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The 2006 Pre-Trib Study Group Conference

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THE 2006 PRE-TRIB STUDY GROUP

Tom's Perspectives
by Thomas Ice

The Fifteenth annual Pre-Trib Study Group Conference was held December 4–6, 2006 at the Sheraton Grand Hotel near the Dallas/Fort Worth airport. This annual conference was the brainchild of Tim LaHaye for the purpose of bringing together scholars, educators, those in prophecy ministries and prophecy popularizers to share papers and presentations in the field of Bible prophecy. Even though the entire program was well received, the conference was highlighted by presentations from Dr. John Hagee, Dr. Charles Ryrie, Dr. David Hocking, and Walid Shoebat, a former Palestinian Terrorist.

THE PRE-TRIB RESEARCH CENTER

The Pre-Trib Research Center (PTRC) was an outgrowth of the Pre-Trib Study Group in 1994 and was founded by Tim LaHaye and Thomas Ice, who has been the director since its inception. The purpose of the Center is to research, teach, and defend the pretribulational rapture and related Bible prophecy doctrines.

The PTRC has over 200 members in association with its efforts. Most of the top prophecy scholars, authors, and popularizers are members of the Center and Study Group. The association of these prophecy experts, which have been facilitated by the Pre-Trib organization, has contributed to the inspiration of dozens of books, articles, conferences, and events that express and defend the literal interpretation of Bible prophecy and the pre-trib rapture. The PTRC and the Study Group have worked to bring together veteran prophecy experts to share their knowledge and encouragement concerning these matters to a younger generation of students and advocates. In this way the torch is being passed to a new generation.

The PTRC was first located in Washington, D.C. for its first five years of existence. The next six and a half years it was located in Arlington, Texas, which is between Dallas and Fort Worth. A year and a half ago, the PTRC relocated to the campus of Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia where Dr. Ice also teaches at the University and Seminary.

THE 2006 PRESENTATIONS

At the Study Group, 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.

The focus of the 2006 Conference was the negative impact of Postmodernism upon the American Church and Bible prophecy, and some issues relating to dispensationalism. The first presenter was Dr. David Noebel who is founder and director of Summit Ministries, a worldview ministry in Manitou Springs, Colorado (www.summit.org). Since Dr. Noebel has written a leading book on worldviews called *Understanding The Times*, which had just been revised to include Postmodernism, then who better to start the Conference with an explanation of Postmodernism?

Dr. Noebel showed us that Postmodernism is a worldview that is very popular throughout our culture, especially within academia. It is a form of mysticism that does

not believe in absolute truth, but thinks that truth is relative to the individual so that what is true for you may not be true for me. "In stark contrast to Postmodern ideas that language is fluid and open to varying interpretations, the Christian worldview says that objective truth exists," said Dr. Noebel. "In contrast to Postmodern ideas that our particular community determines truth, nearly everything about Christianity is *universal* in scope and application."¹ Since Postmodernism has had a great influence upon Evangelical Christianity in the United States it is a major contributing factor to a decline in interest in the study of the Bible in general and in prophecy in particular.

Dr. Robert Thomas, professor of New Testament at The Master's Seminary in California (www.tms.edu) presented a paper on "Postmodern Hermeneutics and Bible Prophecy." Dr. Thomas concluded the following:

We have surveyed how every person is doing right in his/her own eyes in the postmodern world of evangelical hermeneutics. . . . we saw the postmodern blurring of the rationality and precision of Scripture. We then took a look at how the postmodern blur is generating a middle-ground mania among evangelicals. Next, we took two samples of how postmodernism has sought to obliterate propositional truth in the realm of Bible prophecy.

In our postmodern culture, evangelicals may still call their hermeneutics by the familiar "grammatical-historical" terminology, they have endowed familiar expression with an entirely different meaning. In the eyes of today's world, such a gathering as the Pre-Trib Study Group is a textbook example of "the poison of prideful interpretation" because it bases its existence on the certainties of what the Bible says about the future. But in the eyes of the God of the Bible, it is a dose of health-giving vitamins for today's church of Jesus Christ. May God bless this organization in the fulfillment of its mission of spreading the truth of the imminent return of Christ and the end-time events to follow.²

Next, the famous retired theologian for many years at Dallas Theology Seminary, Dr. Charles Ryrie spoke on "How to Obscure Dispensationalism." In reality he spoke about how to make dispensationalism clear by warning of the many ways in which friend and foe alike actually obscure it. It was great to see this grand giant in the faith expound this topic and receive a standing ovation at the conclusion of his talk.

Roger Oakland of Understand the Times Ministry (www.understandthetimes.org), who often ministers throughout the world through Calvary Chapels, gave a great presentation entitled, "The Emerging Church Movement and Bible Prophecy." Oakland explained how the Emerging Church movement is taking evangelicals back to Rome by emphasizing experience over truth and their almost universal disdain for Bible prophecy. This movement developed out of the church growth movement and exhibits a Postmodern worldview.

