

The Structure of Matthew's Gospel

- A => 1:1-17 The past generations lead up to Jesus Christ as the son of David and the son of Abraham.
- B => 1:18-25 Mary at Jesus' birth.
- C => 2:1-23 As Jesus returned from Egypt, so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."
Then he settled in Nazareth and fulfilled what was also said through the prophets: "He will be called a Nazarene."
- D => 3:1-10 John called people to repentance and warned them to produce good fruit.
- E => 3:11-12 Jesus is greater than John.
- F => 3:13-15 John baptized Jesus even though Jesus did not need to be baptized. This was to fulfill all righteousness.
- G => 3:16-17 God's voice from heaven said: "This is my Son whom I love, with him I am well pleased."
- H => 4:1-11 The devil tempted and tested Jesus.
- I => 4:12-8:22 Jesus went up a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him and he began to teach them. When he came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him and he healed all the sick.
- J => 8:23-9:38 This segment prefigures the saving significance of Jesus' death and resurrection. Jesus would have the authority to forgive sins and raise the dead.
- K => 10:1-42 Jesus warns the disciples of persecution.
- L => 11:1-19 John had prepared the way for Jesus.
- M => 11:20-30 In Korazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum there was no repentance in response to Jesus' miracles even though the foreign cities of Tyre and Sidon would have repented long ago.
- N => 12:1-22 The picking of heads of grain and healing people on a Sabbath caused rejection and persecution but Jesus' actions were explained in a quote from Isaiah.
- O => 12:23-50 No other miraculous sign will be given than the sign of Jonah. As Jonah was three days and

three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

N' => 13:1-52

Jesus' told the parable of the sower and the telling of parables in the face of rejection was explained in a quote from Isaiah.

M' => 13:53-58

Only in his hometown and in his own house is a prophet without honour.

L' => 14:1-36

After John's beheading Jesus had compassion on the crowd and healed all the sick.

K' => 15:1-20

The Pharisees and teachers of the law take offense at the disciples and Jesus.

J => 15:21-28

This segment prefigures the saving significance of Jesus' death and resurrection. Even the Gentiles would receive healing.

I' => 15:29-39

Jesus went up a mountainside and sat down. Great crowds came to him and he healed all the sick. After three days Jesus called his disciples and asked them to feed the crowd. After Jesus had sent the crowd away, he got into the boat and went to the vicinity of Magadan.

H' => 16:1-12

The Pharisees and the Sadducees tested Jesus.

G' => 16:13-17:23

God's voice from the cloud said: "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him."

F' => 17:24-27

Jesus paid the temple tax even though he was exempt from the tax as God's son. He did not want to offend.

E' => 18:1-20:28

Jesus taught his disciples on greatness.

D' => 20:29-34

Jesus opened their eyes and they followed him.

C' => 21:1-27:54

As Jesus entered Jerusalem, the crowds said: "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee." However, the centurion and those with him concluded at his death: "Surely he was the Son of God."

B' => 27:55-28:15

Mary and the other Mary at Jesus' tomb.

A' => 28:16-20

The future generations in all nations will be blessed through Jesus (who reigns as the Son of David and has inherited God's promises to Abraham).

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- A => 1:1-17** **The past generations lead up to Jesus Christ as the son of David and the son of Abraham.**
- B => 1:18-25** **Mary at Jesus' birth.**
- C => 2:1-23** **As Jesus returned from Egypt, so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son." Then he settled in Nazareth and fulfilled what was also said through the prophets: "He will be called a Nazarene."**
- a => 2:1-12 Magi came and worshipped the king of the Jews in Bethlehem but were warned in a dream not to trust King Herod.
- b => 2:13-18 The outwitted King Herod gave the command to murder the boys of Bethlehem but Joseph had fled with Jesus and his mother to Egypt until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."
- a' => 2:19-23 Joseph was warned in a dream not to trust the son of Herod. Therefore, he settled his family in Nazareth and so was fulfilled what was said through the prophets: "He will be called a Nazarene."
- D => 3:1-10** **John called people to repentance and warned them to produce good fruit.**
- E => 3:11-12** **Jesus is greater than John.**
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- G => 3:16-17** **God's voice from heaven said: "This is my Son whom I love, with him I am well pleased."**
- H => 4:1-11** **The devil tempted and tested Jesus.**
- I => 4:12-8:22** **Jesus went up a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him and he began to teach them. When he came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him and he healed all the sick.**
- Heading => 4:12-17 From that time on Jesus began to preach: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."
- a => 4:18-22 Jesus called the first disciples.
- b => 4:23-25 Jesus preached the good news of the kingdom and healed every disease and sickness among the people.
- c => 5-7 Jesus was teaching with authority. (*See separate paper on the structure of the Sermon on the Mount.*)

