

A Report on the IFCA Annual Convention

(Part 2)

By PAUL J. SCHARF

In the previous installment, I began to share a report on this year's IFCA International Annual Convention, which was held from June 28 to July 2, in Lincoln, Neb.

The convention theme was "The Soon & Coming King—Biblical Eschatology." Convention attendees ratified a resolution that complemented that theme, titled, "Resolution on Dispensational Premillennialism."ⁱ

The convention afforded plentiful opportunities for teaching and discussion. In addition to the four general sessions, there were two theological panels, and 23 workshops in six different timeslots.

There were also five business sessions and three women's conference sessions, along with children's programs.

Additionally, there were specialized meetings for chaplains.

Dr. Richard Bargas, executive director of IFCA International, set the tone for the week with his general session message on Monday evening.

"Dispensational premillennialism was the majority view," Bargas said. "But with the rise of the 'Young, Restless, Reformed' crowd ... there was a backlash against dispensationalism. Now the popularity of the *Left Behind* series is used to mock dispensationalists."

However, Bargas emphasized: "Those who reject our view cannot do it on exegetical grounds."

He said that the theological opponents of dispensationalism do simply end up mocking it.

"We need to be courageous in dealing with eschatological agnostics," Bargas stated. "The way you interpret prophecy will determine the way you interpret the whole Bible."

"I am a convinced dispensational premillennialist because I believe that is exactly what the Bible clearly teaches," he added. "We're hoisting high the flag."

Dr. Thomas Ice, executive director of the Pre-Trib Research Center and professor at Calvary University, spoke in Tuesday evening's general session. He was followed on Wednesday by Dr. Michael Vlach, who was in the midst of moving from The Master's Seminary (where he had taught for 15 years) to Shepherds Theological Seminary (where he will now be professor of theology); and, on Thursday, by Dr. Larry Pettegrew, who is research professor of theology at Shepherds.

Ice taught on the pre-tribulational rapture in his session. Vlach discussed the intricacies of the kingdom of God, and Pettegrew spoke about the day of the Lord.

These four men also participated in a theological panel on eschatology on Wednesday morning. They took up a number of interesting questions, including the following:

- How did New Testament writers quote the Old Testament?
- Is the pretribulational rapture referenced in the words “the falling away” in 2 Thessalonians 2:3?
- Does a pretribulational rapture offer escapism from the problems of this world?
- How do we deal with the apostasy in seminaries?
- Why do young people seem to be losing interest in Bible prophecy?
- What is literal, grammatical, historical interpretation?

Ice stated the pretribulationalism alone offers “a rationale for the rapture,” since it ends the church age.

“Israel is the only phase in God’s plan which is paused and unfinished,” he stated.

Vlach explained that the pattern of *tribulation – return – kingdom* is found in numerous passages, including Isaiah 24 to 27; Zechariah 14; Matthew 24; and the book of Revelation.

“Those symbols can be literally interpreted,” he said.

In the final general session, Pettegrew gave an extensive overview of “The Impending Day of the Lord,” dealing with numerous passages and details, and showing how, ultimately, “The warrior Messiah will finalize the cosmic war when He arrives on the planet.”ⁱⁱ

In the next installment, I will turn to a secondary emphasis of the convention, which dealt with social justice, critical race theory, intersectionality and wokeness.

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ⁱ IFCA International; 8 July 2021; <https://www.ifca.org/blog/Advancing%20the%20Cause/resolution-on-dispensational-premillennialism>; Internet; accessed 15 July 2021.

ⁱⁱ This quote comes from the third and final point of Dr. Pettegrew’s outline, on his handout titled, “The Impending Day of the Lord.”