

The Seal Judgments

The Tribulation (1st 3½ Years)

- Jesus continues the Olivet Discourse with a description of events during the first half of the seven-year tribulation period.
 - “Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” (Matthew 24:9-14)
- The Tribulation can be broken down into two phases, consisting of the seal judgments and the trumpet judgments.

The Seal Judgments

- The Tribulation begins with the breaking of the first seal.
 - “I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, ‘Come!’ I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.” (Revelation 6:1-2)
 - This judgment brings forth the Antichrist, who is represented as the rider on a white horse and with a bow, but no arrows.
 - The Antichrist will have victory through diplomacy as the emerging leader of the newly formed ten-nation Roman alliance, destroying three of them.

- “The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings.” (Daniel 7:24).
- The Antichrist will establish a covenant with Israel for seven years, which marks the beginning of the Tribulation.
 - “He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ In the middle of the ‘seven’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.” (Daniel 9:27)
- The Antichrist will rise from the sea of humanity prior to the Tribulation.
 - “The dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. It had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on its horns, and on each head a blasphemous name.” (Revelation 13:1)
 - He will not be identified until he establishes a covenant with the Jews to allow them to resume sacrifices in the newly built temple.
 - The process of establishing this covenant may take a significant portion of the three-and-a-half-year period between the end of the Gog and Magog war and the start of the Tribulation.
- Why does Israel sign a peace agreement with the Antichrist since her enemies have already been divinely defeated?
 - Isaiah 28:15 states that Israel signs onto this covenant to avoid an overwhelming scourge.

- “You boast, ‘We have entered into a covenant with death, with the realm of the dead we have made an agreement. When an overwhelming scourge sweeps by, it cannot touch us, for we have made a lie our refuge and falsehood our hiding place.’”
- With the rise of wars and religious persecution (i.e. seal judgments 2-4), it appears that the Antichrist promises to allow Israel to build their temple unhindered by establishing this agreement with him, the harlot religion (Revelation 17:3-6), and his newly formed Roman alliance.
- The temple is complete, and the sacrificial system is able to resume for the first time since the last temple was destroyed in 70 AD by the Romans.
 - The people will be able to worship at the temple for 42 months.
 - “I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, ‘Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, with its worshipers. But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months.’” (Revelation 11:1-2)
- God empowers two witnesses to prophesy for 1,260 days
 - “‘And I will appoint my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.’ They are ‘the two olive trees’ and the two lampstands, and ‘they stand before the Lord of the earth.’” (Revelation 11:3-4)
 - Two or more witnesses are required by Mosaic Law to confirm testimony
 - “On the testimony of two or three witnesses a person is to be put to death, but no one is to be put to death on the testimony of only one witness.” (Deuteronomy 17:6)

- “In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true.” (John 8:17)
- They have the ability to supernaturally protect themselves and inflict plagues during their time of prophecy.
 - “If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. They have power to shut up the heavens so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.” (Revelation 11:5-6)
- Many scholars believe that these two witnesses are Moses (Exodus 7-11) and Elijah (1 Kings 17)
 - The powers given to these witnesses closely mirror those given to both of these men and because they were both were with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration. (Matthew 17:1–8; Mark 9:2–8; Luke 9:28–36; John 1:14)
 - God promises to raise up a prophet like Moses.
 - “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him...I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites, and I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him.” (Deuteronomy 18:15,18)
 - God also promises to raise up Elijah.

- “I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome Day of the Lord comes.” (Malachi 4:5)
- Other scholars believe that it is Enoch that witnesses with Elijah, not Moses
 - They are the only two known individuals that have been taken to heaven directly without experiencing death.
 - “Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.” (Genesis 5:24)
 - “As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind.” (2 Kings 2:11)
 - Scripture states that people only die once.
 - “Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.” (Hebrews 9:27)
 - “But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.” (Revelation 21:8)
- A third possibility is that these two witnesses are not famous historical figures, but ordinary believers because of the lack of specificity in Revelation 11.
- The remaining horsemen of the apocalypse
 - The second seal is a rider on a red horse represents war where people will slaughter one another.

