

Parousia

11

THE SIGN MINISTRIES NEWS



**UPDATED
EDITION
PUBLISHED**

**An interview with
Robert Van Kampen**

An interview with Robert Van Kampen



We recently had the privilege of sitting down and talking at length with Robert Van Kampen, author of *The Sign*, *The Rapture Question Answered Plain and Simple*, and *The Fourth Reich*, and Founder and Chairman of The Sign Ministries. In this interview he speaks directly on his passion for ministry and his thoughts on the Updated Edition of *The Sign* that has just been published.

PAROUSIA: Why is an accurate biblical understanding of end-time events so important?

RVK: I believe that anybody who looks around himself in any way realizes that there is a tremen-

dous proliferation of end-times propaganda that has flooded every media market available to any reader. The sad thing is that little of it agrees, and yet it is all labeled as biblical prophecy. And so by calling it *biblical* prophecy, it kind of gives license to the writer to really say whatever he wants to, authoritatively. And because prophecy is something that probably will not be fulfilled in his lifetime, he can get away with it. Tremendous confusion is created especially in the Christian reader's mind, and the world just continues to think we're all nuts. And yet the Word of God is clear that God is not a God of confusion.

I believe that the greatest problem today is that we are not using a consistent hermeneutic in our

attempt to understand prophecy, a consistent method of understanding God's Word, from Genesis to Revelation. If you use a consistent, face-value hermeneutic, then all of a sudden you do not get lots of options. You are really only permitted one option, and that is what the Word is *actually telling you*. We do not determine the meaning of Scripture; we *discover* the meaning of Scripture!

PAROUSIA: *The Sign* has been distributed worldwide, and its acceptance continues to grow. How would you describe your general feelings about this response to your book?

RVK: The reaction to *The Sign* that we are seeing worldwide has got nothing to do, in my opinion, with my book. It has everything to do with the Word of God. Anytime the Word of God is rightly divided—and put down in a logical sequence and order, comparing Scripture with Scripture, taking Scripture in context—you're going to get people excited. Suddenly they see the truth, rather than having to put their faith in a doctrine that has no biblical basis whatsoever. The reality is that all we have done is systematize end-time events. It is really the Word of God and the clarity with which it speaks on these issues that, I think, have people so excited all over the world. They realize it is not my opinion that we want them to "buy into," but it is what God's Word teaches that we want them to be "sold on."

PAROUSIA: There has also been some opposition to the positions taken in *The Sign*. How do you respond to critics of the position?

RVK: That's a very difficult question. I have heard men say that the prewrath position is heretical and that I am a heretic for promoting it. Church association amendments and bylaws have publicly stated that the position is wrong, that it should be avoided at all costs, and that it will even cost people their jobs if they become prewrath in their eschatological beliefs.

One well-known prophetic author recently told some people at a convention (who happened to be good friends of mine) that he could not see how a man could take the position I take and still be a Christian. I do not get angry; I get sad. We are not talking about the doctrines of Grace, the Sovereignty of God, or the magnificent creative powers of the Almighty Son of God, but we are talking about the timing of when Christ will return.



“We do not determine the meaning of Scripture; we *discover* the meaning of Scripture!”

And as important as that is, with the terrible consequences if one's position is wrong, I think it is very sad to call somebody a heretic or a non-Christian because he tries to take Scripture for what it says. Perhaps that negative response should give us some idea of the intensity surrounding this topic for people who make their living from it, especially when their position has not a single verse in all of Scripture to substantiate it! In contrast, I've never received a single cent, personally, for the work my staff and I have done through The Sign Ministries. My motives are not financial.

PAROUSIA: You have written three books: *The Sign*, *The Rapture Question Answered Plain and Simple*, and *The Fourth Reich*. What are the basic differences between the three books?

