

NT 3XE3/5XE5/6XE6
**The Present Age and the Age to Come:
Biblical Eschatology**



McMaster Divinity College
Jan 8–April 5, 2024
Online Asynchronous
Winter 2024

Francis G.H. Pang, Ph.D.
pangfg@mcmaster.ca
Online Office Hours:
Monday 11:00-12:50pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Eschatology was once deemed one of the most important sub-disciplines within biblical 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 biblical 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 Bible. 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 biblical eschatological traditions were developed from these ideas. Second, we will read through the major eschatological passages in the New Testament and discover unifying themes of biblical eschatology by carefully reading through the text in the original context. And finally, we will look at the contemporary significance of the selected 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

Synchronous learning is online or distance education that happens in real time, whereas **asynchronous** learning occurs through online channels without real-time interaction. This course is designed as an online asynchronous learning only course. Students must have a basic familiarity with computers to participate, including the ability to navigate Avenue to Learn (A2L) course site, participate in synchronous office hours using Zoom, and make and upload PDFs of assignments to A2L.

All course contents are delivered asynchronously. This course contains four modules. Each module contains material roughly equivalent to three weeks of synchronous classes. Video

lectures and materials will be made available at the beginning of each module. Students will view the assigned video lectures, study the handouts, read assigned articles and other materials, and complete exercises (see course requirements below) for each module.

Optional virtual office hours will be held on Monday from 10:00-11:50 pm. Since this is an online course, students are welcome to come to virtual office hours to discuss any questions raised in the forum and/or the assignments. The meetings (via Zoom) will be dedicated to answering questions, clarifying concepts, consolidating learning, and discussing interpretation. Students should expect to commit at least 4-5 hours per 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.

Christian History and Worldview (CW)

Students taking this as a Christian History and Worldview 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 Bible 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 Bible

- 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 Bible in terms of their theological, historical, and social context
- To explain key topics and terms related to biblical 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)

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

The Apocrypha (Deuterocanonical books)

Textbook Purchase: All required textbooks for this class are available from the Hurlburt Family Bookstore located beside the entrance to the Nathaniel H. Parker Memorial Chapel of McMaster Divinity College. To purchase in advance, you may contact the bookstore manager, Bernice Quek, by phone at 416.620.2934 or 416.668.3434 (mobile); or by email at books@readon.ca. The Hurlburt Family Bookstore also carries other books and merchandise and is open throughout the academic year during posted hours.

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. Modular Tasks (60%)

The material covered in this course are divided into FOUR modules. In each module we will go through the eschatological passages in a particular corpus (see schedule below). All modules contain three tasks spanning three weeks. Students are expected to work through the required tasks independently. These tasks are due every three weeks (see below). The tasks require different types of work:

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. 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. These should be posted on A2L to foster online group discussion.

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.

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. These should be posted on A2L to support a collaborative learning environment.

3. Reflection Task

Students are to answer a set of questions regarding a key passage of the section twice per module (beginning and the end). Students need to answer a few questions at the start of the module (before going over the material). These questions will help them understand the scope and direction of the material covered in that module. Answers should be brief (one page **max**) but succinct. After viewing all the material, students need to repeat the exercise with ANOTHER SET of questions. 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 on A2L in the introductory module (see module zero below). Please submit your answer by uploading your document to the corresponding submission box (for each module).

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 the class A2L forum. A form will be provided on the first day of class for students to choose one of the four submission deadline (the end of a module). 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 post should include a brief description of the artefact to provide context and a way to access the artifact. Students are expected to record a short presentation (10-15 mins, schedule will be determined in the first couple weeks of class) and post two to three questions on A2L to facilitate online discussion. 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 online discussion. Students are expected to go through the presentation materials and contribute to the conversation. The goal of this exercise is to foster 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 8 at 11:59pm

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

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 8, 2022
Total	100%	

SCHEDULE

Release Dates	Class Topics	A2L Reading Modules
Jan 8	<p>Module “zero”: Course Introduction/Library Resources Introduction to Biblical Eschatology: History, Trends, and Contemporary Significance</p>	<p>“Course Introduction” “Library Resources” “Introducing Modular Tasks”</p>
Module 1: Eschatology Before Jesus		
Jan 15	<p>The Origins of Eschatological Hope: OT Covenantal Promises Jewish Prophetic Traditions Jewish Apocalyptic Traditions</p>	<p>“Jewish Prophetic Writings”: Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel “Jewish Apocalyptic Writings”: Ezekiel, Zechariah, Daniel, 1&2 Maccabees</p>
Module 2: Pauline Eschatology		
Feb 5	<p>The Eschatology of the Early Church: A Chronology Pauline Eschatology: The Parousia (Timing and Order) Resurrection and the Intermediate Stage A Unifying Eschatology?</p>	<p>“Pauline Texts” 1 & 2 Thessalonians 1 & 2 Corinthians Philippians</p>
Module 3: The Eschatology of Jesus		
Feb 26	<p>The Signs of “the End” The Fall of the Temple and the Parousia Eschatological Parables</p>	<p>“Olivet Discourse” Mark 13 and Matthew 24–25</p>

Module 4: The Eschatology of the Church

Mar 18	The Eschatology of the Church: The Delay of Parousia Inaugurated Eschatology The End of the End: New Heaven and New Earth	“The Delay of Parousia” Lukan Eschatology Johannine Literature Revelation 20–22
April 1	Conclusion: Major Themes in New Testament Eschatology Towards an Eschatological Lifestyle	“Conclusion”

