

LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THE MATTHEW 16:13-18:20 CHIASM AS THE FOUNTAINHEAD OF MATTHEAN
PROTO-ECCLESIOLOGY

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To my wife, Amie.

Thank you for all you love, support, and encouragement as we have worked to achieve this goal.

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ABSTRACT

The only two instances of the Greek term ἐκκλησία (usually translated “church”) found in the Gospels are in Matthew 16:18 and 18:17. These two passages have been examined, debated, and interpreted in a number of ways by various scholars. The present dissertation presents considerable exegetical evidence that these two uses of ἐκκλησία are actually part of a larger literary structure called a chiasmus, which connects the passages in which Matthew 16:18 and 18:17 are found. Because these are highly significant ecclesiological passages, this study further develops the connection of the chiastic structure to other foundational ecclesiological passages, namely the Matthean Great Commission (28:16-20) and Acts 2-6 in order to examine and clarify the theological implications of this newly discovered chiasm. The results of this study demonstrate that: 1) there is strong support for the existence of this chiasm; and 2) understanding Matthew 16:13-18:20 as such has important implications for ecclesiological issues such as the relationship of national Israel to the church and the specific circumstances of the beginning of the church.

PROPOSAL AND INTRODUCTION

One of the most well-known passages in the Bible, as well as a foundational text for the doctrine of ecclesiology, is Matthew 16:17-19: “And Jesus said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven’” (NASB).¹ As one author has said, “For the passage about Peter, the Rock...has been and is a watershed, of decisive importance for every interpreter of the New Testament.”² Because of its high-profile nature and the fact that the contents of this verse have been dissected and debated from so many different angles, it almost seems inconceivable that there could be a fresh perspective left from which to approach this passage.

However, such a fresh, unexplored angle does indeed exist. It is the highly significant role that Matthew 16:17-19 plays within a previously unnoticed literary structure spanning from Matthew 16:13 to 18:20. The passage in question is certainly of great importance, but when viewed as part of an overarching literary structure, it is but one piece of a larger whole, which is of significant importance for exegesis and theology. As will be developed in detail in the following study, both the exegetical implications arising from this newly identified literary structure for the Matthew 16:13-18:20 structure itself, the remaining chapters of Matthew, and

¹ Unless otherwise noted, translations will be from NASB.

² Joseph Anders Burgess, *A History of the Exegesis of Matthew 16:17-19 from 1781 to 1965* (Ann Arbor, MI: Edwards Brothers, 1976), 1.

the earlier chapters of Acts, as well as further implications for the Doctrine of Ecclesiology, are far-reaching.

Need for This Study

To date, there has been a great deal of study devoted to Matthew 16:13-20,³ especially Peter's confession of Jesus as the Messiah, and, to a lesser extent, Matthew 18:15-20, primarily as a text dealing with church discipline.⁴ Both of these passages contain uses of the word ἐκκλησία, the only uses found in the Gospels, and specific formulations using the words δέομαι

³ Burgess, *A History of the Exegesis of Matthew 16:17-19*, explains that he consulted 13,000-14,000 sources in preparation for this study, which has 82 pages of only select bibliographic material at the conclusion. The following represent only a few of the different viewpoints and methods from which this passage has been approached: Ian S Kemp, "The Blessing, Power and Authority of the Church: A Study in Matthew 16:17-19," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 40, no. 2 (April 2016): 128–139; David L Turner, "Matthew among the Dispensationalists," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 53, no. 4 (December 2010): 697–716; Oscar Cullmann, *Peter: Disciple-Apostle-Martyr* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953); Robert H Gundry, "Narrative Framework of Matthew 16:17-19: A Critique of Professor Cullmann's Hypothesis," *Novum testamentum* 7, no. 1 (March 1964): 1–9; Bernard P (Bernard Peter) Robinson, "Peter and His Successors: Tradition and Redaction in Matthew 16:17-19," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 21 (June 1984): 85–104; Patrick Schreiner, "Peter, the Rock: Matthew 16 in Light of Daniel 2," *Criswell Theological Review* 13, no. 2 (2016): 99–117; Henry A Corcoran, "Viewing Biblical Narratives through a Literary Lens: Practicing Narrative Analysis on Matthew 16: 16-20," *Christian Education Journal* 7, no. 2 (September 2010): 299–318; Michael Crosby, "Rethinking a Key Biblical Text and Catholic Church Governance," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 38, no. 1 (2008): 37–43; Tucker S Ferda, "The Seventy Faces of Peter's Confession: Matt. 16:16-17 in the History of Interpretation," *Biblical Interpretation* 20, no. 4–5 (2012): 421–457.

⁴ Donald A. Carson, "On Abusing Matthew 18," *Themelios* 36, no. 1 (May 2011): 1–3; R. Bruce Compton, "Church Discipline: The Correction Of A Believer Or The Excommunication Of An Unbeliever? Harmonizing Matthew 18:15-17, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, And 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 20, no. 0 (2015); Sharyn E Dowd, "Is Matthew 18:15-17 about 'Church Discipline'?", in *Scripture and Traditions: Essays on Early Judaism and Christianity in Honor of Carl R. Holladay* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 137–50; Curtis W. Freeman, "Where Two or Three Are Gathered: Communion Ecclesiology in the Free Church," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 31, no. 3 (September 2004): 259–72; Jeffrey A. Gibbs and Jeffrey J. Kloha, "'Following' Matthew 18: Interpreting Matthew 18:15-20 in Its Context," *Concordia Journal* 29, no. 1 (January 2003): 6–25; Estella B. Horning, "The Rule of Christ: An Exposition of Matthew 18:15-20," *Brethren Life and Thought* 38, no. 2 (1993): 69–78; Bridget Illian, "Church Discipline and Forgiveness in Matthew 18:15-35," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 37, no. 6 (December 2010): 444–50; David McClister, "'Where Two or Three Are Gathered Together': Literary Structure as a Key to Meaning in Matt 17:22-20:19," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 39, no. 4 (December 1996): 549–58; Mark Allan Powell, "Binding and Loosing: A Paradigm for Ethical Discernment from the Gospel of Matthew," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 30, no. 6 (December 2003): 438–45; Wyman Lewis Richardson, "The Rule of Christ and Congregational Polity: A Unique Challenge and Opportunity," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 47, no. 1 (September 2004): 45–53.

and λύω, which have to do with “binding” and “loosing” on earth and in heaven. While it would seem, even at first glance, that there should be a connection made between these passages based on the use of similar terminology alone, very little research actually connects the two in more than a cursory manner.⁵ However, very recent research has proposed and established the likely existence of a large literary unit—a chiastic structure—within Matthew, spanning from 16:13 to 18:20,⁶ which shows how the author truly intended the two significant previously mentioned passages to be connected. In the light of this fresh research, a need has emerged to investigate this section of Matthew’s Gospel in more depth to see if, indeed, this is a viable way to deal with these passages as parts of a single unit and the implications this would have for the interpretation of this section of Scripture.