RVK: *The Sign* is the flagship book of The Sign Ministries. It was my attempt, through years of research, to harmonize both the Old and New Testaments beginning with the events that occur at the beginning of the seventieth week of Daniel, right up to the first day of the Millennium. Topically, it is a broad book, 550 pages or so of theology, and it hits upon a lot of end-time subjects. It was not easy to write. Scripture needed to be compared with Scripture, and Old Testament prophecy had to fit hand-in-hand with New



“The conformity and the harmony of the entire Bible from beginning to end is overwhelming.”

Testament teaching with no contradictions. Of course, in that book we take a strong position that the Word of God is clear on when the rapture will occur. And it was this particular issue that people fiercely attacked. So we wrote a manual called *The Rapture Question Answered Plain & Simple (RQA)*, which has been translated into a whole slew of foreign languages and has been used all over the world. Pastors love the book because it deals directly with the rapture issue and what the Scriptures say about it, plain and simple. *RQA* really answers thoroughly what *The Sign* covered in general.

The Fourth Reich was something that we did because we realized that not everybody likes 600 pages of theological reading as bedtime reading. They love the Word and they want to know what the Word says, but their mind may not have the theological bent necessary to put their arms around all of the material found in *The Sign*. So we very, very carefully—and I mean over a long period of time—came up with a novel that illustrated, through fictional characters in a novel situation, what we believe to be the precise biblical sequence of events that will occur in the last days. A person reading and remembering the novel will say “Oh, I know when that happens,” because they remember the story. Where if you gave them the theological book, *The Sign*, they would be a little confused in how it

worked out. So the novel has had an impact on a non-theological audience. Recently, there has been a lot of discussion of putting *The Fourth Reich* into railroad stations and airports through a major and secular, paperback publisher, and we think it will become a very fine evangelistic tool as well should God be pleased to market this book in this manner. That’s our prayer.

PAROUSIA: When you originally wrote *The Sign*, why did you choose that name for the title?

RVK: When the disciples realized that Christ was going to die, and that after His death He was going to come back, the question they asked Him in Matthew 24:3 was, “What will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?” They wanted to know “when are you coming back, and when are you going to judge the wicked at the end of the age?” He already explained in Matthew 13 that the end of the age was when He would harvest, by fire, the wicked tares that remain on earth after the wheat had been safely stored in the barn, just as in the days of Noah. They wanted to know *when*.

If you read the Olivet Discourse, the Temple Mount Discourse, the Book of Revelation, Acts 2, etc., you quickly see that the sign of the end of the age and the sign of Christ’s coming are back-to-back signs that clearly tell a person looking for Christ’s return when He is coming. Thus the title—*The Sign*. Christ’s return is “the blessed hope.” It is that sign of His coming that I look for, that everyone of us should look for, all the days of our lives.

PAROUSIA: What prompted you to do an updated edition of *The Sign*?

RVK: You spend years putting a book together, and you come out with it in six or seven years. You’ve wrestled with ideas; you’ve tried to put them down in writing; you’ve tried to be accurate; and then after the book comes out, you get people who react to it. They say, “Well, why do you say this?”, or, “Is this technically right?” There are lots of little adjustments that could be made. Suddenly you say, “Oh, I could have said it a little differently”, or, “I could have done this different.”

You have to understand that I am not a writer. I am prone to be a teacher in my writing, and I repeat myself. I was redundant in the book, and that was pointed out to me by my best critics. Add to that the fact that the last several years I have been very ill. So my recuperation period at home offered me a

wonderful opportunity to go through the manuscript and eliminate much of the redundancy. I was also able to trim down certain things that were not important to the fine line. I added graphs and charts that we developed for our multimedia presentations for conferences and church seminars put on by The Sign Ministries. We also refined things, and we came up with more precise definitions, which I thought was important. In the end I was able to take this flagship book and put it into a structure that, whether I am here or whether I'm gone, will be something people can use as a resource for many years to come. It is timeless because it is tied to Scripture, not current events! That was my desire. But nothing major in the book changed. Just more refinement, better definitions, new charts, and less redundancy.

