

# One Messiah, two advents, three forerunners: The chiasmic structure of Matthew 11:2–17:13



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This article proposes and evaluates a large chiasmic structure for Matthew 11:2–17:13, leading to a discussion about the one Messiah, his two advents, and three forerunners, namely John the Baptist, the prophet Elijah, and another forerunner, the Apostle Peter, during the Inter-Advent Period. The structure emphasises God's kingdom programme, the Inter-Advent Period and the parables of Matthew 13. What may be theologically significant about this chiasmic structure is that it may link Matthew 13 to the typological fulfilment of the feasts of the LORD by the Lord Jesus Christ and it also focuses attention on the roles of three forerunners.

## Introduction

According to Turner (2008:357)<sup>1</sup> the passage between the third and fourth discourses of the Gospel of Matthew 'may be the most difficult section of this Gospel to analyse as to structure'. Different structures have therefore been proposed for this passage. While arranging the Gospel of Matthew into an eleven-part chiasm, Combrink (1983:71) delineates the section after the parabolic discourse as stretching from Matthew 13:54 to 16:20, arguing that the very next verse, 'From that time Jesus began' (Ἀπὸ τότε ἤρξατο ὁ Ἰησοῦς – 16:21; cf. 4:17; but see also 26:16), introduces a change in the plot of the narrative (cf. Kingsbury 1975:xii).<sup>2</sup> But perhaps Gundry (1982:10; cf. Patrick 2010:48) is correct in saying that '4:17 and 16:21 seem to mark turning points in Jesus' life, not in Matthew's Gospel'. Adhering more closely to Matthew's narrative-discourse sequence, Van Aarde (1982:22) extends the passage all the way to the next discourse, dividing 13:53–17:24 into three subsections that each end with a reference to the Apostle Peter. But McClister (1996:549–558) proposes a chiasmic structure for 17:22–20:19, showing that a new section of Matthew need not necessarily start at 18:1 or 19:1.<sup>3</sup> Another approach applies a Markan outline to Matthew and combines this with the geographical movement of Jesus' public ministry in Galilee, identifying this large section from 4:12 to 16:20 (France 2007:2–5).<sup>4</sup> But in this passage Jesus had already moved out and back into Galilee (15:21–39); the revelation of Jesus Christ first finds its geographical apex on the Mount of Transfiguration, before the earlier announcement concerning Jerusalem and the cross is later set into geographical motion (16:21; 17:1–13; cf. 19:1). The different structuring proposals for the passage under review – among others that are not discussed in detail<sup>5</sup> – have not been met with unanimous approval (cf. Carson 1995:334). The first criterion for detecting an extended chiasmus has therefore been met, as there is 'a problem in perceiving the structure of the text in question, which more conventional outlines fail to resolve' (Blomberg 1989:5).

This article has three main purposes. The first purpose is to propose and evaluate a chiasmic structure for Matthew 11:2–17:13. The second purpose is to discuss 11:2–17:13 using the structural features of the proposed chiasmic structure, emphasising the First and Second Advents of the Lord Jesus Christ, the kingdom programme and the Inter-Advent Period. The third purpose is to comment on the theological significance of this chiasmic structure, focusing on

1. References to Matthew will be indicated only by chapter and verse numbers. Quotations from Scripture are taken from the NKJV.

2. Derickson (2006:423–437) also arranges the Gospel of Matthew into an eleven-part chiasmic structure, but considers the passage to start after the parabolic discourse and to end at 17:27.

3. Blomberg (1992:25) identifies two sections for this passage: 13:53–16:20 and 16:21–17:27. The rhetorical approach of Patrick (2010:69–71) arranges Matthew around ten messianic citations of Isaiah, including sections 11:2–12:45, 12:46–13:58, and 14:1–16:12.

4. The Markan or geographical approach based on Jesus' public ministry in Galilee overlaps closely with the second part of Kingsbury's (1975:xiv) topical outline that sub-divides 4:17–16:20 into two smaller sections, namely 4:17–11:1 and 11:2–16:20.

5. McCuiston (2013:38–39), for example says that Matthew structured his Gospel like a Greek drama into a prologue, parados, five episodes, and an epode – with episode 4 covering Matthew 13:54–17:27.

**Note:** This article is based on a study at the Stellenbosch University (Discipline Group Old and New Testament, Faculty of Theology).

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FIGURE 1: Proposed chiasmic structure for Matthew 11:2–17:13.

Matthew 13 and the feasts of the LORD, as well as on three forerunners, namely John the Baptist, the prophet Elijah, and the Apostle Peter.<sup>6</sup>

## Chiasmic structure for Matthew 11:2–17:13 proposed and evaluated

The Lord Jesus Christ and his kingdom programme, as well as the forerunners to the First and Second Advent, are viewed as *inclusios* for the literary *unit* as a whole (11:2–15; 16:28–17:13). The literary *situation* is firstly marked by the rejection of the Messiah-King and his offer of the kingdom of heaven (11:12, 16–24; 12:14, 22–50; cf. 13:53b–58; 14:1–12; 15:1–3; 16:1–4; 17:12); secondly by a description of significant events and processes between the two advents of the one Messiah (13:1–53a); and thirdly by Jesus teaching his disciples but also the ultimate vindication of Christ when he comes in his kingdom (14:13–15:20; 16:5–12; 16:28–17:13). As for the literary *arrangement*, the following chiasmic structure is proposed for 11:2–17:13 (see Figure 1: 'Proposed chiasmic structure for Matthew 11:2–17:13').

How can one avoid 'imagining chiasmus where it was never intended' (Blomberg 1989:5)? The first of nine criteria identified by Blomberg (1989) has already been noted in the introduction, but the remaining eight criteria

6. This article does not consider the possibility that Moses or another person could be a forerunner to the Second Advent (cf. Mt 4:4; Mt 17:3).

are used to evaluate the chiasmic structure proposed for 11:2–17:13:

- (2) There must be clear examples of parallelism between the two 'halves' of the hypothesized chiasmus ...
- (3) Verbal (or grammatical) parallelism as well as conceptual (or structural) parallelism should characterize most if not all of the corresponding pairs of subdivisions. ...
- (4) The verbal parallelism should involve central or dominant imagery or terminology, not peripheral or trivial language. ...
- (5) Both verbal and conceptual parallelism should involve words and ideas not regularly found elsewhere within the proposed chiasmus. ...
- (6) Multiple sets of correspondences between passages opposite each other in the chiasmus as well as multiple members of the chiasmus itself are desirable. ...
- (7) The outline should divide the text at natural breaks which would be agreed upon even by those proposing very different structures to account for the whole. ...
- (8) The center of the chiasmus, which forms its climax, should be a passage worthy of that position in light of its theological or ethical significance. If its theme were in some way repeated in the first and last passages of the text, as is typical in chiasmus, the proposal would become that much more plausible.
- (9) Finally, ruptures in the outline should be avoided if at all possible. (pp. 5–8)

Whereas Figure 1 focuses on Blomberg's criteria 2 and 3, Table 1 ('Verbal and conceptual parallelism in Matthew 11:2–17:13') was prepared with a view of meeting criteria 4 and 5.

