



BBC UPDATE

“The Word of Exhortation: ...”

Dr. Thomas M. Strouse



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Excerpt from new commentary on the Book of Hebrews from Dr. Thomas M. Strouse, due out in Spring of 2017.

The Word of Exhortation: A Commentary on The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews

Article Continuation

Spiritual Condition

The spiritual condition of the audience was the same as the mixed multitude of the first generation of “the Covenant Community”—those with a great deal of light of which some received by faith and others rejected (*vide* Heb. 3:7-19; 6:4-6). With several warnings about apostasy signaled by the expression “*lest*,”¹⁶ the Apostle challenged the mixed multitude about responding to the light that they had received or experience dire consequences (Heb. 2:1; 3:12, 13; 4:11; 12:3, 13, 15). Further, he coupled with the warnings thirteen hortatory subjunctives expressed as “*let us*.” For instance, he said “*let us hold fast our profession*” (Heb. 4:14; cf. also Heb. 4:1, 11, 14, 16; 6:1; 10:22, 23, 24; 12:1[2x], 28; 13:13, 15). The author addressed Hebrews to the Jerusalem Jews of which some thousands had been saved (Acts 21:20). He exhorted them to give up the Jewish practices (i.e., animal sacrifices) that would keep them from receiving Jesus of Nazareth as their only Messiah, because sudden destruction was about to come upon them in the form of Titus’ decimation of the Jews and desolation of the city and temple.¹⁷ Therefore, the audience consisted of Jews and God-fearing Gentiles who professed faith in Christ and were baptized church members. No doubt great pressure arose upon these church members from family and friends who pressured the professed Jewish Christians to recant and come back to Judaism. Apparently, some church members were tempted with actually practicing animal sacrifices, or were

¹⁶ “*Lest*” occurs 11x in Hebrews.

¹⁷ In AD 66, the Jews revolted against the Roman Empire causing Titus to sweep across Judea towards Jerusalem. Galilee was sacked in AD 67 and the entire Judean coast and north was subjugated to Titus by AD 68. After Nero committed suicide in AD 68, the attack upon Judaea intensified. Within the next year (AD 69) there were four Roman emperors concluding with Vespasian, who summoned Titus to Jerusalem. There, Jerusalem was sacked, the Temple destroyed, and 1,100,000 Jews killed by AD 70. With the destruction of the Temple, Judaism had no place to sacrifice and no need for priests. Judaism came to a dramatic end in AD 70! The Covenant Community existed from the time of Moses’ covenant in 1446 BC and the time of the destruction of the Temple in AD 70.

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sympathetic with this sinful practice, and needed to obey this “word of exhortation” or suffer consequent and immediate damnation.

AUTHORSHIP AND DATE

Author

The authorship and date are obviously connected. The Book is anonymous and thus evidence must be sifted with biblical discernment by NT church members. From external evidence, Eusebius affirmed that “who wrote this Epistle, God knows this truth (i. e., that Paul wrote it).” The conservative Eastern patristics accepted Pauline authorship (e.g., Clement of Alexander, Origen) whereas the Western fathers rejected Pauline authorship (Hippolytus and Irenaeus). Theologians have posited several other candidates for authorship, namely Apollos, Barnabas, Luke, Priscilla, Silas, etc., with very little recent consensus.¹⁸

The clearest biblical statement on authorship is that which critical scholars so readily ignore or dismiss. Peter stated, saying, “*And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction*” (II Pet. 3:15-16). Peter made the following affirmations: 1) Paul wrote Scripture,

¹⁸ Donald Guthrie, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*. Hebrews, Vol. 15 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1983.), pp. 21-24.

2) he wrote it to Peter’s audience, and 3) Peter’s audience was the Jewish diaspora (vide II Pet. 3:1; I Pet. 1:1; Jam. 1:1). Biblically, it is irrefragable that Paul wrote Hebrews in his total corpus of fourteen NT Books (thirteen were written to Gentile Christians or churches).¹⁹

In spite of this clear scriptural declaration by the inspired and authoritative statement by the Apostle Peter, unqualified commentators have made inane and dangerous statements about Peter’s assertion. For instance, the renowned Lutheran theologian Lenski states,

“The fact that v. 1 (II Peter 3:1) cannot refer to First Peter is plain. That letter has been lost. Have we this letter of Paul’s to which Peter refers? Many say that we have, but when they try to identify it, there is complete disagreement. Romans, Ephesians, Galatians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Hebrews, even Laodiceans (Col. 4:16) have been mentioned. For ourselves we admit that the letter written by Paul to which Peter refers, has been lost to us...We confess that it seems strange that valuable apostolic letters should have become lost, at least two of Paul’s (I Cor. 5:9 and Col. 4:16) and one of Peter’s.”²⁰

Lenski denied that Paul could have written anything to Peter’s Jewish readership, and others say it is not necessary to know. For instance, commenting on II Pet. 3:15-16, Leon Morris, states, “But what did Paul write to the recipients of 2 Peter? It is impossible to answer

¹⁹ After all, Paul was trained in the Hebrew Scriptures under the leading Jewish scholar Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), he had a tremendous burden to testify to Jews like himself that Jesus was the Messiah (Rom. 10:1), and although “the Apostle to the uncircumcised” (Gal. 2:7), he was “a Hebrew of the Hebrews” (Phil. 3:5).