The special guest speaker at the Monday evening banquet was Dr. John Hagee pastor of the 19,000-member Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas (www.jhm.org). Pastor Hagee has recently started an important pro-Israel organization called "Christians United for Israel." Dr. Hagee spoke on the subject of World War III. In his usual rousing style, Dr. Hagee made the case that Islam is at war with America, whether we recognize it or not. Dr. Hagee also announced that he does not believe in dual covenant theology.³

Dr. David Hocking of Hope for Today Ministries (www.davidhocking.org) spoke at the Tuesday morning devotions on "What is Bible Prophecy." Dr. H. Wayne House, a author and lecturer who teaches at Faith Theological Seminary in Washington and Oregon (www.hwhouse.com) gave a paper on "Does God Know The Future? Openness Theism and Predictive Prophecy." Openness Theology teaches that God does not necessarily know the future. Such a view has sprung up within Evangelicalism and obviously destroys any interest in Bible prophecy. Dr. House rebutted this view and demonstrated why such a view is not compatible with one who believes the Bible.

"Postmodernism and its Impact Upon Theological Education," was the topic if Dr. Bob Wilkin's paper. Dr. Wilkin is director of the Grace Evangelical Society (www.faithalone.org) located in the Dallas area. Dr. Wilkin documented the extensive spread of Postmodernism throughout so many Evangelical colleges and Seminaries by quoting from many of their faculty members. He recommended that we should do the following:

My purpose is to warn us. We live in perilous times.
It is hard to believe how far seminaries and Bible colleges have fallen.
Withhold your support of schools until you are sure they are not teaching
postmodernism. Don't attend such schools or send people from your
churches there.⁴

Dr. Ron Bigalke, an author, director of Eternal Ministries (www.eternalministries.org) and Associate Pastor at Grace Community Church in Rincon, GA presented a paper on "Problems with Progressive Dispensationalism."⁵ Dr. Bigalke cited many areas in which so-called "progressive dispensationalism" has departed from traditional and true dispensationalism. In a related topic, Dr. David Larsen, distinguished professor of homiletics at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, IL spoke about "The Postmodern Abandonment of Israel."⁶

Tuesday evenings are spent talking about current events and Bible prophecy. The first speaker was Walid Shoebat (www.shoebat.com) who gave his testimony and spoke about the Israeli/ Islamic Conflict in the Middle East. It was an amazing presentation. Then we had a trio of Dr. Chuck Missler of Koinonia House Ministries (www.khouse.org), Dr. Randal Price of World of the Bible Ministries (www.worldofthebible.com) and Dr. Jimmy DeYoung of Prophecy Today Ministry (jimmydeyoung.gospelcom.net/pp) give their take on various aspects of geo-political trends, especially those affecting Israel.

Our final two presenters on Wednesday morning were George Gunn of Shasta Bible College and Graduate School (www.shasta.edu) and Dr. Mike Stallard of Baptist Bible Seminary (www.bbc.edu/seminary). Gunn presented an excellent paper on John 14 and the Rapture,⁷ while Dr. Stallard spoke on "Is Dispensationalism Hurting American Political Policies in the Middle East?"⁸

CONCLUSION

Almost all of these papers can be viewed and downloaded at the website of the Pre-Trib Research Center. Also, one can purchase a mp3 audio CD of the conference or DVD videos at the Pre-Trib website (www.pre-trib.org). Next year's conference will be in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, December 10-12, 2007 and will focus on the Book of Revelation. Many will want to plan now to attend. Maranatha!

ENDNOTES

¹ David Noebel, "What is Postmodernism?" (A paper presented at the Pre-Trib Study Group, December 4, 2006 in Irving, Texas. www.pre-trib.org/article-view.php?id=291), p. 44.

² Robert Thomas, "Postmodern Hermeneutics and Bible Prophecy" (A paper presented at the Pre-Trib Study Group, December 4, 2006 in Irving, Texas. www.pre-trib.org/article-view.php?id=293), p. 43.

³ Dual Covenant theology holds that Jews are saved by keeping the Mosaic Law while Gentiles are saved by faith in the gospel.

⁴ Bob Wilkin, "Postmodernism and its Impact Upon Theological Education" (A paper presented at the Pre-Trib Study Group, December 4, 2006 in Irving, Texas. www.pre-trib.org/article-view.php?id=294), p. 24.

⁵ Ron Bigalke, "Problems with Progressive Dispensationalism" (A paper presented at the Pre-Trib Study Group, December 4, 2006 in Irving, Texas. www.pre-trib.org/article-view.php?id=287).

⁶ David Larsen, "The Postmodern Abandonment of Israel" (A paper presented at the Pre-Trib Study Group, December 4, 2006 in Irving, Texas. www.pre-trib.org/article-view.php?id=289).

⁷ George Gunn, "John 14:1-3—The Father's House: Are We There Yet?" (A paper presented at the Pre-Trib Study Group, December 4, 2006 in Irving, Texas. www.pre-trib.org/article-view.php?id=288).

⁸ Mike Stallard, "Is Dispensationalism Hurting American Political Policies in the Middle East?" (A paper presented at the Pre-Trib Study Group, December 4, 2006 in Irving, Texas. www.pre-trib.org/article-view.php?id=292).