Blomberg's criteria 6, 7, and 8 appear to have been met: the proposed structure has numerous corresponding sections or

**TABLE 1:** Verbal and conceptual parallelism in Matthew 11:2–17:13.

Section	Synonymous parallelism indicated by '—'; antithetic parallelism by 'vs' and synthetic by '≈'	Central or dominant imagery and terminology Words or ideas not found elsewhere within the proposed chiastic structure
A & A'	'Are you the coming One?' (11:3) — 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!' (17:5). John the Baptist and Elijah (11:12–14) — Elijah and John the Baptist (17:10–13). All the prophets and the law (11:13) — Moses and Elijah (17:3–4). 'Elijah who is to come' (11:14b) — 'Elijah is coming first' (17:11). Suffering (prison) (11:2) vs / ≈ glory in the kingdom (16:28, 17:2; cf. 11:6). John the Baptist is 'more than a prophet ... My messenger before Your face' (11:9–10) ≈ Moses and Elijah talking to the transfigured Son of God and Son of Man (17:2–3, 5, 12).	Clothing ('soft' 11:8; 'bright as the light' 17:2). Face(s) (11:10; 17:2; cf. 17:6). First advent of Christ and forerunner (11:2–15) ≈ preview of the Second Advent of Christ and forerunner(s) (17:1–13). Various past deeds of Christ (11:2–5) ≈ Son of Man will be raised from the dead (17:9). Violence against the kingdom of heaven (11:12) ≈ 'did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer ...' (17:12b).
B & B'	Rejection of the forerunner and of the messiahship of Jesus by 'this generation' and people in cities (11:16–24) vs acceptance of the Son of Man by his disciples (16:24–27). The past miracles of Christ (11:19–24) ≈ first explicit announcement of the cross of Christ (16:21). Indication that 'this generation' and Galilean cities would not accept Christ and his offer of the kingdom (11:16–24) ≈ certainty of offering the kingdom of heaven by way of the cross (16:21). Demon (11:18) ≈ Satan (16:23).	Saving one's life and losing it (11:16–24) ≈ losing one's life for Christ and saving it (16:25–26). Reproach and woes for not repenting (11:20–24) — rebuke for not minding the things of God (16:22–23). Rebuke and judgement for not repenting (11:20–24) vs reward for following Christ (16:27).
C & C'	Revelation of God the Father (11:25) — revelation by the Father to the Apostle Peter of who Christ is (16:17b). The identity of Christ, the Son of God (11:27) — Peter's confession that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God (16:16) vs non-identities of Christ (16:14).	Heaven and earth (11:25) — earth and heaven (16:19). Authority: all things handed over by the Father to the Son (11:27) ≈ Christ gives Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven and authority to bind and loose (16:19; cf. 18:18). Invitation to come to Christ (11:28–30) ≈ Christ will build his church (16:18). Geographical connection: Caesarea Philippi (16:13) was a site for the worship of the Greek god Pan (supposedly a half-god, half-man creature) and also for Caesar (supposedly a half-man, half-god creature). But Christ is both fully God and fully human (11:25–27; 16:16).
D & D'	Authoritative teaching (something 'greater than the temple') of the Son of Man, Lord of the Sabbath (12:6, 8) vs teachings (yeast) of Pharisees and Sadducees (16:12). Merciful provision (12:7) — recalling the compassionate feeding of 5 000 and 4 000 (16:9–10).	Eating heads of grain (literally — 12:1) vs eating leaven (metaphorically) of the Pharisees and Sadducees (16:6, 12). Not knowing or not understanding (12:7) — not understanding or not remembering (16:9–11).
E & E'	Testing the messiahship of Jesus by seeking to accuse him (12:10) — testing the messiahship of Jesus by seeking a sign from heaven, even though Christ was sent from heaven (16:1). Parabolic instruction ( <i>qal wahomer</i> ), arguing from the lesser to the greater (12:11–12) ≈ another <i>qal wahomer</i> parabolic instruction (16:2–3).	First mention of the plot of the Pharisees to destroy Jesus (12:14) — Jesus abandoning the Pharisees and Sadducees emotionally, judicially, and geographically (16:4). First mention of the plot to destroy Jesus (12:14) ≈ the sign of the prophet Jonah (16:4).
F & F'	Opposition and consequent withdrawal of Jesus, followed by healings (12:15) — opposition and consequent withdrawal of Jesus, followed by healings (15:21, 28, 30–31). Future ministry to the Gentiles (12:18–21) ≈ ministry outside of Israel to Gentiles (15:21–39).	Proclaiming justice to the Gentiles; in his name the Gentiles will hope (12:18–21) — Gentiles praising the God of Israel (15:31). Compassion of the Suffering Servant, also towards Gentiles (12:20) — Jesus shows compassion not only towards the lost sheep of Israel but also towards Gentiles (15:24, 32).
G & G'	Rejection of the messiahship of the Son of David and blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (12:22–37) — rejection by Jesus of the traditions of the elders upheld by the scribes and Pharisees (15:1–20). He who does not gather with Me scatters abroad (12:30) ≈ not drawing near to God, in vain they worship Me (15:8–9). Blasphemy and idle words (12:31–32, 36–37) — false witness, blasphemies (15:19).	A kingdom cannot be divided against itself (12:25) ≈ blind leading the blind and falling into a pit (15:14). Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks (12:35) — what comes out of the mouth comes from the heart (15:18; cf. 15:11, 19–20). Kingdom of Satan (12:24–27), Beelzebub the prince of demons and brood of vipers (12:34) vs / ≈ every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted (15:13).
H & H'	Sign of the prophet Jonah (12:39–40) ≈ foreshadowed in the death of John the Baptist (14:1–12). Evil and adulterous generation (12:39, 41–42, 45) vs response of Jesus' disciples and some of the crowd (14:33–36).	Demon possession and 'this generation' in Israel who did not follow Jesus (12:43–45) ≈ unbelieving Herod the tetrarch imagines a ghostly return of John in Jesus' deeds (14:2). Queen of the south and Solomon (12:42) vs Herodias ( <i>queen</i> ) and her daughter [ <i>Salome</i> ] (14:3, 6–8). Jews of 'this generation' in Israel seeking a sign from heaven, from One 'greater than Jonah' and 'greater than Solomon' (12:38–42) ≈ Christ, the Son of God, performing various miracles to a Jewish audience out of compassion and to teach his disciples (14:13–36).
I & I'	Spiritual household of Christ (12:50) ≈ physical hometown and household of Christ (13:55–56). Theme of rejection and unbelief (12:46–48) — rejection and unbelief (13:57–58).	Mother, brothers, and sister (12:46–50) — mother, brothers, and sister (13:55–56). My Father in heaven (12:50) — the son of the carpenter (13:55).
J	The parables and mysteries of the kingdom of heaven and the works of the Son of Man during the inter-advent period.	

