

Matthew 22-06-26b

We're ready now to resume our study and we're going to pick up the pace a bit. I think the most important sign is the first one and that's why we have given it its due, spent some time on it. False claims about Christ are deadly.

It introduces destructive heresies that lead to destructive ways. It robs us of our salvation. It denies us entrance into the blessings of the present and the rewards of the future.

There is nothing more serious than allowing ourselves to be deceived, to fail to receive a love of the truth and to be robbed of all of these wonderful benefits. As we continue now in Matthew 24, the second sign. If you have the first sign down, false claims about Christ, you should have Matthew 24, verse 5 and verses 23-28.

You should have 2 Thessalonians 2, 9-12. You should have Revelation 13, pretty much in its entirety. 2 Peter 2 and 2 Peter 3, verses 14-18, which is the remedy.

This is the exhortation to us, how we can avoid being taken in and suffer that terrible loss. The second sign is in Matthew 24, verses 6-8 and it is wars and rumors of war. We talked about what rumors means, that there are overt wars, there are covert wars, there are different kinds of conflict that are set up.

So Matthew 24, verses 6-8. We don't really need to spend time there because we spent plenty of time earlier, but turn to Revelation chapter 6. As soon as I say Revelation 6, it is one of those familiar Bible chapters. You know that this is where the sequence of seals, beginning the seals, trumpets, thunders and bulls, the seals that are cracked open by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Who is worthy to open the scroll? People talk about all of the horrific consequences that are unleashed on the earth when these seals are opened and these riders go forth on the horses and all of these terrible consequences occur and they tend to forget each of these seals is opened by the Lord Jesus. If He didn't break that seal, these things wouldn't happen. It is at His behest.

It is on the instruction of His Father. The Father gives Him this scroll with these seals. Who is worthy to open it? Only the Lamb, only the Lord Jesus.

He initiates each one of these seal consequences. They are judgments on the earth, and a big part of the judgment is self-inflicted. People follow the beast.

They listen to the false prophet. In Revelation 6, when you get to verses 3 and 4, remember the first seal, there is this white horse, and the one who sits on it is the false Christ. He is the beast.

He is a false Messiah. He goes forth looking like He is going to conquer all of the evils of the world. He's got a bow, but no arrows.

He's got the intent. He's got the appearance, but He hasn't got the ammunition. If they don't get your guns, they'll get your ammunition.

Just saying. So then in verse 3, when He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, Come and see. And notice when He opened, capital H, when the Lord Jesus Christ opens the seal, this horse, fiery red, goes out, and it is granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth.

Peter says, Be sure you are found in peace. This guy on the red horse is going to take peace from the earth. Jesus said there will be wars and rumors of war in Matthew 24, verses 6 through 8. This guy on the red horse is going to take peace from the earth, and people will kill one another.

And there is given to him a great sword. We see a war here, a war there. There are seldom multiple wars of consequence going on at the same time.

There are disputes, there are skirmishes, there are battles, but there are wars, plural, and more in the making, and they're going to be numerous, they're going to be replete, because when this rider on the red horse comes, there won't be peace anywhere. There's pretty much going to be war everywhere. You think division is bad now? They're talking about knights of rage, and division, and this percent and that percent of the poll are going to vote for this one, or that one, or this policy, or that approach, this philosophy, this understanding, this political or social issue.

This is going to be magnified exponentially. People will not be able to get along, and when they can't get along, they will resort to violence. This is something relatively new in the fabric of American social culture.

It was infrequent to see violent rioting until the latter part of the last century, but it has increased in frequency, and the issues over which people are willing to perpetrate violence drive through crowds, shoot up unarmed groups, burn things down, break through barriers, and so on, is increasing exponentially, and it is a precursor. It is not the fulfillment of this sign. It is conditioning people to take this as normal.

