

Matthew 10.23

Taking the gospel through the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes:

Prophetic Perspective and the Land of Israel as Metaphor

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Introduction

Without question, Matthew 10 is a unique portion of Scripture. This text records instructions to the apostles that Jesus gave when He sent them on the first gospel mission (1-6). Thus, the text has a strong historical quality that makes it difficult to apply. That is, the passage seems riveted to the past, to “what happened back there” because Jesus sent the twelve to the lost sheep of Israel only (10.5-6). We have a commission of the apostles recorded here that goes back *before* the resurrection to an activity they fulfilled while Christ was with them on earth.

How then do we apply it to the church today? It seems inapplicable. However, the chapter contains many familiar verses that Christians readily apply to their lives. Some examples are: the worker is worthy of his hire, shake off the dust of your feet, be wise as serpents and harmless as doves, fear not those who can kill the body, the hairs of your head are numbered, and confess Christ before men. Who would bar any of these passages from application in the church? Still, there seems to be a big historical ditch preventing application. Therefore, we must ask, “How do we properly determine the relevance of this chapter for us, how does it apply to you and me?” We can answer these questions by unpacking the subject of apostolic preaching in the following ways: the place, audience, and time of apostolic preaching, its application, and its purpose. Then we can conclude with some thoughts for further discussion. One area of discussion might be why this text makes some Premillennialists into wavering Premillennialists.

1A. The Place, Audience, and Time of Apostolic Preaching

Here, I will first discuss an interpretation of Matthew 10.23. Then, I will draw out some implications from the text.

1B. An interpretation of Matthew 10.23

When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

For proper interpretation, we need to work with the immediate context, define prophetic perspective, and then we can offer a reasonable explanation of the passage.

1C. Context within the chapter

In the context, 10.5-6, Jesus locates the preaching of the apostles within the geographical borders of Israel (**Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, ⁶ but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel**). He pointedly instructs the apostles to avoid Gentile and Samaritan cities. Complicating things even more is the time reference for apostolic preaching *in the cities of Israel*. According to our text (10.23), the apostles preach *there* until the Son of Man comes. Problems therefore surface. How could they preach up to the second coming in light of the fact that Jesus did not return in their lifetimes? Furthermore, because of the Great Commission (Mat. 28), we know that the gospel goes to all nations. Yet the text confronts us with the idea that apostolic preaching continues until the second coming, and it does so within the strict limits of Israel’s borders. Per verse 15, “towns” point to land, *so they preach in the land of Israel until the parousia*. These facts give us the perspective of a prophet.

2C. Prophetic Perspective

The notion of prophetic perspective surfaces, additionally here, in the seemingly contradictory references to the Gentiles (do not go to the Gentiles, v. 5 with “to bear witness... before... the Gentiles,” v. 18). In the outline of the preaching activity of the apostles, there is a

subtle transition from its initial phase in this first missionary journey to the broader witness bearing activity that will occur beyond the resurrection to the Gentiles. This shows that we have two phases of apostolic ministry merged in “prophetic perspective.” We should not back off from this merging of ideas in prophecy (as Ridderbos does, *Matthew*, 200). We should not back off and fragment the text into chronologically discrete segments (such as: these verses, 1-15, apply before the resurrection and these other verses, 16f, apply after it). My intuition is that such fragmentation characterized classical dispensationalism; I do not know where the progressive dispensationalists stand on this point.

Rather than fragmenting, we should read the text as a unit (the way it comes to us) and learn from its prophetic perspective. Furthermore, my premise here is that this chapter is a canonical unit that reflects the way Jesus taught this subject; it is not a sloppy editorial combination of reports with inherent tension if not contradiction. Instead, the future is condensed, concatenated, and compressed into a time-flattened unity. Like John’s concatenation of the baptism of the Spirit and fire that blends Pentecost with the final judgment (Mat. 3.11), Jesus also looks to the future in this manner. This perspective should guide interpretation of the text. How to do so is our challenge.

3C. A reasonable explanation

Therefore, if we read verse 23 with a sense of prophetic perspective (combining 5-6 with 18), then we can form a reasonable explanation of the text *as a unit*. Then we will read verse 23 like this: “You will not finish your testimony to the lost sheep in the land of Israel to Gentiles until the second coming.” Such a reading points up the distinctive place of the twelve apostles. Their preaching extends to the end of the age. There is not only a leaping over to post-resurrection activity, but there is also a leaping through the ages to the end of time. Thus, radically and perhaps surprisingly, the apostles are *still* preaching *in the cities of Israel*. Their gospel is the gospel of the NT; it is the truth therein revealed that interprets the life of Christ (cf. the promise of the canon in outline in Jn. 14.26; 15.26-27; 16.13). In other words, their testimony is the foundation of the church with Christ as the chief cornerstone (Eph 2.20).