member sets (A'–I, I'–A', and J); the proposed chiastic structure divides this literary unit at natural breaks with which most commentators agree; and the centre of the structure (J) focuses on the parables and mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Moreover sections A and A' are thematically related to J, since A and A' cover the First and Second Advents of Christ and its respective forerunners, whereas the parabolic discourse (J) focuses, to a large extent, on the Inter-Advent Period. Regarding criterion 9, ruptures in the chiastic structure have been avoided. Most parallel elements of the chiastic structure are of similar length, except for H' which is longer than H. Still, since 14:34–36 can be viewed as a transitional summary (Carson 1995:346) this pericope seems to describe a specific outreach of Jesus to a Jewish audience (H').

The proposed chiastic structure also aligns well with Matthew's overall purpose. Not only does Matthew present Jesus as the

Messiah of Israel, but Toussaint (1980) indicates that Matthew presents three aspects of the kingdom programme:

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. (p. 20)

## Discussion of Matthew 11:2–17:13

The aim of discussing the chiastic structure proposed for 11:2–17:13 is to clarify the meaning of its parallel elements, whether these pairs are linked synonymously (by way of correspondence), and/or antithetically (contrast), and/or synthetically (conceptually and thematically).

## Sections A (11:2–15) and A' (16:28–17:13)

The introductory section of this chiasmic structure focuses on the opposition and suffering accompanying the First Advent of Christ and his forerunner (11:2–15, A), whereas the concluding bookend highlights the forerunner to the Second Advent and, more importantly the Son of Man who will return to the earth in glory (16:28–17:13, A').

John the Baptist preached that the kingdom of heaven was near on condition that the nation of Israel repented (3:2, 7, 10; cf. Mt 3:2–5). The Jewish people who heard John the Baptist preach, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near!' could only have expected a restoration of the Davidic kingdom on earth, to be ruled by the Messiah (3:2; 4:17; cf. 10:7; 15:24).<sup>7</sup> This kingdom over Israel commenced at Mount Sinai (Ex 19–24) and came to an end at the time of the Babylonian captivity. Since then four successive Gentile kingdoms have held sway on earth – the 'times of the Gentiles' (cf. Lk 21:24). God has promised, however, that the last person with a human nature to rule the restored Davidic kingdom of God on earth will be an eternal descendant of David, that is, the Son of David who is the Lord (1 Chr 17:10b–14; Ps 110; Mt 22:41–45).<sup>8</sup> Judgement will precede the establishment of that kingdom (3:7).

By the time one reaches the passage under review (11:2–17:13), Jesus' words and deeds had already authenticated his messianic claims. Did Israel place its faith and trust in Jesus the Messiah-King? When the kingdom of heaven is established on earth, surely John will not have to suffer unjustly in prison. Hence the question, if Jesus is 'the coming One', why is the fourth Gentile empire not crushed and replaced with the messianic kingdom (11:2–3; Dn 2:44–45; 7:13–14, 26–27)? By pointing to his miraculous deeds and words, Jesus provides a summary of his ministry up to that time and pronounces a blessing on all who maintain their faith in him (11:4–6). Jesus does not correct John's understanding concerning the kingdom that he preached about, that is, a literal, restored Davidic kingdom on earth (cf. McClain 1959:302).

Jesus affirms John as 'more than a prophet', since John is a forerunner and preparer of the way before the Messiah-King (11:9–10). Jesus also affirms that John is greater than any Old Testament saint, yet even the least in the kingdom will be greater than he (11:11). This statement acknowledges that the Davidic kingdom was neither restored nor established at that time, otherwise John would certainly have been *in* that kingdom (Toussaint 1980:150). John the Baptist, like believers and unbelievers alike, are in the universal or eternal kingdom of God – understood as God the Father's rule as Lord over heaven and earth which he administers through God the Son (11:25–27) – but only believers will enter (and thus be 'in') the

7. These Jews could not have expected a spiritual-kingdom-in-the-heart, because it would not have had any 'special significance whatever to Israel, for such a rule of God had always been recognized among the people of God' (McClain 1959:303).

8. In accordance with the mandate given to the first Adam, the last Adam must mediate the rule of God in history on earth until the last enemy is defeated (Gn 1:28; Ps 8; 1 Cor 15:24–28; Heb 2:5–9).

restored Davidic kingdom when it is established on earth (cf. 3:10; 7:21; 8:11–12).

Despite the fact that the kingdom of heaven was suffering violence from the days of John the Baptist 'until now', it was still possible to establish the kingdom on earth at Christ's First Advent, provided Israel repented and turned to Christ in faith (11:14; Toussaint 1980:153). As affirmed in Matthew 3:3 and 11:10, John the Baptist fulfilled the prophecies relating to the forerunner as mentioned in Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1a. But only *if* (the conditional Greek particle *εἰ*) 'you are willing to receive it', will John the Baptist fulfil the prophecy of Elijah 'who is to come' as mentioned in Malachi 4:5–6 (Hebrew Bible 3:23–24).<sup>9</sup> 'There is scarcely a passage in Scripture which shows more clearly that the kingdom was being offered to Israel at this time. Its coming was contingent upon one thing: Israel's receiving it by genuine repentance' (cf. McClain 1959:306–307; Toussaint 1980:153). Since 'this generation', as a collective group in the history of the nation Israel, neither repented nor turned to Christ, John the Baptist was not Elijah (cf. Barbieri 1983:44; Constable 2016:200). Peters (1972a) focuses attention on the one Messiah and his two advents:

[T]his preaching of the nighness of the Kingdom, this offer of the Kingdom to the Jews at the First Advent on condition of repentance, is the *key* to the commingling of the Advents of Christ. It could not be otherwise. It being predetermined as eminently suitable to tender this Kingdom at the First Advent of Jesus, the Messiah, and it being also foreknown that it would be rejected, the matter is so guardedly presented as not to interfere with the free moral agency of the nation, and as not to be opposed to foreknown fact. (pp. 364–365)

When the reader of the first Gospel reaches the events described in 16:28–17:13 (A'), Jesus had explicitly predicted his death and resurrection and the establishment of the kingdom of heaven had already been postponed. Importantly the idea of 'two separate comings of the Messiah could not be clearly revealed until His first arrival on earth and His rejection had become historically certain in the movement of events' (McClain 1959:335; cf. Peters 1972a:242). Peter, James, and John are given a foretaste, or vision, of the Son of Man coming in his kingdom (16:28–17:9; cf. 2 Pt 1:16–18). The transfiguration reveals the certainty of Christ's Second Advent, his kingdom programme and the necessity of the cross (17:9; Toussaint 1980:212). The unveiled divine glory of the Son of God is the glory that the Son of Man will radiate when the messianic kingdom is eventually established on earth (17:2; cf. 13:43, J). Representing the prophets and the law (11:13), Moses and Elijah also appear before the glorified Lord, talking with him (17:3). '[T]he presence of Moses, under whose mediatorial rule the ancient Theocratic Kingdom was established at Sinai, speaks strongly of the reality of its future re-establishment' (McClain 1959:337). While incorrect as to the timing of the establishment of the restored theocratic Davidic kingdom on earth, Peter is correct in connecting this kingdom with the fulfilment of the Feast of Tabernacles

9. The phrase *ὁ μέλλον ἔρχεσθαι* in 11:14 'probably also speaks of a future coming of Elijah' and this phrase 'implies a futuristic view of Mal 4:5–6' (Turner 2008:422).

(17:4; cf. Zch 14:16–21; Barbieri 1983:60). The earlier question about the coming One (cf. 11:3) is then most emphatically answered by God the Father: ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!’ (17:5; cf. Dt 18:15; Ps 2:7; Is 42:1; Heb 1:1–4).

As they come down the mountain, after having been told not to tell anyone the vision until the Son of Man had risen from the dead, the disciples ask, ‘Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?’ (17:9–10).<sup>10</sup> Jesus not only upholds this particular teaching of the scribes but He also affirms that, indeed, ‘Elijah is coming first and will restore all things’ (17:11). As there is only one Messiah but two advents, contingency is evident when considering the role of the forerunner: John the Baptist could have been Elijah if ‘this generation’ in Israel had accepted his message and turned to Christ. But while John turned ‘many’ Israelites to the Lord their God (Lk 1:16), clearly he did not restore ‘all things’ (17:11). Instead John was rejected and even martyred – ‘they did to him whatever they wished’ – and, likewise the Son of Man also suffered (17:12–13). Since the establishment of the kingdom of heaven had been postponed, Elijah the prophet must come to restore ‘all things’ in fulfilment of the prophecy of Malachi 4:5–6.

From a geographical perspective, what started in a prison dungeon where the forerunner to Christ’s First Advent was held (11:2), will culminate in the Son of Man coming in his kingdom at his Second Advent as previewed in a vision on a high mountain (17:1, 9). Since Josephus mentions that a walled fortress was built on its summit, it is very unlikely that Mount Tabor is the high mountain referred to in 17:1 (Constable 2016:283). While other mountains could conceivably be the site of the transfiguration – such as Mount Miron or Mount Arbel – Mount Hermon is probably the site (Barbieri 1983:59). Not only is Caesarea Philippi (16:13) near the foot of it, but Mount Hermon is also the highest mountain in Israel. If the transfiguration indeed took place on Mount Hermon, then after Jesus’ first explicit passion announcement (16:21), he first moved north (17:1) before later going south to Jerusalem and the cross. Outlines of the Synoptic Gospels that are based on geographical movements should take this into account.

### Sections B (11:16–24) and B’ (16:21–27)

The opposition of ‘this generation’ and people in the cities to both John the Baptist and Jesus is contrasted with Christ’s submission to the Father’s will regarding the cross and the obedience of Christ’s disciples (11:16–24, B; 16:21–27, B’).

Section B indicates that ‘this generation’ will neither play a wedding nor a funeral game (Turner 2008:296). Whether the message is the nearness of the messianic banquet or repentance, John and Jesus are both rejected (11:16–19). Evidently few Jews accepted Jesus as the Messiah. Even the

<sup>10</sup>Constable (2016:287) remarks that it ‘seems unlikely that the disciples viewed Elijah’s appearance in the Transfiguration as the fulfilment of Malachi 4:5–6. If they did, their question would have been: “Why did Messiah appear before Elijah, when the scribes taught the reverse order of appearances?”’

people in cities where most of the mighty works of Christ were performed to authenticate his messianic claims, remain unrepentant, are rebuked by Christ, and will face judgement (11:20–24). ‘This generation’ as a representative group of the nation of Israel, rejected the Messiah-King (cf. Malan 2014:102, 190).

After noting that the eschatological programme of the Old Testament did not have the Church age in view, Toussaint (1980) states that if Israel had accepted Jesus as the Messiah, the programme of the Lord would have been the following four steps:

- (1) the acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah, (2) the cross, (3) the seven years of Jacob’s trouble, and (4) the return of the Messiah to establish the kingdom’. (p. 64)

The timing of Christ’s cross (step 2) was not contingent on step 1 (Scholtz 2014:3), because if the Jews accepted the Messiah Jesus would still have died on the cross and experienced resurrection and ascension in fulfilment of many Old Testament prophecies (Constable 2016:56).<sup>11</sup> Therefore ‘Christ came to offer the kingdom by way of the cross’ (Toussaint 1980:64). The length of the period between the cross and ascension of the Lord Jesus (step 2) and the start of the Tribulation Period (step 3) remains undefined (cf. Dn 9:26–27a; Ac 1:6–7); this is the Inter-Advent Period.<sup>12</sup>

Written at a time when John’s funeral had already taken place and the wedding feast of the kingdom of heaven had already been postponed, section B’ contains Matthew’s first explicit announcement that Christ must go to perform his great work on the cross: ‘He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life’ (16:21; cf. 11:20–21, 23). In so doing Christ typologically fulfils the Feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits. Whereas section B refers to Christ’s past miracles and people in cities who remain unrepentant, section B’ looks forward to Christ’s work on the cross and to obedient disciples of Jesus. The terms of discipleship explain the kingdom programme during the Inter-Advent Period: self-denial and suffering for Christ and his disciples, before glory and rewards in the restored Davidic kingdom during the age to come (16:21–27; cf. 13:17; 1 Pt 1:11).