PAROUSIA: Have your feelings about the prewrath position changed in the seven years since you wrote the first edition?

RVK: Not one jot or tittle! I am overwhelmed at how the theme of a prewrath rapture is all over the New Testament and the Old Testament as well. In *The Sign*, I show that if you take three different prophetic passages in the Old Testament you come to the same prewrath position, that it's the position that Christ taught, the same position Peter taught, the same position Paul taught, and the same position John taught in the Book of Revelation. I just shake my head and I say, "If something is truth, you should see it all over." If you are going to believe that Christ is Creator, then you should see it in the Old Testament and the New Testament. And you do. If you believe the prewrath position of when Christ returns is accurate, you should see it in the Old Testament and in the New. And you do. And to me that is very, very exciting. The conformity and the harmony of the entire Bible from beginning to end is overwhelming.

It was so difficult putting *The Sign* together. I spent literally years on it. And yet the forty different writers of Scripture did not have proofs and computers and editors and all the rest. They sat down and they did it once and it was *all right*. That is amazing! The inspiration of Scripture is absolutely amazing.

PAROUSIA: Are there any changes in the basic arguments for the prewrath position in the updated edition?



“What we want is truth. We do not want any one man’s ideas of what the truth is. We want the truth of God’s Word...”

RVK: No. Best stated, we feel there are five critical “pillars of prophecy” that must be understood to have a proper view of end-time events. We talk about this in the book. We have never changed an iota on any of these foundational issues. There are a few areas that staff members and myself would say, “We think this,” or, “We think that,” because it is an implied argument, a gray area, and we have never gotten the singular verse that says “Hey, this is the answer. End of discussion!” When we’ve encountered these gray-area issues, we have tried to note that point in the book. We try to say, “This is what the Bible seems to say, but it also says this as well, so we will not be dogmatic.” We always want to have the integrity to say this is implied not explicit. The explicit arguments have always been the same. The implied arguments are noted as “implied,” and I think that as you read the book we have been fair in those areas. What we want is truth. We do not want any one man’s ideas of what truth is. We want the truth of God’s Word, and if we cannot do that we will say, “This is the best we can do, yet we will not die for it.” But we would die for the explicit arguments before we would recant.



“What I want people to do is get into the Word. I want them to check out and see if this is what the Word says.”

PAROUSIA: Will the updated edition address current world events?

RVK: Not like some of the current, sensational prophetic materials attempt to do—trying to make everything an end-time event, setting dates and all the rest. No. In general, we address what the events and the conditions of the world will be like before Christ returns. If world events fit what Scripture teaches, fine. But we are not trying to fit prophecy into current events. We are waiting for current events to substantiate prophecy. When you come at it from that direction, you watch what is going on in the world, but you do not reach unjustifiable conclusions, and you do not grab for things just to sell product. You just watch what is going on and wait for current events to precisely fulfill prophetic Scripture.

Do I think that things are happening today that fit the biblical scenario? Absolutely. Do I think that this has to be the time? No I don't. I don't know when Christ will return. All we can do is watch for the events that Scripture teaches will occur before Daniel's 70th Week begins, watch for the rise of a powerful world leader, wait for his one-world government to take shape, listen to his demands for

world worship, and then watch for the sign of Christ's coming and the end of the age. Already we are starting to see some of those precursors begin to happen—Israel is once again a nation, and forces are pushing for a one-world government.

PAROUSIA: For those of us who have read the first edition and the expanded edition of *The Sign*, why should they study the updated edition?