In addition, since the two passages in Matthew 16 and 18 contain the only occurrences of the word ἐκκλησία in the Gospels, it stands to reason that these are ecclesiological significant passages. Since a fresh way of understanding these two passages now exists, especially one that connects them and will help connect them to the remainder of Matthew’s Gospel and even the earlier chapters of Acts, exploring the meaning of this proposed chiastic structure will accomplish much more than add to the field of literary criticism. It will also lend fresh theological understanding to the beginning of the church and ecclesiological understanding in general. Examining the chiastic connection of Matthew 16:13-18:20 and developing the

⁵ Richard H Hiers, “‘Binding’ and ‘Loosing’: The Matthean Authorizations,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 104, no. 2 (June 1985): 233–50; Henry Joel Cadbury, “The Meaning of John 20:23, Matthew 16:19, and Matthew 18:18,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 58, no. 3 (1939): 251–54; Schalk W. Cronjé, “A Study of the Theological and Ecclesiological Consequences of Jesus’ Pronouncements in Matthew 16:18-19 and 18:18 Concerning Peter as the Rock, the Keys of the Kingdom given to Peter, and the Church as Holder of the Keys of the Kingdom,” *Acta Patristica et Byzantina* 14 (2003): 78–96; Kari Syreeni, “Between Heaven and Earth: On the Structure of Matthew’s Symbolic Universe,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 40 (October 1990): 3–13.

⁶ A. Boyd Luter and Nicholas A. Dodson, “Hidden in Plain View: An Overlooked Chiasm in Matthew 16:13-18:20,” *Filologia Neotestamentaria* XXVIII–XXVIX (2016): 23–37.

connection to rest of Matthew and to Acts is, then, an important endeavor for the field of literary criticism and for systematic theology, especially the foundations of ecclesiology.

Purpose of This Study

Chiastic structures are present in many of the various literary genres throughout the Old and New Testaments. As they have been identified and studied, especially since the early to mid-twentieth century, chiasms have been shown to be more than just literary niceties or mnemonic devices to aid the hearer of the text, though they certainly are beneficial in those regards. The presence of chiasms should be seen as much more noteworthy than simply aesthetic features of the text; they can, and often do, have great exegetical significance in the interpretation of biblical passages.⁷

Thus, the existence of such a structure connecting two theologically significant passages in the Gospel of Matthew, which has only recently been identified, deserves further and in-depth investigation. This study will show that the chiasm in Matthew 16-18 is not only exegetically significant for that section of Scripture itself, but it also has great significance for the remainder of Matthew's Gospel as well as the early chapters of the Book of Acts. As such, it will lend important theological insight for the understanding of the beginning of the Church.

This study will first establish that there is a connection between Matthew 16:13-18:20 that is much more than mere similarity in wording. As will be demonstrated, there is, within these verses, a literary structure known as a chiasmus, of which the two passages containing the uses of ἐκκλησία and the "binding" and "loosing" terminology form the outer layers of this

⁷ Ronald E Man, "The Value of Chiasm for New Testament Interpretation," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 141, no. 562 (April 1984): 146–157; Ian H. Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Monograph Series 111 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995).

structure. As will be seen, demonstrating the existence of this overarching structure will also help to properly understand the meanings of the individual passages in question. Furthermore, since the structure encompasses all that is in between them, it will aid in understanding those passages as well, especially in light of how they all fit together within the structure (which itself will be shown to have an important meaning).

As stated above, the development of the chiasmic structure connecting Matthew 16:13-18:20 will not only help in understanding the connection between and meaning of these oft-discussed but fairly rarely associated, passages, it will also be a valuable tool for understanding the remainder of Matthew's Gospel. Thus, the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasmus is not simply a stand-alone literary structure, but its existence shows a connection between this unit and the remaining chapters in Matthew, especially with the Matthean version of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:16-20.

In addition, the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasmus will be shown to have a connection to the earlier chapters of the book of Acts. Since Matthew 16:13-18:20 contains the only uses of the word ἐκκλησία ("church") in the Gospels, it has important implications for the study of the beginning of the church. Thus, examining and assessing the validity of possible connections between Matthew 16:13-18:20 and the earlier chapter of Acts, where the church is clearly seen to be growing and developing, is important for understanding Jesus' declaration of intent to build His church (Matt 16:18) and the building of His church through His disciples, as seen in the Book of Acts.

Method of This Study

For Evangelical Christians who hold to Scripture as the final authority in matters of faith, the goal of biblical interpretation must be to find the correct meaning of the text of Scripture. This means that one must seek first to understand what the original author intended the text to mean to the original audience. As John Breck explains, “This is the necessary first step toward any attempt to unfold what has traditionally been called the ‘spiritual sense’ of Scripture, which we can define as the Word addressed by God *through the text* to the church and world of today.”⁸ Since the nineteenth century, the focus of biblical criticism has largely moved from the literal sense of Scripture, or the author’s intended meaning, to finding the sources behind the text (source criticism), detecting oral traditions within the text (form criticism), identifying the persons or schools who helped shape the final form of the text (redaction criticism), or even to the idea that the meaning of text is incomplete until it is read and assimilated by the reader (reader-response criticism).⁹ Though these methods have bequeathed some potentially valuable insights (e.g., identifying important literary structures within the text of Scripture), they have, by and large, made little effort to discern the intended meaning, and, even though they can be used in ways to *help* uncover the intended meaning, additional approaches, such as literary structural analysis, are needed to uncover the literal sense of a biblical passage.¹⁰

Undoubtedly, the biblical authors used various forms to convey their messages. Thus, to understand the meanings that the authors intended to communicate, it is important to study the

⁸ John Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language: Chiasmus in the Scriptures and Beyond* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1994), 15.