### Sections C (11:25–30) and C’ (16:13–20)

Revelation of the Father by the Son (11:25–30, C) finds its parallel match when the Father reveals the identity of his Son, Jesus Christ, to Peter (16:13–20, C’).

Given the implicit deferment of the establishment of the kingdom of heaven on earth (11:16–24, B), readers of Matthew are immediately given insight into the relationship between

<sup>11</sup>McClain (1959:344) adds: ‘Those who cavil at the idea of an offer which is certain to be rejected betray an ignorance, not only of Biblical history (cf. Isa 6:8–10 and Ezek. 2:3–7), but also of the important place of the legal proffer in the realm of jurisprudence.’

<sup>12</sup>The Tribulation Period is viewed as a period of seven years immediately preceding the return of the Son of Man to the earth, comprising two consecutive periods of 3,5 years each – the latter 3,5 years is called the ‘Great Tribulation’ by Jesus (24:21; cf. Toussaint 1980:141).

the Lord of heaven and earth and God the Son. The Son has received all authority and thus, in his deity he administers this universal kingdom (11:25–27). What God the Father hides or reveals ('these things') concerns the 'overall significance of Jesus' mission' (Blomberg 1992:192) and the things of the kingdom (Toussaint 1980:156). Later the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, which for the most part cover the Inter-Advent Period, are given only to Christ's disciples (13:11). The Son emphasises that no one knows the Son except the Father and no one knows the Father except the Son, and to whom the Son wills to reveal him (11:27) – leading to the Lord's gracious invitation (11:28–30).

During Christ's First Advent the gospel of the kingdom was preached to Israel only, for the good news that the eschatological, earthly messianic kingdom is near required Israel's *national* response – which of course includes individual Jewish responses as well (3:2; 4:17; 10:7; cf. 15:24). If 'it will accept its King, Israel will have its kingdom' and, for this reason, the 'King is concerned with manifesting his presence, but only as the Son of David' (Toussaint 1980:138). But 'this generation' in Israel's response was already evident in the previous passage (11:16–24, B). Henceforth until such time as the King will again authorise the 'gospel of the kingdom' to be preached by Jewish messengers during the Tribulation Period when the establishment of the restored theocratic Davidic kingdom will again be near (Scholtz 2014:5), the gracious call of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is 'Come to me', a call focusing on *personal* salvation, rest in Christ, and discipleship (11:28–30). The Messiah made this personal invitation to a Jewish audience first, but after the cross Christ's invitation goes out to Samaritans and Gentiles as well (cf. 10:5–6; 15:24; 16:19; 28:18–20; Ac 1:8).

The chiasmic parallel in Section C' is another Christological passage of high import (16:13–20, C'). God the Father reveals the identity of the Messiah, the Son of God, to Peter and references to authority in the kingdom are also made (16:16–19; cf. 11:25–27). Using the future tense, Christ declares that He will build his church (16:18). The church is not the restored Davidic kingdom of God (Constable 2016:271). Instead, the church is part of God's universal and eternal kingdom; the church is a new entity built by the ascended Christ from Pentecost until the Bridegroom comes to take his bride (Ac 2; 11:15–17; 1 Cor 15:50–53). The Old Testament did not directly reveal the church's existence; the church is a New Testament mystery, as Paul later explains (Eph 3:1–12; 5:32–33; Derickson 2006:436). The Feast of the Harvest was typologically fulfilled on the birthday of the church, the day of Pentecost (Ac 2).

While the authority to 'bind and loose' is later also given to the other apostles (16:19; cf. 18:18; Jn 20:23), the keys of the kingdom of heaven are given *only* to Peter.<sup>13</sup> The Lord of

13. The apostles were given the authority to legislatively bind (forbid) and loose (permit), and also to judicially bind (punish) and loose (set free from punishment), according to Edersheim (1993:531–532). For example legislative authority is exercised in Acts 15, and judicial authority is exercised in Acts 5:1–11 and 1 Corinthians 5:1–13. The authority to bind and loose was not passed on by way of apostolic succession, and Peter is not the first pope in a line of many. Local churches cannot add to or subtract from what has legislatively been inspired in the New Testament, but they can and must judicially exercise discipline in accordance with the law of Christ.

heaven and earth has hidden 'these things' (11:25) and, if the least of these little children finds or identifies Christ – the hidden *afikoman* (Scholtz 2015c:5) – then the Head of the household blesses the child with a gift through the Son (16:16–19; cf. 11:25–27). The teachings of Matthew 16:17–19 clearly show that God the Father and Jesus Christ intended Peter to have a unique, privileged role. Since the keys of the kingdom of heaven provide the Apostle Peter with the unique authority to open the door of the kingdom of heaven to Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles (Acts 2, 8, 10–11), Peter acts as a forerunner during the Inter-Advent Period. Fruchtenbaum and Gendron (1996; emphasis – JJS) describe Peter's special role in connection with the keys of the kingdom as follows:

Having the keys, already known from the Old Testament, carried two concepts: first, authority (Isa. 22:20–24) and, second, the right to unlock the door. Therefore, the basic point of Matthew 16:19 is that Jesus gives the authority to Peter to open the door of the church, or the body of Christ, to all three segments of humanity. Once he opens the door for a segment of humanity, *it will remain open for them*. This helps explain the sometime delay of the baptism of the Spirit to believers. (p. 230)

### Sections D (12:1–8) and D' (16:5–12)

Section D contrasts the ministry and authoritative teaching (something 'greater than the temple') of the Son of Man and Lord of the Sabbath (12:6, 8) with the false teaching (leaven) of the Pharisees and Sadducees in section D' (16:5–12). When David was rejected in Israel as the Lord's anointed, he was not condemned for eating the showbread (12:3–4; cf. 1 Sm 21:1–6). When the disciples of the Son of David, the Messiah, pluck grain on a Sabbath without breaking the law of Moses (Dt 23:25) they should also not be condemned – even if this action contravenes Pharisaic teaching (cf. 12:2). The ministry and authority of Immanuel supersede that of the temple, for the authority of the Lord of the Sabbath is 'greater than the authority that God had granted the Sabbath to have over his people' (Constable 2016:210). Christ later shows mercy by feeding 5000 and 4000 (16:9–10; cf. 12:7).