RVK: It is better written, is more precise, has better definitions, and has excellent charts and graphs. If I were a Pastor or a Bible teacher and needed a good study guide to direct me to the right passages in Scripture, this updated edition would be, I think, a better resource than the earlier editions. Even the footnotes, including Greek and Hebrew words critical to the understanding of prophetic texts, are explained in everyday language so that the average layperson can understand. The material is better organized in this third version. I am very pleased about the way it is organized. In seven years you get to be a better writer, and you just do things better, and you organize better. It was a vast topic then, and it is a vast topic now, but I think that in the updated version it is just far clearer. It is just a much better presentation. If I was going to have a singular book on my desk, it might be fun to have the first edition, but it is the third one that I would want to study from.

PAROUSIA: Who is the audience you would like to reach with the updated edition?

RVK: *The Sign* is primarily written for Christians, and the world finds it interesting because it is exciting to talk about end-time events. It presents the gospel clearly, but it is a doctrinal book with its primary appeal to believers. We want to reach church laypeople who love the Word of God and want to know what it says. So this book is a good place to start, and we point them to hundreds of passages of Scripture where they can go and research it for themselves. When I sign a book for someone, I invariably point to Acts 17:11. That's where it says "Be like the Bereans." The Bereans checked everything out that Paul said. What I want people to do is get into the Word. I want them to check out to see if this is what the Word says.

We found that the natural audience for the book is Bible students, seminarians, and pastors. And probably those who use the book most often are Bible study group leaders. It has been people who

really have a love for God's Word, who want to know what it says and are willing to be Bereans and search it out for themselves.

PAROUSIA: You have been quoted as having said that this work is the most important work that you have ever done. Why?

RVK: Of course you've got to take that quote in context, but it has been a study to which I have devoted much of my life the past twenty years. It deals with something so magnificent—the great hope of the church, the return of Christ—and yet the results are substantially different from what is being taught in churches that allegorize, or to some degree, fail to recognize that Christ will permit us to go through the persecution of Antichrist in order that we will not shrink away at the appearance of His coming. For this reason, I feel that the book is not only looking to the return of Christ, but it is also setting the stage for caution, for believers everywhere to be informed and prepared for what will someday happen. *The Sign* covers, in depth, things that we as Christians should know, and hopefully the book will help heighten one's expectation of the return of Christ.

PAROUSIA: What has been the impact of *The Sign* in your own personal life?

RVK: We have kind of touched on that already, but I think the two things that have been so amazing to me are how sweetly and simply God's Word speaks to these issues and the harmony there is if one accepts Scripture for what it says instead of trying to read into it one's own ideas of what it ought to say. In addition, prophetic passages call you up short. Every time we are told about the return of Christ, it is always within the structure of being prepared to be counted worthy for that great day—a very sobering thought. It says we should be alert and sober looking for that day. Whether you are dealing with the end of the age as it is explained in 2 Peter 3, 2 Thessalonians 2, 1 Thessalonians 5, Luke 21, or wherever, it is always around the issue that we need to be counted worthy, for that day of judgment is coming. Hebrews 10 says that as we see this great day (of the Lord) approaching, we should not neglect our gathering together. Why? Because we need one another. And we need to help one another. We need to sustain one another. And I think all of that has had an impact, because you see it all over Scripture.

“*The Sign* has a purpose, and it is having tremendous effect.”

PAROUSIA: Is *The Sign* an unfinished work? Might there be future editions?

RVK: I do not think so. I have put many years into this. I am very comfortable with the positions I take. The other night I was teaching a Bible study class at my home church, and I came up with another great verse that shows that the wrath of Antichrist is not the wrath of God but clearly the wrath of Satan. It is just a fabulous verse taken directly from 2 Thessalonians 2, and although I had read the verse hundreds of times before, I just never saw it. Of course, the first thing I wanted to do is run back to the publisher and stick it in the book, but the book is done. It's being printed as we speak. So you know, I cannot rewrite the book for one more little verse that again confirms the position proven in Revelation 12. But it is really a neat verse, and I would love to add it. That's the way I am. "Ooh, here is another verse. Let's add it quick." But I can't. I have gone as far as I can, and enough is enough. Anyway, the publisher would probably kill me.

