeans--in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the LORD to the prophet Jeremiah, must be fulfilled for the devastation of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years" (Dan. 9:1-2).

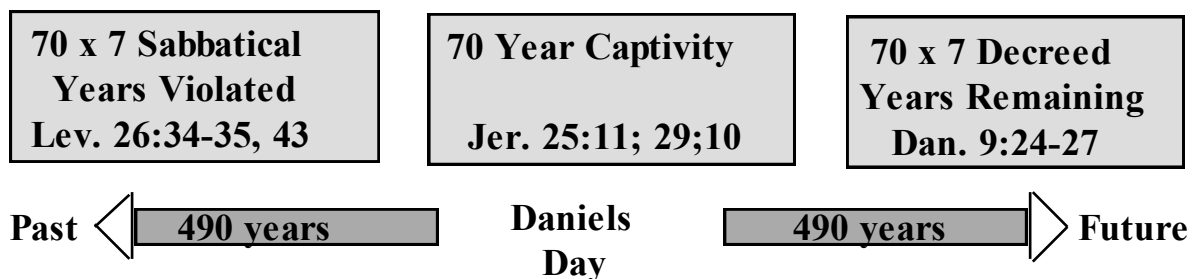
The "first year of Darius's" reign mentioned here would have been 538 B.C..

It seems that Daniel had been reading and studying the writings of the prophet Jeremiah

(Jer. 25:11-12; 29:10-14), and had come to realize that the period of Israel's discipline for sin, carried-out through the Babylonian captivity, was nearly at an end, "namely, seventy years." Israel was disciplined because they sinned against God by not giving the land the seventh year of Sabbatical rest as God had commanded (2 Chron. 36:21). God had warned Israel that they would be dispersed among the Gentiles in judgment until the land had recovered its neglected Sabbaths, seventy in number (Lev. 26:33-35).

This would lead us to believe that in the eight hundred years that Israel had occupied the promised land, seventy sabbatical years were violated. Daniel understood the significance of Jeremiah's prophecy and became excited about the prospect of returning to the homeland. His reflections on the past can be shown in the following chart:

Daniels View of the Past and Future Seventy Sevens



(Chart by Prof. Hoehner)

Daniel was overwhelmed with joy and anticipation, but at the same time, he realized that before the exiles could return to the promised land they needed to confess and repent of sin (Lev. 26:40-46). Moses had warned the Jewish people in his day, that obedience would bring blessing from God, and likewise disobedience would bring discipline (Deut. 28:48-57, 64-68). Israel had experienced the discipline promised by God through Moses. Daniel now desired to reverse this unfortunate experience by praying to God to restore the nation in keeping with Deuteronomy 30. He offered this prayer of intercession and confession for sin and disobedience, and asked God to restore His people to the land of promise and blessing (Dan. 9:3-19).

As Daniel was praying, the angel Gabriel came to him to give him insight and understanding (Dan. 9:20-23). The amazing thing here is that Gabriel didn't come to instruct Daniel about his immediate request to permit the exiles to return to their land, but to deliver unto Daniel an all encompassing revelation from God assuring him that He would certainly restore Israel to their land and establish the promised Messianic kingdom. Gabriel makes it clear that the Messianic kingdom would not come with Israel's return at this time, when the seventy year captivity ends, but will await fulfillment of the prophecy of seventy sevens to be explained in 9:24-27.

II. The Meaning of the "Seventy Sevens"

A. The angel Gabriel delivered God's Revelation concerning the prophecy of the "seventy sevens" (weeks) to Daniel in 9:24-27:

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"Seventy weeks are decreed for your people and your holy city: to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place. Know therefore and understand: from the time that the word went out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the time of an anointed prince, there shall be seven weeks; and for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with streets and moat, but in a troubled time. After the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing, and the troops of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed. He shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall make sacrifice and offering cease; and in their place shall be an abomination that desolates, until the decreed end is poured out upon the desolator."

B. So what does it mean? The first question that must be addressed concerns the meaning of the terms, "seventy sevens." It may be adduced from the context that years are meant, since Daniel had been thinking in terms of seventy years of the captivity derived from Jeremiah's prophecy. The "seventy sevens" would then be understood to refer to seventy years of seven or 490 years. Although this is the best

explanation, and the one to which we shall return, others do not agree with this literal interpretation. Numerous interpretations have been advanced to explain the meaning of this phrase.