### Sections E (12:9–14) and E' (16:1–4)

Sections E and E' emphasise the break between the religious leaders and Jesus. In section E the Pharisees ask Jesus a question to accuse him (12:10). After Jesus heals a man on the Sabbath, for the first time the Pharisees plot to destroy Jesus (12:14). In section E' the Pharisees and Sadducees again come to test Jesus (16:1; cf. 12:10), but Jesus argues once more from the lesser to the greater and rebukes his opponents for failing to read the messianic signs of the times (16:2–3; cf. 12:11–12). Jesus then abandons the Pharisees and Sadducees (16:4), a withdrawal that is 'emotional and judicial as well as geographical' (Carson 1995:361; cf. 12:14).

### Sections F (12:15–21) and F' (15:21–39)

Sections F and F' show that, following the first announcement of the plot to destroy Jesus, a ministry of the Suffering Servant

not only to Israel (cf. 10:5–7; 15:24) but also to Gentiles is anticipated (12:15–21, F) and later illustrated (15:21–39, F’).

In the light of the Pharisees’ plot to destroy him and for the first time in Matthew, Jesus withdraws but still continues to heal all (12:15). Quoting from Isaiah 42:1–4, Matthew shows the Father’s approval and the Spirit’s anointing of Jesus as the Messiah (12:18; cf. 3:16–17). Moreover references to Gentiles prepare the reader for Christ’s future ministry among the Gentiles (12:19–21; cf. Turner 2008:316) and also ‘prepares his Jewish reader for the proclamation of a universal Savior’ (Toussaint 1980:161). Not long thereafter, in section F’, it is indeed Gentiles that glorify the ‘God of Israel’ (15:31; cf. Blomberg 1992:245), because Christ mercifully heals many (15:29–31; cf. 12:20). By feeding a predominantly Gentile crowd, Jesus shows that God’s kingdom programme includes Gentiles in the future messianic banquet. But such inclusion do not change the priority of the Jews in God’s kingdom programme, since the covenant children must be fed first (15:21–28); and Israel’s preeminent place is never lost (cf. Carson 1995:355; Toussaint 1980:195). Sections F and F’ correspond well to the pattern of opposition (15:1–20; cf. 12:14), withdrawal (12:15; 15:21), continued healing (12:15; 15:28–30), and even a ministry to the Gentiles.

### Sections G (12:22–37) and G’ (15:1–20)

Instead of acknowledging that the Son of David performs a messianic miracle (12:22–23), the religious leaders of ‘this generation’ reject Jesus as the Messiah on the basis that he is defiled – even satanically empowered (12:24; cf. 12:34a; 15:14). The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit that ‘this generation’ in Israel commit is an unforgivable sin (12:31–32). This causes the postponement of the Davidic kingdom on earth (Toussaint 1980:164–165). Fruchtenbaum (2004; cf. McClain 1959:315–316) states:

The unpardonable sin was not an individual sin, but a national sin. It was committed by that generation of Israel in Jesus’ day and cannot be applied to subsequent Jewish generations. The content of the unpardonable sin was the national rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus while He was physically present on the grounds that He was demon possessed. This sin was unpardonable, and judgment was set. The judgment came in the year AD 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple and the world-wide dispersion of the Jewish people. ... From this point on, a special emphasis is placed on *this generation* in the Gospels, for it was guilty of a very unique sin. (pp. 296–297)

The chiasmic parallel is found in 15:1–20 (G’) where, in the teaching about defilement Jesus repeats that what proceeds from the heart is what defiles a person (15:11, 18–20; cf. 12:34). As was the case in 12:22–37, so also in 15:1–20 the religious leaders of the day think they judge Jesus with their words, but really God will judge them by their words (cf. Constable 2016:217). Christ clearly demonstrated through the work of the Holy Spirit that the kingdom of God was drawing near, even to the very point of contact (12:28), but by following the ‘traditions of the elders’ rather than the commandments of God (15:2–3), these blind leaders of the blind led many to

reject the Son of David, falling into the pit of the judgement of AD 70, with more judgement to come (cf. 12:31–32; 15:14).

### Sections H (12:38–45) and H’ (14:1–36)

While Jesus promises in section H to provide the sign of Jonah to ‘this generation’ of Jews (12:39), the sign of Jonah is foreshadowed in section H’ by the murder of the forerunner to the First Advent – and what happens to the forerunner will happen to Christ (14:1–12; cf. 27:50). Further whereas section H highlights the unbelief of the Jews of ‘this generation’ who failed to follow Christ and who ended in a terrible spiritual state (12:41–45), those Jewish disciples who followed Jesus are taught by him, strengthened in their faith and given a foretaste of the messianic banquet (in section H’, 14:13–36).

After rejecting Jesus as the Messiah, the scribes and Pharisees incredibly and unbelievably ask for a sign (12:38). The only sign that will be given an ‘evil and adulterous generation’ is the sign of the prophet Jonah, a thinly veiled reference to Christ’s cross, burial, and resurrection (12:39–40). The men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of a prophet from Israel sent to the Gentiles; the queen of the South came from the ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of king Solomon; so, since One ‘greater than Jonah’ and ‘greater than Solomon’ is here, ‘this generation’ is condemned (12:41–42). Because they failed to repent at the preaching of both John and Jesus, the Holy Spirit will not be poured out over ‘this generation’ as a representative group of the nation Israel (cf. Is 32:15–20; Jr 31:31–34; Ezk 39:25–29; Jl 2:28–3:1), and instead this generation is even worse off than before (12:43–45).

In the chiasmic parallel (H’) through the instrumentality of an evil tetrarch, his queen, and her daughter, Salome, John the Baptist’s murder foreshadows the death of the Messiah (14:1–12). But unlike John Christ rose from the dead on the third day (cf. 14:2), thus providing the sign of the prophet Jonah to ‘this generation’. Ministering to a predominantly Jewish crowd in Israel (cf. Blomberg 1992:231), Jesus feeds the 5 000, pointing to the messianic banquet when the kingdom will be established (14:15–21). When they see Jesus walking on water, his Jewish disciples do what ‘this generation’ in Israel failed to do, namely to worship Jesus as the Lord, the Son of God (14:22–33). As for Peter, son of Jonah, he is eventually sent to the Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles with the message of the sign of the prophet Jonah (14:28–31; 16:16–19; Ac 1:8; 2; 8; 10–11; 15:7).