Well, if you don't like what happens, go break something, go burn something, go perpetrate violence somewhere, somehow. Find the people responsible and hurt them. So, the same part of this, not only are there wars, but partly as a result of these conflicts, as a result of these hugely divisive, radical differences of opinion on how things should be, there are going to be famines.

We are already seeing shortages in this country, not because there is a lack of the things that we are short of, but because of policies that say, I don't think you ought to have

that. I want you to use something else. I want you to rely on something else.

I want you to come to us for something. I want to redeploy resources, and so on. And because of this, we have famines.

Famines are put for shortages of any and all kinds. It can be fuel. It can be heat.

It can be food. It can be baby formula. It can be weapons.

It can be anything that you need to survive. It can be medicines. It can be ability to confederate and associate and have fellowship with your fellow believers.

It can be the free flow of ideas and opinions and speech. There is a famine. Dr. Griswold's got a sermon called, A Famine for the Bread of Life, where truth is hard to find.

And truth in our age is found by those who publish it, those who speak it, those who communicate it, those who speak it in love. And there can be a famine for the bread of life, a famine for the truth. People who have not received the love of the truth, if they don't love it, they hate it.

And they want to exterminate it. They want to get it off the table. I don't like what you say.

I'm going to firebomb you. I'm going to destroy you. I'm going to cancel you.

I'm going to hurt you and make you stop saying that truth. Men love darkness rather than light. You notice recently they were announcing a night of rage because they disagreed with the court decision.

It's not a day of rage. Why is it a night of rage? The reporters who were covering all of these protests and crowds were saying, well, there's not much going on right now, but we're waiting for it to get dark. Because when it gets dark is when the violence breaks out.

Look at the 537 riots they had year before last, that summer of rage, and a great majority of them took place at night. Cover of darkness. So, wars and rumors of wars.

Matthew 24, 6-8, Revelation 6, 3 and 4. Famines you find mentioned in Matthew 24, 7 as well. And in Revelation 6, 5 and 6, when he opens the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, come and see. I looked and behold, a black horse.

And he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures say, a gallon of gasoline for \$6 and a pound of meat for \$15. Just put it in modern terms.

Shortages, famines. What is our application? Turn back, you can leave Revelation for the moment, turn back to Matthew 6. Matthew 6, as we see the precursors and the manifestations of this principle, these are going to be discrete and concrete and material, actual happenings. They have happened in the past, they will happen in the future.

They are happening now, both as spiritual manifestations and as precursors. The population of the world is at this moment being conditioned, being exposed to the first expressions of these circumstances so that they will be inured, they'll get used to it. Why is it nobody breaks a sweat when there's a homosexual kiss on TV? Because they started it a couple of decades ago and with increasing frequency and regularity, now you've got regularly recurring characters who are every different letter of the alphabet with a plus after it and their relationships and their expressions of public display of affection and so on are promoted and are featured and are deemed to be essential.

Same thing here, so Matthew 6, verse 25, Matthew 6, 25, Therefore I say to you, when shortages occur and people try to deny and hoard and take away essential supplies, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on, how you will protect yourself. Why do we put on clothes? We protect ourselves from the vision of other people at first blush, but also it's weather protection, it's insulation from the heat of the sun, it's insulation from the cold of the winter blast. Can you swipe that for me, please? Just swipe that.

It is insulation against weather conditions, against extremes. Do not worry about what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Isn't life more than how comfortable am I? How acceptable am I? How accepted am I? Life is more than that.

Look at the birds of the air, they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Paul says in Philippians 4, 7, My God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Our task is to be found in him, to be found without spot, blameless, at peace.

Don't sweat it. The Father knows what you have need of. If he can take care of the birds, we are higher in his estimation than his own animal creation.

Psalms 23, verse one. Now this is the application of sign number two. What is our application? Matthew 6, 25 through 34.

You can read all the way down. Do not worry about tomorrow. Tomorrow will worry about its own things.

Sufficient to the day is its own trouble. Just focus on today. Get through today.