Consequently, the apostles’ preaching is distinctively within the geographical boundaries of Israel (as to place), it extends all the way to the second coming of Christ (as to time), and it involves Gentiles (as to people). These are facts that suggest a number of implications when we view them through the eyes of a prophet’s perspective and vision.

2B. Implications from Matthew 10.23

1) The implication of figurative language

We have figurative language regarding the location, audience, and time of apostolic preaching. The Lord teaches the apostles about their mission to the Jews, that it is exclusive in a literal sense (only go to Israelite towns and not to Gentile towns), but international in a metaphorical sense. Figuratively speaking, in the vision of the Prophet, the borders of Israel extend to the ends of the entire earth (to wherever Gentiles live)!

We must wonder how it can be that the apostles go only to Israelites in the land of Israel at the same time that they go to Gentiles in all lands of the earth? The use of Hosea by Paul regarding Israelites as “not my people” (Hosea 1.9; 2.23; Rom 9.25) leads us to conclude that literal Israelite towns are Gentile towns spiritually! This is the case because Jesus tells the disciples that as they go only to the lost sheep of Israel and not to the Gentiles, they will be going to the Gentiles, and they will do this right up to the second coming! Going to Israel anticipates and embodies, in a metaphorical way, Gentile mission soon to come literally.

2) The implication of judgment and salvation

This perspective reveals the fact of *judgment on Israel* that has come in the coming of the kingdom. It also reveals the *fulfillment* of the promise of the kingdom *to Israel* in two significant ways: a) First, Israel’s salvation comes in terms of a remnant: “the lost sheep” of Israel. b)

Second, it reveals the fulfillment of the promise of the kingdom to Israel in blessing the Gentiles (cf. Gen. 12.3; 17.8). In the language of John 10 (14-16), they *continue* until the second coming to preach to the lost sheep of that fold (Jews), and they are *still* preaching to other sheep not of that fold (Gentiles); preaching to *both* in the land until He comes!

3) The implication of holy land and covenant people.

In the teaching of Jesus, if you insist on talking about “holy land,” then you have to refer to the holy earth. Now the kingdom of God encompasses the globe. The world of nations is the covenant people of God. The nations are “lost Israel,” and from this “international Israel,” God is drawing out the true seed of Abraham, the church.

Hebrews 2.16 indicates that God’s eternal covenant children are the seed of Abraham. Not helping angels but the seed of Abraham is equivalent to saying, “God helps fallen sinful human beings in terms of His covenant purposes that predate creation and that come to particular and historical expression in His dealings with Abraham and his descendants” (cf. Jn 17.2 with Heb 2.13-16). Thus, the nations (made up of Jews and Gentiles) are the lost Israel; the nations are the covenant people of God that are lost like sheep in need of a shepherd. In turn, the plentiful harvest (Mat 9.37) of Christians comes from international Israel, from Israel that has become the nations and the nations that have become Israel. Now the Gentiles are the seed of Abraham, they are the lost sheep of Israel and all Gentile towns are Israelite towns. Gospel mission to the towns of Israel continues until the second coming as the gospel goes to the cities of the world. The kingdom of Christ has come and His rule extends to the entire earth. He is building His church from the people of His covenant, from covenant breakers that populate the earth.

In this church building time, we should view all people on earth as lost children of Abraham just as we should consider that they are all lost sons of Adam and Eve. As we view all people as image bears of God but fallen, likewise, we should view them as *covenant breakers*. In this line of thought, the nations of the earth are the covenant people of God because what formerly belonged to Israel (the covenants, the giving of the law, the promises, Rom. 9) now belongs to all nations. However, like old Israel, this new “international Israel” is in covenant with God on the pathway of disobedience and covenant breaking.

