

# Chiastic Structure of Matthews Gospel

1

## The Basic Structure of A Chiasm

- A. Introductory statement on focus A
- B. First statement on focus B
- C. Central focus of the chiasm
- B. Second statement on focus B
- A. Final statement on focus A

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- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.
- E.
- F.
- E.
- D.
- C.
- B.
- A.

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- A. Demonstration of Jesus' Qualifications as King (chaps. 1–4)
- B. Sermon on the Mount: Who Can Enter His Kingdom (chaps. 5–7)
- C. Miracles and Instruction (chaps. 8–9)
- D. Instruction to the Twelve: Authority and Message for Israel (chap. 10)
- E. Opposition: The Nation's Rejection of the King (chaps. 11–12)
- F. Parables of the Kingdom: The Kingdom Postponed (chap. 13)
- E. Opposition: The Nation's Rejection of the King (chaps. 14–17)
- D. Instruction to the Twelve: Authority and Message for the Church (ch. 18)
- C. Miracles and Instruction (chaps. 19–23)
- B. Olivet Discourse: When the Kingdom Will Come (chaps. 24–25)
- A. Demonstration of Jesus' Qualifications as King (chaps. 26–28)

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Once one sees the parables of the kingdom as the center of Matthew's message, he must then ask what point was being made by the parables.

Toussaint addressed this issue. "The answer can only be found by observing the main emphases of Matthew's Gospel and noting the logical development of those emphases...."

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Neither the significance of the life of Christ narrated by Matthew nor the doctrines contained in his Gospel are intelligible without an understanding of his argument."

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Then, observing the data of the text, he argues that the Gospel was written to Jewish believers based on “the author’s style, by the vocabulary of the Gospel, by its subject matter, by the use it makes of Old Testament quotations,...

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...by the genealogy of chapter one, by its emphasis on Peter, by the unexplained customs related in the book, and by the testimony of tradition.”

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From this he concludes,  
“Matthew has a twofold  
purpose in writing his Gospel.  
Primarily he penned this  
Gospel to prove Jesus is the  
Messiah, but he also wrote it  
to explain God’s kingdom  
program to his readers.”

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Matthew  
presented God’s  
kingdom  
program in  
three aspects.

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First, the earthly literal kingdom was offered to Israel in the person of Jesus, the Messiah, at His first coming.

Second, the kingdom was postponed because Israel rejected its Messiah.

This postponed kingdom will be established at Christ's second coming.

Third, Christ Jesus is now engaged in building His church, composed of those who in this age are the heirs of the kingdom.

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Matthew's eleven-part chiastic structure includes five parallel pairs of material. As noted earlier, not every element in each unit has a corresponding element in its parallel unit. But sufficient points of contact occur that enable readers to recognize the point being made by that pair.

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A. Demonstration of Jesus' Qualifications as King  
(chaps. 1–4)

Chapters 1–4 are parallel to chapters 26–28, for in both sections a non-Jewish ruler attempted to kill Jesus, and in both instances this occurred after the ruler was told that Jesus is King of the Jews.

A. Demonstration of Jesus' Qualifications as King  
(chaps. 26–28)

13

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14

In both sections the Jewish leaders assisted their ruler and did not believe in Jesus. In the first section Jesus escaped death by going to Egypt, but in the second section He conquered death by rising from the grave.

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B. Sermon on the Mount: Who Can Enter His Kingdom (chaps. 5–7)

Chapters 5–7 are parallel to chapters 24–25, for in both sections Jesus addressed the nation of Israel as its King.

B. Olivet Discourse: When the Kingdom Will Come (chaps. 24–25)

16



Chapters 5–7 are parallel to chapters 24–25, for in both sections Jesus addressed the nation of Israel as its King. In chapters 5–7 Jesus, the messianic King, described the character traits of citizens of His kingdom, and in doing so He declared who will be allowed to enter His kingdom. At this time the kingdom was still expected and was offered to Israel.

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In chapters 24–25 the kingdom was delayed because of the nation's rejection of the offer in chapters 11–12.<sup>17</sup> In chapters 24–25 Jesus again addressed the nation of Israel in response to questions from His disciples. He spoke of the signs Israelites should watch for in order to be prepared for His return to set up the postponed kingdom. Thus Jesus' answer to His disciples may be seen as addressing Israel in the same sense as the Sermon on the Mount.

18

### C. Miracles and Instruction (chaps. 8–9)

Chapters 8–9 are parallel to chapters 19–23. Both recount Jesus' instructions about discipleship and the coming kingdom as well as giving reports of Jesus' miracles.

### C. Miracles and Instruction (chaps. 19–23)

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Chapters 8–9 are parallel to chapters 19–23. Both recount Jesus' instructions about discipleship and the coming kingdom as well as giving reports of Jesus' miracles. Chapters 8–9 record miracles that are divided by two pericopes on discipleship. Then in chapters 19–23, the section following the second set of instructions, Matthew recounted Jesus' instructions to His disciples and noted other miracles He performed.

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Where the first section emphasizes Jesus' miracles and touches on discipleship, the second section emphasizes Jesus' instructions to those who were His disciples and only mentioned His miracles. They cover similar themes but with differing focuses.

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D. Instruction to the Twelve: Authority and Message for Israel (chap. 10)

Chapters 10 and 18 are parallel in that both include Jesus' instructions to the twelve apostles.

D. Instruction to the Twelve: Authority and Message for the Church ch.18)

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Chapters 10 and 18 are parallel in that both include Jesus' instructions to the twelve apostles. In chapter 10 the kingdom was still being offered to the nation. And so the disciples were sent to Israel to announce the nearness of that kingdom. In chapter 18 the kingdom was no longer being offered, for it had been rejected by the nation. Instead of a message for Israel, Jesus gave His disciples instructions on the life of the church.

