



# BBC UPDATE

## THE BBTS FALL LECTURE SERIES



Dr. Thomas M. Strouse

**OVER** one hundred Baptist pastors and church members attended the Bible Baptist Theological Seminary 2023 Fall Lecture Series at Galilean Baptist Church pastored by Pastor Stephen Hinebaugh. Pastors from twelve different churches attended as Dr. Thomas M. Strouse dealt with *“Present Challenges to the Lord’s Assemblies.”* The topics dealt with issues in Bibliology, Theology Proper, Soteriology, Ecclesiology and Eschatology. The fellowship was great and the pulled pork luncheon was excellent.

Dr. Strouse challenged the Baptist pastors and church members about the theological heresy of the “mystical body of Christ” and the need to reject the teaching and practice of it. Many Baptists reject the universal invisible church teaching but support para-church ministries such as Bible colleges, evangelistic associations, and mission boards, all of which are outside of any church authority. The Lord Jesus Christ gave all biblical authority to the baptizing agency in the New Testament, the Baptist assembly (Mt. 28:19-20). If the entity cannot baptize, it has no *divine* authority to evangelize. The “mystical body of Christ” heresy and the practice of para-church ministries undermine the Lord’s institution of biblical churches in evangelism, teaching, finances and honor. Baptist pastors and church members must answer the “why” of supporting ministries that undercut the very doctrine and practice of the Lord’s assemblies and of their respective church!



*BBTS faculty and Pastors in attendance at the Lecture Series*



## WHAT IS "THE BODY OF CHRIST"?

The Apostle Paul utilized the ecclesiological expression "*the body of Christ*" (*soma Christou*) twice (I Cor. 12:27; Eph. 4:12), denoting Christ's possession of His Body. He used other combinations of the expression as well, such as "*one body*" (*heni somati*) eight times (Rom. 12:4; I Cor. 10:17, 12:12 [2x], 13, 20; Eph. 4:4, and Col 3:15), "*one body in Christ*" (*hen soma en Christo*) once (Rom. 12:5), "*His body*" (*to soma autou*) twice (Eph. 1:23, 5:30), and "*the body*" (*tou somatos*) twenty times (I Cor. 12:12, 14, 15 [2x], 16 [2x], 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 25, Eph. 3:6, 4:12, 16 [2x], 5:23, Col. 1:18, and 2:19).<sup>1</sup> Every ecclesiological reference to *soma* that Paul utilized was in an epistle to a local church. He never addressed the non-baptized and therefore the non-church member Christian.<sup>2</sup>

The first chronological reference to "*one body*" is significant and establishes the foundational meaning to the term. In a non-ecclesiological illustration, the Apostle stated, "*What? Know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? For two, saith he, shall be one flesh*" (I Cor. 6:16). This sordid example nevertheless establishes Paul's meaning of "*one body*." The man and the harlot are two bodies uniting with one purpose in mind—fornication. This union of immorality is comprised of two individual bodies, which are indeed distinct one from the other, but are united in a common goal. Paul used the expression "*one body*" to mean "united bodies." The man's body was distinct from the harlot's body. Their union of bodies never constituted some sort of "mystical body of fornication." "*One body*" to Paul meant one man's body united with one harlot's body (two literal bodies = united bodies [in purpose] = "*one body*").<sup>3</sup> This usage of "*one body*" in the Pauline *corpus* must remain intact since he never rescinded it. Therefore, throughout the Apostles' Epistles, "*one body*" means either numerically one body (e.g., Eph. 4:4) or "united bodies." When this Pauline interpretation is applied to ecclesiological passages, it becomes apparent that the Apostle stressed unity among various local church bodies (cf. I Cor. 12:27; Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18), as well as unity within each body of Christ. The Lord Jesus is the Head of each of His local churches or Bodies (cf. Rev. 2-3). Just as the omnipresent Lord is the Head of each man (I Cor. 11:3), so is the same Lord the Head of each one of His bodies in Christ.<sup>4</sup>

Several test passages may be offered for proof of the Pauline interpretation of the "united bodies" definition. In I Cor. 12:13, the Apostle affirmed that he and the Corinthians ("*are we all baptized*") had been baptized "*into (eis) one body*," or water baptized with reference to united bodies. The body in which Paul had been baptized was the Damascus *ekklesia* and the body in which the Corinthians had been baptized was the Corinthian *ekklesia*. These bodies were united in common doctrine and practice (cf. Jude 1:3). Another "difficult" verse is Rom. 12:5, wherein Paul declared, "*So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and*

<sup>1</sup> The NT also refers to the physical body of Christ, using variations of these expressions (cf. Rom. 7:4), which expressions are not germane to this essay.

<sup>2</sup> Although some may hopelessly cling to a universal church from Paul's address to "*all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord*" (I Cor. 1:2), I Corinthians repudiates local church problems and offers solutions which would not be pertinent to or authoritative over non-church member Christians.