- “When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, ‘Come!’ Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make people kill each other. To him was given a large sword.” (Revelation 6:3-4)
- The third seal is a rider on a black horse represents famine where food will become scarce.
 - “When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, ‘Come!’ I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, ‘Two pounds of wheat for a day’s wages, and six pounds of barley for a day’s wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!’” (Revelation 6:5-6)
 - The elite may not be affected because the oil and wine are not damaged.
- The fourth seal is a rider on a pale horse represents both physical and spiritual death.
 - “When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, ‘Come!’ I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.” (Revelation 6:7-8)
 - Death and Hades appear to be references to the world government and harlot religion as physical death and spiritual death respectively.
- During this period:
 - People will slaughter one another (Revelation 6:4)
 - food will become scarce (Revelation 6:6)

- Those that are not outright killed by war or starvation, are subjected to plagues and attacks by wild animals (Revelation 6:8).
- Together, these judgments kill a quarter of the earth's population (Revelation 6:8).
- It will be with the opening of the fourth seal judgment that, through diplomacy, the Antichrist will become the leader of the ten-member Roman alliance that forms the world government.
 - This is accomplished through diplomacy.
 - Killing the 3 leaders of the alliance (Daniel 7:24) does not occur until the midpoint of the tribulation period.
 - This turns the government and the harlot world religion into the instruments of death described in Revelation 6:8.
 - The global religious war represented by the second seal will most likely be the process by which this is accomplished.
- Given the nature of these judgments, they most likely occur in quick succession of each other.
 - These judgments also likely occur very early in the Tribulation because the remaining seal judgments as well as the trumpet judgments must also occur within the first half of the seven-year tribulation period.
- Since the Antichrist has made a peace agreement with Israel, these judgments are most likely centered on the Gentiles rather than specifically on the Jews, but many Jews will most likely also be affected.
- The opening of the fifth seal judgment shows a scene in heaven where martyrs cry out for justice.

- “When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, ‘How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?’ Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers and sisters, were killed just as they had been.” (Revelation 6:9-11)
- Much of the global conflict described in the 2nd through 4th seal judgments may include increased religious persecution.
 - There will be many that did not truly have faith in Christ prior to the rapture but have since come to know Christ and turn to Him for salvation, who will then be persecuted and martyred.
 - “Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me.” (Matthew 24:9)
 - These new Christians will be persecuted and martyred by followers of the harlot religion.
 - It not only has tacit approval by the world government, but the government may also provide the legal legitimacy by sentencing capital punishment through the court system.
- The martyred must wait a little longer for justice to be meted out.
 - “Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord.” (Romans 12:19)
 - Unfortunately, more are yet to be martyred during the tribulation period as people come to know Christ and turn to Him for salvation.

- When the sixth seal is opened, there are major natural disasters.
 - The world is rocked with a massive earthquake and there are unusual astronomical events that occur, such as what appears to be lunar and solar eclipses and a major meteor shower.
 - “Then I saw Him open the sixth seal. A violent earthquake occurred; the sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair; the entire moon became like blood; the stars of heaven fell to the earth as a fig tree drops its unripe figs when shaken by a high wind; the sky separated like a scroll being rolled up; and every mountain and island was moved from its place.” (Revelation 6:12-14)
 - People realize that God is judging them.
 - “Then the kings of the earth, the nobles, the military commanders, the rich, the powerful, and every slave and free person hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains. And they said to the mountains and to the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of the One seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, because the great day of Their wrath has come! And who is able to stand?’” (Revelation 15-17)
- Before the seventh seal can be opened, the remnant of Israel needs to be sealed from harm from both divine judgments and from the wrath of the Antichrist
 - “Then I saw another angel, who had the seal of the living God rise up from the east. He cried out in a loud voice to the four angels who were empowered to harm the earth and the sea: “Don’t harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we seal the slaves of our God on their foreheads.” (Revelation 7:2-3).

- This group consists of twelve thousand people from each of the twelve tribes of Israel (Judah, Reuben, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin) and total 144,000 people. (Revelation 7:4-8)
- These will be the first fruits of Israel
 - “These are the ones not defiled with women, for they have kept their virginity. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. They were redeemed from the human race as the firstfruits for God and the Lamb.” (Revelation 14:4)
- They will repent and accept Jesus as their Messiah.
 - “Then I will pour out a spirit of grace and prayer on the house of David and the residents of Jerusalem, and they will look at Me whom they pierced. They will mourn for Him as one mourns for an only child and weep bitterly for Him as one weeps for a firstborn.” (Zechariah 12:10)
 - “And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written: The Liberator will come from Zion; He will turn away godlessness from Jacob. And this will be My covenant with them when I take away their sins.” (Romans 11:26-27)
- A great multitude that cannot be counted will be saved during the Great Tribulation through the ministry of these 144,000 witnesses.

