

Should be source of encouragement. (Pars. 19, 21) To begin qualifying for eternal life, it is clear that *positive* action is needed.

6. The "Sign" that God's New Order Is Near (*ka* chapters 16, 17; read Matthew 23:34-24:51.)

We can be uplifted by the "sign" that New Order is near! (Chap. 16; 30 min.) Problems and worries of today leave most persons troubled, insecure about future. Vastly different with Christians who understand meaning of Jesus' "sign" regarding our time. (Read appropriate verses in Matthew 24 as you discuss them.) Apostles were interested in future in view of Jesus' comments. (Luke 19:41-44; Heb. 9:26; pars. 3-7) When would end of Jewish system come? How would they know? Jesus outlined events leading up to destruction of Jerusalem. (Pars. 8-14) Was life-or-death matter to note the indication that destruction impended. (Pars. 15-17) When Romans encompassed Jerusalem, Christians knew end near. (Pars. 21, 22, 26) Larger future fulfillment expected, as Revelation chapter 6 (written after 70 C.E.) pointed forward to war, famine and pestilence. Applies to entire wicked system, dominated by Christendom. Have seen evidences of fulfillment of sign since 1914. (Pars. 28, 30-33) Though this means destruction impends, is cause of encouragement. Why? Note what will be destroyed. Led by Anglo-American Seventh World Power, nations look to UN for peace. Revelation shows that this peace organization will lead in desolating false religion. (Pars. 42-44) Those desiring God's favor are urged to get out of false religion, just as Christians fled Jerusalem. (Par. 45) Coming destruction will begin with false religion and include rest of wicked system. (Pars. 52, 53) Encouragingly, some will survive. (Pars. 55-57) These will be ones discerning true Messiah and gathering there for spiritual nourishment. (Pars. 60, 63) They are not discouraged by disturbances in the physical heavens. (Pars. 70, 71) Will not be forced to acknowledge *parousia* when Jesus comes to destroy system, for they already have acknowledged his presence and that he has gathered his anointed ones. (Pars. 74, 76) They are sure all he promised will occur, and look forward to preservation. (Pars. 81-83) Have we fully joined with such ones? Time to decide now.

Jesus stressed need to be alert and active, as with the "faithful and discreet slave." (Chap. 17; 25 min.) Hard to believe that persons would ignore fulfillment of "sign," but they do. As with people before Flood, most display lack of faith and ignore *parousia*. (Pars. 4-7) Need to keep on watch that we are alert and active when he comes as executioner. Ought to live each day as ones aware of the time. (Pars. 10-13) Lesson in being active and faithful during presence is found in "faithful and discreet slave." Jesus directed words to entire body of disciples. (Pars. 14, 16) Slave class began with anointing of disciples in 33 C.E. when nation of spiritual Israel formed. (Pars. 20-23) Slave began to make spiritual food available. (Pars. 24-26) In modern times, anointed as a class have provided spiritual food. (Pars. 29, 30) Even despite difficult condition of World War I, slave class continued supplying food for individual domestics. (Par. 40) After "Master" received Kingdom power and turned attention to servants, he showed approval, assigning responsibility for his spiritual things on earth. Now even have responsibility of caring for "great crowd." (Pars. 49-51, 54) Individual anointed ones turning bad become like the "evil slave," rejected by Jesus. (Pars. 59-62, 65) Even if not of the "faithful and discreet slave" class, should

see need to be faithful in Christian activities. Attention to such will aid us to avoid being ensnared. (Luke 21:34-36; pars. 66-68) Thus *sign* that New Order is near will mean eternal blessings for us.

7. When Apostates Are Gone—Peace for a Thousand Years! (*ka* chapters 18, 19; read 1 Thessalonians 4, 5; 2 Thessalonians 1, 2; Psalm 116.)

Heed the warning—Now is the time for decisive religious action! (Chap. 18; 35 min.) Jehovah's witnesses happy that many new ones regularly associate; shows commendable interest in true worship. How important is decisive action on your part? For Witnesses, how vital is it to reach still others (relatives, workmates, neighbors) with Christian message? First and Second Thessalonians give an answer; will discuss "man of lawlessness." General outlook today is hope for peace among nations; Bible shows that time will come. (1 Thess. 5:1-3; pars. 1-3) Some in Thessalonica thought Christ's presence and "day of Jehovah" had come; Paul corrected them, explaining fulfillment was future. (2 Thess. 2:1, 2; pars. 5-8) Before "day of Jehovah" apostasy had to come. (2 Thess. 2:3; pars. 12, 13) Meant a rebellion against Jehovah on part of ones claiming to be Christian, especially the leaders. Also foretold in other Bible books. (Acts 20:28-30; 2 Pet. 2:1-3; pars. 16-25) In time men claiming to be Christian did take to selves role of leaders, becoming clergy. (Pars. 27, 31, 34) This composite "man" set himself in opposition to God, demanded reverence. (Pars. 38-40, 42, 43) Apostles acted as a restraint to apostasy, which showed evidence of developing even while they were on earth. (2 Thess. 2:6; 1 John 2:18-22; pars. 44-46, 49-51) During Christ's then future presence clerical "man of lawlessness" would be destroyed; means an end to apostates. (2 Thess. 2:8; pars. 52, 53) God lets this "man" operate, thus allowing those taking pleasure in unrighteousness to be deceived. (2 Thess. 2:9-12; pars. 59-63) Soon the end of "man of lawlessness" class, and of all apostates, will come. Just as earthly Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 C.E., Christendom and rest of Babylon the Great will be destroyed, to be followed by rest of wicked system. (Pars. 67-69) Where do we stand? Are we actively aiding others to separate from that class? When apostates are gone, will we be here? What conditions then?

A millennium of peace and other blessings for those pursuing true worship now. (Chap. 19; 20 min.) Maybe feel insecure; not sure if you will survive. With apostates earth wide being destroyed, what reason can one have for confidence of life in paradise to follow? True, that end of entire wicked system to come in great tribulation, but Jesus promised that "flesh" would be saved. (Matt. 24:3, 21, 22; pars. 2, 3) This preservation, and outlook we can have, nicely described in Psalm 116. As psalmist looked to God for life, so must we. (Ps. 116:1-6; pars. 6, 7) We need the faith the psalmist and Paul had. (Ps. 116:7-11; 2 Cor. 4:8-10; pars. 9-12) After *final* part of great tribulation, war of great day of God Almighty, will realize that God preserved us when he destroyed wicked. (Pars. 13, 14) Such *deliverance* into New Order will move us to appreciation. (Ps. 116:12-14; par. 17) Will see how precious to God are his loyal ones; he did not let Satan wipe them all out. (Ps. 116:15, 16; pars. 22, 24) What a joy it will be to have peace in which to express our gratitude to God by sacrifices of thanksgiving. (Ps. 116:17-19; pars. 26-28) Prospect of that preservation and of delightful peace of thousand years to follow should move us to share now in preaching, thus holding before others this prospect. (Par. 30)