c' => 8:1-15	Jesus was healing with authority
ca => 8:1-4	<i>Jesus healed a man by touch.</i>
cb => 8:5-13	<i>The centurion said to Jesus: "Just say the word and my servant will be healed. For I myself am an man under authority, with soldiers under me."</i>
ca' => 8:14-15	<i>Jesus healed a woman by touch.</i>
b' => 8:16-17	Jesus healed all the sick because he took up our infirmities and carried our diseases.
a' => 8:18-22	Jesus explained the cost of discipleship.
J => 8:23-9:8	This segment prefigures the saving significance of Jesus' death and resurrection. Jesus would have the authority to forgive sins and raise the dead.
a => 8:23-27	Jesus saved his disciples from drowning by exercising authority over the winds and the waves. [There are allusions to the work of Moses whom God used to rescue his people from Egypt.]
b => 8:28-34	When Jesus and his disciples arrived on the other side of the sea, Jesus drowned in the sea a large herd of pigs which were possessed by demons. . [There are allusions to the work of Moses whom God used to rescue his people from Egypt.]
c => 9:1-8	The crowd praised God who had given Jesus the authority on earth to forgive sins.
d => 9:9-38	Jesus had been given the authority to raise the dead.
da => 9:9	<i>Jesus called Matthew to be his disciple.</i>
db => 9:10-11	<i>The Pharisees queried that Jesus was eating with sinners but Jesus came to be a doctor to the sick.</i>
dc 9:12-13	<i>Jesus told the Pharisees: "Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.'"</i>
db => 9:14-15	<i>John's disciples queried that the disciple were not fasting but when the bridegroom was present, it was not the time for fasting.</i>
dd => 9:16-17	<i>New and old garments – as new and old wineskins – do not go together.</i>

dd => 9:18-26 The woman touched Jesus' garment and the crowd laughed at Jesus' faith in resurrection.

db => 9:27-33 News of Jesus' healings spread all over that region and people claimed that nothing like this had ever been seen in Israel.

dc => 9:34 The Pharisees said: "It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons."

db => 9:35-36 Jesus went through all the towns and villages, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. He had compassion on the crowds.

da' => 9:37-38 Jesus told his disciples to pray for workers to be sent out into the harvest.

K => 10:1-42 Jesus warns the disciples of persecution.

L => 11:1-19 John had prepared the way for Jesus.

M => 11:20-30 In Korazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum there was no repentance in response to Jesus' miracles even though the foreign cities of Tyre and Sidon would have repented long ago.

N => 12:1-22 The picking of heads of grain and healing people on a Sabbath caused rejection and persecution but Jesus' actions were explained in a quote from Isaiah.

O => 12:23-50 No other miraculous sign will be given than the sign of Jonah. As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

a => 12:23-37 Demons and judgement.

aa => 12:23-29 Jesus drives out demons by the Spirit of God and heals people permanently.

ab => 12:30-37 By your words you will be acquitted or condemned.

	b => 12:38-42	This wicked generation will receive no other sign than the sign of Jonah.
	a' => 12:43-50	Demons and judgement.
	aa => 12:46-50	<i>This wicked generation experiences only temporary relief from demons and the final condition is worse than the first.</i>
	ab => 12:46-50	<i>Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.</i>
	N' => 13:1-52	Jesus' told the parable of the sower and the telling of parables in the face of rejection was explained in a quote from Isaiah.
	M' => 13:53-58	Only in his hometown and in his own house is a prophet without honour.
	L' => 14:1-36	After John's beheading Jesus had compassion on the crowd and healed all the sick.
	K' => 15:1-20	The Pharisees and teachers of the law take offense at the disciples and Jesus.
	J => 15:21-28	This segment prefigures the saving significance of Jesus' death and resurrection. Even the Gentiles would receive healing.
	I' => 15:29-39	Jesus went up a mountainside and sat down. Great crowds came to him and he healed all the sick. After three days Jesus called his disciples and asked them to feed the crowd. After Jesus had sent the crowd away, he got into the boat and went to the vicinity of Magadan.
	H' => 16:1-12	The Pharisees and the Sadducees tested Jesus.
	G' => 16:13-17:23	God's voice from the cloud said: "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him."
	F' => 17:24-27	Jesus paid the temple tax even though he was exempt from the tax as God's son. He did not want to offend.
E' => 18:1-20:28		Jesus taught his disciples on greatness.

