

BBC UPDATE

BAPTISTS AND LIBERTY



Dr. Thomas M. Strouse

If the state governments allow citizens to celebrate July 4, 2020 (*sic*), it will be interesting to hear the politicians’ speeches about patriotism in “the land of the free.” However, it will be more curious to hear the patriotic sermons by Baptists about the love for God, for the country, for the flag, and for the First and Second Amendments! It seems that America has been taken hostage by the enemy (China [?]) and put in house arrest with hardly a whimper from patriots or pastors. The Second Amendment has been disarmed because the First Amendment has been largely ignored or surrendered. When citizens willfully give up the right to worship the Lord GOD of creation and redemption without government interference, there is no need to bear arms. The enemy has conquered with “nary” a shot!

Christians must never forget that we are pilgrims and strangers in a foreign land (even in post-Christian America). Our focus must be on obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ and His word first and foremost. Every generation of Christians must be re-taught the truths of Scripture especially when doctrine and practice stop being a conviction and merely become a convenience. Many Baptist pastors seem to have forgotten their calling from the Lord Jesus Christ to be the bishop (overseer) of their respective assembled assembly. Baptist pulpits and people need to overcome the historical knowledge deficit about religious freedom and the scriptural knowledge deficit about the nature of the *ekklesia* and the role of the pastor and people.

From a historical perspective, Baptists in America were involved significantly to secure religious liberty, which effort resulted in the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights. The historical marker in Orange County, VA pays tribute to the Statesman James Madison—Baptist Pastor John Leland meeting. The marker reads:



Near this spot in 1788, elder John Leland and James Madison, the father of the American Constitution, held a significant interview which resulted in the adoption of the Constitution by Virginia. Then Madison, a member of Congress from Orange, presented the First Amendment to the Constitution guaranteeing religious liberty, free speech, and a free press. This satisfied Leland and his Baptist followers.

The backdrop of this meeting was the persecution that the Baptists of Virginia suffered from the Virginia Episcopal Church. Baptists had attempted to disestablish the *sacral society* that had developed in Virginia by the Episcopalians. The former appealed to President Washington to amend the Constitution to guarantee religious freedom. Baptist Pastor John Leland was very influential with the Baptists of Virginia and Madison needed his support. The two met and agreed on the necessity of religious freedom. Leland declared, saying, “The liberty I contend for is more than toleration.”¹

Article continued on page 2

¹ Robert C. Newman, *Baptists and the American Tradition* (Des Plaines, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 1976), p. 43.

The Baptist historian William Cathcart cogently observed, saying,

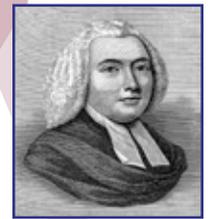


“Denominationally, no community asked for this change in the Constitution but the Baptists. The Quakers would probably have petitioned for it if they had thought of it, but they did not. John Adams and the Congregationalists did not desire it, the Episcopalians did not wish for it, it went too far for most Presbyterians in Revolutionary times...The Baptists asked it through Washington; the request commended itself to his judgment and to the generous soul of Madison, and to the Baptists, beyond a doubt, belong the glory of engrafting its best article on the noblest Constitution ever framed for the government of mankind.”²

It is a sad day indeed when Baptists perpetuate the ignorance of or remain passive about their patriotic heritage in earlier days of religious persecution and suffering in America. One only needs to read about the tremendous suffering Baptist pastors and church members endured in Virginia as documented in such works as Robert Semple, *History of the Baptists in Virginia*. Lafayette, TN: Church History Research and Archives, reprint of the 1894 edition. The government’s role before God and for the people is to protect but not to regulate.

Foundational to the escape of tyranny, many preachers proclaimed the division between state and church, such as Jonathan Mayhew. In 1754 he preached, saying,

“Neither God nor nature has given any man a right of dominion over any society independently of the society’s approbation and consent to be governed by him... Disobedience is not only lawful but glorious [to those that] enjoin things that are inconsistent with the demands of God.”³



On the point of biblical re-education for Baptists, the nature and practice of “visible” assembly is pre-eminent. It is necessary to know doctrine but also to practice doctrine. It is not enough to aver belief in the assembled assembly but then to not practice the belief temporarily. It almost seems like the hard-nosed, local church only, no universal, invisible, mystical Body of Christ pastors have temporarily forsaken the practice. In fact, it seems that the universal invisible church position is alive and well, and getting healthier and healthier! Some Baptist pastors seem to have taken the approach that the unassembled assembly is still an assembly even though it is not assembled! The “universal-invisible churchites” have long argued this position, giving a second definition for *ekklesia*. Citing my own commentary from years of personal study, critique, and debate, I have attempted to refute this second definition while dealing with the *locus classicus* for the universal church position (i.e., Acts 8:3):

