

NT 3XE3
New Testament Eschatology:
Living in the End Times



McMaster Divinity College
Jan 10–April 8
Wednesday 4:00pm–5:50pm
Winter 2022

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Office Hours: By Appointment
Room 243

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Eschatology was once deemed one of the most important sub-disciplines in New Testament (NT) studies. Ernst Käsemann even proclaimed a half century ago that “apocalyptic was the mother of all theology.” Unfortunately, the place of eschatology in the church today seems to be alternating between eschato-mania and eschato-phobia. Christian literature is full of fictions (and non-fictions) that spend an unhealthy amount of time and energy making end-time predictions, insisting that the drama of “the end” is going to play out according to a literal (and often atomizing) interpretation of certain eschatological passages in the Bible. However, when the NT authors speak about the eschaton, their primary focus is not so much on the end of time *per se* but on pastoral concerns in the here and now. They were interested in the end because of how our hopes and fears impact the way we live our lives, knowing that there is an end to our lives and eventually to human society as we know it.

This course is primarily an exegetical study of the main eschatological passages in the New Testament. Following a two-step hermeneutical approach, we will look at: (1) what these passages meant in their original context and (2) what they mean to us in our contemporary setting. The course consists of three learning components. First, we will examine various prophetic and apocalyptic thoughts before the times of Jesus and look at how various NT eschatological traditions were developed from these ideas. Second, we will read through the major eschatological passages in the NT and discover unifying themes of NT eschatology by carefully reading through the text in the original context. And finally, we will look at the contemporary significance of the selected NT texts and discuss how they help shape an eschatological lifestyle, i.e. a Christian way of life that does not lose sight of the second coming of Christ.

MODE OF DELIVERY

This course will be delivered in the Modified Hybrid method. A Modified Hybrid Course meets in person and online in an alternating sequence. One week the course meets in person, on campus; the following week the course meets online. This pattern allows for some on-campus community time for each course but also maximizes the benefits of a hybrid format by reducing trips to campus and using online learning strategies. The alternating online weeks will include a blend of both asynchronous and synchronous learning. Synchronous learning is online or distance education that happens in real time, whereas asynchronous learning occurs through online channels without real-time interaction. The online weeks will be structured around online instructions and discussions in both synchronous (live-streaming lectures, video chat, etc.) and asynchronous (pre-recorded lectures,

threaded discussion etc.) methods. Program students at a distance (more than 100 km) or anyone who is feeling unwell/unsafe (with permission from Registrar's office) can join the in-person sessions through live-streaming.

Students are encouraged to meet with the instructor (by appointment through Zoom/MS Teams) to discuss any questions raised in the forum and/or the assignments. Professional degree students should expect to commit 4-5 hours/week on the course and Advanced Degree students (MA, DPT, PhD) should expect to commit 10-12 hours/week on the course.

SPECIALIZATIONS

Biblical Studies (BS)

Students taking this as a Biblical Studies course will be encouraged to explore the historical, cultural setting and theological emphasis of various eschatological texts in the Bible, as well as scholarly debates concerning the interpretation of the contents.

Pastoral Studies (PS)

Students taking this as a Pastoral Studies course will be encouraged to explore how the various themes of biblical eschatology are relevant for Christian faith and practice in the contemporary world.

Church & Culture (CC)

Students taking this as a Church and Culture course will be encouraged to explore the eschatological messages within its historical and culture setting and compare it to the many interpretations in the contemporary cultural landscape.

Advance Degree Students (MA, DPT, PhD)

Advance degree students who wish to apply for this course as an Advanced Elective for their degree program must consult with their primary supervisor and the course instructor to develop an Advanced Elective approach to the course that fulfills the specific elements required by the program.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The following goals are set for the student:

Knowing:

- To become familiar with the main eschatological passages in the NT for use in teaching and preaching ministry
- To gain an understanding of problems and issues in the controversial areas of Christian eschatology and to be able to identify the text(s) that illuminate the options

Being:

- To become competent interpreters of the text
- To gain a positive appreciation of theological unity and diversity in the NT
- To allow the eschatological passages to motivate, form, and transform our faith, worship, and Christian way of life

Doing:

- To develop skills in interpreting the eschatological passages in the NT in terms of their theological, historical, and social context
- To explain key topics and terms related to NT eschatology
- To be able to evaluate apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic artwork in various media (music, films, literature, TV shows, etc.) from a biblical perspective

TEXTBOOK AND MATERIALS

1. Students are required to possess the following:

- The English Bible (modern versions such as NASB, NRSV or NIV)
- The Greek New Testament (for those with Greek competence). Students who had taken Greek are encouraged to use their Greek Bible
- Additional reading materials will be distributed on Avenue to Learn (A2L) prior to the first day of class

2. Students are recommended to have access to the following:¹

The Apocrypha (Deuterocanonical books)

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 145, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact:

READ On Bookstore, 5 International Blvd, Etobicoke, Ontario M9W 6H3;

Phone: 416.620.2934; fax: 416.622.2308; email: books@readon.ca.