Accordingly, per Matthew 13 (36-43), Messiah’s kingdom comes in a way that is comparable to a man (representing God) that sows good seed in his field (the world). An enemy (Satan) sows bad seed in the man’s field. The lesson for us in our study in Matthew 10 is that God’s kingdom includes within it both good and bad seed, His redeemed children and those that are not His redeemed children. *Remarkably, whether you are redeemed or not, you are in His kingdom that has come in the coming of Christ.* From the world as a place located within the land of Israel (metaphorically in the vision of the prophet), and from the world as a family of nations to the end of the age, God calls out His redeemed people. The entire world is “lost Israel” and the apostles have the commission to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel to form the church composed of Jews and Gentiles alike. Thus, Matthew 10 is one fabric with Matthew 28.

4) The implication of preaching then and now

In turn, we can state that *what the apostles preached is what we preach today spreading the word everywhere possible to the ends of the earth until Christ comes.* There is a “then and now” quality throughout: what they did back then, we continue to do now. They did it in a foundation laying way. We do it in a way that builds on that foundation.

2A. Understanding how to apply apostolic preaching then and now

It is important to note that we all (ministers and disciples alike) share in the apostles’ mission. Thus, all the things said of them (responses, exhortations, promises, warnings, etc.) apply to all of us *mutatis mutandis*, which means we make “the necessary adjustments” to our place in post-apostolic times, as ministers with the apostolic text in our hands, and as disciple-listeners to apostolic preaching in its post-apostolic form.

The responses that met the apostles will duplicate themselves in the time between. The exhortations to the apostles are exhortations to those who preach the gospel today. The promises and warnings (both as subtle exhortations) to them are exhortations to all disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. the shift from “you”

to “whoever,” 10.27, 33). How people respond to them (v. 40) is a matter of how they receive the Lord. This is true today when preaching correctly presents the apostolic doctrine.

For application purposes, we can outline the chapter along two lines: applications that belong primarily to preachers (then and now), and applications that belong to both preachers and disciples (then and now).

1B. Applications that belong primarily, but not exclusively, to preachers (1-24)

The words of Jesus to the apostles are words to us because their preaching continues until the second coming; so, we have instructions to all preachers in the time between; they labored in a foundation-laying way and we enter into their labors in a building way, building on the apostolic foundation. Let me give these applications to preachers in bare outline.

The things that happened to the apostles as they went about fulfilling their preaching task will be duplicated in many ways across the centuries after the apostolic era *as the gospel goes to the Gentiles by going to the towns of Israel*. In the section up to verse 25, we have exhortations to those who preach the apostolic message both then and now. However, surely, the main points apply directly to the preaching of the word as something we all have a share in as preachers and listeners (as those who preach and those who listen to preaching). There are implications for listeners here even if all or most of the attention is on preachers.

As the gospel goes to “international Israel” (to the Gentiles including Jews who are in effect Gentiles because they are “not my people”), it includes the promise of healing, but in a particular way. The apostles preached in word and deed; we preach that word-deed defined gospel. We preach the miracles as embodiments of the good news of kingdom salvation that culminates in our resurrection based on the resurrection of Christ as first fruits. For example, resurrection is a great theme and not to be confined to Easter sermons, nor is it confined to apologetic sermons; it is the good news fleshed out in its fullness.

1) Go...preaching the apostolic word (10.1-8a)

⁵These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, ⁶but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' ⁸Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons.

2) Preach by means of the support of those who receive your word (10.8b-10)

You received without paying; give without pay. ⁹Acquire no gold nor silver nor copper for your belts, ¹⁰no bag for your journey, nor two tunics nor sandals nor a staff, for the laborer deserves his food.

It is a general rule that those who preach the gospel live by the gospel. They are to “make their living” by it without other means of acquiring income (there are obvious exceptions, as Paul’s tent making indicates, but living by the gospel is the general rule).

3) Pursue the goal of finding worthy ones (10.11-15)

¹¹And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart. ¹²As you enter the house, greet it. ¹³And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. ¹⁴And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. ¹⁵Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.

In other words, worthy ones are out there for the finding. They are God’s elect, the sure harvest of His covenant children (cf. Jn. 17.2). Give them the gospel of peace that brings peace to the heart before God. The key to worthiness is listening (hearing willingly and obeying the apostolic message). Toward those who refuse to listen, “shake off the dust from your feet,” and know that they are bound for severe judgment. The apostolic preaching, apostolic doctrine, is key to a right relationship with God. Preachers today must preach and teach that doctrine and seek those who will listen to that message in its fullness. The message of the apostles should have primacy and priority (don’t make it modern; take modern people back to it).

4) Be alert and aware of the hardships that go with preaching (10.16-18)

¹⁶"Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. ¹⁷Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, ¹⁸and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. ¹⁹When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. ²⁰For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through

you. ²¹ Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, ²² and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ²³ When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes. ²⁴ "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. ²⁵ It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household.