What has God supplied? God answers our prayer when we say, give us this day our daily bread. Just take it a day at a time. What can I do today? Let tomorrow take care of itself.

Commit it to the hands of a faithful creator. My God shall supply all your needs. So Matthew 6, 23 and 24.

Philippians 4, 7. Psalm 23, verse one. It's interesting because this is sort of a stated condition. You could insert in brackets because in front of Psalm 23, verse one.

What does Psalm 23, verse one say? You can say it with me. The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want.

I shall not lack. Why is it that I will not lack? I'm just a sheep. I can't make grass grow.

I can't make rainfall. I can't fend off wolves and bears, lions, predators. Why is it I will not lack? The Lord is my shepherd.

Be diligent to be found in him. Be diligent to show yourself approved to God. A workman who does not need to be ashamed.

If the Lord is my shepherd, I will not lack. What I need, he will supply. If I need a test, if I need a challenge, if I need a shortage to grow my faith, to test my resolve, to determine where my heart is, God will provide it.

The Lord is my shepherd. His rod and his staff only work when they make contact with the sheep, right? He doesn't do semaphore signals with his rod and his staff and the sheep understand the language. How does a shepherd communicate with the sheep? There are three ways.

With his voice, with his rod, and with his staff. The Lord is my shepherd. I want to listen to his voice.

And if I feel the rod of correction, if I am rescued by that crook staff that pulls me out of a thorn bush I've gotten myself tangled in, it may hurt to get scraped out of those thorns. But his rod and his staff comfort me. I have the security of structure, the security of contact, and oversight, and the knowledge of the shepherd about my condition as his sheep.

The Lord is my shepherd. That's why I won't lack. People can try to perpetrate all they want.

If the price of fuel goes sky high, if the price of groceries goes sky high, if the price of everything goes sky high, my father's got the cattle on a thousand hills. He'll just send more resources my way. And if for any reason I don't have a supply, am I looking in the right place? Am I praying, give us this day our daily bread? Am I trusting in him, looking at the birds, looking at the flowers of the field? They toil not.

Neither do they spend. They don't rely on their own efforts. The Heavenly Father clothes them.

And God will never suffer the righteous to be moved. I've never seen the righteous go hungry or his seed begging bread. Why? The Lord is my shepherd.

I shall not want. Psalm 23.1. 2 Corinthians 9.8. All of these are application. Be sure you get them down.

2 Corinthians 9.8. God is able to make all grace abound toward you. Would anybody argue that or dispute it? Is God able to make his grace abound or is he not? Do you believe he is and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him? Hebrews 11.6. If you believe that, then you believe Paul when he says, God is able to make all grace abound toward you so that you always having all sufficiency in all things. There is comfort always having all sufficiency in all things.

Do you need patience? God can supply it. You just have to know where the patience container is. He doesn't just drop it in on a parachute out of the sky.

Patience is one of the spirit. It is cultivated. It is recognized as coming from the spirit and there is a way to have it and there's a way to lose it.

Always having all sufficiency in all things may have an abundance for every good work. Why does God supply us? If we've stopped good work, our supply may dry up. I don't put gas in a mower that I don't use because it doesn't work.

I've got a log splitter out here and the tank is bone dry because the carburetor is clogged up and it doesn't work. I'm not going to supply fuel to a device that doesn't work. I will put gas in the ones gas is precious enough as it is.

I'm going to put it in the, in the machines that work. That's who's going to get the supply. I cannot emphasize enough.

Second Corinthians chapter nine, verse eight, God is able to make all grace abound toward you so that you always having all sufficiency in all things may have an abundance for a purpose for every good work. As it is written, verse nine, he has dispersed abroad. He has given to the poor.

His righteousness endures forever. Verse 10. Now may he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food supply and multiply the seed you have and increase the fruits of your righteousness.

Scratch out the word sown. I don't know why the King James, new King James put that in there. Verse 10, second Corinthians nine.

May he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food supply and multiply the seed

you have the seed that you have. It's sown in us, not by us. So that we increase the fruits of our righteousness.