On a related point, Saul of Tarsus entered into the homes of church members, obviously, who were members of the assembled assembly. This verse is not a proof text for the notion that the noun ἐκκλησία can mean an “unassembled church,” and thereby supporting the universal church heresy. The church is the assembly which is constituted with baptized believers. The Scriptures give no evidence of a universal and invisible notion for the ἐκκλησία! This would be an oxymoron to designate a non-assembly as an assembly.

² William Cathcart, *Baptist Patriots and the American Revolution* (Grand Rapids: Guardian Press, 1876 reprint), pp. 109-111

³ Alice M. Baldwin, *The New England Pulpit and the American Revolution. When Pastors Preached Politics, Resisted Tyranny, and Founded a Nation on the Bible* (Powder Spring, GA: American Vision Press, 2014), p. 57. This is an extremely valuable read for all Baptist pastors and Church members.



Pastor Cas Reeves

GOD'S SALVATION

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."
(Galatians 2:16)

God's salvation is just that, It is God's salvation for man. It is something that God does for man. Nevertheless, many men find this too difficult to believe and counter by doing all they can to place different types of good works into their lives in order to justify themselves before a holy God. There are many good works that people do; some of the more popular are various forms of baptism and frequency of church attendance; being good to their neighbor; also different kinds of personal sacrifice. All these good works are for the purpose that a man might find himself justified or made right in God's sight, which will make access to heaven possible for him.

However, Galatians 2:16 is clear about what God thinks about man trying to be justified by the law (10 Commandments). He declares decisively "a man is not justified by the works

of the law." On the other hand, God clarifies how men are justified or saved. He declares they are saved or "...justified by the faith of Christ."

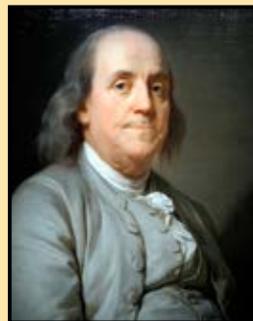
Thus, when a person wants to be saved, they must repent or turn from the idea or notion that they can do something good to please God enough so that He will accept them into heaven. It is clear that anyone who will be justified or will go to heaven will have to come to heaven through the avenue of faith, not just any faith, but by the faith that belongs to Christ. Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father; but by me"* (John 14:6). There is only one way to heaven and that way is through Jesus Christ, not good works. God's salvation is by the faith of Jesus Christ who is the Son of God, not by the works of sinful and unholy men. -CAR



Sunday School students practicing "Social Distancing"



Quotes From the Past:



Benjamin Franklin
1706-1790

American Founding Father

"Those who would give up essential Liberty, to purchase a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety."

The Christian theologian may not employ a form 'neo-orthodoxy' by changing the meaning of biblical words to fit their pre-conceived notions! For instance, Saucy states, "*Ekklesia* also designates the universal church. In this usage the concept of a physical assembly gives way to the spiritual unity of all believers in Christ. *Ekklesia* in this sense is not the assembly itself but rather those constituting it; they are the church whether actually assembled or not. This is clearly evident in the early persecution of the church at Jerusalem. **Even when believers are scattered abroad and in their homes, they are 'the church' (Acts 8:1-3).**" Robert L. Saucy, *The Church in God's Program* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), pp. 16-17. He failed to recognize that they were baptized church members and became the assembly only when they assembled. In this verse, the term "church" is the figure of speech ("synecdoche") wherein the whole represents the part ("church" = church member).⁴

Shades of Ignatius! This proto-Roman Catholic patristic gave the first known reference to church after the writing of the New Testament, and said, "*Wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church.*"⁵ Obviously Ignatius referred to the universal church. Unassembled church members do not constitute an *ekklesia*! They are unassembled church members. Likewise, employees of IBM when at home do not constitute IBM, or else there would be a universal, invisible body of IBM!

