



BBC UPDATE

NASHUA, NH MODULE



Dr. Thomas M. Strouse

DURING the week of September 25-29, Dr. Thomas Strouse taught the module on the *Book of Hebrews* at Bible Baptist Church in Nashua, NH, pastored by Pastor Jonathan Stockton. About eleven students attended the course, several from area churches. Pastor Stockton and his gracious wife Amanda attended to the needs of the professor and students. The Stocktons have taken on the daunting task of leading and mending this hurting assembly by the grace of God to the praise of



Class Photo of Nashua, NH Module

the Lord Jesus Christ! On Wednesday night, Dr. Strouse reviewed the initial chapters of *Hebrews* to the congregation. The following is the introduction to audience and authorship of this so-called controversial *Book of Hebrews*, the written form of the Pauline “word of exhortation” (Acts 13:15 and Heb. 13:22).

AUDIENCE

THE issue of the audience of Hebrews invokes several questions that must be answered. 1) What was their ethnicity? 2) Where did they dwell? 3) What was their spiritual condition? The Christian, who studies the Word of God, indwelt with its author the Spirit of God, serving in the Church of God, and abides under the authority of the Man of God, has full assurance of knowing all revealed truth as John promised, saying, “*ye know all things*” (I Jn. 2:20). The Lord has recorded in the very *Epistle* data that establish parameters for knowing possible answers to these queries. Concerning the audience’s ethnicity, the numerous references to OT institutions, people, and practices would exclude Gentiles, unless they were God-fearers attending synagogue services. Only those with a full acquaintance of Jewish heritage would appreciate the message of the *Epistle*, traditionally known as “to the Hebrews.” The dwelling place of the audience was not in Rome, as the writer was indeed in Rome, as he declared, saying, “*they of Italy salute*

AUDIENCE OF THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

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you” (Heb. 13:24). Since the author cited the Hebrew OT, and not the *LXX*,¹ he must certainly have directed the epistle to the Jerusalem church (cf. Acts 15:21). Furthermore, animal sacrifices continued in Jerusalem, which the author condemned (cf. Heb. 8:4; 10:11). The center of all Judaism, including the Temple, the Aaronic priesthood, and the animal sacrifices, was at this time the city of David, Mount Zion, Jerusalem. 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 and compare with Neh. 9:19-21). With several warnings about apostasy signaled by the expression “*lest*,”² 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 *the Epistle to the Hebrews* to Jerusalem Jews, some thousands having been saved (Acts 21:20), exhorting 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 coming upon them in the form of Titus’ decimation of the Jews and desolation of the city and temple.³ Therefore, the audience consisted of Jews and God-fearing Gentiles who professed faith in Christ and were baptized church members. Apparently, some were either practicing animal sacrifices, or were sympathetic with this sinful practice and needed to obey this “*word of exhortation*” or suffer damnation.

AUTHORSHIP AND DATE

THE authorship and date are obviously connected. The *Book of Hebrews* is anonymous and thus NT church members must sift evidence with biblical discernment. 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). 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.

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,*

¹Thomas M. Strouse, “Scholarly Myths Perpetuated on Rejecting the Masoretic Text of the Old Testament,” *Emmanuel Baptist Theological Journal* 1 (Spring 2005): 37-61.

²“*Lest*” occurs 11x in Hebrews.

³In 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.

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AUTHORSHIP AND DATE

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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, 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). Therefore, Paul wrote one *Epistle to the Hebrews* in his total corpus of fourteen NT Books (thirteen were written to Gentile Christians or churches).⁴ 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*. *Contra*: 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. 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.” *Contra*: This is a very subjective and hence weak argument since style and vocabulary change with the author’s audience, purpose, etc.

3. The so-called dependence of the author on the first generation believers eliminates Paul (cf. Heb. 2:3). *Contra*: This passage teaches that the author’s revelation **was confirmed** (*ebebaiothe* [8x])⁵ by first generation believers, not “**handed over**” (*paradidomi* [cf. I Cor. 11:23]) by them; revelation can only be confirmed by revelation.

4. The author does not deal with the same doctrines that Paul did in his Gentile Epistles. *Contra*: a different audience with different subjects requires different theological emphases.

