

Zombie apocalypse offers secularized twist on Scripture

May 31, 2013

WACO—*The Walking Dead*, *Doomsday Preppers* and *Left Behind* may have more in common than meets the eye.

Dramas about zombie apocalypse, TV reality shows about survivalists and speculation about end-times prophecy all grow from a desire for hope in the face of an uncertain future, said [Joe Coker](#), religion lecturer at Baylor University.



Joe Coker “People want to feel confidence about what is coming and how to prepare for it,” said Coker, who plans to teach a course on “The Zombie Apocalypse and American Christianity” in the spring 2014 semester at Baylor.

“There is hope that we will survive and that good will overcome evil. There is some savior—some source of hope for humanity—who will overcome terrible forces.”

While Christianity sees Christ as Savior, some segments of popular culture paint a picture of human-centered salvation based either on violence or scientific reason, he observed. And instead of focusing on faith in a Savior who conquers death to provide eternal life, elements of pop culture fixate

on creatures that rise from the dead to destroy.

The popularity of the walking dead zombies and undead vampires among young people may emerge from a postmodern pessimism and lack of certainty about the future, Coker noted.

Zombies and vampires both offer “a horrible twist” on Christian concepts of resurrection and eternal life, he said.

“They are resurrected to bring death and destruction rather than to bring life. They feed on flesh and blood,” rather than finding spiritual nourishment in the body and blood of Christ symbolized in the Lord’s Supper, he noted.

As evil incarnate, vampires present an explicitly “anti-Christ figure” who can be overcome by Christian symbols such as the cross, Coker said.

Zombies represent a more secularized vision of life and death.

“With zombies, I believe the preferred way to defeat them is a bullet in the brain,” he said. “The focus in zombie literature is on humanity as the source of hope. A human savior will overcome evil, usually through the use of brute force or science.”