Ecclesiologically, when church members sit at home watching sermons with live-streaming they do not and cannot experience the special ecclesiological presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who said, "*For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*" (Mt. 18:20) and "*And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle*" (Rev. 1:13). This is not a statement to diminish biblical preaching in any venue, but online preaching or live-streaming does not constitute a church, an *ekklesia*, or an assembled assembly! If this scenario was a "church" then there would be no biblical or practical argument against illegitimate para-church ministries or against the universal, invisible church doctrine and practice. If a pastor cannot physically oversee his church he cannot fulfill his pastoral calling. Obviously the church ordinances cannot be observed when the assembly is unassembled. These assertions ought to be basic to every pastor. To pretend that live-streaming a Gospel message even with singing hymns is "having church" is not only ludicrous it is unbiblical!

Eschatologically, one should remember that North America will be subsumed under Antichrist with no military or economic influence. Instead the Revived Roman Empire will be the military force and the rebuilt Babylon will be the economic center (Dan. 2:40-45; 9:24-27; Rev. 17-18). Is COVID-19 Satan's trial run? It is indirect and subtle. The next time it will be direct; you shall not preach Christ (at risk of offending Muslims or apostate Christianity) and you shall not assemble at risk of death! Nevertheless, Paul encouraged the Philippians, saying, "*For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself*" (Phil. 3:20-21). While we look and wait for the Lord's Coming, let us remember the command of the precious Saviour Who instructed with the clear and simple expression, saying, "*Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's*" (Mk. 12:17).

⁴ Thomas M. Strouse, *The Lord Added to the Church: A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (Cromwell, CT: Bible Baptist Theological Press, 2021), p. 506.

⁵ Ignatius Theophorus, *Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans*, Chapter 8.

ἐκκλησία = **church/assembly**

Mt. 16-18 - Built on Christ

Mt. 18:20 - 2 or 3 gathered together

Acts 2:1 - all accord in one place

Acts 2:42 - Continued in doctrine
and fellowship

Acts 12:12 - gathered together praying

CHRIST

The Head of the Body
Col 1:28

The Assembly, Body of Christ, House of God, Church of the Living God

Revelation 1:20

-The Lord hold the Pastor in His Right Hand

Matthew 3:6, Romans 6:2-4

-Baptism into the Local Assembly for membership

Matthew 26:26-28

-Practice the ordinance of the Lord's Supper

I Timothy 3:15

-Only candlestick assemblies are authorized to be the Pillar and Gound of the Truth!

John 20:1, Acts 2:1, Acts 20:7, I Cor. 16:1-2, Rev 1:10

-The Assembly meets at a minimum on the 1st day of the Week (Sunday)

I Cor 12:18

-Lord sets each member into the body

Romans 12:6-15

-Lord gives each Member a gift to serve with

I Cor 3:16-17

-The Temple of God
-Spirit of God dwells in Church
-Don't mess with the Lord's Church

Acts 12:5, 12

-Power in Corporate Prayer

Matthew 28:19-20

-Authority to carry out the Great Commission

Ephesians 2:21-22 - In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Apostles/Prophets = Foundation