5. The chronology does not fit Paul’s life. *Contra*: 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).⁶

The ongoing assault upon the Pauline authorship is demonically leveled at the divine Author to cause confusion in interpretation and its subsequent application. The real issue revolves around any arguments that can refute the Pauline authorship. The author of *Hebrews* was a spiritual giant of the first century who was a Christian with vast knowledge of the OT Scriptures. Peter said Paul wrote Scripture to the Jews—the *Epistle to the Hebrews*!



⁴After 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).

⁵Paul confirmed the promises made to the patriarchs about Gentile salvation, saying, “*Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers*” (Rom. 15:8). He was not dependent upon the patriarchs passing on these promises to him, but his ministry, given by God, confirmed the OT promises.

⁶Titus’ 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).

BBC MINISTRIES

MEN PREACHING



BBC Church members, Andrew Williams and Dr. Ryan Strouse were able to minister to a number of sister churches over the past several weeks. Brother Williams preached in the Bronx, NY and Dr. Ryan Strouse preached in Maine and Massachusetts. Pastor Darrell Nelson, Dr. Ryan Strouse, Mr. Jeff Skorupski, and Mr. Bill Gagnon have the ongoing ministry of filling the pulpit for Dr. Thomas Strouse as he teaches BBTS modules at various locations.

“And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” II Tim. 2:2

TITUS PROGRAM



Mr. Aiko Tinte



Mr. August Gagnon



Mr. Cisco Melendez



Mr. Tommy Thompson

August Gagnon and Tommy Thompson used their spiritual gifts to preach to the assembly on Sunday, September 24th during the Sunday School service.

SUNDAY SCHOOL



Mrs. Kirsten Gagnon is currently teaching about Discernment in the Children's Sunday School class.

FIRST ANNUAL LADIES' HAT DAY AT BBC



September 17, 2023



BBC/BBTS 2023-2024 SCHEDULE

2023

September 25-29
Bible Baptist Church
Nashua, NH
Book of Hebrews

October 22-25
Willow Grove Baptist Church
Waynesburg, PA
Timeless Truths Bible Conference

October 28-29
Calvary Baptist Church
Mannington, WV
TBA

November 10
BBTS Fall Lecture Series
Galilean Baptist Church
Stafford Springs, CT
The Present Challenge to the Lords Assemblies

December 10
Commencement Service
Seoul, Korea

2024

January 1-5
Ireland Module
Greek Project and Acts 10-19

January 15-19
Fairhaven Baptist College
Chesterton, IN
Johannine Epistles

February 26-March 1
Philippines Module
Quezon City
Johannine Epistles

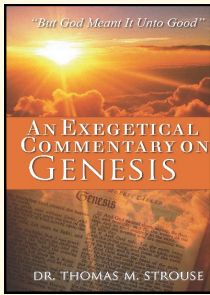
April 12
BBTS Spring Lecture Series
"TBA"

May 18
Bible Baptist Church
Graduation Banquet

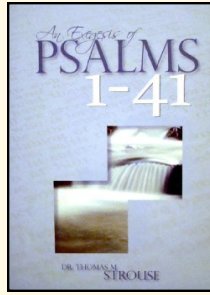
May 19
Bible Baptist Church
Commencement Service

June 3-7
Community Baptist Church
Coopersburg, PA
Bibliology

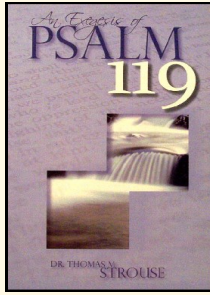
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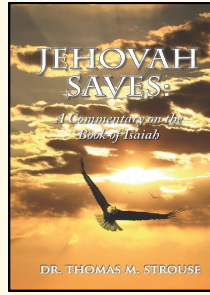
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\$20.00