If we're not producing righteousness in our lives, why would God supply all of our needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus? What's the point? Put gas in the tank. Engine doesn't start. Grass doesn't get cut.

Logs don't get split. Weeds don't get assassinated. Verse 11, while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, it is given to you so that you can give to others.

You are blessed so that you can be a blessing. We get so focused on I want to be supplied. I want to be blessed.

I want to be protected. We forget that we are supposed to be a channel and an avenue of protection and provision and opportunity and truth for others. Let your light so shine.

We're not lit so that we can be warm ourselves. We are lit so that we can illuminate and warm others. Enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God.

People are blessed in association with us. They're not thanking us. If we do it right, if we're functioning properly, people who are blessed by our presence or our spiritual gift, go directly to God and give thanks.

Thanksgiving goes to God because of us. We don't need to be thanked. God needs to be thanked.

He's the one that supplied us and channeled that supply through us to others. So that is sign number two. When there are conflicts, when there are shortages, this is where we go.

There are plenty of passages that talk about internal conflict. This kind of goes back to sowing deception within the camp of the saints. You can go to first Corinthians chapter one.

We'll be looking at that a little bit, a little bit further on when we get to the abomination of desolation, but the seeds of it are sown here in wars and rumors of war. When there are conflicts amongst all of the nations and tribes and peoples and tongues and kindreds, there shouldn't be conflict within the body of Christ. We should be united, but we'll cover that when we get to the abomination.

Sign number three, given by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 24, nine through 13, persecution, persecution. You remember this in Matthew 24, turn over to Luke 21, 12 through 19. This is the application.

We know what persecution is. We don't have to belabor that point, but for the

application turned to Luke chapter 21. This is something of a parallel, but it is more of a second witness to this truth.

It has some unique things that are not found in Matthew. Luke chapter 21, verse 12, before all these things, and you can see signs of the times and the end of the age, verse seven up there, same question that we saw in Matthew 24. When will these things be? What sign will there be when they're about to take place? Verse 12, before great earthquakes and famines and pestilences, fearful sites and great signs from heaven.

This is coming up later. This is going to be our seventh sign, but Jesus backs up in verse 12 in Luke 21, before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to synagogues and prisons, to synagogues, to the hands of organized religion, to the hands of your own people and your own kind. You're going to be handed over to religious zealots.

You will be persecuted, hounded and penalized by your own. You will be brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake, but it will turn out for you as an occasion for witness, as an occasion for testimony. The reason God is going to allow this bad circumstance is to shine the light of His glory off of you.

Your life is going to be a witness. Stephen would have not given out with the wonderful sermon of Acts chapter 7 if he had not been arrested by religious authorities and ultimately stoned. The Apostle Paul had his first exposure to Christianity, and one of the things that factored into his decision to accept the words of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Damascus Road was seeing Stephen killed for his faith.

Paul was there holding the coats. He heard Stephen's testimony, and God used it. It was a witness and a testimony, and from that, unbeknownst to Stephen at the time, you have the greatest of the Apostles with the most fulsome writing ministry that has blessed us for 2,000 years and counting.

Right? Witness and a testimony. Do you think if Stephen had it to do over again, he would exactly the same way? Do you think the Apostle Paul, imprisoned, stoned, and left for dead, 40 stripes minus one three different times, shipwrecked, persecuted, hounded, bad-mouthed? Do you think if the Apostle Paul could go back and start over at the Damascus Road, he would choose any differently? He would probably be even more dedicated, knowing what was coming and knowing how God would use him. He would say, wow, I could have actually done that better.

Maybe I wouldn't have made that wasted trip back to Jerusalem, gotten tangled up with the men from James and so on. I could do it better if I had another shot. He wouldn't do less.

He would do more. And he tells us over and again, these marks on my body are the

marks of the Lord Jesus. I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

These stripes that were inflicted by my fellow Jews, those who persecute me, I bear these as badges of honor. I share the sufferings of Christ who was also persecuted and ultimately executed by his own. He came to his own and his own received him not.

