Theological Research Methods I:  

*Introduction to Module & Research Concept*

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**Relevance of Research for the Christian Worker**

- **Hermeneutical**: Understanding & apply Scripture
- **Discipleship**: Facilitates Spiritual formation
- **Ecclesiological**: Church problems require answers
- **Missional**: How to advance the Gospel
- **Societal**: Disciplines on how to pose more fruitful questions
- **Educational**: Foster learning culture in the Seminary
Creating and Expanding a Research Culture at Pentecostal and Charismatic Seminaries and Graduate Schools in the Majority World¹

by Dave Johnson

Many have been frustrated by the fact that western books do not totally address the theological, missiological, and pastoral issues in the Majority World. Also, the Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement (PC) in the Majority World, as well as other evangelicals, has experienced stupendous growth, but is often lacking in discipleship and maturity. I believe that part of the answer to these issues is to be found in creating and actively maintaining a research culture on our Majority World seminary campuses and online communities that will provide scholars with the atmosphere and resources to engage in research, reflection, writing, and publishing opportunities to address these issues.

[Johnson 2021:39]
Basic Assumption of Scholarship

“As a researcher and a true scholar, you cannot simply accept the word of others at face value; you must evaluate it on the basis of evidence and sound argument and be prepared to disagree and criticize. This is a fundamental part of what it means to exercise your independence and autonomy”


Objectives of the MASM Programme

1. Become well-grounded in sound biblical theology and capable of interpreting, communicating, and applying theology in ministry;

2. Be empowered with the relevant theological leadership skills and spiritual formation for effective performance in church ministry.

3. Develop the pastoral skills necessary for ministry within various traditions, ministry settings, and cross-cultural contexts.

4. Gain adequate biblical and theological preparation for further post-graduate studies (e.g., MPhil or MTh).
Theological Research Module is fundamental to meeting the Objectives of the MASM degree

Research Requirements at DI MASM: MA Thesis

The course MA in Sacred Ministry is a 6-credit hour research project, 15,000-20,000, required for the Master’s degree.

However, it is optional. Students may replace the thesis with two courses/modules. They require all core courses (6 courses). Students may, however, upon the advice of their supervisor(s), audit any relevant course not selected as part of his or her electives.
This course, made up of two parts, I and II, is aimed at providing students with theoretical and practical knowledge and confidence to perform worthwhile theological research in service of the Kingdom. Its interim goal is to prepare students to produce their MA thesis which is a requirement for obtaining the degree. But in the long term it will also serve as providing the foundations for future postgraduate theological research and ultimately foster a culture of consistent Christian scholarly theologians and pastoral practitioners.

The first part (Theological Research Methods I) focuses on broad foundations of theological research, acquisition and honing of research ideas, construction of topic and detailing concise research concepts. The second part (Theological Research Methods II) focuses more on the research journey, choices of methods and the construction and defense of the research proposal.

Topics covered include conceptual issues in research, research ethics, literature review, research design, techniques for data collection, tools for data coding and analysis, various qualitative methods of data collection, analysis and publication. Basic statistical methods will also be covered even though not exhaustively. Students will be introduced to the use of software in data analysis (NVIVO for qualitative research).

### DI MASM Research Project Process

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<th>Step of Process</th>
<th>Instruction</th>
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<td>Research Idea, Topic &amp; Concept Submission</td>
<td>Assessments for Part I</td>
<td>15(^{th}) March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Proposal Submission</td>
<td>Template to be used</td>
<td>Date to be announce after Part II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Proposal Defense</td>
<td>Assessments for Part II: Oral Defense</td>
<td>Date to be announced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allocation of Supervisor</td>
<td>Allocated according to faculty expertise</td>
<td>Date to be announced</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Conduct &amp; Thesis Writing</td>
<td>Done under supervisor</td>
<td>Date to be announced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Submission &amp; Marking</td>
<td>Detailed instruction on thesis available</td>
<td>Date to be announced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA Thesis Defense</td>
<td>Before faculty &amp; external examiner panel</td>
<td>Date to be announced</td>
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Structure of the Module: Part I (Research Concept)

