

Patricia Huggins  
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NT615 What the Bible is Not – Ch. 2 (Strauss)

The Bible was not written to us; however, it was written for us. Along with distance in time and culture and the fact that we live in a constantly changing world, the Bible is often difficult to understand and apply.

Straus lifts four main things the Bible is not. *The Bible is not a magic-answer book.* Scripture cannot be taken out of context and made to convey what one desires it to mean as needed. Scripture must be understood in its original context before it can be applied to life's current circumstances. There are different literature styles in the Bible, making it challenging to consider the Bible a book to be read in one manner.

Consideration must be given to versions of the Bible that are being used. Chapters and verses were added after the original Bible for organizational purposes and sometimes wound up in the wrong place and distracted from the natural divisions of the text. These additions can confuse translation.

*The Bible is not a list of commands to obey,* yet it is God's word to us. The Spirit of God honors and uses his word to communicate with us, and throughout scripture, we see that obedience is a crucial responsibility of God's people. Obedience is how we show our love for God. We do not grow in our relationship with God by being dogmatic to a list of rules. We grow by learning the nature of God and maintaining a relationship with God. Commands to obey can change based on man's practice or desire. Also, there are commands, laws, and instructions that we still have no idea why they were given.

*The Bible is not a collection of promises to claim.* Promises and prophecies were given to various churches and people at different times and circumstances; therefore, not everyone can claim the same. There are positive and negative promises. Every biblical promise has a context, a recipient, a purpose, and qualifications. These must be understood before we claim them. The promises of God have significant applications for us. God cares for us and can meet all of our needs. Also, promises are sometimes conditional and dependent upon a recipient's response.

*The Bible is not a textbook of systematic theology* that deals with the Bible's doctrinal and moral teachings. The Bible does teach the truth about God and us. It teaches how we should strive to be in a relationship with God. The Bible's theology is progressive, contextual, and situational. It gradually provides greater insight into the nature and purpose of God, and it does not contract earlier revelations. It clarifies and expands it.

Too often, I have heard testimony from Christians who use scripture out of context. Sadly, misuse of scripture has convinced women to remain in horrible marriages stating that they should follow their husbands as he follows Christ. They conclude by saying this does not mean he is a perfect man. None of us are perfect. The tithing principle has been used to beat members over the head in arguing the 10<sup>th</sup> as being 10% of gross pay, and it has to be money only.

Chapter 2 has given me much to consider in my seminary journey. The difficulty of unlearning what I have been taught all of my life and applying what I have learned is one task. The relief I feel in knowing that some of the challenges I raised in the Christian church and was verbally shut down when sharing are actually valid is significant.

