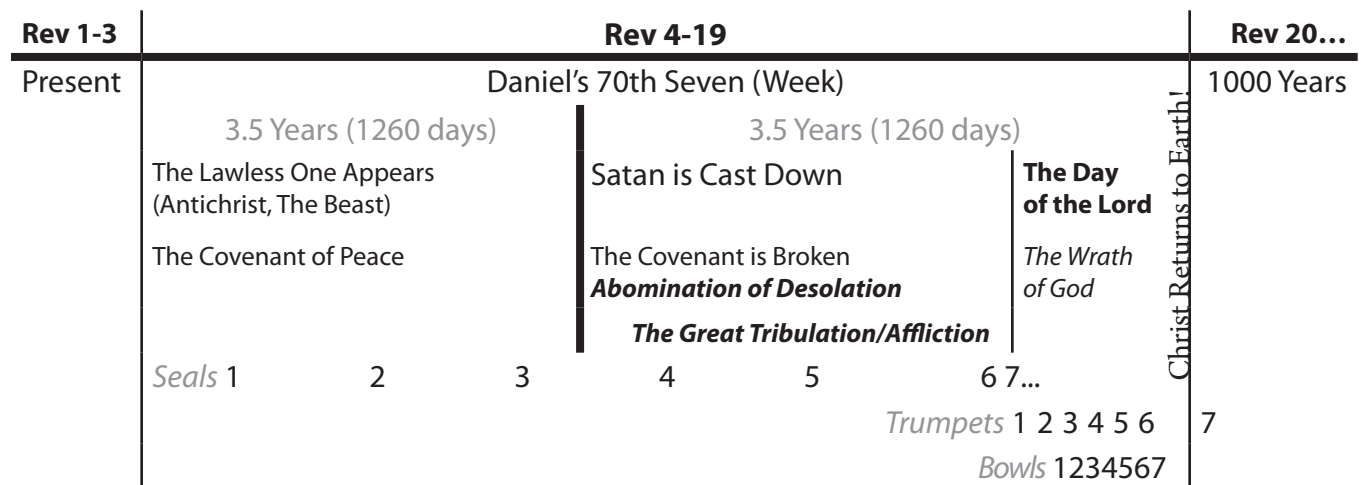


# The Big Picture of the End Times



## Notes about the chart.

Anytime we make a chart, we should do so in humility knowing that there are far too many details to fit in. However, in the issues related to the End Times, charts are helpful in mapping out all the options. This chart is based on a trajectory of texts that are interrelated and have to be taken into careful consideration when discussing the End Times: Daniel 9-12, Matthew 24 (and the parallels in Mark 13 and Luke 21), Paul's details in 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and the larger framework of the Book of Revelation. With this in mind, we can make some general observations and address some common misconceptions related to these events.

**01 Daniel 9-12** | The Background for this basic framework has its first foundation in Daniel 9-12 where we get the vision of **the Decree of the Seventy Sevens**. Although this is a hotly debated issue, we are convinced that this decree refers to a period of 70 sets of seven year periods for a total length of 490 years. The first 483 year period moves from the Persian decree for the Jews to return to the land to the coming of Christ Jesus in the first century. This leaves a final seven year period that is described by treachery of the "Coming Prince": "*He will confirm a covenant with many for one seven. But in the middle of that seven he will bring sacrifices and offerings to a halt. On the wing of abominations will come one who destroys, until the decreed end is poured out on the one who destroys*" (Dan 9:27). This "coming Prince" is surely fulfilled in the Antichrist/The Lawless One/The Man of Sin/The Beast that we see in the New Testament. We note that this final seven year period is divided into two halves by the breaking of the covenant by the Prince/Antichrist.