1. Introduction to Module & Part 1
2. Theoretical Overview of Research
3. Research Methods in Biblical Studies
4. Research Methods in Systematic Theology
5. Research Methods in Practical Theology I – Church
6. Research Methods in Practical Theology II – Society
7. Collecting, Processing and Analyzing Research Data
8. Writing Research Topic & Concept
9. Research Problem & Questions
10. Summary & Research Concept Clinic

Structure of the Module: Part II (Research Proposal)

1. Introduction to Research Proposal Writing
2. Efficient Literature Search
3. Reviewing the Literature
4. Designing the Research
5. Research Ethics and Challenges
6. Writing the Research Proposal
7. After the Research Proposal Defense
8. Scholarly Writing
10. Summary & Research Proposal Clinic
Assessments for Part I

• **Formative Assessment**: 40% of total marks
  – Submit your Research Topic with two (2) sentences explanation of the idea
  – Send as attachment on A4 to annang@sats.ac.za
  – Deadline for submission: 15th March 2024

• **Summative Assessment**: 60% of total marks
  – Submit your Research Concept of two hundred (200) words
  – Send as attachment on A4 to annang@sats.ac.za
  – Deadline for submission: End of Semester

Assessments for Part II

• **Formative Assessment**: 40% of total marks
  – Submit Research Proposal using the provided template
  – Deadline for submission:

• **Summative Assessment**: 60% of total marks
  – Oral Defense of Research Proposal
Thesis

A rigorous piece of academic writing based on, and sometimes written in tandem with, an independent and original research, submitted as partial or full fulfilment of requirement for university degree.
What is Theological Research?

A carefully structured and systematic investigation of a biblical or theological problem with a view of providing its solution and/or clarifying its nature.

Thesis vs. Sermon

- Both require careful research
- Thesis is based on structured and systematic research
- Both aim at Persuasion through logic and rhetoric
- Logic is more important to thesis as you are seeking to persuade scholars
- Evidence, interrogation and precise referencing are fundamental for thesis
Thesis vs. Essay

- Both have argument as central feature
- Both have similar structure: Introduction – Body – Conclusion
- Essay question is set by examiner, but thesis questions are set by student
- Essay may defend an opinion, but thesis must offer rigorous evidence for conclusions
- Critical engagement of scholarship more pronounced in thesis

Thesis vs. Ordinary Book

- Thesis requires Precision and Clarity of language
- Thesis employs formal Language: Depersonalize as much as possible, passive voice is often better
- Coherence of ideas is fundamental – Importance of conjunctions (e.g., but, and, or, because) and conjunctive adverbs (e.g., therefore, finally, then, so that, hence, as a result)
- Claims must be supported by references
- Self-aware objectivity, gives rationale for each choice
- Answers the objections of imaginary reader
Research involves higher cognitive investigative function involving purposefully and fruitfully Creating, Evaluating, or Analyzing knowledge.
Writing and Researching in Tandem

Research → Write → Research → Write → Research → Write → Research → Write

Writing isn't what you do after you have an idea. It's how you develop an inkling into an insight.

Turning thoughts into words sharpens reasoning. What's fuzzy in your head is clear on the page.

"I'm not a writer" shouldn't stop you from writing. Writing is a tool for thinking.
Identifying the Problem

Research Idea, Title & Concept

Clarified Research Problem (The What) + Structured Research Plan (The How)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Idea vs concept</th>
<th>An idea is:</th>
<th>A concept is:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Derived from an individual or a small group from the same function or team</td>
<td>Derived by a cross-functional team—including domain experts, designers, developers, and end users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulation of solution</td>
<td>Feature-based</td>
<td>Based on customer journey, with outline of the user-experience flow and experience; focused on how to create business value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing approach</td>
<td>Un tested or tested ad hoc</td>
<td>Tested methodically, and continually validated by end users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development path</td>
<td>High-level/limited clarity on feature roadmap, prioritization, and rationale</td>
<td>Clearly defined feature roadmap—including rationale, backlog of features needed for minimum viable product, and sequenced approach to adding features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology considerations</td>
<td>Agnostic of technological feasibility</td>
<td>Clear definition of technological feasibility, including architecture decisions and articulation of key trade-offs</td>
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From Research Idea to MTh Thesis (Distinction): An Example

- Y is a Chartered Physiotherapist

- A leader in her church involved in their healing ministry

- Intrigued about the meaning and relevance of James 5:14-15
  - “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.”