<sup>3</sup> The rationalistic thinking Christian may argue that one equals one but divine revelation says "*for two, saith he, shall be one flesh*" (I Cor. 6:16). In another example, Paul enjoined the six churches in Rome, saying, "*That ye may with ...one mouth glorify God*" (Rom. 15:6). He wanted his plural audience to glorify God with "united mouths"!

<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that each of the Lord's Candlesticks is both an organization (Tit. 1:5 ff.) and an organism (cf. Eph. 4:11-16).

## WHAT IS "THE BODY OF CHRIST"? CONTINUED

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*every one members one of another.*" Paul certainly was not a member of the church at Rome since he had not been there, but presumably he was still a church member of the Antioch assembly from which he was sent (Acts 11:26, 13:1-4). The church body at Rome and the church body at Antioch were "*one body in Christ*," or united bodies in Christ.

In concert with the aforementioned arguments for the Pauline usage of "united bodies" is Paul's obvious and clear reference to the Corinthian church as a "*body*." This New Testament writer declared under inspiration to the Corinthian *ekklesia*, "*Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular*" (I Cor. 12:27). Greek scholars Robertson and Plummer struggle with the interpretation of this verse because their pre-conceived and unproved assumptions conflict with the anarthrous construction *soma Christou*. They state,

“‘Body of Christ’ is the quality of the whole which each of them individually helps to constitute...It does not mean, ‘Ye are the Body of Christ,’ although that translation is admissible, and indicates the truth that each Christian community is the Universal Church in miniature...Least of all does it mean, ‘Ye are a Body of Christ,’ as if St. Paul were insisting that the Corinthians were only a Church and not *the* Church, a meaning which quite remote from the passage. Nowhere in the Pauline Epistles is there the idea that the one Ecclesia is made up of many Ecclesiae...He means here that the nature of the whole of which the Corinthians are parts is that it is Body of Christ, not any other kind of whole.”<sup>5</sup>

They reject the clear meaning that Paul addressed the Corinthian church as "*the body of Christ*,"<sup>6</sup> one among many, and rather argue for the fallacious and facile "Platonic body"—the Corinthian body was a visible manifestation of the true body. Moving beyond theological assumptions based on Platonic philosophy, one should ask how the Corinthian church was the body of Christ in Corinth. First, it had the Lord Jesus Christ as the Head (I Cor. 1:1-3; 11:3). Second, it was the living organism with feet, hands, ears, and eyes (I Cor. 12:15-22). Third, it was the means by which the Lord Jesus would accomplish His Great Commission in Corinth and the surrounding area (Mt. 28:19-20).<sup>7</sup>

The interpretation that *soma Christou* refers to the local church may be applied to several representative passages. In Eph. 1:22-23, the Apostle equated the *ekklesia* to the *soma* ("*the church, Which is his body*"). Since all 115 references to *ekklesia* in the *Textus Receptus*<sup>8</sup> refer to a visible assembly (civic [Acts 19:32, 39, 41], Israel [Acts 7:38], or Christ's [Mt. 16:18, *et al*]), it follows that the *soma* was the visible assembly at Ephesus. Paul declared that this same body at Ephesus would include both Jews and Gentiles as fellowheirs,<sup>9</sup> a mystery not taught in the OT (Eph. 3:5-6). Furthermore, the Apostle taught that Christ was the savior of the

<sup>5</sup> Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1955), p. 332.

<sup>6</sup> This genitive construction is a Semitism that makes the *nomen regens* (body) articular since the *nomen rectum* is a proper noun (Christ).

<sup>7</sup> The Great Commission for Christ's assemblies includes baptizing converts. The so-called mystical body of Christ does not baptize converts because of the vast confusion evinced in Christendom surrounding the ordinance, and because of the lack of biblical authority.

<sup>8</sup> The Critical Text rejects "*to the church*" in Acts 2:47, along with other proto-Romish attacks on NT ecclesiology such as omitting the requisite faith for believer's baptism (Acts 8:37), and promoting the territorial church ("then had the *church* rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria") in Acts 9:31.

<sup>9</sup> The reality of I Cor. 12:26, "*And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it*," should set in when one recognizes this could only be applied to the local church.

# WHAT IS "THE BODY OF CHRIST"? CONCLUSION

*Continued from page 3*

body, the Ephesian church for which He gave Himself (Eph. 5:23, 25). The Lord loved and died for the church at Ephesus. Now it is true that He loved and died for other churches, for all Christians and all OT saints, and for the whole world (Jn. 3:16). But all this verse requires is that He loved and died for the Ephesian body of Christ. Paul also affirmed that the Lord was the Head of the Colossian body of Christ (Col 1:18), which had close association with the churches (bodies) at Nymphas' house and in Laodicea (Col 4:15-16).