REFERENCES

- Beale, Gregory. *A New Testament Biblical Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011.
- Blomberg, Craig L. and Sung Wook Chung. *A Case for Historic Premillennialism: An Alternative to “Left Behind” Eschatology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009.
- Braaten, Carl E. and Robert W. Jenson. (eds.) *The Last Things: Biblical and Theological Perspectives on Eschatology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.
- Collins, John J. *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*. 2nd Ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.
- deSilva, David A. *Seeing Things John’s Way: The Rhetoric of the Book of Revelation*. Louisville, KY: WJK, 2009.
- . *Discovering Revelation: Content, Interpretation, Reception*. Discovering Biblical Texts. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021.
- Gladd, Benjamin L., and Matthew S. Harmon. *Marking All Things New: Inaugurated Eschatology for the Life of the Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016.
- Gregg, Steve. *Revelation: Four Views: A Parallel Commentary*. Rev. ed. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2013.
- Hays, Christopher M. *When the Son of Man Didn’t Come: A Constructive Proposal on the Delay of the Parousia*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016.
- Hill, Craig C. *In God’s Time: The Bible and the Future*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.
- Hoekema, Anthony A. *The Bible and the Future*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979.
- Hogeterp, Albert L.A. *Expectations of the End: A Comparative Traditio-Historical Study of Eschatological, Apocalyptic and Messianic Ideas in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament*. Leiden: Brill, 2009.
- Holman, Charles L. *Till Jesus Comes: Origins of Christian Apocalyptic Tradition*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996.
- Koester, Craig R. *Revelation and the End of All Things*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018.

- Kyle, Richard. *The Last Days are Here Again*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998.
- . *Apocalyptic Fever: End-Time Prophecies in Modern America*. Eugene, Oregon: Cascade, 2012.
- Ladd, G.E. *The Presence of the Future*. 2nd ed. London: SPCK, 1980.
- Menn, Jonathan. *Biblical Eschatology*. Eugene, Oregon: Resource, 2013.
- Middleton, J. Richard. *A New Heaven and a New Earth: Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014.
- Plevnik, Joseph. *Paul and the Parousia: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997.
- Schmidt, Thomas E. and Moisés Silva. (eds.) *To Tell the Mystery: Essays on New Testament Eschatology in Honor of Robert H. Gundry*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994.
- Stein, Robert H. *Jesus, the Temple and the Coming Son of Man: A Commentary of Mark 13*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014.
- Thiselton, Anthony C. *The Last Things: A New Approach*. London: SPCK, 2012.
- Witherington III, Ben. *Jesus, Paul and the End of the World: A Comparative Study in New Testament Eschatology*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP 1992.
- Wright, N.T. *Jesus and the Victory of God*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996.
- . *The Resurrection of the Son of God*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003.
- . *History and Eschatology: Jesus and the Promise of Natural Theology*. London: SPCK, 2019.

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR, ATTENDANCE, AND PARTICIPATION

- All thoughtful student participation is welcome. There are no “dumb questions” or “stupid answers.” Students will respect the contributions of other students, although they may disagree, and respond to them without ridicule or scorn.
- While we are not going to introduce new content during our weekly online sessions, students are strongly recommended to come to these meetings every week to ask questions, clarify concepts, discussing interpretation, and most importantly, form a supportive learning community.
- Students are to observe proper online learning etiquette and manner.

ONLINE CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

Students who opt to come to virtual office hours (zoom meeting) are expected to follow these guidelines:

1. Please choose a location that allows you to attend the meeting with the least amount of (expected) distractions and interruptions. A busy café, for example, may not be the best environment for you to participate in various class activities.
2. You are responsible for a device that meets the recommended requirements of running zoom smoothly and have a fast and reliable internet connection for the meeting.

3. Anything that is considered as inappropriate to do in class in person should also be considered as not appropriate during live-streaming meeting.
4. Please keep your video on as much as it is possible to foster a lively collaborative learning environment.
5. Please mute your microphone during the meeting unless you have a question or when participating in a class/group discussion.

LATE SUBMISSION POLICY

All assignments must be submitted on or before the due date, 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 5, 2024** without written permission from the Office of the Registrar (mdcreg@mcmaster.ca).

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Academic dishonesty is not qualitatively different from other types of dishonesty. It consists of misrepresenting the ownership of written work by deception or by other fraudulent means. In an academic setting this may include any number of forms such as: copying or using unauthorized aids in tests, examinations; plagiarism, i.e., submitting work that is not one's own (regardless of the means of its production) but passing it off as if it is; submitting work for credit in a course for which credit is being or has already been given, unless the previously submitted work was presented as such to the instructor of the second course and has been deemed acceptable for credit by the instructor of that course; aiding and abetting another student's dishonesty; giving false information for the purposes of gaining admission or credit; giving false information for the purposes of obtaining deferred examinations or extension of deadlines; forging or falsifying McMaster University or McMaster Divinity College documents.

AODA

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the content of this course is intended to be accessible to all students who are enrolled in the course, including those with disabilities. If a student requires accommodation to participate fully in this course, that student is to contact SAS at McMaster University, who will then work directly with the McMaster Divinity College Registrar to negotiate reasonably appropriate accommodation for the student. The MDC Registrar will communicate with faculty regarding necessary accommodations. Please note that an accommodation is not retroactive and must be requested in advance to allow sufficient time for implementation.

GENDER INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all 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, for example, the following: NRSV (2021), NCV (1991), TEV/GNB/GNT (1992), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), NIV (2011), and the 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.