⁹ See the chapters discussing most of these specific types of biblical criticism as applied to the New Testament in David Alan Black and David S. Dockery, eds., *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues* (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001).

¹⁰ Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language*, 9–15.

structure of literary units within the overall compositions. According to Breck, “Structural analysis of the New Testament texts has proven beyond any doubt that most, if not all, of their authors, like many of their Hebrew and Jewish predecessors, relied heavily on chiasmus (also called ‘chiasm’) to produce their literary work.”¹¹ Not only are chiastic structures important rhetorical/literary forms in the New Testament, but there is an intimate connection between the structural form of a passage and its thematic content, that is, its theological meaning. As such, a newly identified chiastic structure encompassing a significant portion of Matthew’s Gospel merits significant investigation in order to establish its legitimacy and draw out any exegetical and theological implications.

The first chapter will begin with the history of the study of chiastic structures in Scripture, especially within the New Testament and the Gospel of Matthew itself in order to establish the key features and functions of chiasms. The existence of specific features common to most, or all, chiasms will help establish the criteria by which Matthew 16:13-18:20 can be evaluated to establish that it is, in fact, a legitimate chiastic structure that has only recently been identified.¹² The discussion of the function and exegetical significance of widely-recognized chiasms will then help to establish the potential exegetical significance of the chiastic structure in question.

The second chapter will focus on establishing the legitimacy of the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasm. The passage(s) will be evaluated in detail and the criteria established in Chapter 1 will be applied to demonstrate the likelihood of that the chiastic structuring is appropriate. Then, in

¹¹ Ibid., 16; See also, Nils Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament: A Study in the Form and Function of Chiastic Structures* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992); John W. Welch, ed., *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis* (Hildesheim, Germany: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1998); Augustine Stock, “Chiastic Awareness and Education in Antiquity,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 14, no. 1 (January 1984): 23–27.

¹² Luter and Dodson, “Hidden in Plain View: An Overlooked Chiasm in Matthew 16:13-18:20.”

Chapter 3, a proposed interpretation of the passages within the chiasmic structure will be presented along with potentially fresh exegetical insights gained from studying this section as a unit, and the remaining chapters of Matthew will be studied in light of the proposed meaning set forth for Matthew 16:13-18:20. Exegetically, and/or theologically, significant insights gained from this study will then be discussed.

Since the passages that form the proposed chiasm in Matthew 16:13-18:20 are significant ecclesiological passages (especially 16:13-20), Chapter 4 will establish the Great Commission (Mt. 28:16-20) as the means by which Jesus' declaration to build his ἐκκλησία would be fulfilled and assess the earlier chapters Acts, in which the church clearly is being established, in light of the previously gleaned exegetical/theological insights from Matthew. Here it will be briefly observed that the author of Acts appears to be reliant on the Gospel of Matthew in certain important ways. Through the implications of this, a case for Matthean theological priority in Luke's use of Matthew will be briefly noted.¹³

Once the connection of the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasm with the remainder of Matthew and the earlier chapters of Acts has been established, Chapter 5 will apply the exegetical data derived in that regard to gain fresh insights in the area of biblical ecclesiology. Concerning the inception of the church, Evangelical theologians typically fall into one of two camps. Many systematic theologians see the church as beginning in Acts 2 at Pentecost, while others, tracing the extensive use of ἐκκλησία terminology in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint (hereafter LXX), understand the church to extend all the way back to the time of the

¹³ A. Boyd Luter and Nicholas Dodson, "Matthean Theological Priority?: Making Sense of Matthew's Proto-Ecclesiology in Acts 1-14," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 61, no. 1 (Fall 2018): 63-74.

Abraham or to Adam.¹⁴ Those who believe the church started at Pentecost will point to Jesus's use of the *future* tense in Matthew 16:18 when he says, *οἰκοδομήσω* μου τὴν ἐκκλησίαν – “*I will build* my church,” as evidence of his looking forward to the time in Acts 2 when that would begin, though somewhat glossing over Jesus' uses of ἐκκλησία in Matthew 18:17. Those who see the church as extending back throughout the history of Israel will take Matthew 18:17 as evidence that Jesus understood the church to be an already-existing institution and essentially explain away or dismiss Jesus' use of the future tense in 16:18.¹⁵ Thus, while theologians of both persuasions may address these significant passages in Matthew, they do so in only a cursory manner, and generally no particular attention is given to the biblical record between Jesus's promise that he would build His church and the early material in Acts where the church is clearly already in existence. At the very least, though, the latter chapters of Matthew and the earlier chapters of Acts should be understood as some sort of a *transitional* period. This transitional period will be shown to contain what can be referred to as a Proto-Ecclesiology, in that it is prior to what many evangelicals understand as the beginning of Jesus' promised ἐκκλησία.

Review of Relevant Literature

Since the establishment and examination of a previously unidentified chiasm in the Gospel of Matthew is foundational to this study, it is important to survey some of the most important examples of previous research concerning chiastic structures. Study of chiasmus as a

¹⁴ It should be noted that, while numerous other biblical and theological considerations are taken into account by theologians when examining the inception of the church, the scope of this study is to examine the insights gleaned from passages in Matthew when understood as part of a single literary unit

¹⁵ See for example, Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, New ed (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1996).

principle of literary construction apparently began with J.A. Bengel's *Gnomon novi testament*, which was published in 1742, in which he first called attention to chiasmus. According to Lund:

Though the chiasmus in its simplest form of four members was well known and cultivated in classical literature, no use seems to have been made of the principle in exegesis until J.A. Bengel called attention to it and employed it, to some extent, in his exposition of the New Testament...To Bengel, then, belongs the credit of having first grasped the significance of chiastic forms in the writings of the New Testament and of having applied the principle to exegesis.¹⁶

In the nineteenth century, significant works by John Jebb, Thomas Boys, and John Forbes furthered the investigation into chiastic structures.¹⁷ However, it was not until the twentieth century, thanks especially to the work of Nils Lund,¹⁸ that the study of chiasmus began to attract attention. Since then, chiasmus has continued to be explored more and more extensively.¹⁹

Lund published several articles on chiasmus, but his landmark work was his book, *Chiasmus in the New Testament: A Study in the Form and Function of Chiastic Structures*, which began as his dissertation research at the University of Chicago (and was later published in 1942).