- She is seeking for Research Idea.
Study of James 5:14-15

Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

Is this future salvation or healing? Is this “get up and walk” or future resurrection? If this is about the future then what is the point of the anointing?

A Research Idea

• Y thought the passage definitely seems to link eschatology with healing.

• But that seems to confuse the concrete pastoral situation of calling for the elders to pray and anoint the sick.

• As this is one of the key passages in the New Testament on healing ministry, how the eschatology function in it is very important.

• Idea: How Eschatology relates to healing practice in James 5:14-15
Y’s Research Topic

Eschatology and Healing Praxes in James 5:14-15

Y’s Research Concept

• The instructions on divine healing praxes of James 5:14-15 contains words and ideas which also relate to eschatology and soteriology.

• Interim study of scholarly literature on the passage suggests that scholars have highlighted this intriguing observation

• I wish to investigate how James intended eschatology to relate to healing and suggest implications for the healing praxes in our church
Divine healing in James 5:14-15 in the light of the eschatology in the epistle of James

By

Research Proposal

Master of Theology
South African Theological Seminary

1. Title

2. Definitions
2.1 Eschatology
According to Menn (2013:1), eschatology is the study of ‘last things’ or ‘end times.’ Grenz in ‘Biblical Eschatology’ notes that within the context of Christian doctrine the topic of eschatology provides an overarching vision of the faith. It shows God’s final goal for creation, how that goal will be consummated and in what manner that goal is already in the process of being realized (Menn 2013:8).

2.2 Parousia
Parousia means ‘presence’ or ‘arrival’ and describes the visit of a ruler to a city with all the related festivities (Menn 2013: 49). Menn notes that when Parousia is used in the New Testament it is essentially a technical term for the eschatological coming of Christ in glory where there will be a resurrection of the dead and the final judgment.
4.2. Scholarship on the eschatology in the book of James

Eschatology is seen to permeate the epistle of James. James’ eschatology is complex and multifaceted with a dual, present inaugurated eschatology as well as an awaited future one. Cheung (2003:240) notes that the early Jesus movement was a messianic one grounded on the assumption that the Kingdom of God had broken in and through the person and ministry of Jesus Christ and that this community anticipated Christ’s second coming as the final manifestation of the glorious Kingdom of God. According to Hartin (1997:980), James and his readers shared a common worldview that looked forward to an anticipated eschatological joy in a future realm despite the challenges that they experienced in their immediate circumstances. Wessel (2002:25) notes that there are three distinct eschatological themes found in the Epistle of James: The Kingdom of God (2:1-7), Judgement (2:12) and the Parousia (5:7-9).

To start with, the epistle is addressed to ‘the twelve tribes scattered abroad’ whose identity is much debated among scholars. Some recognize James’ audience as diaspora Jews living outside of Israel (e.g., Verseput 2000:104, Bauckham 1999:13, Kloppenberg 2007:242, Allison 2015:8), Jewish Christians (e.g., Moo 2000:50, Hartin

4. Research problem and questions

4.1. The research problem is that it is not immediately clear the extent to which the pervasive eschatology of the epistle of James might contribute to addressing the several interpretive issues raised by James 5:14-15. The main research question therefore is:

How might using the eschatology projected in the Epistle of James as a hermeneutical lens assist in the interpretation of divine healing in James 5:14-15?

