

Chafer Conference Digs Deep Into OT

By PAUL J. SCHARF

Roughly 200 Christian leaders gathered at West Houston Bible Church on Monday through Wednesday of this week for the annual Chafer Theological Seminary Pastors' Conference.

The theme this year was "Critical Issues for Understanding the Old Testament Text." The keynote speakers were Dr. Randall Price (president, World of the Bible Ministries), Dr. Douglas Petrovich (professor, Brookes Bible College) and Henry Smith (Associates for Biblical Research).

Price dealt first with the history of the Old Testament text and then gave two presentations on the Dead Sea Scrolls. Petrovich focused on textual variants and chronology in the Hebrew Bible, including the date of the Exodus. Smith began with the "Transmission and Preservation of Scripture," then addressed some specific issues in Genesis.

In comparison with other conferences that I attend, this one is truly the most like visiting a seminary module. The topics chosen are intended to augment and complement the education that Chafer students are receiving.

Dr. Andy Woods, president of Chafer Theological Seminary, provided his annual report on the school, which was really an exposition of the school's seven distinctives. He referred to these as "non-negotiables." They are:

- Scripture's Original Languages
- Consistent Literal Method of Interpretation
- Dispensational Theology
- Full Counsel of God's Word
- Sufficiency of the Scriptures
- Biblically Informed Comprehensive Worldview
- Freeness of God's Grace

The school's key verse is 2 Tim. 2:2, which governed Woods' presentation.

He also touched on Acts 20:26-27, where the Apostle Paul prophesied regarding challenges that would confront the church in the ensuing centuries. He called this text "an explanation as to why we have Chafer Theological Seminary." It states:

Therefore I testify to you this day that I *am* innocent of the blood of all *men*. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.

"The preacher or teacher is accountable—not just for what they say, but what they don't say," Woods stated. "Our goal at Chafer Seminary is to produce—not so much

preachers—but verse-by-verse teachers of the Word of God. Your ministry can only be as deep as your preparation.”

Woods emphasized how necessary he believes Chafer Seminary is in today’s world—as witnessed by the conditions found in so many churches. He stated: “The number one email I receive is, ‘Can you tell us of a Bible-believing church where we live?’”

Woods said, “The truth of the matter is, we have a lot of churches—but we don’t have a lot of churches that are teaching the kind of things our school is promoting.”

On the positive side, however—at least for the students’ sake—Woods stated: “We have more churches interested in our graduates than we have graduates.”

Woods gave this challenge to the audience: “Who is going to teach your church and your children? As you wrestle with that question, now we see the need for Chafer Seminary,” he stated.

“We believe God has raised up this school,” added Woods. “There has to be a training institution of some kind, somewhere, to prepare people to fulfill these ministries so that this famine across the land can be satisfied.”

Missionary James Myers also spoke three times in the evening sessions, on New Testament topics.

Chafer Seminary is named for Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer. It was founded in 1993, and currently has more than 80 students. Information on programs and other resources can be found at Chafer.edu.

The Chafer Pastors’ Conference is free for attendees and exhibitors as a ministry of West Houston Bible Church, under the leadership of Dr. Robert Dean, who serves as pastor. All of the presentations (from this year, as well as previous years) can be viewed at DeanBibleMinistries.org/Conferences. Many of them are at least on the level of seminary classes, and would prove very useful for research.

There were more than 150 additional people watching the conference by live stream this week, beyond those who attended in person.

Paul J. Scharf (M.A., M.Div., Faith Baptist Theological Seminary) is a church ministries representative for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, based in Columbus, WI, and serving in the Midwest. For more information on his ministry, visit sermonaudio.com/pscharf or foi.org/scharf, or email pscharf@foi.org.

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