- a => 18:1-14 Whoever humbles himself like a child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.
- b => 18:15-35 The demand to forgive a brother seventy-seven times does not seem to be fair .
- c => 19:1-12 The disciples said to him: “If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry.” Jesus replied: “Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given.”
- d => 19:13-15 Jesus said: “Let the children come to me for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”
- c’ => 19:16-30 The astonished disciples asked: “Who then can be saved?” Jesus said: “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are impossible.”
- b’ => 20:1-16 Equal wages for unequal labour in God’s kingdom does not seem to be fair.
- a’ => 20:17-28 Whoever wants to become great must serve the others like Jesus.

D’ => 20:29-34 Jesus opened their eyes and they followed him.

C’ => 21:1–27:54 As Jesus entered Jerusalem, the crowds said: “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.” However, the centurion and those with him concluded at his death: “Surely he was the Son of God.”

- a => 21:1-11 Jesus entered Jerusalem with the crowds saying that he was the prophet from Nazareth.
- b => 21:12-22 Jesus entered the “den of robbers”.
- c => 21:23-22:45 Jesus’ authority is questioned.
- d => 23:1-39 Woe to the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. Jerusalem kills the prophets.
- e => 24:1-25:46 Jesus is teaching about the coming of the Son of Man.
- d’ => 26:1-27:10 The chief priests and the elders plot to kill Jesus. They decide to put him to death.
- da => 26:1-13 The chief priests and the leaders plot to kill Jesus. The expensive gift of a woman prepares Jesus for his burial.*
- da-i => 26:1-5 The chief priests and the leaders plot to kill Jesus.*
- da-ii => 26:6-13 The expensive gift of a woman prepares Jesus for his burial.*
- db => 26:14-16 Judas makes arrangements to betray Jesus.*
- dc => 26:17-19 Jesus and the disciples make preparations for the Passover.*
- db => 26:20-25 Jesus exposes Judas’ intentions of betraying him.*

dc => 26:26-30

Jesus and the disciples celebrate the Passover with Jesus offering them the cup with his blood which is poured out for the forgiveness of sins.

db => 26:31-35

Jesus predicts that Peter will disown him.

dc => 26:36-44

Jesus prays about his cup of suffering.

db => 26:45-56

Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss.

dc => 26:57-68

Jesus confirms before the Sanhedrin that he is the Christ and will be coming on the clouds of heaven.

db => 26:69-75

Peter disowns Jesus with an oath.

da' => 27:1-10

The chief priests and elders decide to put Jesus to death. The money of Judas makes provision for the burial of foreigners.

da'-i => 27:1-2

The chief priest and elders decide to put Jesus to death.

da'-ii => 27:3-10

The money of Judas makes provision for the burial of foreigners.

c' => 27:11-31

Jesus is questioned and mocked as the "king of the Jews".

b' => 27:32-44

Jesus is crucified with robbers.

a' => 27:45-54

Jesus died outside of Jerusalem with the centurion saying that he had surely been the Son of God.

B' => 27:55-28:15

Mary and the other Mary at Jesus' tomb.

a => 27:55-56

Many women – among them Mary and the other Mary – followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs.

b => 27:57-60

Joseph of Arimathea placed Jesus' body in his own new tomb.

a' => 27:61

Mary and the other Mary were sitting opposite the tomb.

b => 27:62-66

The tomb is guarded so that no one can steal the body and claim a false resurrection.

a => 28:1-10

Mary and the other Mary welcome Jesus at his resurrection.

b' => 28:11-15

The chief priests and elders bribe the soldiers so that they spread the lie of the disciples stealing Jesus' body.

A' => 28:16-20

The future generations in all nations will be blessed through Jesus (who reigns as the Son of David and has inherited God's promises to Abraham).

The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-7:29) is not a pamphlet that was published on its own. The Sermon on the Mount is only a segment (3 chapters) of an entire book – the Gospel of Matthew (28 chapters). However – frequently – when we read the Bible today – and when we read the different books of the Bible (such as the Gospel of Matthew) – we do not pay much attention to the scope of an entire book. In case we do want to do some further study – investigate the meaning of some Bible verses – we often do not concentrate first on the book in which the Bible verses occur but start searching for similar sounding passages in all of the (sixty-six) books in the Bible. We jump from passage to passage – from Bible book to Bible book – and think that this is going to yield the best results. Why? We do not understand that each book in the Bible is its own unique piece of literature (inspired by God) with structure, the development of themes and conclusions which reflect its place in God’s history with his people.