Preachers are also like sheep, they are like sheep in the midst of wolves. Jesus tells us that opponents are going to act wolf-like and deliver you to courts, floggings, before kings, governors and Gentiles. The Lord's purpose in these hard times is that gospel witness go forth, even though preachers will be hated and delivered over to death, even though families will divide, and even though persecution of act and word will come. Preachers are to know that they are not alone in these hardships. Jesus faced them first and therefore His followers should expect them (the servant is not above his master, 24-25).

5) Work knowing that the apostolic testimony is the word of the Spirit (10.19-20)

¹⁹ When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. ²⁰ For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

"It is not you but the Spirit that speaks" is a promise that the witness of the apostles will have the authority of God for it will be the very word of God by the Spirit. That is why preachers today must put a radical importance on the witness of the apostles. That message brings life and peace to sinners in need. Thus, the goal is not to find modern applications for today but to confront modern people with the apostolic witness to Christ.

6) Persist through trials in the work of gospel mission (10.21-23)

²³ When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

When people reject you in one town, go on to another. "Worthy ones" are out there and God will lead preachers to them. Ministers are to endure to the end knowing the promise that by enduring they will be saved. The work goes on until the second coming. "Those who endure to the end will be saved" is an encouragement, a promise to rest in; it is a duty but here the emphasis is on the promise that goes with the duty to persevere. It is encouraging to face a difficult up-hill climb confronted with wolves, hatred, floggings and death with the knowledge that salvation stands at the other end of endurance. God's ministers must and will persevere to the end and find salvation (deliverance into glory through all hardships).

2B. Applications that belong to both preachers and disciples (10.24-42)

Those addressed in the text are also the hearers of preaching both then and now. Thus, there is discussion about listeners: "If anyone will not receive you or listen to your words" (10.14). Then reference to disciples (10.24) includes the subtle shift from *you* (and "your") to "everyone" (and "whoever") in verses 31-32.

²⁶ "So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. ²⁷ What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. ²⁸ And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰ But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. ³² So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, ³³ but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven (10.26-33).

Regarding these listeners, the Lord cites responses, duties, and consequences. Some will be enemies and some will be disciples. Thus, we learn things about suffering for the gospel, we learn about the consequences of disobedience, and we learn about the duties of ministers *and the duties of disciples*.

Accordingly, the passage has a richness that we can appreciate when we meditate awhile on its complexity, moving as it does from apostolic to post-apostolic times, from preachers to listeners, and from enemies to disciples.

At any given time up to the second coming, ministers, and all disciples have the duty to acknowledge Christ before men. Those who acknowledge Him before men have Him as their advocate before the Father in heaven. Those who deny Him before men have Him as prosecutor before the Father in heaven. *Thus, we all share in preaching the apostolic message, by testifying to what they preached. We all have a share in gospel mission.* What they announced then, we acknowledge now. What they preached to the Gentiles then metaphorically, we acknowledge now among the Gentiles literally.

The context for doing this joint work of confessing Christ is our Father's providential care. Enemies who can kill the body should not cause us fear. God is the one to fear who saves and judges whole persons, body and soul. He is our Father. We are more valuable than the sparrows that He knows. Therefore, confess Christ knowing that Christ is your advocate by the Father's love as well. Thus, we should be about the task of gospel mission in a joint way. The six things above regarding preachers and preaching call all of us to mission work.

Therefore, we must help each other in promoting the preaching of the gospel that Christ and the apostles defined in word and deed. We should give that message priority and primacy because their teaching is the word of the Holy Spirit. We should support the preacher that he may live of the gospel. We should all be on the lookout for worthy ones who will listen to the preaching of the apostolic doctrine (cf. the grace of God in the whole counsel of God and all that is for the nurture and profit of the people of God). We need to keep on keeping on and therefore we should help one another and encourage one another in the work of gospel mission. We are to do these things with a sense of duty to walk worthy of our calling and with a deep concern for the means that God has appointed for the spread of the gospel to the ends of the earth to the end of the age.

3A. The Purpose of the apostles' preaching

In a word, the purpose of apostolic preaching (then and now) is *to form a new Israel*, a new people of God beginning that development *within old Israel*. Christ first sets the new Israel apart in the calling of the twelve. Through the twelve, the "worthy" have a place in the new Israel. Finally, *preaching in the cities of Israel up to the second coming involves preaching to Gentiles*. Therefore, *Gentiles (with Jews) make up the new Israel*, the new children of Abraham by submission to Jesus-Messiah in repentance from their covenant breaking.