²⁰ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of The Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publ. House, 1966), p. 353. Lenski was a reformed Roman Catholic in the Lutheran Church, and he demonstrated a very weak bibliography.

that question. Nor is it necessary to do so in view of Peter's general statement: 'He [Paul] writes the same way in all his letters.'²¹

Common arguments against this biblical testimony are the following:

1. The absence of Paul's name as required by II Thess. 3:17 indicates that he did not write this anonymous Letter. However, Paul made his promise to Gentile churches that he would put his name on his literature to Gentiles affirming Pauline apostolic authority to the Gentiles, since someone was forging letters as from him (cf. II Thes. 2:2). Moreover, the Jews would not accept the "authority" of an apostle to the Gentiles to replace their OT system.

2. The literary style and vocabulary is "non-Pauline." Obviously, this is a very subjective, and hence an extremely weak argument since style and vocabulary change with the author's audience, purpose, etc. (see the *hapax legomena* in of *Hebrews*).

3. The author does not deal with the same doctrines that Paul did in his Gentile Epistles. Again, a different audience with different subjects requires different theological emphases. *Hebrews* deals with the theology and practice of the Covenant Community, subjects very unfamiliar with Gentile Christians.

4. The chronology does not fit Paul's life. To the contrary, it may have been written while Paul was in his second Roman imprisonment while Peter was still alive, after Timothy's release, and before AD 70, or about AD 64-67 (II Tim. 4:7-17; Heb. 13:23). Nero became emperor in AD 54 and committed suicide in AD 68. Late in his reign he increasingly persecuted followers of Christ (64 ff.). Following Nero's short-lived replacements such as Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, Vespasian reigned (AD 69) and used his son Titus to

destroy Jerusalem, the Jews, and the Temple (AD 70)²². These first four objections are feckless.

5. The so-called dependence of the author on the first generation believers eliminates Paul (cf. Heb. 2:3). Kistemaker states emphatically with regard to this verse, saying, "The conclusion may be drawn that the writer had not heard the Lord personally but had to rely on the reports of others. Paul, of course, states categorically that he did not receive the gospel from anyone but Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:12)...Paul, therefore, could not have written the words of Hebrews 2:3."²³ MacArthur follows this similar refrain and declares, saying,

"It is significant that the writer includes himself among those people who had received confirmation of Christ's message from others (2:3). That would seem to rule out someone like Paul, who claimed that he had received such confirmation directly from God and not from men (Gal. 1:12)."²⁴

Guthrie is not quite as dogmatic, saying, "Whereas this statement in 2:3 could possibly be interpreted to include the apostle Paul, it is not the most natural understanding of it. Paul would never have admitted having received the core of his gospel second hand, as this author appears to do."²⁵

²² Titus' brother Domitian began to reign in AD 81, and increased persecution against Christians including the Apostle John, who was banished to the isle of Patmos by AD 95 (cf. Rev. 1:9).

²³ Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary. Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), p. 8.

²⁴ John MacArthur, *Hebrews. MacArthur Bible Studies* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publ. Co., 2006), p. 1.

²⁵ Guthrie, p. 23.

²¹ Leon Morris, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary. I and II Peter*, Vol. 12 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. House), p. 288.

Actually, the author employed the aorist passive form of the verb “*was confirmed*” (*bebaioo*) which denotes the corroboration, validation, or verification of truth. The verb occurs seven other times (Mk. 16:20; Rom. 15:8; I Cor. 1:6, 8; II Cor. 1:21; Col. 2:7; and Heb. 13:9), receiving the KJV translation of “*confirm*”²⁶(4x), “*establish*” (2x), or “*stablish*” (1x). The verb is important since the author needed the original audience of the Lord Jesus to confirm, verify, substantiate, corroborate, or validate the truth that he had received from the Lord. Many commentators seem to misunderstand the nature of the *bebaioo* verb involved, positing the meaning of another verb, namely “*to deliver*” (*paradidomi*). They interpret “*confirm*” to mean “*deliver*,” arguing that the first generation Christians “*delivered*” the teachings of Christ to the second generation Christians, which practice did occur, but not in the unique case of Paul!

