

Planetary Defense Conference 2019

By T.W. Tramm

THE International Academy of Astronautics will hold its sixth Planetary Defense Conference in Maryland later this month (April 29 - May 3).

The biannual Conference brings together experts from around the globe to discuss mitigation strategies and disaster response plans in the event of an asteroid threat or impact.

During this year's meeting, a hypothetical scenario will be presented in which an asteroid initially determined to have a low probability of striking the earth is later, as the observational dataset grows, deemed a threat.

Such a scenario seems more probable each year. Two decades ago, when NASA began tracking near earth objects, only a single asteroid was observed passing between the Earth and the Moon. By 2011, the number had risen to 27 annually. In the past several years, the average number of asteroids passing by Earth at less than one lunar distance has surged to around 70, the highest count to date being 91 last year.

Known Asteroids Passing Less Than One Lunar Distance From Earth (2001 – 2018):

2001	-	1
2002	-	2
2003	--	5
2004	---	10
2005	--	6
2006	----	12
2007	-----	15
2008	-----	20
2009	-----	19
2010	-----	22
2011	-----	27
2012	-----	22
2013	-----	23
2014	-----	32
2015	-----	27
2016	-----	60
2017	-----	56
2018	-----	91

Disturbingly, the majority of asteroid close calls came with no warning as NASA was unaware of their presence until they were upon us. A lesser number were discovered as little as 24 hours to a week in advance.

Should earth-dwellers be concerned?

It depends. Scripture says those who have accepted God's free offer of salvation through Jesus Christ are not appointed to wrath, namely the kind of devastation a major asteroid-impact would visit upon the planet (1 Thess. 5:9). Those who don't know the Lord, however, and who will not be caught up to safety in the mass-evacuation we call the Rapture, have reason to be nervous. According to the only book with a perfect record of predicting the future, at least one mountain-sized object presently hurtling through space has earth's name on it:

"The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned into blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed" (Rev. 8:8, 9).

The exponential increase in asteroid traffic suggests that this devastating impact is drawing nearer. While scientists scramble to prepare mitigation plans, there is but one way to escape what is surely coming upon the earth—a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

LINKS:

1. Conference: <http://pdc.iaaweb.org/>

2. Fictional asteroid threat scenario:
<https://cneos.jpl.nasa.gov/pd/cs/pdc19/>

3. Near earth objects since 2001: https://en.wikipedia.org/.../List_of_asteroid_close_approache...
<https://www.jpl.nasa.gov/news/news.php?feature=7194>

4. NASA animation of all known asteroids in the solar system (1999-2018):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vfvo-Ujb_qk