### Sections I (12:46–50) and I’ (13:53b–58)

There is little doubt that 12:46–50 (I) and 13:53b–58 (I’) parallel each other (cf. Patrick 2010:69). This is clear from the repeated references to Jesus’ mother, brothers, and sister(s) (12:47–50; 13:55). Christ’s calling is not primarily as the ‘son of the carpenter’, but rather his calling is to do the will of his Father (12:50; 13:55a). Christ invites all who would do the will of the Father, indicating the importance of spiritual kinship over biological relations (12:50; cf. 3:9). Jesus is accepted by some people but rejected by others – a theme

continued into the parabolic discourse, where the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven are given to Christ's disciples but not to others (13:11).

### Section J (13:1–53a)

According to Combrink (1983) and Derickson (2006), the central section of the entire Gospel of Matthew is the parabolic discourse. The central element of the chiastic structure proposed for 11:2–17:13 is likewise Matthew's third discourse (section J). But Matthew 13 also contains a chiastic structure, emphasising 13:34–43 as its centre (cf. Blomberg 1992:213). Not only does the catchphrase with which the centre of section J in 13:43 ends – 'He who has ears to hear let him hear!' – repeat the same words with which section A ended (11:15), but 13:43 also looks forward (to A') to the time in the kingdom when the righteous will shine forth as the sun with the reflected glory of the Son of God, the glorified Lord Jesus Christ (16:28–17:2; cf. Mt 4:2).

While a detailed discussion of all the parables of Matthew 13 falls outside the scope of this article, it must be said that the central authority figure in the parables of Matthew 13 is the one Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ (Scholtz 2015b:7). The parables do not describe the established and restored Davidic kingdom on earth under the Messiah-King (given its postponement). During the Inter-Advent Period the kingdom 'exists in this intercalation only in the sense that the sons of the kingdom are present' (cf. Peters 1972a:142; Toussaint 1980:172).

The introductory parable of Matthew 13 identifies various responses and fruit-bearing (or lack thereof) to Jesus Christ and the sowing of the word of the kingdom, whether such sowing is from the days of John the Baptist during Christ's First Advent (through the gospel of the kingdom), during the great commission (through the gospel of Christ) or during the Tribulation Period (through the gospel of the kingdom). The concluding parable of the series requires the scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven to bring forth the new and the old (13:51–52). The mysteries or 'new' in Matthew 13 describe what will happen between the First and Second Advents, whereas the 'old' may refer to direct, unconditional prophecies about the establishment of the kingdom of heaven that will only be fulfilled during the Tribulation Period and at Christ's Second Advent – continuing into the age to come when the Davidic kingdom will have been restored (Scholtz 2015a:2).

In the chiastic centre of section J, the interpretation of the parable of the tares teaches that till the messianic kingdom has been established on earth, judgement of unbelieving 'tares' has been postponed and good and evil will co-exist until Jesus' Second Advent (13:36–43; cf. 3:7). Whereas the parable of the tares covers the Church age as well as the judgements of the Tribulation Period, the eschatological timeframe that the parable of the dragnet covers appears to be only the Tribulation Period immediately prior to Christ's Second Advent. But 'before the coming of the great and

dreadful Day of the LORD, the prophet Elijah will be sent to Israel to restore all things (Mt 4:5–6; Mt 17:11)' (Scholtz 2015b:5). As for the third forerunner, it is a distinct possibility that the mustard seed may refer to the apostle Peter that was sown into the world at the start of the church age (Scholtz 2015a:6).

## The theological significance of the structure of Matthew 11:2–17:13

Compared to other proposals that were mentioned in the introduction, why is the proposed chiastic structure for Matthew 11:2–17:13 a worthy alternative? Firstly, the proposed chiastic structure fits the various pericopes of this large section of the first Gospel well. Secondly, the proposed chiastic structure fits the overall purpose and theme of the Gospel of Matthew. Thirdly, it captures the emphasis on the Apostle Peter that Van Aarde (1982) highlighted. Fourthly, the structure still fits into the overall chiasm that Combrink (1983) and Derickson (2006) proposed for Matthew as a whole. Fifthly, it avoids being beholden to necessarily end just before the next discourse in Matthew (cf. McClister 1996). Sixthly, while the proposed chiastic structure does not view 16:21 as a narrative, topical, or geographical turning point in Matthew (cf. Gundry 1982:10), it does no harm to these foci either.

But what could theologially be significant about the chiastic structure of Matthew 11:2–17:13? This section explores two aspects of possible theological significance, namely to link Matthew 13 and the feasts of the LORD and to consider the forerunners to the First and Second Advent and the Apostle Peter as the forerunner during the Inter-Advent Period.

### Matthew 13 and the feasts of the Lord

When he is given a vision of the Son of Man coming in his kingdom on the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter is not wrong to anticipate the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles during the restored theocratic Davidic kingdom (cf. 16:28, 17:4, A'). In harmony with Zechariah 14:16–21, Peter's eschatology is spot-on but his timing is not (Barbieri 1983:60; cf. Malan 2014:153). Since the Feast of Tabernacles is last in the series of feasts of the LORD (Lv 23), only if the previous feasts had been fulfilled would Peter's timing have been correct. But as noted earlier once the implicit reference to the cross ('the sign of the prophet Jonah' – 12:39–40, H) is made explicit, Jesus says that he will be 'raised on the third day' (16:21, B'). In the process, Christ typologically fulfils the Feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits. Moreover on the birthday of the church, Christ typologically fulfils the Feast of the Harvest (cf. 16:18, Ac 2:1–4, C'). If the last feast in the series will typologically be fulfilled by Christ when the kingdom is established on earth (cf. 17:4), and the first four feasts of the series have already been fulfilled typologically, then it stands to reason that the other feasts will also be fulfilled typologically sometime before Christ's second coming.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup>This author has linked the parables and mysteries of Matthew 13 to the typological fulfilment of the feasts of the Lord (Scholtz 2015c).



Importantly the focus of the typological fulfilment of the feasts of the LORD is on the Person of the one Messiah, the Lord Jesus, and on his work from his First Advent until his Second Advent.