Paul asseverated that God had saved him, called him, and revealed divine truth to him, saying, “*For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ*” (Gal. 1:12) and “*To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood*” (Gal. 1:16). *Following this revelation, the Apostle eventually met with Peter, as he stated, saying, “Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. 18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord’s brother”* (Gal. 1:17-19). When Paul went

to “*see*”²⁷ Peter, the two apostles no doubt shared truth, Peter verifying to Paul the teaching of the Lord, such as the details of the Lord’s Supper. Peter was an eyewitness to the Lord’s Table (Mt. 26:26-29) and corroborated truths to Paul of which he already was aware, as he stated, saying, “*For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: 24 And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. 25 After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me*” (I Cor. 11:23-25).

In addition, Paul visited James the Lord’s brother who was also an eyewitness to the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, and who confirmed truth to the Apostle to the Gentiles. Both Peter and James heard the Lord Jesus Christ’s teaching on “*so great salvation*” (Heb. 2:3) and they confirmed, verified, substantiated, corroborated, and validated the truth to Paul, who received the same truth from the resurrected Christ. Paul is the only one who received special revelatory training in truth (including the mysteries [Eph. 1:9, *et al*]) and could say that the first generation saints “*confirmed*” the truths he had been taught by the Saviour. Paul was the only person who could have possibly written Hebrews, which truth confirms Peter’s revelation (II Pet. 3:15-16). Hebrew 2:3 is not an argument against Paul as author, but is the irrefutable contextual argument that he is the only possible candidate!

The ongoing assault upon the Pauline authorship is demonically leveled at the divine Author to cause confusion in interpretation and its

²⁶ The English word “confirm” gives the sense of “confirming up” or “co-establishing” truth, necessitating two sources for one to verify the other.

²⁷ The *hapax legomena* verb “*see*” (*historeo*) refers to the activity of historicizing, or discussing historical narrative, such as the life of Christ.

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subsequent application.²⁸ The real issue revolves around any arguments that can refute the Pauline authorship. There are none! The testimony of Peter and the exegesis of Heb. 2:3 demand the Pauline authorship of *Hebrews*. The author of *Hebrews* was a spiritual giant of the first century who was a Jewish Christian with vast knowledge of the OT Scriptures. Paul wrote his “any word of exhortation” to the Jews—the *Epistle to the Hebrews*!

²⁸ The numerous commentaries that attempt to interpret and apply *Hebrews* to Christian churches in general or even to Gentile Christians vouch for this criticism.



JOHN SUNG FAMILY

Indonesian Pastor John Sung is praying about taking a sabbatical from his church in Pontianak-Kalimantan Barat and attending BBTS in the Fall Semester. He is attempting to obtain a visa for himself and wife and four children. Please pray that the Lord's will may be accomplished.



LAWRENCE VISIT



Our missionaries, Mr. and Mrs. James Lawrence, will be visiting the weekend of January 1, 2017. They were trained and sent out by BBC to the needy land of the Mormons in Utah. We are looking forward to them presenting their ministry to BBC in the AM service.

DO YOU WANT TO GO TO HEAVEN?

DEVOTIONAL CORNER

DO YOU WANT TO GO TO ...

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Devotional Corner



Dr. Caswell A. Reeves

DO YOU WANT TO GO TO HEAVEN?

Like Christmas presents, you must receive them in order to have them. The gift that God has given to all of us in order to save us is His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

If you receive God’s gift, then you can have everlasting life and go to heaven as a child of God.

“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” (John 1:12)

When I was asked if I wanted to go to heaven, I said, YES! My thinking was simple: No one in their right mind would choose the alternative. I was asked if I believed that the Bible was God’s word; Again, I said, yes! I then was shown a verse of scripture that has changed my life forever.

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” (John 14:6)

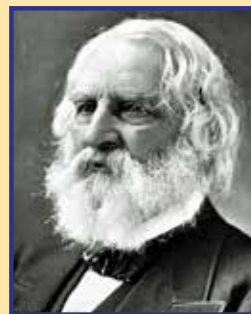
If you believe that the Bible is God’s word, and you really want to go to heaven, this verse tells you how to get to heaven. First Jesus said, I am the way - Jesus is the way to heaven. Secondly, Jesus said, I am the truth - Jesus is the truth that you do not need to doubt. Thirdly, Jesus said, I am the life - Jesus is not just life, but He is the life eternal for

all who will believe. You must turn from anything else that you believe and receive the truth that Jesus is the ONLY WAY to the Father of heaven. Can you see it - the heavenly Father is in heaven, and if you want to be with the Father who is in heaven, then you must receive Jesus who is the ONLY WAY to the Father in heaven.