PAROUSIA: Will you be writing any more books, or will you be involved in authoring or contributing to other projects?

RVK: A lot of that depends on my health. I am not a writer just to write. The Scriptures created *The Sign*. To do another book just to get my name on a cover is, to me, self-serving. *The Sign* has a purpose, and it is having tremendous effect. Do I want to do more writing? Perhaps, if my health permits and I feel there is something important to say on a topic that I know something about. So far, I have burnt myself out and everybody around me. We currently have a trilogy of books that makes our case, each book having a unique purpose. Many of them are already in foreign languages, but we are not trying to sell books. We are trying to get truth out. And if God should give us something we should do, we will sit down and we will attack it as best we can.

PAROUSIA: Thank you very much for taking the time to share with us.

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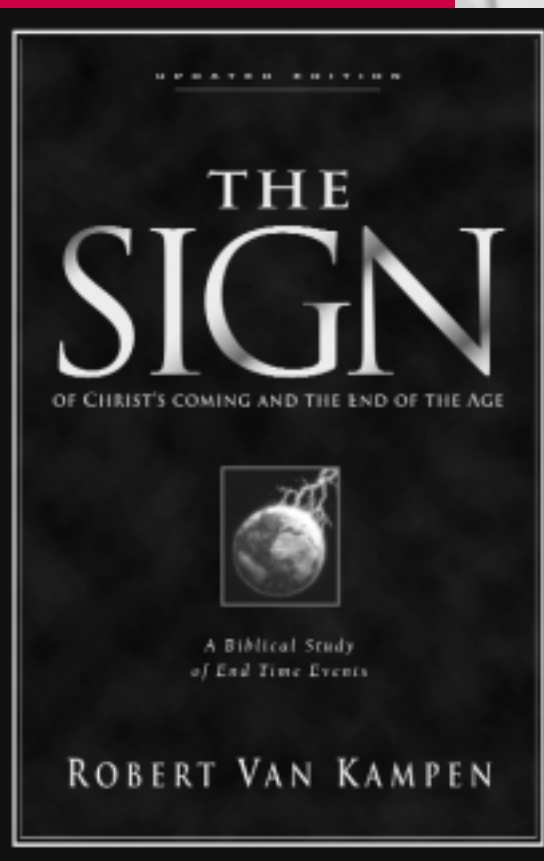
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The Prewrath Rapture Position Explained

This 100-page book is an excerpt from Robert Van Kampen's book *The Rapture Question Answered, Plain and Simple*. This shortened version is presented as an introductory text for anyone who may be unfamiliar with eschatology (the study of end times) or may desire an easy-to-read outline of the Prewrath position.



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In the mid 1800's Tregelles' books were known all over the world. His other works some of which are still in print and available today are: *Remarks of the Prophetic Visions in the Book of Daniel*, *The Revelation: A New Translation*, and *The Historic Evidence of the Authorship and Transmission of the Books of the New Testament*.



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by **Robert Van Kampen and Roger Best**

