



**Nipawin Bible College**  
**BT312 – The Church and Last Things**  
**Dr. Joel Houston**  
**Winter 2019**  
**3 Credit Hours**  
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### ***COURSE DESCRIPTION***

“What is the church?” While this seems like a relatively innocuous question, closer inspection reveals it to be quite complex. Is the church one, or many? Is the church visible (i.e. an identifiable group of believers) or invisible (i.e. the elect, known only to God)? What are the ordinances? Who makes the rules? Indeed, *what is it that the church actually does?* Equally mysterious, and perhaps even frightening is the doctrine of Eschatology, or “The Last Things.” Sometimes relegated to specialists, and often a subject accompanied by charts, graphs, and hard to understand scriptures. It is little wonder, then, why these two theological topics are sometimes avoided, even by devout Christians!

BT312, the fourth course of Systematic Theology, seeks to understand, and indeed, “de-mystify” the biblical teaching concerning the nature of the church (ecclesiology) and the last things (eschatology). Far from being doctrines that are intended to confuse, these loci of theology are to be a great encouragement to the believer. From being a part of a called and chosen covenant community, nourished by the word and the ordinances or sacraments of Christ, to looking forward to our blessed hope, the soon return of Christ, BT312 seeks to build up our faith in areas that are rather underdeveloped.

### ***COURSE TEXTBOOKS***

The Holy Bible (A translation of your choosing).

Dever, Mark. *The Church: The Gospel Made Visible*. (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2012). **208 Pages.**

Horton, Michael. *Pilgrim Theology: Core Doctrines for Christian Disciples* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012). **185 Pages.**

Wright, N.T., *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperOne, 2008). **352 Pages.**

### ***THE BIG QUESTION***

*How does Christ exercise his reign through the Church, and to what end?*  
**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

- 1) Students will understand the basic evangelical-Reformed configuration of the church, as well as the various ways that other traditions (Roman Catholic, Orthodox, etc.) view the church.
- 2) Students will appreciate the diversity of thought around the nature of the ordinances or sacraments and will be able to articulate what these differences are, and why they are important.
- 3) Students will develop their own understanding of the doctrine of the last things, particularly with regard to the Millennium. As with other doctrines, students will understand and appreciate different views, while confidently articulating their own.
- 4) Students will be able to describe the nature of the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. This will include an understanding of the biblical teaching on the nature of Hell, and the new Kingdom.
- 5) Upon gaining a robust vision of the both the Church and the blessed hope to come, students will be equipped and energized to continue on in their calling as disciples of Christ, and servants of his Church.

## **COURSE ASSIGNMENTS & EXAMS**

### **Book Précis – 15%**

#### **Book completion – 5%**

- Students are required to read **both** Dever, *The Church* and Wright, *Surprised by Hope*. Upon completing the works, students will write a **3-4** page summary, or précis of **one** of the books: either Dever **or** Wright. Instructions for writing a précis accompany this syllabus in Appendix **B**. It is important to note that you are not so much required to give your *opinion* of the work as you are to demonstrate your *comprehension* of it. Students will submit *only* their paper (the book is not required for evaluation), along with the **signed declaration** found in Appendix **A** that they have completed reading the alternate text, in its entirety, for this class. No partial marks will be awarded for incomplete reading of the text.

**Book Précis and Reading Due: February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019.**

### **Integrated Knowledge Paper – 25%**

- It is one thing to know “theological facts”—objective truths about what the Scriptures teach, and quite another to relate these facts to everyday life in a way that is meaningful and applicable.  
With the aim of specifically applying theological insights gleaned from the course, students will write a **12 page** “integrated knowledge” paper on a topic that pertains especially to the issues raised in BT312.

The first 8-10 pages will evaluate divergent perspectives on a particular topic (i.e. the visible/invisible church, the nature of the ordinances/sacraments, interpretations of the Millennium etc.) and argue for the perspective they feel is best supported by the scriptural data. This is the research component of the paper.

The remaining 2-4 pages will demonstrate the necessity of holding to the correct interpretation of a particular doctrine, with special attention paid to the practical life of the disciple. This may be viewed as integrating research with discipleship—answering the “so what?” question.

Papers will be evaluated for exegetical insight, proper representation of all positions involved (no strawmen!), and rigour, innovative applications.

**Integrative Knowledge Paper Due: March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019.**

### **Text Reading – 15%**

- Read and interact with select portions of Michael Horton’s *Pilgrim Theology*. The relevant chapters for BT312 are: 15-19 (inclusive). Your interaction with the Horton text will include underlining and/or highlighting the text along with written comments in the margins (or sticky notes if you so not like writing in books). Finally, students will write a **two-page** critique of the selected portions of the book, identifying both positive and negative aspects of Horton’s work. **Your interaction with *Pilgrim Theology* is vital:** because the in-class lectures, discussions and exams are based on Horton’s text, it is axiomatic that the better you understand the text content, the more successful you will be in class. Your book will be evaluated as evidence of your careful reading.

**Book Completion Date: April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019.**

### **Exams:**

#### **Course Midterm Exam – 15%**

- **Tuesday February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019, 8:30am.**

#### **Course Final Exam – 25%**

- **Tuesday, April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018, 8:30am.**

All written assignments are to be typed in accordance with the NBC Study Guide for papers. Assignments will be graded on the basis of content, clarity, grammar, and spelling. Assignments will be due **no later than 5:00 pm** on the day that they are assigned.

### **ATTENDANCE POLICY:**

- Refer to the NBC Handbook 2018/2019

**LATE ASSIGNMENT POLICY:**

- Refer to the NBC Handbook 2018/2019

**Reading: 745pp**

**Writing: 17pp**

**SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THEOLOGICAL WORKS**

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\* There may be other relevant books and articles available to you that are not listed on the syllabus. This is a starting point.

## Appendix A: Statement of Reading Completion

**Please select one box:**

**I have read:**

Mark Dever, *The Church*

N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope*

**In its entirety and for this class** (BT312, "The Church and Last Things", Winter 2019).

**Alternatively,**

I did not complete the required reading for this course (BT312, "The Church and Last Things", Winter 2019).

**Printed Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed Name:** \_\_\_\_\_