¹⁶ Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 35–36.

¹⁷ John Jebb, *Sacred Literature* (London, 1820); Thomas Boys, *Tactica Sacra: An Attempt to Develop, and Exhibit to the Eye by Tabular Arrangements a General Rule of Composition Prevailing in the Holy Scriptures* (London, 1824) and *Key to the Book of Psalms: Being a Tabular Arrangement, by which the Psalms Are Exhibited to the Eye according to a General Rule of Composition Prevailing in the Holy Scriptures* (London, 1825); John Forbes, *The Symmetrical Structure of Scripture, or the Principles of Scripture Parallelism Exemplified in an Analysis of the Decalogue, the Sermon on the Mount, and Other Passages of the Sacred Writings* (Edinburgh, 1854), *Studies on the Book of Psalms: The Structural Connection of the Book of Psalms, Both in Single Psalms and in the Psalms as an Organic Whole* (Edinburgh, 1888), and *Analytical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans: Tracing the Train of Thought by the Aid of Parallelism* (Edinburgh, 1868).

¹⁸ Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*; Nils Lund, "The Presence of Chiasmus in the Old Testament," *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 46, no. 2 (1930): 104–26; Nils Lund, "The Influence of Chiasmus upon the Structure of the Gospels," *Anglican Theological Review* 13, no. 1 (January 1931): 27–48; Nils Lund, "The Influence of Chiasmus upon the Structure of the Gospel According to Matthew," *Anglican Theological Review* 13, no. 4 (October 1931): 405–33; Nils Lund and Henry Walker, "The Literary Structure of the Book of Habakkuk," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 53, no. 4 (1934): 355–70.

¹⁹ This is evidenced by the fact that one can find a vast number of articles dealing with the existence of chiasmus in numerous parts of Scripture with even the briefest of searches of scholarly databases.

Chiasmus in the New Testament became quite influential and set the stage for the development of contemporary chiasmus research.

As to his own methodological stance, Lund was greatly influenced by the work of the leading scholars in the field of Form Criticism, such as Johannes Weiss and Rudolf Bultmann. Not surprisingly, then, he relied heavily on the principles of *Formgeschichte* in his work. As a result, he makes a distinction between the Hebrew and Greek literary influences he believed can be detected within the text of the New Testament. He identified Chiasmus as being part of the Hebrew influence that can be identified in the text, explaining at the outset of his book:

The following pages, therefore, are devoted to the tracing of the Hebrew literary influence on the Greek text of the New Testament; more definitely, they discuss a particular Hebrew form, namely, the extensive use of the inverted order commonly called chiasmus.²⁰

Though other works have since helped to show that chiasmus was common to the literature of most, if not all, ancient cultures, not just Hebrew literary tradition,²¹ Lund's work remains important for evaluating the existence of chiasmus in both the Old and New Testaments. Lund examines passages from the Law, the Prophets, and Psalms to establish criteria for identifying chiastic structures, then surveys the Pauline epistles, the Gospels, and Revelation to show that the use of chiasmus is widespread in the literature of the New Testament.

It is not an overstatement to say that Nils Lund was integral in helping to stimulate the study of chiastic structure into the significant field of New Testament study that it has become today. His works, especially *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, are still some of the most relevant and commonly appealed to sources concerning the study of chiasmus. In addition, Craig Blomberg's article, "The Structure of 2 Corinthians 1-7," is a very insightful work in regard to

²⁰ Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 28–29.

²¹ See Stock, "Chiastic Awareness and Education in Antiquity."

evaluating potential chiasmic structures, given that he devotes a great deal of space specifically to the topic of detecting extended chiasms.²² Though Blomberg's article is brief, it is thoroughly researched and provides excellent specific criteria for identifying chiasms in an effort to help avoid trying to force chiasms where they do not really exist. Yet even more concerned with preventing the false identification of chiasmus is Mark J. Boda, who, in his article, "Chiasmus in Ubiquity: Symmetrical Mirages in Nehemiah 9," identifies several pervasive errors made by rhetorical analysts in identifying chiasmic structures.²³ Though his work is focused on chiasms purportedly identified in Hebrew compositions, his concern that the identification of so many chiasms over the last roughly fifty years has made many scholars skeptical, and the cautions that he offers against too hastily "detecting" a chiasm are well worth noting. Finally, John Welch, upon whose work Boda heavily relied, has extensively researched chiasmic structures and specified some very helpful criteria for their identification as well, most succinctly in his article, "Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating the Presence of Chiasmus."²⁴

John Breck's *The Shape of Biblical Language: Chiasmus in the Scriptures and Beyond* makes an important contribution in that, while he does primarily discuss chiasmic structures throughout the New Testament (and other non-biblical literature), he devotes two chapters to chiasmic structures within the Synoptic tradition. Breck also focuses largely on the drawing out of

²² Craig Blomberg, "The Structure of 2 Corinthians 1-7," *Criswell Theological Review* 4, no. 1 (1989): 4-8.

²³ Mark J. Boda, "Chiasmus in Ubiquity: Symmetrical Mirages in Nehemiah 9," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 21, no. 71 (September 1996): 56-58.

²⁴ John W. Welch, "Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating the Presence of Chiasmus," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4, no. 2 (1995): 1-14; See also *Chiasmus in Antiquity*. Welch has also published aspects of his work online and given a helpful summary chart of criteria from various resources on the study of chiasmus at "Criteria Chart | Chiasmus Resources," accessed August 31, 2017, <https://chiasmusresources.org/criteria-chart> While Welch has done much of his work in an effort to establish the legitimacy and importance of the existence of chiasmic structures, not only in the Bible, but also in the Book of Mormon, and the presence of such structures in the Book of Mormon is outside the realm of this study, his research and writing is, nonetheless, thorough and valuable for the evaluation of biblical chiasms.

the exegetical and theological significance of the structures of these literary units, which unquestionably is vitally important for furthering the discussion of the significance of the larger Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasm.