Those that assume that the body of Christ refers to all Christians regardless of any church membership must prove from exegesis that their assumption is valid. To do so they have several biblically exegetical obstacles to overcome. First, they must show that the body of Christ is exclusively a soteriological expression, which they cannot do since the term is found only in Epistles addressing local churches. Second, they must demonstrate exegetically that "one body" cannot mean "united bodies" but instead must mean numerically "one" body. Third, they must explain exegetically, without assuming, that Paul did not address the Corinthian church as "the body of Christ."<sup>10</sup>

In summary, since the unproved assumptions of the popular view of Spirit Baptism and the mystical body of Christ are Scripturally challenged and found wanting, it stands that they are not true. What is true is that Spirit Baptism (with Jesus as the agent [Mt. 3:11]) was a first century spiritual phenomenon that has since accomplished the Lord's purpose by authenticating the upper-room assembly and has ceased, and that the term "the body of Christ" refers to each of the Lord's churches by which He fulfills the Great Commission through this His only agency.

<sup>10</sup> Some have claimed that the Corinthian church had the character or quality of "body of Christness" but was not the true "body of Christ." This may be likened to saying that a four-legged animal with a wagging tail has all the characteristics of a dog but it is not a true dog; it is merely the visible manifestation of the universal, invisible dog!



*Photos of just a few of the men who enjoyed some one-on-one fellowship with other like-minded men:*

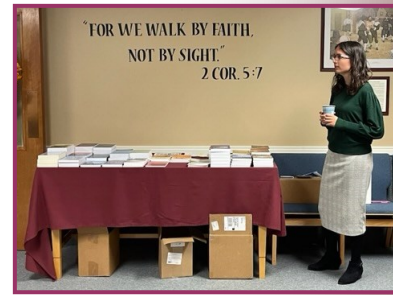
- (1) Dr. Main & Dr. Ryan Strouse.
- (2) Pastor Short & Pastor Hammond.
- (3) Cisco, Bill & Andrew from BBC.
- (4) Professor Skorupski & Pastor Stockton



# PHOTOS FROM THE LECTURE SERIES



*The desserts tasted as good as they looked!*



*Brittany Blair managed the book table.*



*Jenn and Scott enjoy the delicious lunch.*



*Dr. Kulus tells a captivating story*



*Noel Meadowcroft and Pastor Hinebaugh*



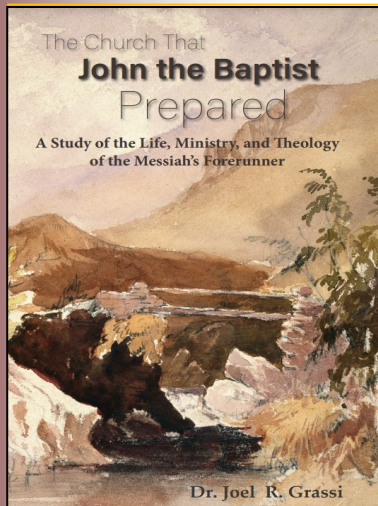
*Everyone had plenty to eat and a place to sit.*



*Young men enjoyed time with each other as well as the drink station.*



*Young ladies also enjoyed a time of fellowship!*



## JOHN THE BAPTIST REVISED REPRINT



Bible Baptist Theological Press, along with Dr. Joel Grassi, is currently reprinting his book “*The Church that John the Baptist Prepared*”, with revisions. We anticipate this book to be available for purchase in the near future.

“*But now hath God set the members everyone of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.*” 1 Corinthians 12:18



New church members, the Careso family, pose with fellow church member, Aiko Tinte, and Pastor Strouse in front of the church sign.

### BBC/BBTS 2023-2024 SCHEDULE

#### 2023

**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*

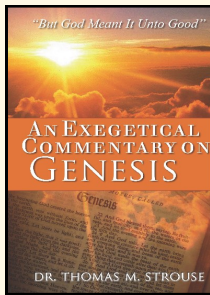
**April 12**  
BBTS Spring Lecture Series  
“TBA”

**May 18**  
Bible Baptist Church  
*Graduation Banquet*

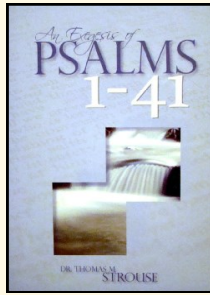
**May 19**  
Bible Baptist Church  
*Commencement Service*