I am following in the footsteps of Christ. How could I not? So they will lay hands on you, but it will turn out as an occasion for testimony. 2114 of Luke, therefore, settle it in your hearts.

Settle it ahead of time. Prepare yourself, prepare your heart not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer. I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist.

You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends. And they will put some of you to death and you will be hated by all for my namesake. But not a hair of your head will be lost.

We looked at this last time. You remember by your patience, possess your souls. Same thing Peter says, be patient, keep control of your soul.

That is our application. The fulfillment of this, by the way, the historical fulfillment is very interesting. You can look up the details of this and it's not well known in the Christian world, but in 68 AD or Anno Domini 68, there was a siege of the temple in Jerusalem and it was fought between Jewish factions.

The Romans had not yet come in, but there was a fraternal or intermural war between Jewish factions. And I'll just read you a little bit out of Wikipedia here. They've got as good a summary as anybody.

You can find it all over. But according to the historian Josephus, the forces of Ananus, one of the heads of the Judean provisional government and former high priest of Israel besieged zealots who held the temple. The background of this is the zealots who were a political movement with religious justification.

They were political, but they justified it. They were the moral majority, so to speak. They sought to incite the people of the province of Judea to rebel against the Roman empire and expel it from the holy land by force of arms.

The first Jewish Roman war began in the year 66 with Greek and Jewish religious tensions expanded into anti-taxation protests and Jewish attacks on Roman citizens. They thought if we can't get this done politically, we'll do it through violence. Sound familiar? By the year 68, Jewish resistance in the north had been crushed and the Roman general Vespasian had established his headquarters at Caesarea Maritima.

The leaders of the collapsed northern revolt, John of Giscala and Simon Bar-Giora, managed to escape to Jerusalem, but brutal civil war erupted as the zealots and the fanatical Sicarii executed anyone who advocated surrender. They were extremists, they had a goal, and they would perpetrate violence against anyone who disagreed with their goals. You think about the echoes of that in our modern time.

People who are dedicated to this kind of a change or this kind of a policy or this kind of a world and if someone disagrees with them, they're ready to get violent. Well, this was the zealots and the Sicarii in 68. So in 68, there was growing unrest and division in Jerusalem.

Ananus incited the people to rise up against the zealots who were robbing the people and using the Temple of Jerusalem as their base of operations, taking their money and using it for their own purposes. Ben Hanan began to recruit for armed conflict. The zealots who were quartered in the Temple learned that Ben Hanan was preparing for battle, so he sallied forth attacking all that got in his way.

He quickly organized the people against them. The skirmish began with belligerents throwing rocks at one another, then javelins, then finally hand-to-hand combat with swords ensued. Remember now, Romans are not involved.

This is all the Jews. Intramural, internecine civil war. Eventually, the zealots retreated to the inner court of the Temple.

Six thousand of Ben Hanan's men held the first court, the outer court. All of this is in the Temple. When you see the abomination of desolation at the Temple, according to Josephus, John of Zaskala, remember he was the northern leader that got crushed by Vespasian and retreated, he escaped to Jerusalem.

He became a friend of Ananus, and he was a spy. He was a turncoat. He pretended to be with the people, but he was secretly on the side of the zealots.

He divulged the secrets of the people outside who opposed the zealots and the Sicarii. He told them to the zealots. Everything the people deliberated about was, by his means, known to their enemies even before it had been well agreed upon by themselves.

So he swore an oath of goodwill because they suspected he might be a spy. So he swore an oath of goodwill to Ananus and the people. After swearing the oath, Ananus sent John of Zaskala into the inner court to speak with the zealots on his behalf.