Once the validity and value of the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasm has been established, it will be important to examine previous interpretations of the passages contained therein. In order to address these passages, various scholarly articles, commentaries, and other books will be consulted, especially those that have already pointed to the existence of chiasmus in Matthew. This will help guide the way in which the implications and meaning of Matthew 16:13-18:20 are drawn out.²⁵ It will also be necessary, when making the connection to the earlier chapters of

²⁵ See, e.g., Man, “The Value of Chiasm for New Testament Interpretation”; Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language*; John Breck, “Chiasmus as a Key to Biblical Interpretation,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 43, no. 3–4 (1999): 249–67; David McClister, “‘Where Two or Three Are Gathered Together’: Literary Structure as a Key to Meaning in Matt 17:22-20:19,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 39, no. 4 (December 1996): 549–58; Elie Assis, “Chiasmus in Biblical Narrative: Rhetoric of Characterization,” *Prooftexts* 22, no. 3 (2002): 273–304; George Howard, “Stylistic Inversion and the Synoptic Tradition,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 97, no. 3 (1978): 375–89, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3266166>; Blomberg, “The Structure of 2 Corinthians 1-7”; Daniel Boerman, “The Chiastic Structure of Matthew 11-12,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 40, no. 2 (November 2005): 313–25; Gary W. Derickson, “Matthew’s Chiastic Structure and Its Dispensational Implications,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 163, no. 652 (October 2006): 423–37; Charles H. Lohr, “Oral Techniques in the Gospel of Matthew,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (October 1961): 403–35; Lund, “The Influence of Chiasmus upon the Structure of the Gospels”; Vincent A. Pizzuto, “The Structural Elegance of Matthew 1-2: A Chiastic Proposal,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 74, no. 4 (October 2012): 712–37; Tyler J. VanderWeele, “Some Observations Concerning the Chiastic Structure of the Gospel of Matthew,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 59, no. 2 (October 2008): 669–73, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jts/fln041>; William Foxwell Albright and C. S. Mann, eds., *Matthew*, 1st ed., The Anchor Bible 26 (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1971); Michael Card, *Matthew: The Gospel of Identity*, vol. 3, The Biblical Imagination Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=http://site.ebrary.com/lib/liberty/Doc?id=10754588>; W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 3 vols., The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988); R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2007); Donald Alfred Hagner, *Matthew*, Word Biblical Commentary, v. 33A, 33B (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1993); Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Sacra Pagina 1 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991); William Hendriksen and Simon Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2002); Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2009); Matthias Konradt, ed., *Das Evangelium Nach Matthäus*, Das Neue Testament Deutsch Neues Göttinger Bibelwerk, Teilband 1 (Bristol, CT: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=http://site.ebrary.com/lib/liberty/Doc?id=11032430>; Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1992); David L. Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=http://site.ebrary.com/lib/liberty/Doc?id=10589903>; Jason G. Duesing, Thomas White, and Malcolm B. Yarnell, eds., *Upon This Rock: A Baptist Understanding of the Church* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2010).

Acts, to examine similarly relevant literature on Acts,²⁶ as well as briefly noting material concerning the relationship between the authors of the Synoptic Gospels. Of particular importance in exploring the link between Matthew and Luke's writings are the works of William Farmer and those who follow in his line of thought concerning Matthean priority, and David Alan Black, as their works lay an important foundation for how Luke may have relied, and built, upon Matthew's work in order to write a Gospel for the Gentiles.²⁷

²⁶ E.g., C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments 34 (New York: T & T Clark, 2004); Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994); F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary*, 3rd rev. and enl. ed (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1990); F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, Rev. ed, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988); James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015); Joseph A. Fitzmyer, ed., *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1st ed, The Anchor Bible, v. 31 (New York: Doubleday, 1998); David E. Garland, *Luke*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series on the New Testament, v. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011); Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1997); William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke*, New Testament Commentary, v. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1978); Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, Second Edition (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014); I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 1st American ed, The New International Greek Testament Commentary 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978); I. Howard Marshall and David Peterson, eds., *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998); Leon Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, Revised edition, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1988); John Nolland, *Luke*, Word Biblical Commentary, v. 35A-C (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1989); David Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2009); Robert F O'Toole, "Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:25-40)," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 17 (February 1983): 25–34; Benjamin R Wilson, "Taking up and Raising, Fixing and Loosing: A Chiastic Wordplay in Acts 2.23b-24," *New Testament Studies* 59, no. 3 (July 2013): 457–60, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S002868851300009X>; Bruce W. Winter and P. J. Williams, eds., *The New Testament in Its First Century Setting: Essays on Context and Background in Honour of B.W. Winter on His 65th Birthday* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2004); Kenneth R Wolfe, "The Chiastic Structure of Luke-Acts and Some Implications for Worship," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 22, no. 2 (1980): 60–71; Charles H. Talbert, *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes, and the Genre of Luke-Acts*, SBLMS 20 (Cambridge, MA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1975).

²⁷ David Alan Black, *Why Four Gospels? The Historical Origins of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2001); William Reuben Farmer, *The Synoptic Problem: A Critical Analysis* (Dillsboro, NC: Western North Carolina Press, 1976); William Reuben Farmer, "A Time for Reappraisal and Fresh Approaches," *Perkins Journal* 33, no. 4 (1980): 1–54; William Reuben Farmer, "The Synoptic Problem: The Inadequacies of the Generally Accepted Solution," *Perkins Journal* 33, no. 4 (1980): 20–27; F. David Farnell, "The Synoptic Gospels in the Ancient Church: The Testimony to the Priority of Matthew's Gospel," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 10, no. 1 (1999): 53–86; William Baird, "Luke's Use of Matthew: Griesbach Revisited," *Perkins Journal* 40, no. 3 (July 1987): 35–38; Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, Second edition. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), accessed August 9, 2017, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=http://site.ebrary.com/lib/liberty/Doc?id=10884601>; Richard A. Burridge, *Four Gospels, One Jesus: A Symbolic Reading*, Third edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014); Eric Franklin, *Luke: Interpreter of Paul, Critic of Matthew*, *Journal for the study of the New*

Finally, since this study seeks to apply the exegetical insights gained from the development of the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasm and its connection to the remainder of Matthew and earlier chapters of Acts to an expanded and clarified understanding of biblical Ecclesiology, it will be helpful to consult a number of relevant theological works. These will include biblical, systematic and dogmatic theologies, as well as works specifically on Ecclesiology, and works dealing with Ecclesiology as it relates to the texts addressed in this study.²⁸ However, it should be noted at the beginning that almost nothing has been written in regard to the ecclesiological implications of the latter chapters of Matthew, a key area of this study (see Chapter Three).