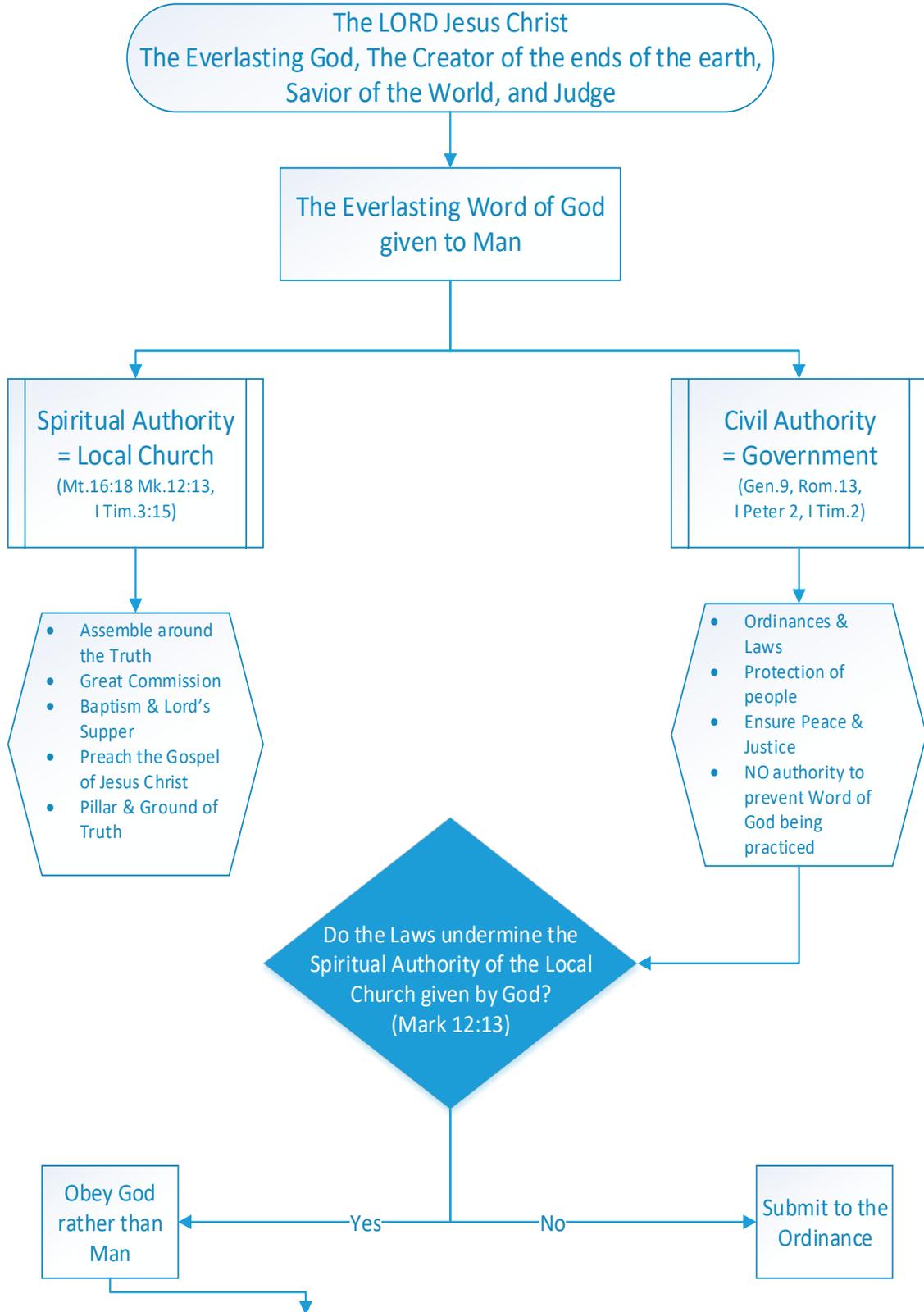
Acts 2:42, Ephesians 2:20

CHRIST = cornerstone

Matthew 16:18

Ephesians 2:20

Biblical Authority Algorithm



Government Authorities through the ages have persecuted: assembling, baptism by immersion, preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, possessing Bibles, and not submitting to state religion. (I Kg.19:2, Dan.3:13-18, Acts 4:18, 8:3,12:1,14:19))

GLOBAL WARMING AND EARTH DAY

Romans 1:25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

Reflection: Last week the world celebrated 'Earth Day'. As a preschool teacher, each year I watch teachers scramble to make art projects with the children in their classroom ready to celebrate the earth. It's always so sad to see that the focus is on the celebration of the creation, saving the earth, and basically worshipping the earth, rather than the Creator!

Here are a few verses to contemplate about our Creator, who is worthy to be praised!

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

Colossians 1:16 For by him were all things created, that are in helibaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether [they be] thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for

him:

Revelation 4:11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Exodus 20:11 For [in] six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them [is], and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

Hebrews 1:10 And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands:

Challenge: Keep your eyes upon our Creator and Saviour. When the Lord gives opportunity... remind those around you Who is worthy of praise.

Have a verse or two ready when these doors open.

Psalm 34:3 O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.

If you would like to receive Grow in Grace morning devotions emailed to you Monday through Friday, please send an email to: Elenas6259@gmail.com



BBTS 2020 GRADUATION

Lord willing, on May 17, 2020 BBTS will hold its 11th commencement service.

There are currently 5 candidates eligible for graduation. Please pray for these men as they complete their coursework and travel for this special day.

GAGNON - REEVES WEDDING

We are looking forward to the wedding of Amanda Gagnon (daughter of BBC members Bill & Kirsten Gagnon) to Mark Reeves (son of Paul and Michelle Reeves, members of Heritage Baptist Church, Endicott, NY) on May 30, 2020. The wedding will be held at Long Hill Baptist Church in Trumbull, CT with immediate family present.

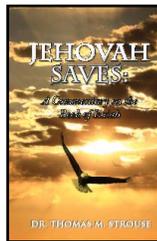


Please pray for this young couple as they seek the Lord's will for their lives together.