Why do we struggle with understanding the literature of the Bible? I think that the number one reason is the Bible’s – (most common) – way of laying out the content of poetry, stories and books. The Bible works with a structuring device which is alien to us. We are used to having an introduction, followed by a progression of points – which are arguing the case – and then the conclusion. This is very clear. There is a line of reasoning which simply deals with one piece of evidence after another and – then – the most important piece of information is at the end because everything has been leading up to the final punch-line. This is not how it works in most Bible books. To us – the content seems jumbled and we cannot see a clear progression of thought. There seem to be snippets of content which – haphazardly – relate to other snippets of content throughout the book. Therefore – to us – the Bible literature – compared with other literature – seems to be inferior. Where is the beauty – the art of writing?

Yet, the truth is that the Bible books are master-pieces. Even the narrations – like Matthew’s story of Jesus’ life – are far more poetic in nature than most of our modern literature. The key structuring device in the Bible was the construct which is called “chiasm”. The basic logic is not difficult. In any given text the first segment correlates with and complements the last segment, the second segment correlates with and complements the second-last segment, the third segment correlates with and complements the third-last segment, and so on. Importantly – the most important piece of information is located in the center – in the middle of the text – (where we are usually still in the middle of arguing our case, maybe just warming up) – while the second most important piece of information is located in the outer bracket. Within this basic chiastic structure there is scope for variations. It is best to give a few examples:

Mark 2:27:

A: The sabbath was made, **B:** for man, **B':** not man, **A':** for the sabbath.

Luke 4:14-20:¹

A1 (v14a): And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee

B1 (v14b): And a report went forth through the whole neighbourhood concerning him.

C1 (v15a): And he taught in their *synagogues*.

B1' (v15b): Being praised by all.

A1' (v16a): And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up.

A2 (v16b): And he entered (as his custom was on the Sabbath) *into the synagogue*

B2 (v16c): and he stood up to read

C2 (v17a): and there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah.

D2 (v17b): And opening the book, he found the place where it was written,

E2 (v18a): The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.

F2 (v18b): He has sent me to proclaim to the prisoners freedom

G2 (v18c): and to the *blind recovery of sight*,

F2' (v18d): to send forth the oppressed ones in freedom

E2' (v19): to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

D2' (v20a): And having closed the book

C2' (v20b): after giving it back to the attendant,

B2' (v20c): he sat down

A2' (v20d): and the *eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him*.

The center of the first chiasm is taken up in the outer bracket of the second chiasm: Jesus was teaching in the synagogues. Likewise, the center of the second chiasm is already prefigured in the outer bracket of the first chiasm: The power of the Spirit was with Jesus to give recovery of sight to the blind. Furthermore, the center of the second chiasm relates to the concluding statement of the outer bracket: Jesus came to grant recovery of sight to the blind. The question is: Will those whose eyes are fixed on Jesus finally see?

Here we can already discern how the recognition of a chiasm helps our interpretation and makes us appreciate the finer sub-points.² I give you one more example where a larger section in a Bible book is structured as a chiasm.

Luke 1:46-2:21 (John and Jesus)

A: Mary sings a song because of the child Jesus (Lk 1:46-56).

B: John the Baptist is born (Lk 1:57-66).

C: Zechariah sings a song because of the child Jesus (Lk 1:67-75).

B': Zechariah sings a song because of the child John (Lk 1:76-80).

A': Jesus is born (Lk 2:1-21).

Now I think that the entire Bible book of Matthew is structured as one big chiasm. Understand this structure and the book will open up to you. You will be able to trace the author's intention and progression of thought. You will be clear about the punch-line and also learn to appreciate all the subtle allusions and sub-points which come out of the pairing of chiasmic segments. Here is Matthew's structure (as I see it):

[Distribute A3 handout. Download at www.livinggracetoowoomba.org.]

Now I will talk us through all of the chiastic brackets from AA' to O.

A (1:1-17) The past generations lead up to Jesus Christ as the son of David and the son of Abraham.

A' (28:16-20) The future generations in all nations will be blessed through Jesus (who reigns as the Son of David and has inherited God's promises to Abraham).

In A Jesus is the focal point of past generations – (1:1: “the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham”) – and in A' he is the focal point of future generations (28:18-20: “ ... All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations ... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you ... ”)

B (1:18-25) Mary at Jesus' birth.

B' (27:55-28:15) Mary and the other Mary at Jesus' tomb.

In B Mary is pregnant with Jesus. Joseph struggles with her pregnancy out of wedlock but does not divorce her. Then, Mary gives birth to Jesus.

In B' Mary (Magdalene) and the other Mary are dominant figures at the time of Jesus' death. The sub-structure of B' makes this clear.