Conclusions

1) Important model for prophetic study

Do we get some hermeneutical guidance from our Lord as to how we can approach OT prophecies regarding the cities of Israel, Jerusalem, temple, and land? From the Sermon on the Mount, our Lawgiver teaches us how to read the law in its true spirit and intent, so, we should expect help in reading prophecy from our Prophet.

Accordingly, here is how it unfolds: Jesus shows us how to move in thought from the cities of the land to the cities of the earth in order to understand the coming of the kingdom promised to David's greater Son (10.7, **And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'**). Thus, through apostolic preaching in the cities of Israel until the second coming, Jesus establishes His rule, His Davidic kingdom-rule, over the Gentiles. The nation of Israel, under judgment, becomes the Gentile nations; they blend in with all others who are "not my people." Again, Paul tells us that those who are "not my people" are Gentiles (**even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles...** ²⁵ **As indeed he says in Hosea, "Those who were not my people I will call 'my people,' and her who was not beloved I will call 'beloved.'"** ²⁶ **"And in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' there they will be called 'sons of the living God.'"** ²⁷ **And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved, Rom.9.14-27).** In other words, Paul says the calling of a remnant from Israel is a calling of Gentiles. How can that be so? It is the case because both Israel and the Gentiles are "not my people," but "they will be called 'sons of the living God.'"

Paul seems to be working with the relation of Israel and the nations the same way that Jesus presents that relationship in Matthew 10. Moreover, this move from Israel to the nations has its match in the move from land to earth when Paul states that the promise of the land to Abraham was a promise of the world (Rom. 4.13, a promise of earth and universe!). Thus, we have good reason to understand the OT promises regarding the children of Abraham and the land of Canaan in a similar way. Then, we can say, “yes, God promised Abraham and his descendents the land with specific boundaries *as promise, type, and foreshadow itself*. The patriarchs always looked beyond themselves to the new human family that will inherit the earth in the dawn of the eternal Sabbath.”

When Messiah comes, this promise unfolds in a way unexpected in a now and not yet fashion. Now, Christ establishes His kingdom on earth by the preaching of the apostolic gospel. It is “then and now” until He comes. When He comes the city of God will come and all nations will flow into it. This is the city that Abraham desired, and that was embodied in the promise of the land, the city that has God as its builder. Living in the land of promise, Abraham looked for the city of God beyond the land (**By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise.** ¹⁰ **For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God,** Heb. 11.9-10). Thus, the writer of Hebrews states that believers have now come to this city in the kingdom of God in a realized eschatology that promises what is still not yet (**22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,** and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, ²³ **and to the assembly [church] of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,** ²⁴ **and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.** ²⁵ **See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven.** ²⁶ **At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens."** ²⁷ **This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of things that are shaken- that is, things that have been made- in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain.** ²⁸ **Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe,** ²⁹ **for our God is a consuming fire,** Heb. 12.22-29).

In the end, when the city of God, which is the New Jerusalem, comes, it will have twelve gates with the names on them of the twelve tribes and it will have twelve foundation stones with the names on them of the twelve apostles (Rev. 21.1-27). Is this not what Jesus and Paul taught? On the foundation of apostolic preaching, God builds a new Israel, the New Jerusalem, a new city, a new human family in which the temple is the Lord and in which the light is the glory of God, and in this light the nations walk! Approaching the gates of the city, you see that you will enter the new Israel through the twelve Israelite gates founded on the apostolic gospel preached until the second coming (per Mat. 10). Once you pass through the gates into the city, what do you see? You see the nations walking in the light of God’s glory. Israel, Jerusalem, the city of God, is made up of Gentiles; Israel is the nations, the land is the earth, and temple is the Lord dwelling with His people (Jews and Gentiles, **not my people** are now **my people** by the apostolic gospel preached-in the vision of the prophet-in the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes).

2) Practical value of prophetic study

All the “ins and outs” of Matthew 10 that the church applies to itself directly and intuitively rightly apply to contemporary life. Otherwise, these teachings are riveted to the past and inapplicable to the church today. In turn, that historical “big ditch” would mean that much of the gospel of Jesus Christ *that He gave in His teaching* is irrelevant to the church He came to build. However, that is impossible because His words are the words of light and life for His lambs and sheep for the “time between” until He comes.