John immediately turned coat as if his oath had been made to the zealots, telling them they were in imminent danger and could not survive a siege. He told them they had two options, either surrender, in which case they would face execution, vigilantism, or retribution for the desperate things they had done, or to ask for outside assistance. Now pay attention, the zealots think that they are under attack and they are going to be

overcome because they are surrounded in the temple.

So they can either just surrender and have all these bad things happen, or they can ask for outside assistance. John told the zealots that Ananus had sent ambassadors to Vespasian to ask him to come take the city, appealing to the Romans to come take the city. This wasn't true, but it convinced them that they couldn't endure a siege without help.

So what they ended up doing, it was resolved to call in the Edomians. Remember Herod was an Edomian? Who are the Edomians? If you take out the vowels, what do you have? You have the Edomites. Edomians are Edomites.

Edomites. Can you imagine? We've seen in the book of Malachi, if you want to see the people I hate, look at Edom. Last word they got.

The New Testament is not circulating yet in any great amount. The Jews, the last book of the Bible they have is Malachi, saying if you want to see the people I hate, look at the Edomians, look at Edom. But the zealots call in the Edomites, and so they wrote a letter to that effect.

And so the messenger sneaked out of the temple, delivered the message to the rulers of the Edomites, who were greatly alarmed, quickly raised an army of 20,000 to march on Jerusalem. And when they found out that these 20,000 Edomites were marching on Jerusalem, Ben-Hanan ordered the gates shut against them and the walls guarded. Yeshua, Jesus, one of the elder high priests, made a speech from the walls denouncing the zealots as robbers and telling the Edomites to throw down their arms.

Simon, son of Cathias, or Catholus, one of the Edomian commanders, quieted the tumult and so on. Anyway, that night a thunderstorm blew over Jerusalem. The zealots sneaked from the temple to the gates, cut the bars of the gates with saws.

The sound was masked by the wind and the thunder. They opened the gates of Jerusalem to the Edomites who fell upon the guards and made their way to the temple. They slaughtered Ananus' forces there, killing him as well.

After freeing the zealots from the temple, they massacred the common people. Brother against brother. Betrayal, division, dissension, before the Romans ever got there.

The only reason the Romans descended on Jerusalem was because of this Jewish civil war. And it began to be a thorn in the side of the Romans. And they said, well, the civil war is over.

This faction that wants to throw us out and become independent. So they really brought it on themselves. But notice this bloodshed, this dissension, this grossly evil rebellion occupied the temple.

They're not priests. The zealots are not priests, but they're in violation of the law of Moses in the inner court. And this is where they stay.

And their opponents are in the outer court. It's all rotten to the core. And this is why Jesus says, when you see that, you had better get out of Jerusalem.

And his warnings, pray that it's not on the Sabbath. In addition to not getting any help, if these weird types who observe one part of the law and not another catch you trying to travel on the Sabbath, they'll execute you for traveling on the Sabbath. They'll execute you for a minor crime.

They will imprison you for a minor crime. They'll put you in without trial and without recourse for trespassing. Where they themselves are the worst trespassers of all, they are dwelling in the inner temple court.

The height of hypocrisy, the height of inanity, the height of the sin of the high hand. So that is persecution. The application, turn quickly now to Revelation chapter six, verse 11.

Revelation chapter six, verse 11. Those martyrs are given a white robe and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer until their fellow servants and their brethren who would be killed as they were, was completed. God is allowing this for a reason and for a purpose.

We should recognize that when hardship comes, there is a reason and there is a purpose. Well, I thought we'd get through our signs. We only made it through the first half of them.

We'll resume next time with sign number four, the gospel of the kingdom being preached in the whole earth, but we'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for the comfort that it provides, the guidance that it gives.

Through patience and comfort of the scriptures, we have hope. We can possess our souls. We can persevere.

We can concentrate on being found without spot and blameless in the day when the Lord Jesus comes to take us to himself. We pray that the Holy Spirit will renew these thoughts and concepts in our hearts day by day so that we can live in a way that is pleasing in your sight and prepares us for the kingdoms which are to come. We pray all these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.