B' => 27:55-28:15 Mary and the other Mary at Jesus' tomb.

a => 27:55-56 Many women – among them Mary and the other Mary – followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs.

b => 27:57-60 Joseph of Arimathea placed Jesus' body in his own new tomb.

a' => 27:61 Mary and the other Mary were sitting opposite the tomb.

a => 27:62-66 The tomb is guarded so that no one can steal the body and claim a false resurrection.

b => 28:1-10 Mary and the other Mary welcome Jesus at his resurrection.

a' => 28:11-15 The chief priests and elders bribe the soldiers so that they spread the lie of the disciples stealing Jesus' body.

In a (27:55-56) Mary and the other Mary are among the women who have followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs and in a' (27:61) they still follow Jesus and position themselves at his tomb. In b (27:57-60) Jesus' body is placed in a new tomb.

In a (27:62-66) the tomb continues to play a role because soldiers guard the tomb to prevent false claims of Jesus' resurrection. However, in a' (28:11-15) the soldiers themselves faced an angel that opened the tomb but the chief priests and elders bribed them to say that the disciples stole Jesus' body from the

tomb. In b (28:1-10) Mary and the other Mary were the first to touch the risen Christ and speak with him. (*Notice again how the outer brackets of the first structure correlate with the core of the second structure and vice versa.*)

C (2:1-23) **As Jesus returned from Egypt, so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.” Then he settled in Nazareth and fulfilled what was also said through the prophets: “He will be called a Nazarene.”**

C’ (21:1–27:54) **As Jesus entered Jerusalem, the crowds said: “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.” However, the centurion concluded at his death: “Surely he was the Son of God.”**

In C two prophecies identify Jesus as the Son of God and a Nazarene – Matthew 2:15: “Out of Egypt I called my son.” Matthew 2:23: “He will be called a Nazarene.” This is the sub-structure of C:

a => 2:1-12 Magi came and worshipped the king of the Jews in Bethlehem but were warned in a dream not to trust King Herod.

b => 2:13-18 The outwitted King Herod gave the command to murder the boys of Bethlehem but Joseph had fled with Jesus and his mother to Egypt until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

a’ => 2:19-23 Joseph was warned in a dream not to trust the son of Herod. Therefore, he settled his family in Nazareth and so was fulfilled what was said through the prophets: “He will be called a Nazarene.”

In C’ Jesus finally enters Jerusalem. When the whole city was stirred and asked: “Who is this,” the crowds answered: “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee” (21:11). Yet, this answer was incomplete because Jesus was more than a prophet from Nazareth. The climax comes at Jesus’ death when the Roman centurion and those with him, who were guarding the dying Jesus on the cross, exclaimed: “Surely he was the Son of God” (27:54). Thus, in C and C’ Jesus is both the Son of God and a Nazarene and throughout this chiasmic bracket his identity remains the dominant theme (e.g.: 2:2: “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?” 2:8: “Report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.” 21:23-27; 26:63: “Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God?”; 27:11: “Are you the king of the Jews?”).

C’ has the following sub-structure:

C’ => 21:1–27:54 **As Jesus entered Jerusalem, the crowds said: “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.” However, the centurion concluded at his death: “Surely he was the Son of God.”**

a => 21:1-11 Jesus entered Jerusalem with the crowds saying that he was the prophet from Nazareth.

b => 21:12-22 Jesus entered the “den of robbers”.

- c => 21:23-22:45 Jesus' authority is questioned.
- d => 23:1-39 Woe to the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. Jerusalem kills the prophets.
- e => 24:1-25:46 Jesus is teaching about the coming of the Son of Man.
- d' => 26:1-27:10 The chief priests and the elders plot to kill Jesus. They decide to put him to death.
- c' => 27:11-31 Jesus is questioned and mocked as the "king of the Jews".
- b' => 27:32-44 Jesus is crucified with robbers.
- a' => 27:45-54 Jesus died outside of Jerusalem with the centurion saying that he had surely been the Son of God.

We may also have a brief look at the sub-structure of d':

d' => 26:1-27:10 The chief priests and the elders plot to kill Jesus. They decide to put him to death.

- da => 26:1-13 The chief priests and the leaders plot to kill Jesus. The expensive gift of a woman prepares Jesus for his burial.
- da-i => 26:1-5 The chief priests and the leaders plot to kill Jesus.
- da-ii => 26:6-13 The expensive gift of a woman prepares Jesus for his burial.

