

The Village Church – Rancho Santa Fe
Discovery # 28– Adult Bible Study – 2025 & 2026

Discovering the Bible

Notes – The Hope

April 28 & 29

The Gospels

Matthew 25:31-46, The Last Judgment

Mark 13:1-37, Watch!

The Letters

Romans 8:18-39, The Future Glory

1 Corinthians 15:50-58, Victory in Christ

1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11, Be Ready!

The Revelation to John

Revelation 1:1-20, John's Vision

Revelation 21:1-6, All Things New!

Revelation 22:1-7, Jesus Is Coming Soon!

INTRODUCTION

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son but gave him up for all of us, how will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ^[a] who died, or rather, who was raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Romans 8:31-34

1. Romans 8 is Paul's words of hope to the church in Rome, offering a stirring affirmation of faith in response to questions about the future.
2. The exciting news from the eyewitnesses of Jesus' resurrection spreads to those who haven't seen it but still believe.
3. Some Christians anticipate an immediate cataclysm, God's ultimate act of establishing the Kingdom.
4. Over the years, many have reflected on Jesus' words and reinterpreted their understanding of God's plan for the future.
5. Those who anticipate this immediate cataclysm perceive and interpret everything happening around them as essential signs of the coming of the Kingdom.
6. The material in the New Testament concerning the future triumph of Christ is so abundant, so complex, and so difficult to interpret that it almost defies brief discussion.

7. A reminder that the passages listed at the beginning of this section were written by people who were currently experiencing or imminently facing some type of persecution.
8. Because of their faith in Christ, the early church expected and taught that Jesus would return shortly, even within the lifetime of the writers. These facts help explain the urgency of the messages of hope.

SCRIPTURES

THE GOSPELS

9. Matthew 25:31-46, known as the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, describes the final judgment where Jesus, as King, separates humanity based on their treatment of the vulnerable.

a) Jesus reveals that serving the marginalized is equivalent to serving Him personally, while neglecting them is rejecting Him.

10. Mark 13:1-37, this passage is *not* seen as a roadmap for a literal apocalyptic end of the world, but as a warning that established, unjust systems (symbolized by the Temple) will inevitably crumble, necessitating a shift in allegiance to the kingdom of God.

- a) Watching and staying awake mean living fully in the present moment, acting with love, and maintaining ethical integrity rather than fearfully anticipating future destruction.
- b) The focus is shifted from a physical return to a realization of Christ's presence and power within the community of believers now, strengthening them to act in the face of injustice.

THE LETTERS

11. Romans 8:18-39 serves as the triumphant conclusion to the first half of Paul's letter.

- a) Rather than viewing predestination as a closed list of "elect" individuals, it is often interpreted as God's *plan* being predestined for anyone who "joins the team" or responds to love.
- b) While many traditional views focus heavily on the afterlife, another lens often emphasizes how this "hope" transforms our "present reality" and social responsibility today

12. 1 Corinthians 15:50-58 Instead of focusing only on escaping the physical body, the emphasis is on the transformation of the *current* self into a fully renewed, glorified state, affirming the value of the physical world.

- a) The defeat of death is seen as overcoming the fear-based living that prevents people from fighting injustice or living authentically, allowing them to be "immovable" in their commitment to ethical living

13. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5 offers comfort to believers grieving deceased loved ones, assuring them that both the dead and living will be united with Christ.

- a) The "clouds," "trumpet," and "air" in 4:17 are often interpreted as apocalyptic poetry or as metaphors for a profound spiritual transformation rather than a literal, physical evacuation of the planet.
- b) The gathering to "meet the Lord in the air" (4:17) is viewed as a community of believers, transformed by Christ's spirit, rising to meet a new reality of justice, rather than an escape from the world.
- c) The emphasis is on living the "day of the Lord" in the present by acting justly and lovingly, rather than passively waiting for a future rescue.

THE REVELATION TO JOHN

14. Revelation 1:1-20, John's Vision is often viewed not as a literal map of the "end of the world," but as a profound piece of apocalyptic resistance literature.

- a) This text was written by an author calling themselves John (likely a first-century, possibly second-century prophet) to seven historical churches in Roman Asia (modern Turkey).
- b) Rather than predicting 21st-century events, Revelation is seen as a critique of the Roman Empire's systemic injustice
- c) The "revelation" is that Christ is "in the midst" of the suffering church *now*, providing a "standard to work towards" rather than a set of concrete future predictions

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does this Matthew 25: 31-46 reveal about the nature of God's judgment?
2. Why are both groups surprised by the King's judgment? (Matt: 37-39, 44)
3. In Mark 13:1-8, the disciples are awed by the immense, immovable temple (v.1-2). What "temples" (religious, political, or economic structures) do we currently idolize or believe are permanent?

4. "Keeping watch" often means staying awake to the suffering of others and acting on behalf of justice. What does it look like for you to be "alert" in your community today? (Mark 13: 32-37)
5. When we see societal disruption (natural disasters, pandemics, war), do we respond with fear (the "end is near" mentality) or with active love? How can we see these moments as "opportunities for witness" rather than signs of despair?
6. Viewing suffering as "childbirth" implies pain that leads to new life. How can we find hope in the struggles of social, personal, or societal change? (Romans 8: 22-23)
7. If the Spirit intercedes for us with "sighs too deep for words," how does this change your understanding of prayer? Does it suggest God is with us *in* the struggle, rather than merely fixing it from afar? (Romans 8: 26-27)
8. The first chapter of Revelation is often viewed not as a literal roadmap for the end of the world, but as a "unveiling" (*apokalypsis*) of timeless truths about power, justice, and the presence of the Divine in times of struggle. In our current world, what hidden truths about power or injustice do you feel are being "unveiled" right now?
9. The vision in Rev. 1:12-16 uses intense, nonliteral imagery (eyes of fire, voice like rushing waters). If this isn't a literal physical description, what *qualities* of the Divine is it trying to communicate? What "eyes of fire" might see in our world today?
10. If night symbolizes fear, oppression, and secrecy, what does a society with "no night" (Rev 22:5) look like practically?
11. The city needs no temple because God is present everywhere (Rev 22: 3-4). How does this challenge the need for exclusive sacred spaces and suggest a spirituality that embraces the whole world as holy?

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Primary Source: Discovering the Bible: A New Generation, published by The Kerygma Program, Pittsburgh, PA. Boyd Lien, author.