C. Alternative views.

1) Liberal- Many in this camp insist that Daniel is a forgery, and written after the time of the historical Daniel, in the second century B.C.. They hold that the pseudo-Daniel confuses the seventy years of Israel's captivity with the seventy sevens of Gabriel's vision. Montgomery, a representative of this camp, "attempts to support the idea that the details of this prophecy are to a large extent fulfilled in the life and persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes" (Montgomery, as quoted by: John F. Walvoord, *Daniel*, p. 217). These insist that this is not prophecy at all, but was history accomplished during the Maccabean times., and recorded by the so-called pseudo-Daniel that wrote this prophecy during that period, in the second century B.C.

2) A-Millennial- This group holds that the "seventy sevens" were completed by the time of Christ's first coming. Young, points out that the "seventy sevens" are "weeks symbolizing indefinite periods of time, rather than duration's of seven years specifically" (Young, as quoted by Leon Wood, *Daniel*, p. 243). Young, like Montgomery finds no satisfactory conclusion for the "seventy sevens," and in fact, presents a very confusing treatment of the prophecy. As Walvoord rightly notes, "None of these men offers a truly

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satisfactory explanation" (John F. Walvoord, *Daniel*, p. 217).

3) Keil and others- These also believe that the "seventy sevens" are to be taken symbolically, and see the first group of seven extending until the coming of Christ, and the next sixty-two, until anti-christ; and the final period of seven to be realized in the last days leading up to the return of Christ (Leon Wood, p. 244).

4) Premillennial- Unlike all of the above, this camp takes the "seventy sevens" as literal seven year periods and seeks to present a balanced and literal interpretation that harmonizes the fulfillment of the 490 years of this prophecy with the context of the Biblical text. As pointed out above, it may be adduced from the context that years are meant, since Daniel had been thinking in terms of the seventy years of the captivity as derived from Jeremiah's prophecy. The "seventy sevens" would then be understood to refer to seventy periods of seven years or 490 years. As Wood observes, "the fact of Daniel's use of definite numbers-- seven, sixty-two, and one--makes it difficult to think of symbolic indefinite periods of time" (Leon Wood, *Daniel*, p. 247).

Pentecost comments, "Daniel's people thought in terms of sevens (heptads). Seven days are in one week. Every seventh year was a sabbath rest year (Lev. 25:1-7). Seven "sevens" brought them to the Year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:8-12). Also since Israel and Judah had failed to keep the sabbatical years (every seventh year the land was to lie fallow, Lev. 25:1-7) throughout her history, the Lord enforced on the land 70 "sabbaths" (cf. Lev. 26:34-35). Thus 490 years would be required to complete 70 sabbatical years with one occurring every seventh year" (J. Dwight Pentecost, *Daniel*, B. K. C., Walvoord and Zuck, p. 1361). Walvoord states, "The conservative interpretation of Daniel 9:24-27 usually regards the time units as years" (John F. Walvoord, *Daniel*, p. 217).

In the development to follow, we will understand the "seventy sevens" to refer to seventy literal periods of seven years or 490 years.

III. The Terminus A Quo of the "70 Weeks" or 490 Years

The next subject concerns the identification of the starting point of the seventy weeks. The angel Gabriel told Daniel in 9:25 that the seventy weeks would start with **the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem**. As we shall see, it is crucial to properly identify the decree that details "the restoration and rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem. Several decrees were issued, but only one addresses the rebuilding of Jerusalem. This decree is the fourth of four decrees that were made by Persian rulers in favor of the exiles that had returned to Jerusalem. The first three decrees deal only with the Temple (Decrees #1 and 2), and the Temple sacrifices (Decree #3), and had nothing

to do with the re-building of Jerusalem. The four decrees will be listed, and then briefly

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discussed.

The four decrees are as follows:

<u>Gentile King</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Decree</u>	<u>Scripture Reference</u>
1) Cyrus -	538-530 B.C.	538 B.C.	(2 Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4; 6:3-5)
2) Darius I -	522-486 B.C.	512 B.C.	(Ezra 6:1, 6-12).
3) Artaxerxes Longimanus	465-423 B.C.	457 B.C.	(Ezra 7:11-26).
4) Artaxerxes Longimanus -	" "	March 5, 444 B.C.	(Neh. 2:1-8).