- db => 26:14-16 Judas makes arrangements to betray Jesus.
- dc => 26:17-19 Jesus and the disciples make preparations for the Passover.
- db => 26:20-25 Jesus exposes Judas' intentions of betraying him.
- dc => 26:26-30 Jesus and the disciples celebrate the Passover with Jesus offering them the cup with his blood which is poured out for the forgiveness of sins.
- db => 26:31-35 Jesus predicts that Peter will disown him.
- dc => 26:36-44 Jesus prays about his cup of suffering.
- db => 26:45-56 Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss.
- dc => 26:57-68 Jesus confirms before the Sanhedrin that he is the Christ and will be coming on the clouds of heaven.
- db => 26:69-75 Peter disowns Jesus with an oath.

da' => 27:1-10 The chief priests and elders decide to put Jesus to death. The money of Judas makes provision for the burial of foreigners.

da'-i => 27:1-2 The chief priest and elders decide to put Jesus to death.

da'-ii => 27:3-10 The money of Judas makes provision for the burial of foreigners.

In the outer bracket (da and da') the chief priests and elders plot Jesus' death and money spent on Jesus prepares for the burial of people (da: Jesus; da': foreigners). Then, the various segments of db and dc alternate between the abandonment which Jesus suffers from his disciples Judas and Peter and the completion of his mission which Jesus accomplishes nevertheless.

D (3:1–10) John called people to repentance and warned them to produce good fruit.

D' (20:29-34) Jesus opened their eyes and they followed him.

In D John called people to repentance and warned them to produce good fruit in keeping with repentance. In D' Jesus opened the eyes of two blind people who then followed him. These physical healings of blind eyes may point to the deeper need of healing the spiritual eyes of those around Jesus (cf. Matthew 15:14: "They are blind guides." Matthew 13:13: "Though seeing, they do not see."). In fact – in the very next episode of Matthew's Gospel narrative – Jesus enters Jerusalem where the chief priest and teachers of the law immediately reject his teaching and healing at the temple (21:15). They did not repent and align themselves with Jesus because they were spiritually blind. While children were shouting the praises of Jesus (21:15: "Hosanna to the Son of David"), they became indignant, confirming Jesus' earlier observation – Matthew 11:25: "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children."

E (3:11-12) Jesus is greater than John.

E' (18:1-20:28) Jesus taught his disciples on greatness.

In E John confessed that Jesus would be greater and more powerful than him. (Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire and he – John – was not even worthy to untie his sandals.) In E' the disciples ask Jesus: "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

Here is the sub-structure of E':

E' => 18:1-20:28 Jesus taught his disciples on greatness.

a => 18:1-14 Whoever humbles himself like a child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

b => 18:15-35 The demand to forgive a brother seventy-seven times does not seem to be fair.

c => 19:1-12 The disciples said to him: “If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry.” Jesus replied: “Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given.”

d => 19:13-15 Jesus said: “Let the children come to me for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

c' => 19:16-30 The astonished disciples asked: “Who then can be saved?” Jesus said: “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

b' => 20:1-16 Equal wages for unequal labour in God’s kingdom does not seem to be fair.

a' => 20:17-28 Whoever wants to become great must serve the others like Jesus.

F (3:13-15) John baptized Jesus even though Jesus did not need to be baptized. This was to fulfill all righteousness.

F' (17:24-27) Jesus paid the temple tax even though he was exempt from the tax as God’s son. He did not want to offend.

In F John recognized that Jesus did not need to be baptized for repentance. He was already holy and without sin. However, Jesus said to him: “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” In F' Jesus himself explained that as the Son of God he did not need to pay a tax to be in his Father’s temple. However, he paid the tax nevertheless so that he would not offend the authorities. Both times – in F and F' – Jesus was exempt from certain religious behaviour – (on account of who he was) – but chose not to cause offense and rather demonstrate his support of all righteousness.

G (3:16-17) God’s voice from heaven said: “This is my Son whom I love, with him I am well pleased.”

G' (16:13-17:23) God’s voice from the cloud said: “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him.”

In G – at Jesus’ baptism – a voice from heaven said over him: “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” In G' – on a high mountain – Jesus is transfigured before three of his disciples and a voice from the cloud said: “This is my Son whom I love; with him I am well pleased ... ” [Notice that in G' the affirmation from the cloud is the climactic centre of Jesus’ passion predictions before (16:21) and after (17:22-23) his transfiguration.]

H (4:1-11) The devil tempted and tested Jesus.

H' (16:1-12) The Pharisees and the Sadducees tested Jesus.

In H Jesus is tempted and tested (peirazdoo) by the devil and in H' it is the Pharisees and Sadducees that test (peirazdoo) Jesus.