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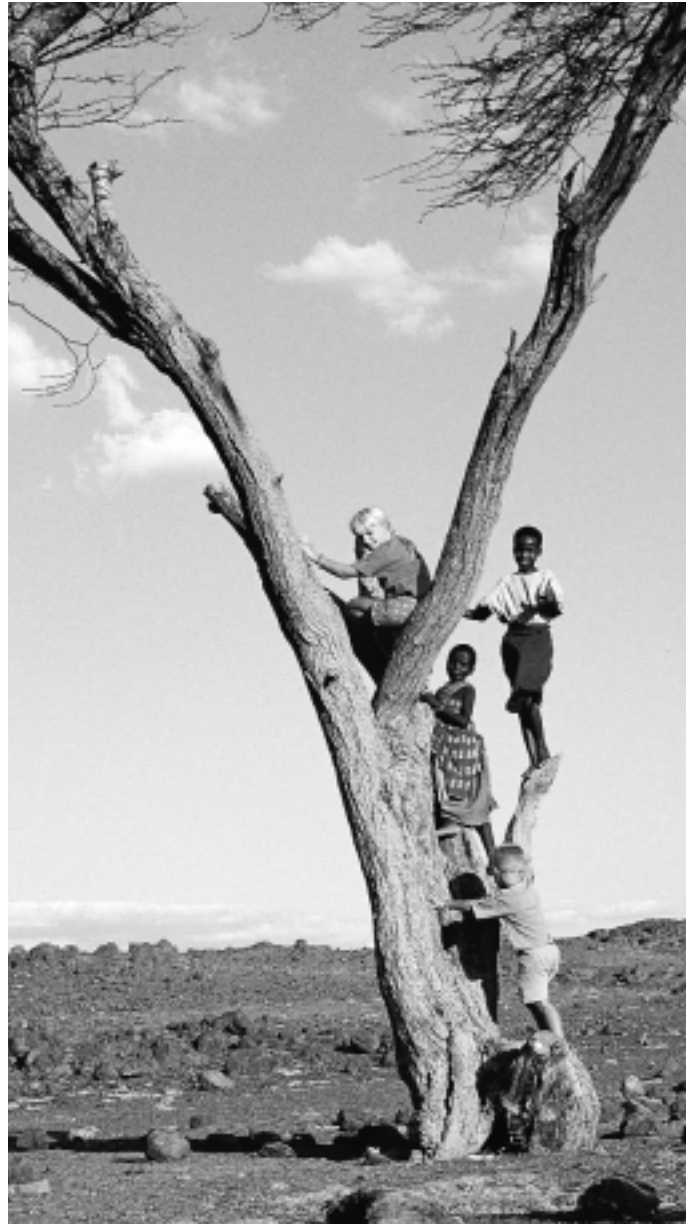
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THE MASTER'S MISSION

1998: Opportunities & Blessings

God continues to use The Sign Ministries in wonderful ways as we have opportunity to teach the prewrath rapture of the church. The scope of our ministry has become worldwide. In the past months we have had the privilege of making presentations in Russia, Ukraine, and India as well as many conferences and seminars here in America.

We are continually encouraged as so many pastors are calling us for help and arranging conferences in their churches. Over the past few months we have shared an overview of end times with folks in Idaho Falls, Idaho; Lytle, Texas; Revere, Massachusetts; Chapel Hill, Tennessee; Norwood, Massachusetts; Smyrna, Georgia; Maysville, Kentucky; Mosinee, Wisconsin; Lamar, Colorado; and Tacoma, Washington.

We have also conducted area-wide Parousia Conferences and Seminars in Nashville, Tennessee; Kansas City, Missouri; Wheaton, Illinois; Houston, Texas; Eau Claire, Wisconsin; and Cherry Hill, New Jersey. We are thankful for all the help from the committees that set these meetings up and made them so successful.

Roger Best spent the last week of January and first week of February ministering in India and speaking at Shalom Biblical Baptist

Seminary in Bangalore; Dr. Ramesh Kumar had invited him back after a visit there last year. He also went north to Hyderabad where he shared in a church conference with Pastor David Bandela and Grace and Truth Ministries. Roger spoke at the inauguration of Bethel Bible Training headquarters, a ministry directed by Pastor Stephen Bandela. We thank God for these faithful pastors who, in a very difficult land where persecution is a reality of life, stand for the truth and authority of the Word of God.

Parousia continues to get a favorable response as our mailings increase greatly every issue. The new Updated Edition of *The Sign* is soon to be available, and we believe this will be a great tool for Christians in their understanding the Word of God in relationship to end times. Our 800 number rings daily with calls of encouragement and questions. And our website (www.signministries.org) receives a hundred hits a day.