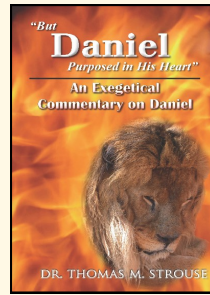
Psalms 1-41
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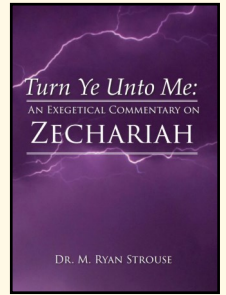
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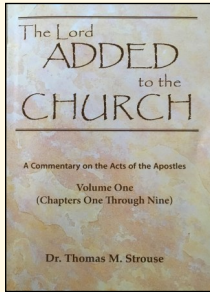
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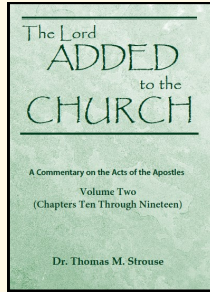
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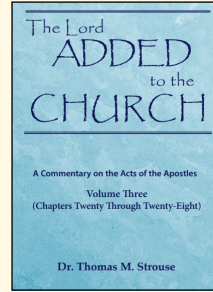
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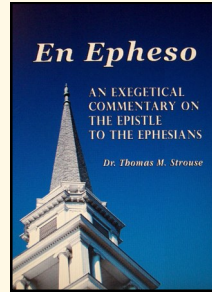
Acts 1-9
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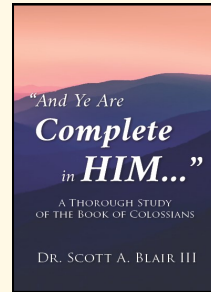
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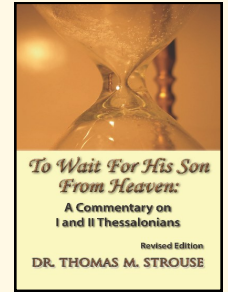
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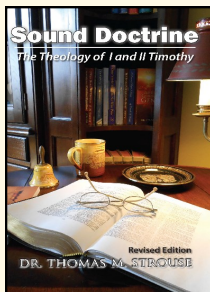
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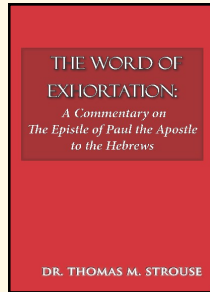
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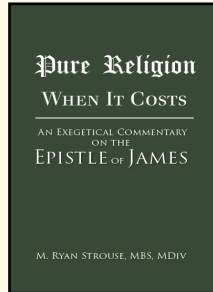
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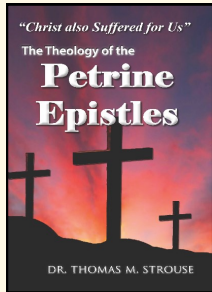
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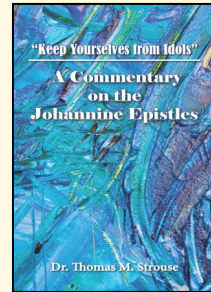
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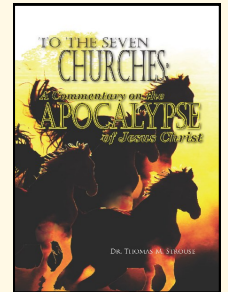
James
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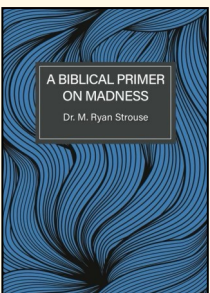
1 & 2 Peter
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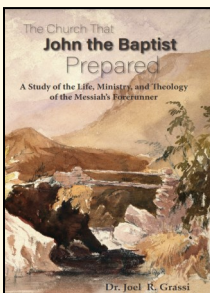
Johannine Epistles
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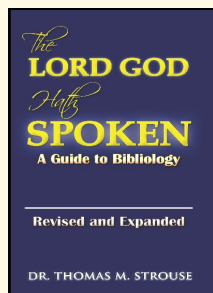
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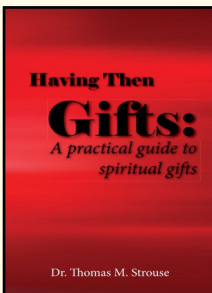
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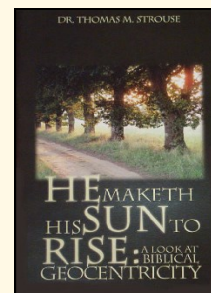
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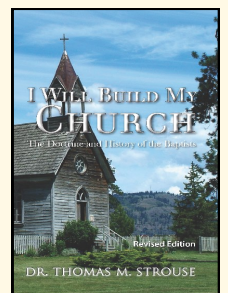
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Spiritual Gifts
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Geocentricity
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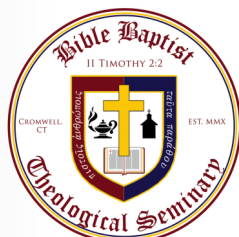
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