- I (4:12-8:22) Jesus went up a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him and he began to teach them. When he came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him and he healed all the sick.**
- I' (15:29-39) Jesus went up a mountainside and sat down. Great crowds came to him and he healed all the sick. After three days Jesus called his disciples and asked them to feed the crowd. After Jesus had sent the crowd away, he got into the boat and went to the vicinity of Magadan.**

In I and I' Jesus goes up a mountainside, sits down and ministers to the disciples and the crowds. Then the sub-structure of I' highlights again the close connection between preaching the kingdom of God and healing every sickness and disease.

Heading => 4:12-17 From that time on Jesus began to preach: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

a => 4:18-22 Jesus called the first disciples.

b => 4:23-25 Jesus preached the good news of the kingdom and healed every disease and sickness among the people.

c => 5-7 Jesus was teaching with authority. (*See separate paper on the structure of the Sermon on the Mount.*)

c' => 8:1-15 Jesus was healing with authority

ca => 8:1-4 *Jesus healed a man by touch.*

cb => 8:5-13 *The centurion said to Jesus: "Just say the word and my servant will be healed. For I myself am an man under authority, with soldiers under me."*

ca' => 8:14-15 *Jesus healed a woman by touch.*

b' => 8:16-17 Jesus healed all the sick because he took up our infirmities and carried our diseases.

a' => 8:18-22 Jesus explained the cost of discipleship.

J (8:23-9:38) This segment prefigures the saving significance of Jesus' death and resurrection. Jesus would have the authority to forgive sins and raise the dead.

J (15:21-28) This segment prefigures the saving significance of Jesus' death and resurrection. Even the Gentiles would receive healing.

In J there are allusions which connect the actions of Jesus with the Old Testament exodus from Egypt. In the past Moses – (the leader at the Old Testament exodus) – had prophesied – Deuteronomy 18:15: "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him" (cf. Matthew 17:5) and Jesus was the fulfillment of this prophecy. In J – like Moses – while he was attempting to cross an expanse of water – he saved his people from drowning by taking command over the winds and the waves (8:26). Then – like Moses – he drowned his

enemies (demons) in the same water (8:32) with the “outcome” (9:1) that now he was exercising the authority to forgive sins (8:1-8) and raise the dead (9:25). The allusions to the Old Testament exodus confirm that the entire episode in J foreshadows Jesus’ saving work through death and resurrection which would have the saving outcome of the forgiveness of sins and the resurrection from the dead.

In J’ it is foreshadowed that the time will come when even the Gentiles will receive healing from Jesus.

Here is the sub-structure of J:

- a => 8:23-27 Jesus saved his disciples from drowning by exercising authority over the winds and the waves. [There are allusions to the work of Moses whom God used to rescue his people from Egypt.]
- b => 8:28-34 When Jesus and his disciples arrived on the other side of the sea, Jesus drowned in the sea a large herd of pigs which were possessed by demons. . [There are allusions to the work of Moses whom God used to rescue his people from Egypt.]
- c => 9:1-8 The crowd praised God who had given Jesus the authority on earth to forgive sins.
- d => 9:9-38 Jesus had been given the authority to raise the dead.
- da => 9:9 Jesus called Matthew to be his disciple.*
- db => 9:10-11 The Pharisees queried that Jesus was eating with sinners but Jesus came to be a doctor to the sick.*
- dc 9:12-13 Jesus told the Pharisees: “Go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’”*
- db => 9:14-15 John’s disciples queried that the disciple were not fasting but when the bridegroom was present, it was not the time for fasting.*
- dd => 9:16-17 New and old garments – as new and old wineskins – do not go together.*
- dd => 9:18-26 The woman touched Jesus’ garment and the crowd laughed at Jesus’ faith in resurrection.*
- db => 9:27-33 News of Jesus’ healings spread all over that region and people claimed that nothing like this had ever been seen in Israel.*
- dc => 9:34 The Pharisees said: “It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons.”*
- db => 9:35-36 Jesus went through all the towns and villages, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. He had compassion on the crowds.*
- da’ => 9:37-38 Jesus told his disciples to pray for workers to be sent out into the harvest.*

[I may simply draw your attention to the relationship between dc (9:12-13) and dc (9:34). Both times there is a conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees. In dc (9:12-13) Jesus attacks the Pharisees while in dc (9:34) the Pharisees attack Jesus.]

K (10:1-42) Jesus warns the disciples of persecution.

K' (15:1-20) The Pharisees and teachers of the law take offense at the disciples and Jesus.

In K Jesus warns the disciples of persecution and in K' the Pharisees and the teachers already take offense at Jesus and his disciples.

L (11:1-19) John had prepared the way for Jesus.

L' (14:1-36) After John's beheading Jesus had compassion on the crowd and healed all the sick.

In L Jesus declared that John had prepared the way for him and in L' – after the beheading of John – Jesus indeed takes over from him.