Other book services may also carry the texts.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students are required to complete the following assignments. All assignments should be uploaded in PDF format to the designated Avenue to Learn (A2L) course folder. No unfinished assignments are permitted. See below for late submission policy.

1. Weekly Reading and Preparatory Work (60%)

The material covered in this course can be roughly divided into four sections. In each section we will go through the eschatological passages in a particular corpus (Jewish traditions, Pauline, Synoptic Gospels, and Johannine Literature). Most sections contain three tasks spanning three modules/weeks. Students are expected to work through the required task prior to attending class. These tasks are due each week before class (Wednesday at 4pm). The tasks require different types of work. There are three types of modules for each section:

¹ There are a few English translations of the Apocrypha: the Brenton LXX Translation, KJV, or NRSV. You can find the NRSV version on the Bible Gateway website (<https://www.biblegateway.com>). For the Brenton and KJV, see <https://apocrypha.org/>.

1. Reading Task

Students are to familiarize themselves with the main texts of the section (Jewish traditions, Pauline, Synoptic Gospels, and Johannine literature). A list of key texts will be posted on A2L. Students need to compile (1) five exegetical issues/questions, these questions can be on a particular text or from comparing a particular topic/portrayal in related texts; and (2) five key messages from the texts.

2. Literature Survey Task

Pick one of the passages from the section and then produce a list of academic resources that discuss the passage, per the following guidelines:

- (a) a minimum of eight suitable sources must be listed;
- (b) a maximum of four commentaries can appear in the list;
- (c) at least two journal articles must be included;
- (d) one encyclopedia or dictionary article can be included;
- (e) the resources must be quickly skimmed so as to reveal the general topics discussed and the ways in which they are approached;
- (f) a short paragraph (no more than 5 sentences) must be supplied for each resource, noting some interesting detail and about its content.

A tutorial will be given during our first meeting, and an A2L module will offer detailed guidance on finding electronic resources (esp. in the DTL and ATLA/EBSCOhost database)

While the grading of these lists will not require strict adherence to MDC style, a bonus 5% will be added to any assignment that perfectly adheres to MDC style.

3. Application Task

Students are to answer a set of questions regarding a key passage of the section. These questions will guide them to approach the eschatological passages from a variety of different perspectives. There are three types of questions: exegetical (the function and meaning of a text); application (what does the text mean to the contemporary church); embodiment (what do we do to embody/epitomize the message today in a believing community?). The same questions will be used throughout the term, and an introductory overview of these questions will be supplied during our first meeting.

2. Cultural Artefacts: Contemporary Significance (20%)

Students are to choose a contemporary cultural artefact that provides insight into how eschatology is portrayed and understood in society. These artefacts should be posted to a class A2L one week before the scheduled presentation. Students can choose from any type of media (news, music, arts, literature/poetry, film/TV series, comics, blog/vlog, etc.) of any period. Examples of a cultural artefact could be a current news story, an article, a blog/vlog post, a scene from a movie/TV show, the songs of an artist/group (secular or worship), or a short story (fiction or non-fiction). The following is a list of sample topics:

- The portrayal of chaos and hope in society in post-apocalyptic film(s)
- The use of kingdom language in the songs of the Hillsong Worship ministry
- The last judgment scenes in contemporary and classical paintings
- The use of kingdom language in Christian and/or non-Christian music

- The caricature of the Rapture in films
- End time prophecies and teachings of a particular tele-evangelist/blogger
- Apocalypticism in popular music

The initial post should include a brief description of the artefact to provide context and a way to access the artifact. Students are expected to give a short presentation (10-15 mins) and lead a short discussion time (10-15 mins) during class (presentation schedule will be determined in the first couple weeks of class). Presentations should focus on the portrayal of eschatology in the artefact and how it reflects an ideology and/or shared cultural values in modern society. Students should also compare the modern cultural assumptions with ancient (biblical) perspectives on various eschatological elements. The presentation should raise at least two questions for class discussion. Students are expected to go through the weekly presentation materials *before* coming to class so that the presentation will *not* simply be a summary of the topic (e.g. give the entire plot of a TV show) but a meaningful discussion of the contemporary significance and relevance of biblical eschatology.