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Though the instructions to the disciples in these two sections differ, in both instances the Twelve were being instructed. This is similar to the pattern in the Pentateuch in which Exodus and Numbers both recount the nation's experiences in the wilderness. Their specific contents are different, but their "wilderness" connection and roles in the structure of the Pentateuch are unmistakable.

24

E. Opposition: The Nation's Rejection of the King

(chaps. 11–12)

Matthew 11–12 is parallel to chapters 14–17. These sections seem to have the most points of contact. John the Baptist was imprisoned (chap. 11) and executed (chap. 14). The conflicts Jesus faced with the Jews in the grain field and synagogue (12:1–14) are parallel to the Jews' objections to Jesus' disciples transgressing Jewish traditions (15:1–20). In both sections Jesus healed many people (12:15–32 and 15:29–31), and in both sections the Pharisees/rulers asked for a sign, and each time Jesus mentioned only the sign of Jonah (12:38–42 and 16:1–4).

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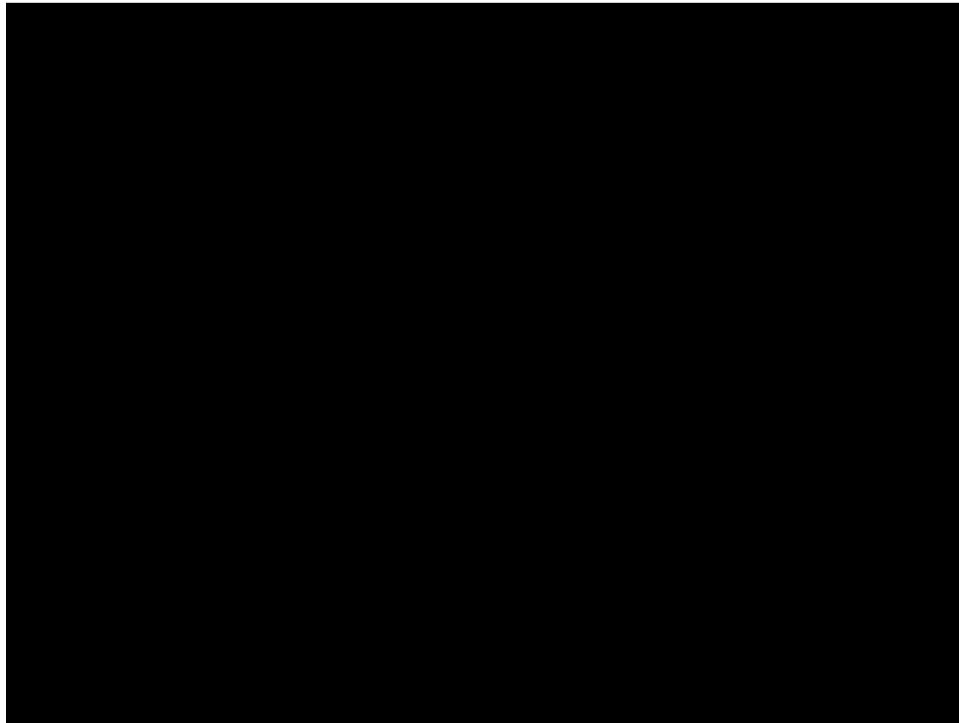
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At the center of the parallel sections are the parables of the kingdom (chap. 13), which may themselves be arranged as a chiasm

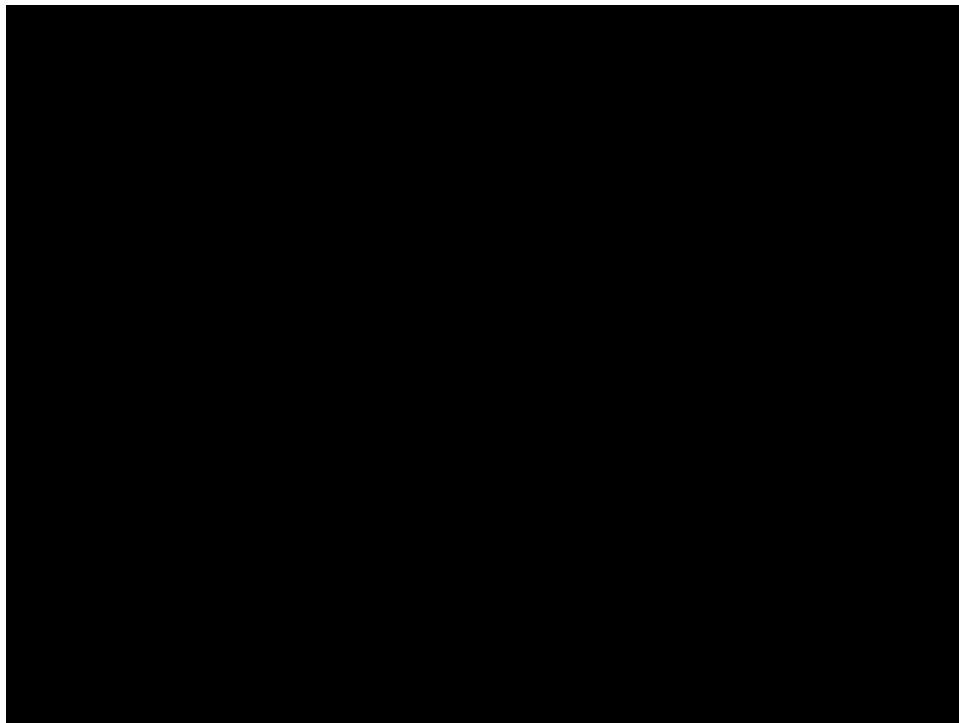
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