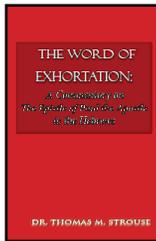
THE BOOK CORNER

These Books may be purchased through Bible Baptist Church: 40 Country Squire Rd. Cromwell, CT 06416 860-229-5387

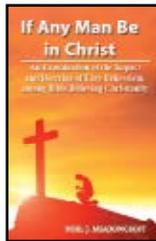
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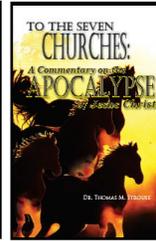
Isaiah \$20.00



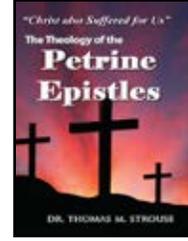
Hebrews \$30.00



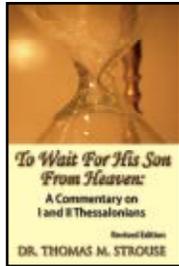
If Any Man Be ... I & II Timothy \$10.00 \$20.00



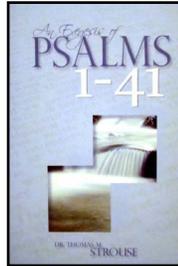
Revelation \$30.00



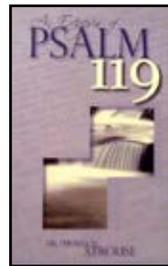
Peter \$20.00



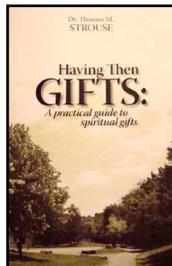
I & II Thessalonians \$20.00



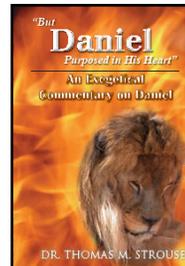
Psalms 1 - 41 \$20.00



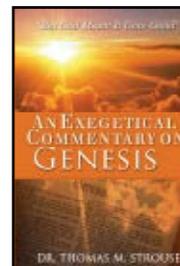
Psalm 119 \$20.00



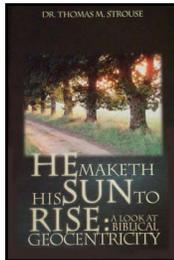
Spiritual Gifts \$8.00



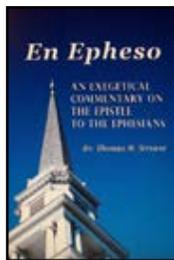
Daniel \$20.00



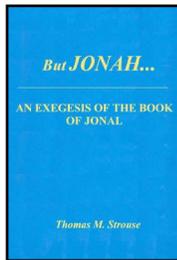
Genesis \$20.00



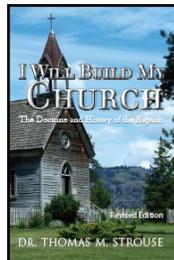
Geocentricity \$10.00



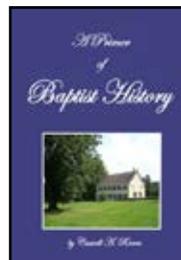
En Epheso \$20.00



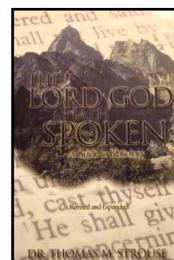
Jonah \$10.00



I Will Build My Church \$15.00



A Primer of Baptist History \$20.00



The Lord God Hath Spoken \$15.00

BBC 2020 SCHEDULE

May 17
BBTS Graduation
5 Candidates!

May 30
Gagnon-Reeves
Wedding

June 8-12
Quakertown, PA
"Eschatology"

June 22-26
Quezon City
"Ecclesiastes"

July 20-24
Plymouth, NH
"The History of the
English Bible"

August 24-28
Fairhaven Baptist
Church
"Minor Prophets"

September 7
Labor Day Cookout
Strouse House

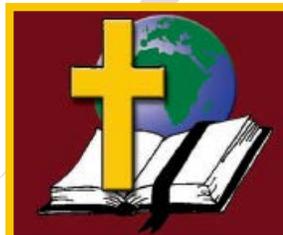
September 14-18
BBC of Nashua, NH
"Bibliology"

October 6-17
Israel Tour
October 25-28
Willow Grove Baptist
Church
"Timeless Truths Bible
Conference"

November 13
BBTS Fall Lecture
Series

If you have any news for the next issue of the BBC Update, please send email to:

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