Testament. Supplement series 92 (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1994); Marijke H de Lang, "The Prehistory of the Griesbach Hypothesis," *Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses* 69, no. 1 (1993): 134–139; Allan J. McNicol, David L. Dungan, and David Barrett Peabody, eds., *Beyond the Q Impasse: Luke's Use of Matthew: A Demonstration by the Research Team of the International Institute for Gospel Studies* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996); David Barrett Peabody et al., eds., *One Gospel from Two: Mark's Use of Matthew and Luke: A Demonstration by the Research Team of the International Institute for Renewal of Gospel Studies* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002); Thomas E. Phillips, Richard P. Thompson, and Joseph B. Tyson, *Literary Studies in Luke-Acts: Essays in Honor of Joseph B. Tyson* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998); Stanley E. Porter, ed., *The Synoptic Problem: Four Views* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016); Michael Strickland, *Evangelicals and the Synoptic Problem*, American University studies. Series VII, Theology and religion Vol. 336 (New York: Peter Lang, 2014); Robert L. Thomas, ed., *Three Views on the Origins of the Synoptic Gospels* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2002); Winter and Williams, *The New Testament in Its First Century Setting*.

²⁸ E.g., Karl Barth et al., *Church Dogmatics*, Study ed (New York: T & T Clark, 2009); Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013); Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*; Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest, *Integrative Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996); Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church*, Contours of Christian Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995); Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000); Duesing, White, and Yarnell, *Upon This Rock*; Donald A Hagner, "Holiness and Ecclesiology: The Church in Matthew," in *Built upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2008), 170–86; Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=http://site.ebrary.com/lib/liberty/Doc?id=10837632>; Matt Jenson and David Wilhite, *The Church: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: T & T Clark, 2010), <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=341707&site=ehost-live&scope=site>; Roger Haight, *Christian Community in History* (New York: Continuum, 2004); Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God; Lectures on the Nature of the Church*, The Kerr Lectures, 1952 (New York: Friendship Press, 1954); Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*, Sacra Doctrina (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998); Pheme Perkins, "Matthew 28:16-20, Resurrection, Ecclesiology and Mission," *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* 32 (1993): 574–88; Christopher Kavin Rowe, "The Ecclesiology of Acts," *Interpretation* 66, no. 3 (July 2012): 259–69, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020964312443192>.

CHAPTER 1: CHIASMUS: INVERTED PARALLELISMS AND THEIR PRESENCE IN SCRIPTURE

The Study of Chiasmus

In modern scholarship, the study of chiasmus as a principle of literary construction began with J.A. Bengel's *Gnomon novi testament*, published in 1742, in which he first called attention to chiasmus. In the nineteenth century, significant works by John Jebb, Thomas Boys, and John Forbes furthered the investigation into chiastic structures.²⁹ It was not, however, until the early twentieth century, thanks especially to the work of Nils Lund,³⁰ that the study of chiasmus began to attract much greater attention. Since then chiasmus has been explored quite extensively,³¹ and many scholars such as John Breck and John Welch have found that the proper identification and

²⁹ John Jebb, *Sacred Literature* (London: J. Duncan, 1831); Thomas Boys, *Tactica Sacra: An Attempt to Develop, and Exhibit to the Eye by Tabular Arrangements a General Rule of Composition Prevailing in the Holy Scriptures* (London: T. Hamilton, 1824) and *Key to the Book of Psalms: Being a Tabular Arrangement, by which the Psalms Are Exhibited to the Eye according to a General Rule of Composition Prevailing in the Holy Scriptures* (London: Boys, 1825); John Forbes, *The Symmetrical Structure of Scripture, or the Principles of Scripture Parallelism Exemplified in an Analysis of the Decalogue, the Sermon on the Mount, and Other Passages of the Sacred Writings* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1854), *Studies on the Book of Psalms: The Structural Connection of the Book of Psalms, Both in Single Psalms and in the Psalms as an Organic Whole* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1888), and *Analytical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans: Tracing the Train of Thought by the Aid of Parallelism* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1868).

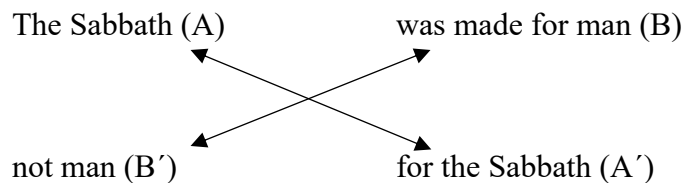
³⁰ Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*; "The Presence of Chiasmus in the Old Testament"; "The Influence of Chiasmus upon the Structure of the Gospels"; "The Influence of Chiasmus upon the Structure of the Gospel According to Matthew"; Lund and Walker, "The Literary Structure of the Book of Habakkuk."

³¹ This is evidenced by the fact that one can find a vast number of articles dealing with the existence of chiasmus in numerous parts of Scripture with even the briefest of searches of scholarly databases.

interpretation of this literary structure can be invaluable for understanding the true meaning of a text in which it is found.³²

Form and Function of Chiasms

A chiasmus, often referred to as chiasm or chiastic structure, is a literary structure which involves parallelism of words, phrases or ideas, entire sentences, or even larger literary units. The word chiasmus is from the Greek *chiazein*, which means to place in the shape of the letter *chi* (*X*) or crosswise.³³ Thus, while synonymous parallelism, which is quite familiar to students of Hebrew poetry, might express a pattern of parallel ideas one after the other, e.g., A-A'-B-B', chiastic or inverted parallelism would express parallel ideas, phrases, etc., in an inverted but balanced manner, e.g., A-B-B'-A'. A basic example of inverted parallelism can be seen in Mark 2:27:



The idea of being a crosswise or “chiastic” structure is effectively demonstrated here, but a chiasmus is typically written out as follows:

³² Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language*.