### Three forerunners

Did John the Baptist fulfil all the prophecies relating to the forerunner(s) mentioned in Malachi 3–4? In agreement with Kaiser (1982:230), three basic answers are proposed:

- Many a-millennial commentators say that John the Baptist fulfilled all that was predicted of the messenger who would prepare the way, and so Elijah will not come again (Hagner 2000:305–308).
- Elijah the prophet will personally come again just before the end of this age (Barbieri 1983:44, 60; Peters 1972b:566); or
- an 'Elijah-like prophet' will come before the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth (Kaiser 1982:230).

Reasons why one can hold the view that Elijah the prophet will personally reappear before the great and dreadful day of the LORD (Ml 4:5–6) include the following.

Few dispute that as the forerunner to Christ's First Advent (3:3; 11:10) John the Baptist fulfilled the prophecies of Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1a. But contrary to Hagner's (2000:308) view, what is said in 11:14 is that John the Baptist will have fulfilled the role ascribed to Elijah the prophet 'who is to come' according to Malachi 4:5–6 only *if* (the conditional Greek particle *ei*) 'you are willing to receive it'. As the immediate and larger contexts make clear, not only did the kingdom suffer violence (11:12) but John the Baptist was also rejected by the majority of 'this generation' (11:16–19; 14:1–12). Since the condition was not met, John the Baptist is not Elijah, who is to come in the future (11:14; 17:10–11).

Was it possible that John the Baptist could have fulfilled the prophecy mentioned in Malachi 4:5–6 relating to Elijah the prophet? Even though John the Baptist was not literally the prophet Elijah (Jn 1:21) but only 'Elijah-like', the Gospels affirm this possibility in terms of contingency but also show that this contingency was not met (cf. 11:12–24). John the Baptist shared many characteristics with Elijah (cf. 3:4), going before the Lord 'in the spirit and power of Elijah' (Lk 1:17a). John the Baptist even turned 'many' of the children of Israel to the Lord their God (Lk 1:16). But what John did not do is to restore 'all things' as Jesus said Elijah still had to come and do (17:11; cf. Ml 4:5–6). As the forerunner to the First Advent, John the Baptist is an almost perfect type of the prophet Elijah, the forerunner to the Second Advent.

If it was possible that an 'Elijah-like' person could have fulfilled the prophecy of Malachi 4:5–6 during Christ's First Advent, why insist that near the end of this age this prophecy must be fulfilled by the very person of the prophet Elijah? Firstly, Jesus affirms plainly that indeed 'Elijah is coming first and will restore all things' (17:11). The plain meaning of 17:11

is not contradicted by the next two verses but rather explains what happened to the first forerunner and what would also happen to Jesus during his First Advent (17:12–13; cf. 14:1–12). Secondly, Malachi 4:5–6 contains a literal prophecy about a literal person who will come before the great and dreadful day of the LORD. This prophecy can only be fulfilled when Elijah the prophet returns. Thirdly, citing the martyr Victorinus, Tertullian, Commodianus, and even Augustine, Peters (1972b:565–566) notes that the early church held that Elijah would still come in the future.

As motivated in section C', this writer views the Apostle Peter as the forerunner to the Church age, because only Peter was given the keys of the kingdom of heaven to open the door to Jewish, Samaritan, and Gentile believers (16:19; Ac 2; 8; 10–11; 15:7). These believers will *inherit* and then enter the kingdom of heaven when it is established at Christ's Second Coming (cf. 5:5; 8:11–12). This use of the keys by Peter did not open the door of the Davidic kingdom which is yet to be restored and established on earth.

But still if the ministry of the first forerunner with the gospel of the kingdom did not restore 'all things', why must the second forerunner to the kingdom of heaven come to do so? Moreover if the establishment of the restored Davidic kingdom was contingent during Christ's First Advent, upon the elect nation Israel accepting the gospel of the kingdom and the messiahship of its Messiah-King – but 'this generation' did not – must not a similar contingency apply before the messianic kingdom will be established at Christ's Second Coming? There is indeed a contingency to the *timing* of Christ's Second Coming to the earth. In a context which is undeniably Jewish (23:37–39), Jesus says that the Jews will not see him again until they say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the LORD!' (23:39; cf. Ps 118:26; Hs 5:15–6:3; Zch 12:10). Allison (1983:77; cf. Malan 2014:129) understands 23:39 to be a conditional prophecy, because the 'date of redemption is contingent upon Israel's acceptance of the person and work of Jesus.' As Fruchtenbaum (2004:307) rightly points out, just as the 'Jewish leaders once led the nation to the rejection of the messiahship of Jesus, they must someday lead the nation to the acceptance of the Messiahship of Jesus'. It will be the task of Elijah the prophet to prove the messiahship of Jesus to the Jewish nation (Peters 1972b:87–88), uniting the Jewish remnant of the Tribulation Period to fear the LORD and to meditate on his Name (Ml 3:16; 4:6; cf. 1 Ki 18:21; 19:18).

## Conclusion

This article proposed a large chiasmic structure for Matthew 11:2–17:13. This chiasmic structure emphasises the First and Second Advents of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Inter-Advent Period as well as God's kingdom programme. But it also highlights how the one Messiah and his two advents intermingle with historical contingency, God's plans, and human responsibility (especially Israel's). Supposing themselves already qualified to enter the restored Davidic kingdom, many in 'this generation' in Israel during Christ's First Advent ignored their spiritual need to come to faith in

the Messiah (3:9; 8:11–12), focusing instead only on the social, political and national aspects of the messianic kingdom. Jesus was rejected as the Messiah by ‘this generation’ in Israel, and consequently the establishment and restoration of the Davidic kingdom was postponed (not cancelled) until his Second Advent. Supposing themselves to have replaced Israel or to have become a ‘new, true or spiritual Israel’, many Gentiles today say that the kingdom offered to Israel at Christ’s First Advent was never more than a spiritual kingdom, will not be offered again to a future generation of Jews, and so the establishment of a restored Davidic kingdom on earth with social, political, and national aspects is written off as ‘mere spurious Jewish ideas’. But just as historical contingency surrounded Christ’s First Advent and his first forerunner, Jesus will not return until the Jews say ‘Blessed is He ...’ – thus in God’s will and through the work of the Holy Spirit, the forerunner, Elijah the prophet, must still come to the Jewish nation to restore ‘all things’ before the Second Advent. As for these intricate chiasmic structures with their *inclusios*, catchwords, and repeated formulae, they should not be written off too quickly as mere literary niceties. It may just be, through literary structures in Matthew, that the coming One, the Son of Man and beloved Son of God, is telling us how to unravel one of the more puzzling problems of the New Testament: one Messiah, two advents, and three forerunners.

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