1) The decree of Cyrus - This is an amazing fulfillment of prophecy. God spoke through Isaiah the prophet some 200 years before Cyrus was ever born (Isa. 44:28; 45:1-25; Ezra 1). Isaiah declared that God would raise-up a Gentile king named Cyrus, who would be a temporal deliverer of God's chosen people. This pagan deliverer, Cyrus, would serve as an illustration of Jesus Christ, the eternal deliverer and Redeemer, that would fully carry-out all of God's purposes for His people Israel. Although God used Cyrus to restore a remnant from captivity to the promised land, this is not the beginning of the seventy weeks. It fails because it deals only with the rebuilding of the Temple and does not refer to the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem required to fulfill Daniel 9:25.

2) The Decree of Darius I - This decree is really no more than an affirmation of the first decree issued by Cyrus. Work on the Temple in Jerusalem had been halted by hostile opposition, and political intervention (Ezra 4:21-24; 5). The Jews defied the order not to build and their enemies had sent another appeal to Darius, King of Persia, to stop the Jews from rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 5). Darius made a search of earlier Persian records and discovered the decree issued by Cyrus in 538 B.C. permitting the captive Jews to return to Jerusalem, and to rebuild the Temple of their God. He further noticed that much of the work had been financed by the royal treasury of the Persian government (Ezra 6:4). Darius ordered the enemies in the land of Israel to "Leave this work on the house of God alone," and further ordered them to pay the full cost of the rebuilding project from the royal Persian tax revenues collected in all of the surrounding provinces; finally, anyone

interfering with this work of the Jews was to be "impaled on a timber drawn from his own house" (Ezra 6:6-12).

Again we see the rebuilding of the House of God, but we still do not have the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem.

3) The decree of Artaxerxes Longimanus - The Temple had been completed on March

12, 516-515 B.C.. Now, some 58 years later, Artaxerxes issued a third decree which extended generous support to the Jews and their temple operations in Jerusalem (Ezra 7:11-28). It is

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apparent that this decree only "relates to finances for animal sacrifices at the temple"

(J. Dwight Pentecost, *Daniel*, B. K. C., Walvoord and Zuck, p. 1362). Once again, this decree also fails because it does not deal with the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem. In fact, all three of the preceding decrees fails for the same reason. As Pentecost points out, "Since an unwallled city was no threat to a military power, a religious temple could be rebuilt without jeopardizing the military authority of those granting permission to rebuild it. No one of these three decrees, then, was the decree that formed the beginning of the 70 sevens" (ibid., p. 1362). Only the fourth decree, to be presented next, provides the necessary elements to fulfill the prophecy of Daniel 9:

4) The second decree of Artaxerxes Longimanus - This fourth and final decree is

the only decree that fulfills the commencement of Daniel's 70 sevens. This decree was issued by Artaxerxes on March 5, 444 B.C., (Neh. 2:1-8). A faithful Jew named Nehemiah

was living in Persia, and served as cupbearer to King Artaxerxes. He was concerned with the condition of the city of Jerusalem, and the fact that the walls were torn down (Neh. 1). The city was defenseless without walls, and so Nehemiah prayed for four months asking God to grant him favor with the King to address this situation (Neh. 1:8-11). God answered

Nehemiah's request, and gave him favor before the King. Artaxerxes granted Nehemiah permission and support to go up to Jerusalem and correct the situation (Neh. 2:1-10). The city walls were rebuilt in 52 days amid fierce opposition and persecution. It is interesting to note, that the city walls were raised, just as Daniel had predicted, in the midst of most distressing of circumstances (Dan. 9:25).

In conclusion, we see that only this fourth decree is seen to fulfill all of the

elements in Daniel's prophecy. This is the **only decree** that supports the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem, which first required the building of secure walls and gates. This then is the key to properly understanding the "**Terminus A Quo**" of Daniel's seventy weeks.

IV. The Three-fold Division of the 490 Years

Notice will be taken here that the 490 year period determined for God to finish

His dealings with Israel, and to establish "Messiah the Prince" on His glorious future throne, is divided into three separate segments of time:

- 1) "7 weeks" (7x7=49 years);**
- 2) "62 weeks" (62x7=434 years);**
- 3) "1 week" (1x7=7 years).**

The first "7 weeks" of 49 years - most believe this refers to the initial return and rebuilding of the temple. "Many years may have been needed to remove the city's debris (after being desolate for many decades)" (Ibid., Pentecost, p. 1363).