³³ Robert L. Alden, “Chiastic Psalms: A Study in the Mechanics of Semitic Poetry in Psalms 1-50,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 17, no. 1 (1974): 12.

A The Sabbath

B was made for man

B' and not man

A' for the Sabbath.³⁴

While this example shows clearly the idea of inverted parallelism, it does not clearly demonstrate a third basic feature often associated with chiasmus, which is climactic centrality.³⁵ Climactic centrality is an important feature of chiastic patterns, so much so that many see this as the defining feature of chiasmus. John Breck defines chiasmus as a, "...literary form consisting of two or more parallel lines structured about a central theme whose detection and proper analysis open new and significant avenues toward understanding the author's message."³⁶ Peter Ellis is also emphatic about the importance of the central element in a chiasmus, stating:

Chiastic structure is valuable for helping us discover the beginning and end of a narrative or discourse. By definition a chiasm begins and ends with matching verses, e.g., a-b-a' or a-b-c-b'-a' where the a and a' are paralleled, containing similar terms or themes. Yet, it is still more valuable as an aid to discerning the central message of the narrative or discourse.³⁷

Ellis is referring here specifically to the fact that in the Gospel of John, the central message or theme is most often found in the central section of the chiasmus, but he undoubtedly sees climactic centrality as a vital feature of chiastic structures generally, which he continually makes evident in his article. While some more than others see climactic centrality as a defining feature of chiasmus, what is important to note about the presence of a chiastic structure is that awareness

³⁴ Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, vii.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language*, 1.

³⁷ Peter F. Ellis, "Inclusion, Chiasm, and the Division of the Fourth Gospel," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 43, no. 3-4 (1999): 274.

of its presence, especially in a larger literary unit, can help the reader understand the meaning of that unit and give further insight for the text in which it is located. The way in which reading with an understanding that a chiasmic structure is present will be further developed shortly.

Chiasmus in the Old Testament

Inverted parallelism, or chiasmic structuring, was popular in ancient times. These literary forms have been identified in Sumero-Akkadian, Ugaritic, Aramaic, Classical Greek, and Latin literature,³⁸ and according to Dorsey, “ancient writers and audiences seem to have appreciated the pattern immensely, if its frequency in ancient literature is any indication.”³⁹ It is not surprising then, that, as Dorsey explains, “The symmetric (or chiasmic or introverted) pattern is also relatively common in the Hebrew Bible.”⁴⁰ Chiasmus has been identified in the Law, the Prophets, and Wisdom literature of the Old Testament.

While traditional parallelism, the balancing of two paired lines, either directly or antithetically, to express a theme in complementary ways, is a common, if not the defining feature of Hebrew poetry, inverted parallelism, or chiasmus, has been identified in many portions of wisdom and poetic literature in the Old Testament as well. Though many chiasms are short, only a few verses or even one verse, Robert Alden has identified at least 19 psalms among the first 50, which he believes are structured chiasmically in their entirety.⁴¹ Some of these

³⁸ Welch, *Chiasmus in Antiquity*.

³⁹ David A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis-Malachi* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 32.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 30.

⁴¹ Alden, “Chiasmic Psalms.”

arrangements have garnered more support from other scholars than others, such as Psalm 8, which Alden arranges as follows:

- A Benediction (v. 1)
- B God's rule (vv. 2-3)
- C Man's meanness (v. 4)
- C' Man's greatness (v. 5)
- B' Man's rule (v. 6-8)
- A' Benediction (v. 9)⁴²

Anthony Ceresko also find chiasmus to be a common literary structure in Hebrew poetry, citing several examples from Psalms: 105:1-6, 7-11; 89:1-5; 145:11:12; 51:1-11, as well as poetic portions of other books such as 2 Samuel 1:19-27 and Hosea 8:9-13.⁴³ Another example of the importance of chiastic structure in the Wisdom Literature is David Dorsey's understanding of the structure of Song of Songs. He recognizes that chiastic structuring can be found throughout the book on the microstructural level, that is, smaller units consisting of a few up to several verses. However, Dorsey, building on the work of J. Cheryl Exum⁴⁴ and William H. Shea⁴⁵, proposes that the entirety of Song of Songs is arranged in a large, overarching chiastic structure. He argues, rather convincingly, that the macrostructure of the book consists of seven parts, each having some chiastic arrangement within, and can be demonstrated as follows:

⁴² Ibid., 13; See also, Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language*, 40–42, who essentially agrees with this arrangement, though he give a much more detailed explanation of the arrangement and its implications for understanding.

⁴³ Anthony R. Ceresko, "Function of Chiasmus in Hebrew Poetry," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (January 1978): 1–10.

⁴⁴ J. Cheryl Exum, "Literary and Structural Analysis of the Song of Songs," *Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 85, no. 1 (1973): 47–79.

⁴⁵ William H. Shea, "The Chiastic Structure of the Song of Songs," *Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 92, no. 3 (1980): 378–96.