Roger Best, Charles Cooper, Bill Lee-Warner and our entire staff stand ready to be of help to you! If you would like to arrange a conference at your church or in your area, give us a call, or if you have questions we will be all the help we can. We thank God for the privilege of service and ministry to you.

Letters to The Sign Ministries

The Rapture Question Answered is the best book I've read on the subject. All the materials published on the pretrib perspective seem to be based on speculation and wishful thinking. — J.S. in Louisiana

I loaned my copy of *The Rapture Question Answered* to one of the leaders of my church. He is halfway through the book at the moment but told me how much he was enjoying the book, and how it had completely changed his views on a lot of end time events... Thank you once again. — P.S. in England

May the Good Lord bless your ministry richly. *The Rapture Question Answered* really opened my eyes... — D.Z. in Florida

I have been in *The Sign* studying for about a year now and find it a

very thorough and insightful study. Studies of this caliber are not easy to find. I have grown extensively throughout this last year and in areas I never would have imagined. It has changed my thinking and my beliefs in many ways. I truly have been persuaded by the Word of God. — L.K. in Wisconsin

I have finished reading [my] copy of *The Sign*... As a pastor, I have found it to be the best and most thorough book I have ever read on eschatology. It has answered many confusing questions concerning pretrib views. The scholarship with which the book was written was excellent! I cannot thank you enough for sending it to me. — Pastor D.H. in Indiana

Just read the book *The Fourth Reich*... most impressed by the

cohesion and accuracy to Scripture... thanks for the "afterward"... I believe it would be better placed in the "forward"! — T.S. by email

It's been a week since the Wisconsin conference, which I enjoyed very much. It solidified my view, which for some reason I've always held, in that the church will be here during the time of Antichrist's wrath. I especially appreciated the common sense, literal, historical, and most importantly the biblical approach to prophecy. [The] speakers... did a great job. — E.G. by email

I'm a Sunday School Adult Ladies' teacher. My pastor is pretrib but can't really stand on what he's been taught and what the Bible says. I'm praying for him to come to the truth. One of our other teachers got a computer,

and I gave him your [website address], and he has got some things from you that have got him thinking... I know some think that I'm wrong and have gone off the deep end, but I can only teach what the Bible says and do the best I can to serve Jesus Christ... Keep up the good work for Him. — C.D. in Oklahoma

I was a dispensationalist for many years, but since I read [*The Sign*] I am now a prewrath rapturist. I am starting a class this Sunday afternoon and the study guide will help. — P.B. in Pennsylvania

We have shared your book across the state of Texas, and people are very interested. We have enjoyed teaching people a more biblical hermeneutic of the rapture. *The Rapture Question Answered* has been received well... Thank you again. — D.M. in Texas

Upcoming Events

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Manila, Philippines

MAY 30-JUNE 1, 1999

Monadnock Full Gospel Church
Rindge, New Hampshire

JUNE 4-5, 1999

Alberta Parousia Conference
Red Deer, Alberta

JUNE 6, 1999

Grace Community
Fellowship Church
Red Deer, Alberta

JULY 13-16, 1999

The Master's Mission
Robbinsville, North Carolina

AUGUST 8-11, 1999

Sun Valley Baptist Church
El Paso, Texas

SEPTEMBER 19-22, 1999

Logan Elm Baptist Church
Circleville, Ohio

We are currently scheduling conferences and seminars for Fall, 1999.

Parousia is produced and published four times a year by The Sign Ministries, P.O. Box 113, West Olive, MI 49460; (800) 627-5134; info@signministries.org; Editor: Rev. Roger D. Best; Associate Editors: Dean Tisch, Sandy Ksycki, Dirk Eichhorst; Creative Director: Scott Holmgren; ©1999 The Sign Ministries. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted without publisher's written permission. Scripture taken from the New American Standard Bible, © Copyright 1977, 1987, 1988, The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. Visit our website at: www.signministries.org

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