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The 2008 Pre-Trib Study Group Conference

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THE 2008 PRE-TRIB STUDY GROUP CONFERENCE

Tom's Perspectives

by Thomas Ice

The 2008 Pre-Trib Study Group Conference was one of the best we have ever experienced. Our seventeenth annual meeting took place at the Sheraton Grand Hotel near the Dallas/Fort Worth airport. The highlight for many was the banquet that featured Joel Rosenberg and the discussion of current events the following evening. Here is an overview of what took place at the 2008 conference.

MONDAY'S PRESENTATIONS

At the Study Group Conference, a speaker has an hour and a half block of time for their presentation. Most usually speak for about an hour and the remainder of time is for question and answers among the members. Such a format not only allows for hearing good information, but also for interaction with one's peers on the subject under discussion.

Dr. Tim LaHaye opened the conference by welcoming our record attendance of over 500 to the conference. The first paper was delivered by Dr. Paul Wilkinson, a British scholar from England who spoke about "For Zion's Sake: Darby and Christian Zionism."[1] Dr. Wilkinson outlined J. N. Darby's role in the development of Christian Zionism, which was considerable and continues in our day to have a great impact. He closed with a song about the rapture that his pastor in Manchester, England had written. Wilkinson played a recording of the song that was sung by his church's congregation.

The next presentation was given by Roger Oakland, founder and director of Understand The Times International on "Apostasy and the Emerging Church."[2] Oakland's presentation consisted of an overview of the false teachings coming out of the Emerging Church movement. He also noted their dislike of Bible prophecy and their spiritual, present form of a mystic kingdom that is supposedly functioning now.

Monday afternoon's papers started with Dr. Wayne House who spoke on "Josephus, the Early Fathers, and the Fall of Jerusalem: An Evaluation of the Preterist View on Jerusalem in Prophecy."[3] House demonstrated that most of the preterists citations of Josephus do not prove that Matthew 24 was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70. Dr. Kevin Zuber, professor at Moody Bible Institute delivered a paper on "The Meaning of 'to meet' in 1 Thessalonians 4:17."[4] Zuber was countering a common notion often put forth by non-pretribulationists that the meaning of the Greek word for "to meet" implies that after Christ and His church meet in the air they immediately return to planet earth, rather than to heaven. Dr. Zuber concluded:

> The fact that we can "fit" 1 Thessalonians 4 into this wider, biblical metaphor of Christ and His Bride does not prove the pre-tribulational rapture, but it does offer a more satisfying and biblically consistent picture of the prophetic event in view in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 than the dubious opinion of the formal reception of a dignitary view.

THE BANQUET

Our normal Monday evening banquet was a wonderful time for all of the 500 people attending. Music for the evening was provided by gospel singer Johnny Ray Watson

from Bastrop, Texas. Dr. Ice and Dr. LaHaye served as the master of ceremonies. Joel Rosenberg was the main speaker for the event.

Joel Rosenberg (www.joelrosenberg.com) spoke about the fact that as a Jewish believer in Jesus as his Messiah, he has always been drawn to the Old Testament prophets. After providing an overview, as he characterized it, of his failed career as a political advisor and consultant, he felt lead to write a novel about the Battle of Gog and Magog from Ezekiel 38 & 39. Rosenberg said of his first novel, *The Last Jihad*, "The first page puts you inside the cockpit of a hijacked jet, coming in on a kamikaze attack into an American city, which leads to a war with Saddam Hussein over weapons of mass destruction. Yet it was written before 9/11, long before the actual war with Iraq." As one who projected such a scenario in a novel written before 9/11, many have wondered where such inspiration came from. He told the audience that the inspiration for the novel came from Ezekiel's prophecy and also from reading some prophecy books written by Tim LaHaye. Rosenberg's wife had worked for Beverly LaHaye at Concerned Women for America and Joel was introduced to LaHaye as a result.

Rosenberg also spoke about some of the impending trends that appear to be on the horizon, with a new president coming into office, and how they might fit in with Bible prophecy. The crowd was very interested in and appreciative of what Rosenberg had to say.

TUESDAY'S PRESENTATIONS

Tuesday morning began with an exciting account from Dr. Ed Hindson, of Liberty University of his near death experiences while spending 100 days in the hospital where he nearly died three times in the Spring of 2008. Hindson told us how the Lord preserved his life and has raised him back to near normal health for His service. Unfortunately, as Hindson was speaking, a man attending the conference died of a heart attack in the lobby of the hotel. This event brought a sadness to the conference because of his loss.

The first presenter of the day was Dr. John McLean, pastor of Berean Bible Church, in Livonia, Michigan. McLean gave a paper on "The Chronological and Sequential Structure of the Book of Revelation."[5] McLean dealt with the difficult and complicated issue of what sections of Revelation were chronological and sequential and which ones were not. Dr. McLean located the midpoint of the tribulation as occurring after the fifth seal, which is one of the two major view held by futurists. The other major view is that the midpoint occurs after the sixth trumpet judgment.