**June 3-7**  
Community Baptist Church  
Coopersburg, PA  
*Bibliology*

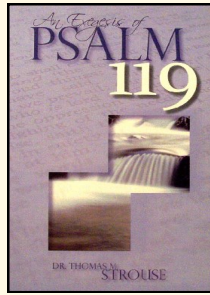
# The Publication Page



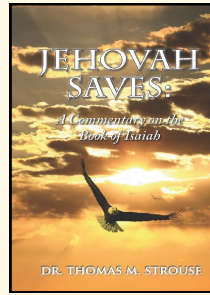
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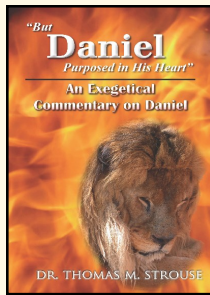
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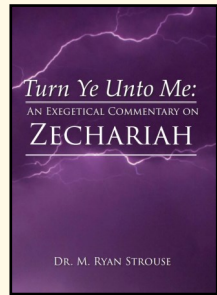
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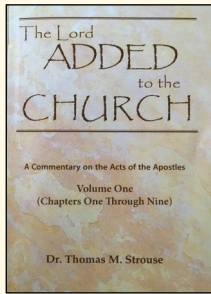
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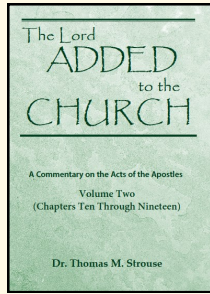
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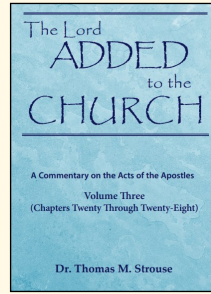
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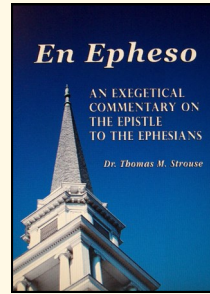
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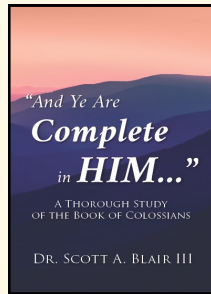
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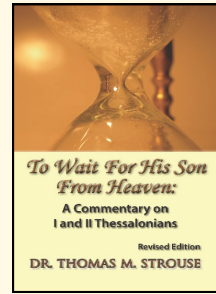
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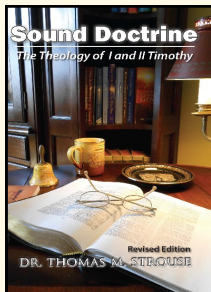
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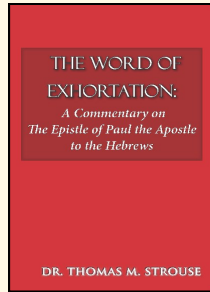
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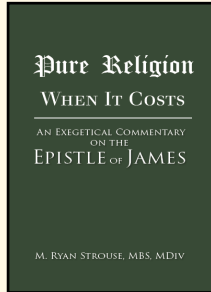
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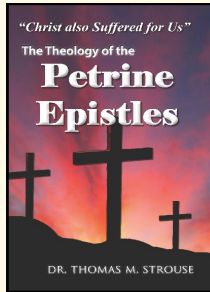
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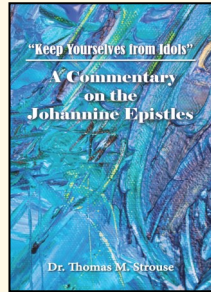
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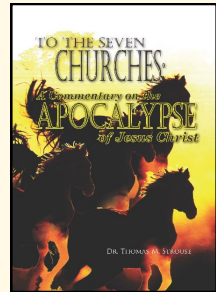
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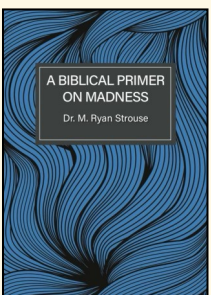
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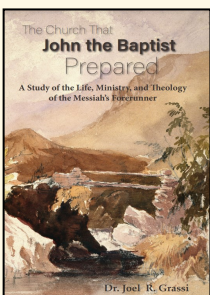
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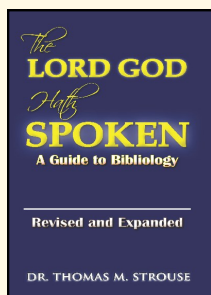
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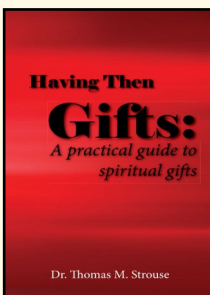
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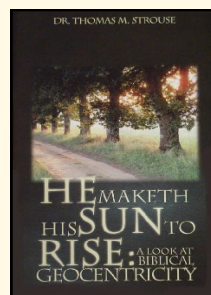
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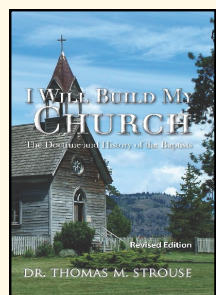
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