The second unit of "62 weeks" or 434 years - brings us right up to the presentation of "Messiah the Prince" to the nation of Israel. According to Daniel's prophecy, the end goal or fulfillment of the '70 weeks" prophecy is the appearance of "Messiah the Prince." Jesus Christ is seen to be the "**Terminus Ad Quem**" of the "69 sevens" or weeks (483 years) of Daniel's prophecy. It is stated that "Messiah the Prince" is to appear on the scene of human history at the end of the 69th week (483 years). If we apply these 483 years (69 of Daniel's 70 weeks) to history, beginning with the issuing of Artaxerxes decree on March 5, 444 B.C., we come up to April 6, 32 A.D.. This day, April 6, 32 A.D., marks the introduction of "Messiah the Prince" to the nation of Israel. This was the very day that Jesus Christ, Israel's promised Messiah, made His Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. He rode into Jerusalem, in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9, "seated on the foal of an ass," and officially offered Himself to the nation of Israel as Her promised "Messianic Prince" (Matt. 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-10; Luke 19:29-38; John 12:12-19).

Observation: It is clear from the above presentation that the first two segments of - "7 weeks" (49 years) and the "62 weeks" (434 years) ran consecutively in history with no interruption of time separating them. This period of time totaled 483 years and extended (according to Sir Robert Anderson and Harold Hoehner) from March 5, 444 B.C. to April 6, 32 A.D. For a detailed treatment of the dates referred to in this

unique prophecy please refer to Sir Robert Anderson, *The Coming Prince* or Harold Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*).

This is absolutely astounding to me! That God should record the very day that His Son, Jesus Christ would present Himself to the nation of Israel as Her promised Messiah! **WOW!** Jesus knew and applied this Scripture in His mournful pronouncement against the nation of Israel on "the day" of "His Triumphal Entry" (Luke 19:42; also cf. Matt. 23:37-39).

The third and final division of "1 week" or 7 years - refers to a future period of 7 years. As pointed out earlier, several of the liberal commentators insist that

the "70th week" or the final 7 years of Daniel's prophecy has been fulfilled in some sense immediately after the 69th week. However, it is much more plausible to recognize a separation to exist between the 69th and the 70th week of Daniel's prophecy (9:25).

It has been pointed out that the "69 weeks" or 483 years have been fulfilled historically with the advent and presentation of the Messiah to the nation of Israel on March 30, 33 A.D.. This fact demands an interval of time to exist between the 69th and 70th week.

Daniel says in 9:26, "Then after sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and

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have nothing." This "cutting off" is referring to the crucifixion of Christ. The "Triumphal Entry" of Christ concluded the "69 weeks" or 483 years. The "cutting off of the Messiah" occurred after the 69 weeks had expired and not during the 70th week. Messiah had come unto his own nation and people (John 1:11), and presented Himself and His Kingdom, but had been rejected and "cut off." Christ was crucified and the establishment of His kingdom postponed. Daniel's prophecy anticipated that this exact sequence of tragic events would transpire.

The rejection and death of Messiah instituted the present interval. As Pentecost comments, "This interval was anticipated by Christ when He prophesied the establishing of the church (Matt. 16:18). This necessitated the setting aside of the nation Israel for a season in order that His new program for the church might be instituted. The present Church Age is the interval between the 69th and 70th 'sevens'" (Pentecost, *Ibid.*, pp. 1363-1364). As Gundry explains concerning this

interval, "the seventieth week did not follow on the heels of the sixty-ninth, but an interval separates the two [periods]"

(Robert H. Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, Grand Rapids, 1973, p. 189.

In conclusion: It is far easier to see and accept an interval between the 69th and 70th week than it is to accept some of the untenable interpretations that have been proposed over the years. As has been stated, the 69 weeks or 483 years have been literally fulfilled through the historical advent and presentation of the Messiah to the nation of Israel on March 30, 33 A.D..

V. The Terminus Ad Quem of The Final Seven (Week) or "7 Years"

The final "week" (7 years) of Daniel's prophecy - the interpretation concerning the fulfillment of this future 7 year period is no less interesting than the previous 483 years passed, and the current Church Age interval studied up to this point. As we come to this final 7 year period, we are concerned with identifying the **"Terminus Ad Quem"** that will signal the beginning, and the completion of the final "week" or 7 years as described in Daniel 9:27.

The next major event in God's program is the rapture of the Church (1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-58);. After the Church is raptured Satan's man, the anti-christ, will rise to power (2 Thess. 2:6-9) and make a peace covenant "with the many (Daniel's people-Israel) for one week" (Dan. 9:27a.). Satan's man, the anti-christ, "is the prince who is to come" that is described in 9:26. This individual will be the future world ruler, that will be the final head of the fourth beast (Dan. 7:8). He will head-up the revived Roman Empire comprised of a 10 nation federation.