- “After this I looked, and there was a vast multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language, which no one could number, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were robed in white with palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: Salvation belongs to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb! ... These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” (Revelation 7:9-10,14).
- The opening of the seventh seal introduces the trumpet judgments.
 - “When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. Then I saw the seven angels who stand in the presence of God; seven trumpets were given to them. Another angel, with a gold incense burner, came and stood at the altar. He was given a large amount of incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the gold altar in front of the throne. The smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up in the presence of God from the angel’s hand. The angel took the incense burner, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it to the earth; there were rumblings of thunder, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake. And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to blow them.” (Revelation 8:1-6).
 - There is no timing associated with this, but based on the length of time needed to complete the fifth and sixth trumpet judgments, it seems reasonable that this could occur somewhere around 16 months into the Tribulation.
 - The magnitude of this judgment is seen by silence in heaven for about a half an hour.
 - This begins the trumpet judgments.

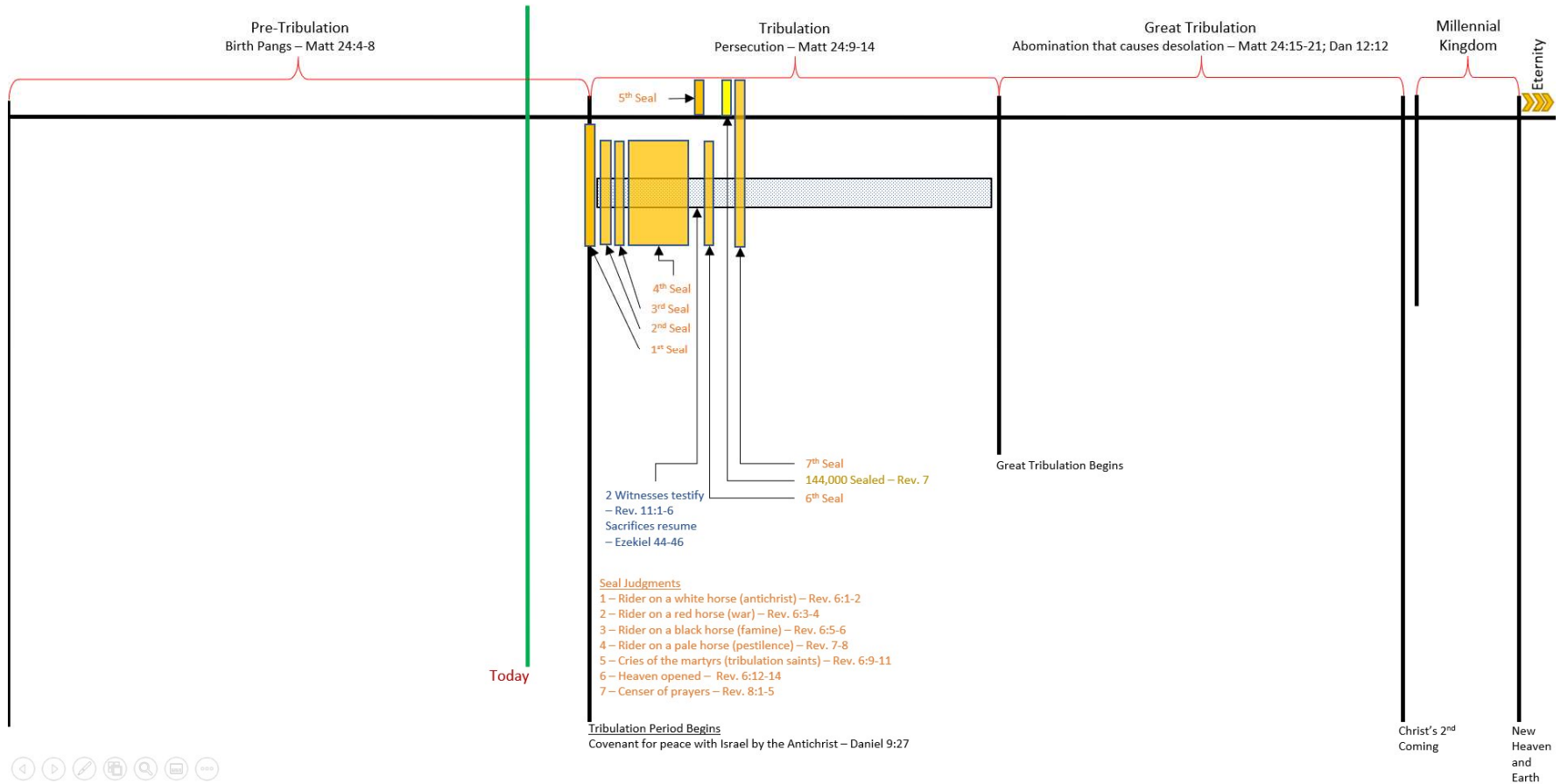


Figure 1: Timeline of the Seal Judgments

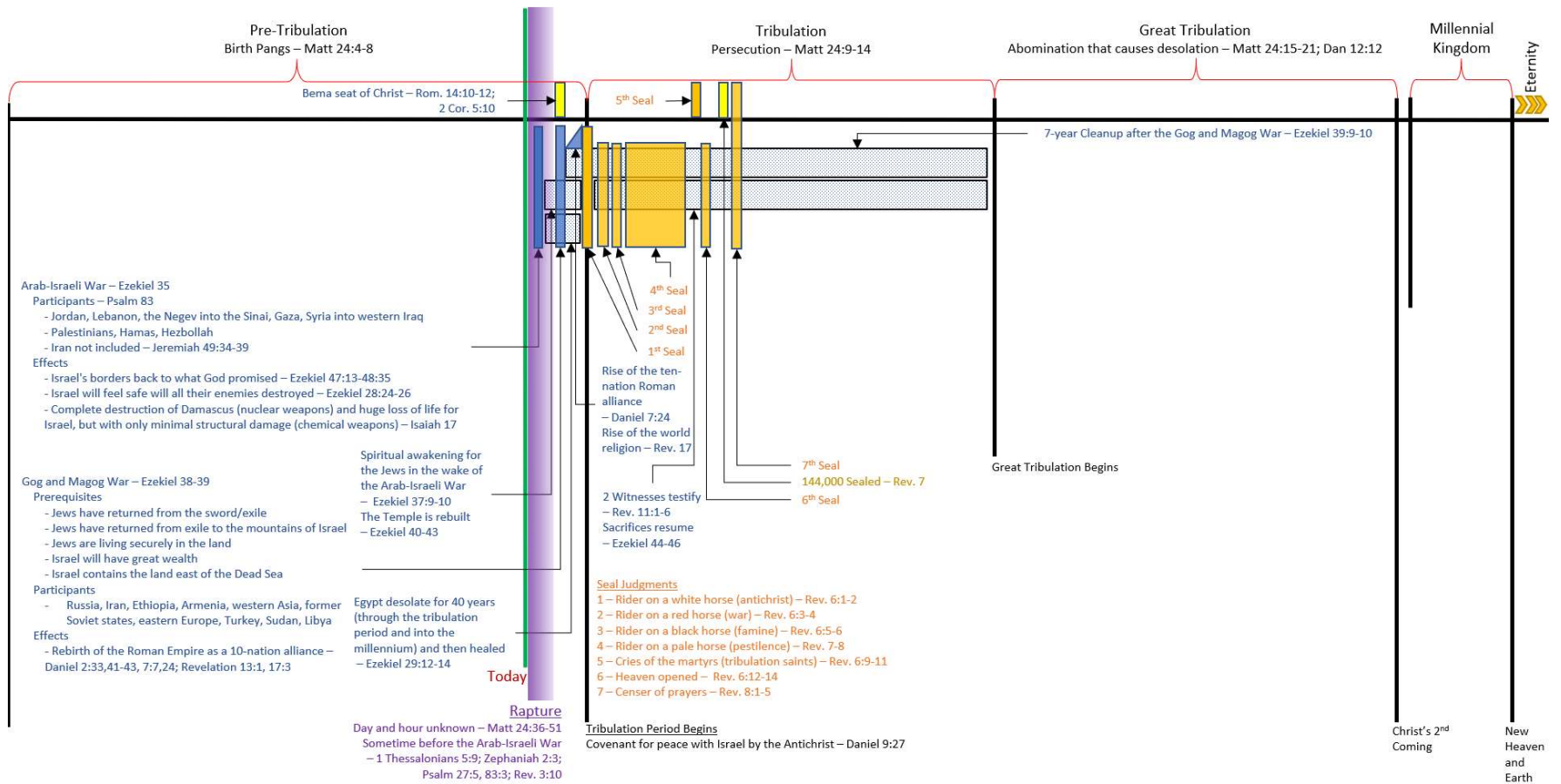


Figure 2: Timeline of End-Times Events