Do you want to go to heaven? You must recognize you’re a sinner that has a need to be saved. You must repent of thinking that you are good enough to go to heaven. You must receive the truth of God’s word about Jesus dying to take away our sin. And you must receive the resurrected Jesus as your Savior. He is your ONLY WAY to the Father in heaven. –CAR

Quotes From the Past: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Early American Poet
1807-1882



Henry Wadsworth
Longfellow

*“I heard the bells on
Christmas Day
Their old, familiar
carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth,
good-will to men!”*

*Grow in Grace for Women***Keep Yourselves from Idols****1 John 5:21**

Exodus 20:4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:

Satan has from the beginning desired to be exalted above the LORD and since then has continued to find ways, in the world, to replace our heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ in the hearts of men (**Isaiah 14:14**).

Santa Claus requires that we lie to our children and are supportive of them as they lust and covet after what they do not have (**1 John 2:16**). Families go into debt to purchase what they cannot afford (**Prov. 22:7**).

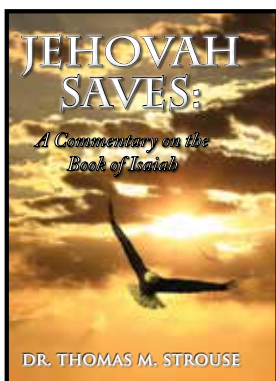
As you lie to children regarding this fictitious Santa and they eventually find out that Santa is not right, how then does it translate to them when you speak of the Lord Jesus Christ whom they also cannot see?

Santa Claus, the false god, is one way he uses to attack the children and parents must guard children from this instead of promoting it (**Proverbs 22:6**).

Santa is fictitious you say. What harm can he do? Have you ever stopped to think about these attributes given to Santa?

• He is watching you • He knows what you want • He sees what you do • He judges if you are good or bad • In one night he can be everywhere • He does not change year after year and death escapes him • Overcomes any and all obstacles • Children sit on his lap and make their requests known to him • Households are excited about his coming

The attributes of Omniscience, Omnipotence, Omnipresent, Eternality, Sovereignty, Worship, Supplications, and many more, belong to the One and Only True God, Jehovah!



NEW BOOK: *JEHOVAH SAVES: A COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF ISAIAH*

The new book by Dr. Thomas M. Strouse entitled *Jehovah Saves: A Commentary on the Book of Isaiah* is available for purchase. The book is an effort to exegete the contents of all sixty-six chapters of Isaiah, resulting in 508 pages of commentary with 746 footnotes chocked full of word studies, grammatical explanations, and theological teachings. It reflects over forty years of study, research, and reflection from the author. Available now! \$30.00

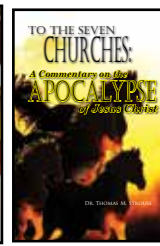
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The Book Corner

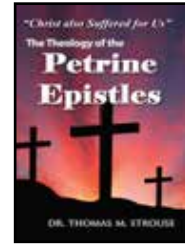
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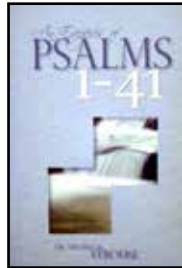
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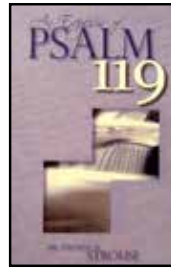
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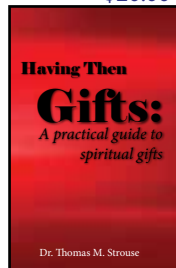
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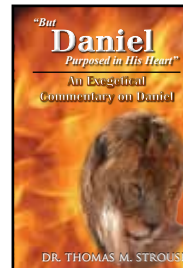
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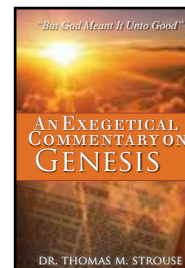
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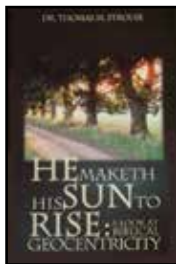
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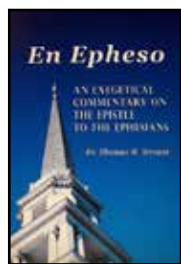
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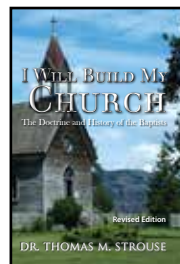
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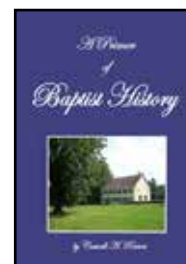
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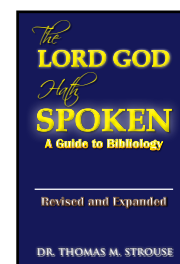
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