The covenant that anti-christ makes with Israel is the **"Terminus Ad Quem"** of the final "7 years" (week) of Daniel's prophecy. The final 7 years will begin to tick-off when this peace agreement is signed between Israel and Her Satanic benefactor, the anti-christ. He will bring peace to Israel, and guarantee Her safety among the hostile

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Arab nations that threaten Israel's very existence. Israel will accept the authority of this future ruler and see him as their promised Messiah. The peace for Israel will be short lived. After three and one-half years, "in the middle of the week," anti-christ "will go forth with great wrath to destroy and annihilate many [of the Jewish people]"(Dan. 11:44; cf. 11:36-45). He will turn against Israel and become her defiler and destroyer and put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering"(Dan. 9:27b.). This future world ruler will also "place abominations on the wing of the temple"(Dan. 9:27c.). Anti-christ will desecrate the temple and set up his Satanic throne in the midst of the temple and will demand to be worshipped as God. Jesus referred to this very thing: "You [will] see standing in the holy place the abomination that causes desolation"(Matt. 24:15; cf. 2 Thess. 2:4). John also wrote about how the future false prophet, that will assist anti-christ, will set up an image of this beast and demand the whole worship it (Rev. 13:14-15).

VI. The Terminus Ad Quem of The Seventy Sevens (Weeks) or 490 Years"

Praise be to God because he will bring about "a complete destruction, one that is decreed [by God], is poured out on the one [anti-christ] who makes desolate. This event then, will mark the **"Terminus Ad Quem" of the Seventy Sevens (weeks) or 490 years of Daniel's incredible prophecy recorded in 9:24-27.** We are told in Revelation 19:11-16 that the heavens will be opened and Jesus Christ, the Promised Messiah, Himself will return with the armies that are with Him in heaven. John goes on to tell us that the beast and the false prophet are seized and "thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with brimstone" (Rev. 19:17-21). In addition, Christ will demolish the armies of the world that anti-christ has assembled to make war with Christ. Satan will be bound and thrown into the abyss and sealed in for a thousand years (Rev. 20:1-3).

VII. Conclusion

The purpose of this investigation has been to determine the exact meaning of the prophecy of God concerning the **Seventy Sevens (Weeks) or 490 Years** delivered to Daniel by the angle Gabriel. It has been seen and concluded that the seventy sevens or weeks refers to 490 years, which God has determined to complete His program with His covenanted people Israel. The **"Terminus A Quo"** of the seventy weeks or 490 years was seen to have begun with the decree issued by Artaxerxes Longimanus on March 5, 444 B.C., (Neh. 2:1-8). From this point, we calculated 483 years forward and came to March 30, 33 A.D.. This day marked the introduction of "Messiah the Prince" to the nation of Israel. This was the very day that Jesus Christ, Israel's promised Messiah, made His "Triumphal Entry" into Jerusalem. This event terminated 483 years of the 490 years. It was determined that only 7 years remain in order for God to complete His plan and purposes for Israel. We have further seen that Israel has been set aside because they rejected their Messianic King and His offer to bring in His promised Kingdom. The present Church Age is the interval between the 69th and 70th 'sevens.'" Thank God for His grace

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that has been poured out to all of us Gentiles!

Finally, the 70th week of Daniel's prophecy was seen to be yet future. This period will begin after the Church has been raptured, and specifically when Israel signs the 7 year peace covenant with anti-christ. Anti-christ will provide Israel with peace

and stability, but only for three and one-half years. This will be the mid point of the tribulation period, and anti-christ will desecrate the temple. He will set himself up to be God and demand that all worship him as God. He will turn against the Jews and attempt to annihilate them. God will intervene, providing His elect people with protection, and will pour out His holy judgment upon anti-christ. Jesus will return at the termination of this final 7 year period, and will throw anti-christ and the false prophet alive into the lake of fire. Satan will also be seized, bound and cast into the abyss for a thousand years. Christ will establish His millennial kingdom in Israel and reign as the sovereign King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

Note to Dr. P Thank you for allowing me to research and write this paper! I feel that I truly understand this most important prophecy. I never quite understood the significance of unlocking the interpretation from within the context in which it was recorded. Having listened to too many divergent interpretations, left me just a little confused. However, after studying with **You**, and reading Prof. Hoehner, Robert Culver, Leon Wood, John Walvoord, and Alva J. McClain, I have a better understanding of this wonderful prophecy.

Thank You, Dr. P

Sincerely, Chuck Silva - Your, Tuna Buddy!

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