4.2 Subsidiary Questions

4.2.1. What is the contextual background of the book of James (general historical-sociological-cultural, the occasion for writing, literary context)?
4.2.2. What does exegesis of James 5:14-15 within the pericope of James 13-20 teach about divine healing?
4.2.3. How might one construct a theological account of Eschatology in the book of James as a hermeneutical lens?
4.2.4. How might using the eschatology projected in the Epistle of James as a hermeneutical lens assist in the interpretation of divine healing in James 5:14-15?
9. Research Design

This research will be a literary study. It falls within the field of Biblical theology and will encompass two stages: Biblical exegesis and theological reflection. The exegetical component of the research will study James 5:14-15 within the pericope of James 5:13-20 in order to determine both the content and context of what was written. A detailed exegetical analysis based on Fee’s (2002) ‘New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors’ will be followed whereby the content and context of James 5:13-20 with particular emphasis on verse 14-15 will be undertaken. The context will be analysed according to 1) textual criticism, 2) lexical data, 3) grammatical data and 4) the historical-cultural background. The context will be determined by studying the 1) historical context: a) general historical-sociological-cultural setting and, b) the specific occasion of writing. Lastly 2) the literary context will be researched. This data will then be carefully synthesized.

The second phase of the research will focus on the Biblical theological component. Although Biblical theology is largely regarded as part of Biblical Studies some view Biblical Theology as a standalone discipline. Asumang (2014:59) notes that Biblical studies serve Biblical Theology yet the demarcation between the two disciplines is fluid. Gaffin (1976:4) asserts that biblical theology is regulative of exegesis because the historical framework of the revelation process itself, rather than the literary relationships determines the message of scripture. Lioy (2014:81) asserts that biblical theologians contextually read scripture through its various narrative prisms in an effort to set forth the whole story of the entire canon. He notes that the Biblical Theologian’s starting point is the belief that God’s word is coherent and unified (2014:81). Lioy notes that Systematic theology focuses on normative timeless truths in order to arrive at precise doctrinal formulations whilst Biblical Theology concerns itself more with the contents of the biblical account and how the manner in which they are conveyed influence the reader’s understanding of important theological teachings. Osborne (2006:39) notes that Biblical theology is immensely helpful as an interpretive tool and
11. Structure and Timeline

Chapter 1: Introduction (Due by 30 August 2020)
The research proposal will become the introduction chapter.

Chapter 2: The contextual background of the book of James (Due by 30 November 2020)
In this chapter the general historical-sociological-cultural context of the book will be examined by reviewing current scholarship. The genre, author, structure and date of writing will be considered and then presented in order to clarify debated views pertaining to the epistle. This information will be collated which will then inform the interpretation of James 5:14-15 within its immediate context.

Chapter 3: Exegesis of James 5:14-15 (Due by 28 February 2021)
In this chapter a thorough and detailed exegesis of James 5:14-15 within the pericope of James 5:13-20 will be undertaken. James 5:13-20 will be studied within the context of the epistle in order to garner the teaching found within this pericope pertaining to

Chapter 4: Eschatology as a lens in the book of James (Due by 31 May 2021)
In this chapter I will employ criteria to identify references to eschatology in James in order to understand how the author employed eschatology in order to teach his readers. The Biblical theological perspective of the eschatological worldview of the author will be constructed by collating and examining the passages in James that explicitly or implicitly teach eschatology. These eschatological passages will be collated and briefly examined in order to construct a lens for interpreting James 5:14-15.

Chapter 5: Interpreting James 5:14-15 through an eschatological lens (Due by 31 August 2021)
In this chapter the eschatological teaching found within the epistle of James will be used to interrogate James 5:14-15.

Chapter 6: Summary and Pastoral reflection and application of understanding James 5:14-15 through an eschatological lens (Due by 30 November 2020)
In this chapter I will reflect on my findings and consider how they can be applied to the understanding and praxes for divine healing in the church today. I will consider what
Summary

• Completion of Postgraduate study is assessed with thesis which represents higher form of critical thinking and creativity

• Thesis is based on Research which is carefully structured and systematic investigation of a biblical or theological problem with a view of providing its solution and / or clarifying its nature

• Research Starts with identifying a problem, stating research idea and writing a research concept

Questions?