Dr. John Whitcomb, who along with the late Dr. Henry Morris, wrote the famous book *The Genesis Flood* that is credited with reviving the Creationist movement in 1961, presented a paper on "Ezekiel 40 thru 48 and Millennial Sacrifices."[6] Dr. Whitcomb dealt with the fact that if one was going to interpret prophecy as we believe we should, within the grammatical–historical or literal tradition, then why are there going to be sacrifices in the millennial temple when Hebrews in the New Testament says that Christ's sacrifice is all that is needed for the forgiveness of sin. Whitcomb concluded the following:

> Before the heavens and the earth flee away from him who sits upon the Great White Throne (Rev. 20:11), God will provide a final demonstration of the validity of animal sacrifices as an instructional and disciplinary instrument for Israel. The entire world will see the true purpose of this system. Of course, the system never has and never will function on the level of Calvary's

> Cross, where infinite and eternal guilt was dealt with once and for all. But the system did accomplish, under God, some very important pedagogical and disciplinary purposes for Israel under the Old Covenant (Gal. 4:1–7). There is good reason to believe that it will yet again, and far more successfully from a pedagogical standpoint, function on the level of purely temporal cleansing and forgiveness (cf. Heb. 9:13) within the strict limits of the national theocracy of Israel during the one thousand years of Christ's reign upon the earth in accordance with the terms of the New Covenant.

Mike Gendron, who was converted to Christ out of Roman Catholicism gave an excellent PowerPoint presentation on "Roman Catholicism and Bible Prophecy."[7] Gendron heads up an evangelistic ministry that attempts to reach all the lost, but focuses in on reaching Roman Catholics for Christ called "Proclaiming the Gospel Ministry" (www.pro-gospel.org). His presentation noted the apostate trends that continue within Roman Catholicism today and how they are setting the stage in the religious realm for the coming time of antichrist.

The last paper for Tuesday was by an American Airline pilot and graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary, Mike Auffet who presented a paper entitled "Miscellaneous Thoughts Concerning the Kingdom of God."[8] Auffet interacted with various wrong views of the Kingdom, especially those who believe that God's kingdom is not a future time of the millennial reign of Christ on earth, but a present, spiritual entity.

We then had our normal Tuesday evening session talking about current events and Bible prophecy. Many thought it was the most informative one we have ever had. The four presenters were Dr. Jimmy DeYoung of Prophecy Today Ministry (www.jimmydeyoung.gospelcom.net/pp), Dr. Chuck Missler of Koinonia House Ministries (www.khouse.org), Dr. David Reagan of Lamb and Lion Ministries (www.lamblion.com) and Bill Koenig, a White House correspondent and head of World Watch International news agency (www.watch.org). These men provided their take on various aspects of geo-political trends, especially those affecting Israel. Many were interested in how the impending Obama presidency would impact American relations with Israel and the rest of the world.

WEDNESDAY'S PRESENTATIONS

The final two presentations of the conference took place on Wednesday morning. Charles Clough, retired Army Scientist working on Atmospheric Effects on weaponry at the US Army Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland, a Dallas Theological Seminary graduate and former pastor (www.biblicalframeworkministries.org) with a brilliant paper on "Interpreting Texts on End-Time Geophysical Catastrophes."[9] Clough presented three, often hidden, presuppositions that one needs to be aware of when interpreting biblical passages that contain language that speaks of geophysical catastrophes. Dr. Thomas Ice of the Pre-Trib Research Center (www.pre-trib.org) at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia spoke on "The Meaning of 'Earth Dwellers" in the Book of Revelation."[10] This was a study of the unbelievers of the tribulation period.

CONCLUSION

All of the papers can be viewed and downloaded at the website of the Pre-Trib Research Center (www.pre-trib.org). Also, one can purchase a MP3 audio CD or DVD videos of the entire conference at our Pre-Trib website. Next year's conference is

scheduled for the Dallas/Fort Worth area, December 7–9, 2009. Many will want to plan to attend if the rapture does not occur by that time this year. Maranatha!

ENDNOTES

[1] http://www.pre-trib.org/article-view.php?id=370. All papers from the conference are located on The Pre-Trib Research Center's website: www.pre-trib.org.
[2] Roger Oakland's presentation was not in the form of a paper, thus we do not have it on our website.
[3] http://www.pre-trib.org/article-view.php?id=367.
[4] http://www.pre-trib.org/article-view.php?id=372.
[5] http://www.pre-trib.org/article-view.php?id=373.
[6] http://www.pre-trib.org/article-view.php?id=374.
[7] Mike Gendron's presentation was not in the form of a paper, thus we do not have it on our website.
[8] http://www.pre-trib.org/article-view.php?id=375.
[9] http://www.pre-trib.org/article-view.php?id=377.
[10] http://www.pre-trib.org/admin/article-view.php?id=376.