3. A Pastoral Letter/Response (20%)

Write a short pastoral letter (1000-1500 words) assuming the following scenario: You learned that an old friend of yours was once a follower of Harold Camping or John Hagee (or some other well-known end-time prediction group).² After the latest failed prediction for the second coming of Christ, he/she lost faith not only in the leader of the group, but in Christian faith. Your friend started to question whether it makes sense to believe in the second coming of Christ and whether eschatology has any bearings in our day-to-day life. In other words, the relevance and value of eschatology in Christian theology and Christian living has been called into question.

The objective of this letter is to try to explain to him/her, in a pastoral manner, the relevance of the Parousia to a modern-day Christian and the function of apocalypticism in the Bible. Take note that the goal of the letter is to persuade, not to confront. There is thus no need to attack the character of the preacher. The key is to demonstrate the kind of eschatology that is formed by responsible exegesis of the biblical text and is still relevant for contemporary churches.

Due Date: Mar 4 at 11:59pm

Grading Summary and Due Date:		
Reading and Preparatory Work	60%	See schedule
Presentation and Discussion	20%	TBD
<u>Pastoral Letter</u>	<u>20%</u>	Mar 4, 2022
Total	100%	

² See for example: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_dates_predicted_for_apocalyptic_events

SCHEDULE

Dates	Class Topics	A2L Module and Preparatory Work	Delivery Method
Jan 12	Course Introduction/Library Resources Introduction to NT Eschatology: History, Trends, and Contemporary Significance	“Course Introduction”	Zoom Meeting
Jan 19	The Origins of NT Eschatological Hope I: Jewish Prophetic Traditions	“Jewish Prophetic Writings” READING	Zoom Meeting
Jan 26	The Origins of NT Eschatological Hope II: Jewish Apocalyptic Traditions	“Jewish Apocalyptic Writings” LITERATURE SURVEY	Zoom Meeting
Feb 2	The Eschatology of the Early Church: A Chronology Pauline Eschatology I: The Parousia	“1 & 2 Thessalonians” READING	In Person
Feb 9	Pauline Eschatology II: Resurrection and the Intermediate Stage	“1 & 2 Corinthians” LITERATURE SURVEY	Zoom Meeting
Feb 16	Pauline Eschatology III: A Unifying Pauline Eschatology?	“Pauline Eschatology” APPLICATION	In Person
Feb 23	The Eschatology of Jesus I: The Signs	“Olivet Discourse (Mark)” READING	Zoom Meeting
Mar 2	Mid Term Break		Online Office Hours
Mar 9	The Eschatology of Jesus II: The Fulfillment	“Olivet Discourse (Matthew)” LITERATURE SURVEY	In Person
Mar 16	The Eschatology of the Church: The Delay of Parousia	“The Delay of Parousia” APPLICATION	Zoom Meeting
Mar 23	Johannine Eschatology I: Inaugurated Eschatology	“Johannine Literature” READING	In Person
Mar 30	Johannine Eschatology II: Selected Topics in Revelation Text: Revelation 20:1–22:5	“Revelation” LITERATURE SURVEY	Zoom Meeting
April 6	Conclusion: Major Themes in New Testament Eschatology Towards an Eschatological Lifestyle	“Conclusion” APPLICATION	In Person

REFERENCES

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LATE SUBMISSION POLICY

All assignments must be submitted on or before the date due, unless other arrangements are made in advance. A late penalty of 2% per day will be applied to all assignments submitted after the deadline, unless an extension has been obtained from the instructor prior to the deadline. Assignments cannot be submitted after April 10, 2022 without written permission from the Office of the Registrar (strickpd@mcmaster.ca).

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College. Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty ~ <https://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>.

In this course we will be using a web-based service ([turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com)) for plagiarism detection. Students who do not wish to submit their work to [turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com) can submit an electronic copy of their work via email in PDF format and no penalty will be assigned, but all submitted work is subject to normal verification standards in order to ensure that academic integrity has been upheld (e.g. online search).

GENDER INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected, but you will need to use gender-inclusive language for humans, and you will need to quote from a gender-inclusive version such as the following: NRSV (1989), NCV (1991), TEV/GNB/GNT (1992), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), TNIV (2005), and the Common English Bible (CEB 2011).

STYLE

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/> Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

DISCLAIMER

This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.