**02 Jesus and the Olivet Discourse** | Jesus' teaching in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 25 and parallels) provides a basic framework for the sequence of events of the last days. He gives the following sequence:

- 1] False Christs, wars, famines and earthquakes as the beginning of "birth pains",
- 2] Affliction/Persecution/Tribulation for Christ's people because lawlessness will increase,
- 3] (The Gospel will proclaimed to all nations before the End.)
- 4] The Abomination of Desolation
- 5] The Great Tribulation/Affliction (along with false Christs and Prophets)
- 6] The Shaking of the Heavens and the Powers of the Heavens
- 7] The Appearing of the Sign of the Son of Man
- 8] The Gathering of Christ's chosen ones (probably the regathering of Israel as a Kingdom)

**03 The Seventieth Week/Seven and the Great Tribulation** | It seems to me that it is a mis-

step to equate the *whole seventieth week/seven of Daniel with the Great Tribulation that Jesus mentions in Matthew 24:21, 29*. Jesus states clearly that the Great Tribulation/Affliction does not occur until **after** the desolating sacrilege of the Antichrist/Lawless One/Man of Sin. Based on the decree of the Seventy Sevens in Daniel 9:26-27 and parallels in Revelation 12 and 13, we know that this Abomination of Desolation does not take place until the “middle” of the seven year period. The word that Jesus’ uses to describe this time, “affliction” is the same word that is used in other contexts to refer to the suffering of believers at the hands of the godless (see Mt 24:9; Acts 11:19; Acts 20:23; 2 Co 1:8; 1 Th 1:6, 3:3, 3:7; 2 Th 1:4; Rev 1:9, 2:9, 2:10). The interesting uses of the term are in Revelation where the term clearly refers what the Asian churches were experiencing in their times. Only in Matthew 24:21 and Revelation 7:14 do we get the reference to “the great tribulation/affliction.” *In both of these contexts the tribulation seems to refer to “persecution” of believers rather than to God’s wrath poured out against the godless.*

- 04 The Middle of the Seventieth Week** | As we have already heard, Daniel refers to the “middle of the seventieth week/seven” as the time when the “coming prince” will break his covenant with the many and bring in desolations. We also hear in Revelation 12 that **Satan will be cast down** at this time (to empower the Lawless One, see 2 Th 2:9) and that he will know that his time is short (Rev 12:12) and that he will seek to destroy Israel (the woman) for “times, times and half a time” or for a period of about 3 ½ years (Rev 12:14). This final period of 3 ½ years is also referred to as the 1260 days (Rev 11:3, 12:6). This period of the final 3 ½ years seems to be when all the “action” takes place. The first 3 ½ years *may be characterized by a period of peace in after the beginning of the “birth pains” Jesus refers to.*
- 05 The Beginning and End of the Seventieth Seven** | Based on Daniel and Paul’s expansions in the 2 Thessalonians 2, it seems that the event that will mark the beginning of the final seven years will be **the appearance of the Antichrist/Lawless One and his making a covenant** with the many for an intended period of seven years. However, as we have just heard, he breaks that covenant in the middle of the seven year period. The end of the period will clearly be marked by **the physical return of the Christ to the Earth** (2 Th 2:8, Rev 19) to bring an end to the reign of the Beast/Antichrist/Man of Sin. The coming of the Christ and the beginning of His Kingdom is clearly announced in the Seventh Trumpet (Rev 11:15) and anticipated with the finishing of God’s wrath in the Seventh Bowl (Rev 16:17).
- 06 The Sequence of the Seals, Trumpets and Bowls** | In Revelation, it is clear that the end of each of the sequences of Seals, Trumpets and Bowls bring us to the final days of God’s wrath and the beginning of Christ’s Reign. **The Sixth Seal** (Rev 6:12-17) realizes the beginning of the Day of Wrath and the appearing of God. The signs of this day—shaking of the heavens—parallel very closely what Jesus describes in Matt 24:29. This Day of Wrath comes *after* the great Tribulation/Affliction according to Jesus. The Seventh Seal should probably be seen as the time for preparing the final judgments. **The Seventh Trumpet** (Rev 11:15) announces the arrival (present tense) of the Kingdom of God and of His Christ. Thus, by the Seventh Trumpet we have entered the time after Christ’s arrival and return and into His reign. **The Seventh Bowl** completes (“It is finished!” Rev 16:17) the Wrath of God. These final Bowl judgments are clearly defined as the final events of God’s wrath (Rev 15:1). This sequence fits within the other frameworks that we have already established.