M (11:20-30) In Korazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum there was no repentance in response to Jesus' miracles even though the foreign cities of Tyre and Sidon would have repented long ago.

M' (13:53-58) Only in his hometown and in his own house is a prophet without honour.

In M Jesus denounced the cities of his home territory because they did not respond to his ministry. The foreign cities of Tyre and Sidon would have repented long ago but Korazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum did not. In M' Jesus accused his own hometown of not responding to him. He explained that only in his own hometown and house is a prophet without honour.

N (12:1-32) The picking of heads of grain and healing people on a Sabbath caused rejection and persecution but Jesus' actions were explained in a quote from Isaiah.

N' (13:1-52) Jesus' told the parable of the sower and the telling of parables in the face of rejection was explained in a quote from Isaiah.

In N Jesus' actions (withdrawing from opposition) are explained by a key quote from Isaiah – Matthew 12:17-21: “This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: ‘Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations. He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory. In his name the nations will put their hope.’”

In N' Jesus' actions (the telling of parables) are explained in another key quote from Isaiah – Matthew 13:13-15: “This is why I speak to them in parables: ‘Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand.’ In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: ‘You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.’”

Both Isaiah quotes explain the somewhat hidden character of Jesus' work Isaiah – Matthew 12:17-21: “This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: ‘ ... He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets ... ’” Matthew 13:13-15: “This is why I speak to them in parables: ‘Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand.’ In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: ‘You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving ... ’”

O (12:33-50) No other miraculous sign will be given than the sign of Jonah. As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

The climax of Matthew's structure is the sign of Jonah which is the resurrection of Jesus. It is the one sign by which a wicked people are to repent. This is the sub-structure of O:

a => 12:23-37 Demons and judgement.

aa => 12:23-29 *Jesus drives out demons by the Spirit of God and heals people permanently.*

ab => 12:30-37 *By your words you will be acquitted or condemned.*

b => 12:38-42 This wicked generation will receive no other sign than the sign of Jonah.

a' => 12:43-50 Demons and judgement.

aa => 12:46-50 *This wicked generation experiences only temporary relief from demons and the final condition is worse than the first.*

ab => 12:46-50 *Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.*

In closing, how can the knowledge of this structure help us in our understanding of the Sermon on the Mount? There are a surprising number of connections between the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) and the centre of the chiasm which spans the entire Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 12:23-50):

1) Matthew 5:22: “But I tell you ... anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.” ⇔ Matthew 12:36-37: “But I tell you that men will have to give an account on the day of judgement for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”

2) Matthew 7:16-20: “By their fruit you will recognize them ... every good tree bears good fruit ... ” ⇔ Matthew 12:33: “Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit.”

3) Matthew 7:21-23: “Not everyone ... will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father in heaven.” ⇔ Matthew 12:46-50: “ ... whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”

4) Before and after the Sermon on the Mount there are summary statements of abundant healings and miracles (Matthew 4:23-25; 8:16-17). However, in the chiasmic centre of Matthew Jesus refuses to perform any more miracles. He said: “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth ... ” (Matthew 12:39-42). This lends – (unforeseen?) – significance to a few verses on the fringe in the Sermon on the Mount – Matthew 7:6: “Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces.” [Cf. Matthew 12:1-21; 13:14-17; 26:63-68]. When we have experienced miracles and then hear the Sermon on the Mount, it is of the utmost importance how we listen and respond to Jesus. Persistent rejection of Jesus and rebellion against the will of God will cause God to withdraw his manifest power in miracles. God is not at our beck and call. Therefore, let us surrender to him now.

[It is also interesting that the core of the chiasm and the brackets that are closest to the core keep explaining how and why Jesus suffered rejection and was not recognized by many: K, M, N & O.]

¹ Following Bailey, K.E.: *Poet & Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes*, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1983; Lund, N.W.: *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, Chapel Hill 1942, 68-69 with the exception of vv18-19

² Chiasms were widely used but they were not always clearly delineated and marked by the various authors. Therefore scholars have difficulties in tracing an author's chiasmic intentions. The following criteria may assist in recognizing the presence of a chiasmic parallel:

- words or phrases are repeated,
- thematic content is the same,
- the same person or the same people propel the narrative forward,
- the same motives appear (typologies, symbolisms, ...),
- the literary genre is the same (direct speech, poem, ...),
- the parallel text segments of the chiasmic bracket are roughly of the same length,
- there are metric parallels,
- the chiasmic bracket contains plausible content (e.g. less important content will not be found in the all important center of a chiasm),
- a literary source was modified to create a chiasmic parallel,
- chiasmic parallels can be clearly distinguished and separated from each other.