- A** Opening Words of Mutual Love and Desire (1.2-2.7): 7 speeches, alternating between the young woman and the young man, chiasitic
1. Solomon mentioned by name
 2. Brothers mistreat (?) the young woman
 3. Her self-assurance regarding her beauty
 4. Her vineyard contrasted with her brothers'
 5. Apple tree as a place of lovemaking
 6. She would keep him as a sachet between her breasts
 7. Closed by refrain, 'His left arm... '
- B** His Invitation to Her to Join Him in the Countryside (2.8-17): 3 or 4 parts, chiasitic
1. Description of the renewal of spring and nature
 2. Flowers and grapevines; vineyards in bloom
 3. He comes to her home to invite her
 4. Ends with refrain, 'My lover is mine... '
- C** Her Dream of Him and Their Union (3.1-5): 7 parts, chiasitic
1. Begins with her in bed at night
 2. She yearns for her absent lover
 3. She goes out to search for him in the streets
 4. She is found by the city watchmen
 5. Refrain, 'My lover is mine... ', at beginning
- D** The Wedding (3.6-5.1): 7 parts, chiasitic
1. Mention of the name of Solomon
 2. Dramatic climax in 4.16-5.1
- C'** Her Dream, and Their Expressions of Admiration for One Another (5.2-7.11 [10]): 7 parts, chiasitic
1. Begins with her in bed at night
 2. She yearns for her absent lover
 3. She goes out to search for him in the streets
 4. She is found by the city watchmen
 5. Refrain, 'I am my lover's... ', at end
- B'** Her Invitation to Him to Join Her in the Countryside (7.12[11]-8.4): 3 parts
1. Description of the renewal of spring and nature
 2. Flowers and grapevines; vineyards in bloom
 3. She would bring him to her home
 4. Refrain, 'I am my lover's... ', at beginning
- A'** Closing Words of Mutual Love and Desire (8.5-14): 7 speeches, alternating between the young woman and young man; chiasitic
1. Solomon mentioned by name
 2. Brothers belittle (?) the young woman
 3. Her self-assurance regarding her beauty
 4. Her vineyard contrasted (?) with Solomon's others

5. Apple tree as a place of lovemaking
6. She would be a seal upon his heart
7. Refrain, 'His left arm... ', at beginning⁴⁶

This arrangement puts the wedding scene as the centerpiece and major focal point of the entire song, which is not surprising in a song celebrating the adoration of two lovers, and which fits well with the idea of the central theme being a major focal point in chiastic structures, as mentioned above. Luter, building on Dorsey's proposed structure, goes even further, and demonstrates that, while Song of Songs is one grand chiasmus, each section is itself structured chiastically as well.⁴⁷ It is clear from the abundance of research⁴⁸ that there is agreement among many scholars that inverted parallelism or chiasmus is an important literary feature in Hebrew poetry.

Chiasmus as a literary feature is not limited only to poetic sections of the Old Testament but can be observed in the legal and narrative sections as well. In the legal sections of the Pentateuch, many instances of repetitious language can be explained, according to Lund, not by the mere formality of language as with modern legal documents, but because they follow a verifiable chiastic pattern. Some are straightforward, e.g., Lev. 11:24-28, which contains seven

⁴⁶ David A. Dorsey, "Literary Structuring in the Song of Songs," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 15, no. 46 (February 1990): 93–94.

⁴⁷ A. Boyd Luter, *Song of Songs*, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2013).

⁴⁸ Ceresko, "Function of Chiasmus in Hebrew Poetry"; Dorsey, "Literary Structuring in the Song of Songs"; Alden, "Chiastic Psalms"; Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*; Lawrence Boadt, "A:B:B:A Chiasm of Identical Roots in Ezekiel," *Vetus Testamentum* 25, no. 4 (October 1975): 693–99; Exum, "Literary and Structural Analysis of the Song of Songs"; Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language*; Anthony R. Ceresko, "The a:B::B:A Word Pattern in Hebrew and Northwest Semitic with Special Reference to the Book of Job," *Ugarit-Forschungen* 7 (1975): 73–88; Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*; Lund, "The Presence of Chiasmus in the Old Testament"; Shea, "The Chiastic Structure of the Song of Songs"; Welch, *Chiasmus in Antiquity*.

sections, the lines of which are alternating parallelisms, while the sections or groups of lines are chiastic:

- A And by these ye shall become *unclean*
- B Whosoever *toucheth* the carcass of them shall be *unclean* until even;
And whosoever *beareth* aught of the carcass of them shall *wash* his clothes,
And be *unclean* until even.
- C Every *beast* which parteth the *hoof*, and is not clovenfooted, nor
cheweth the cud, is *unclean* unto you
- D Every one that *toucheth* them shall be *unclean*
- C' And whatsoever goeth upon its *paws*, among all the *beasts*
that go on all four, they are *unclean* unto you
- B' Whosoever *toucheth* their carcass shall be *unclean* until even,
And he that *beareth* the carcass of them shall *wash* his clothes,
And be *unclean* until even.
- A' They are *unclean* unto you.

Other examples are more extensive and contain even more layers, e.g., Lev. 14:10-20 and 14:21-32. Of these, Lund says, “[T]hese laws show an elaborate combination of chiastic and alternating lines with traces of numerical symmetry; they also illustrate the law of distribution of related ideas at the extremes and at the centre.”⁴⁹ Other examples of symmetric patterning in legal section can be seen in Ex. 21:2-22:27 and Ex. 22:28-23:19,⁵⁰ but it is not limited only to legal language.

Chiasmus can be seen in the narrative sections of the Pentateuch and Prophets as well. Lund sees a chiastic pattern in Gen. 3:9-17, which describes the meeting between the fallen pair and God, the characters being introduced as the man (v. 9), the woman (v. 12), and the serpent

⁴⁹ Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 53.

⁵⁰ Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*, 73–74.

(v. 13), and the meting out of the punishments for their sin, which are pronounced in reverse order: to the serpent (v. 14), to the woman (v. 16), and to the man (v. 17).⁵¹ Similarly, Dorsey recognizes chiastic structuring in Gen. 3, but as part of a larger structure that spans from Gen. 2:4-3:24:

- A Creation of Man (2:4-17)
- B Creation of Woman (2:18-25)
- C Serpent in conversation with woman (3:1-5)
- D Sin and God's uncovering of it (3: 6-13)
- C' Punishment of serpent (3:14-15)
- B' Punishment of woman (3:16)
- A' Punishment of man (3:17-24)⁵²

Dorsey also identifies many symmetric patterns in other narrative sections such as the story of the flood (Gen. 6:9-9:19), the Tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9), the Exodus (Ex 6:14-13:16), the wilderness journey (Num. 10:11-21:20), and the story of Rahab (Josh. 2).⁵³ Another example of chiasmus in narrative can be seen in the book of Ruth, which Boyd Luter and Richard Rigsby take to be a single, extended chiasmus.⁵⁴

In addition, Dorsey detects symmetric patterning, or chiasm, in many of the major and minor prophets. For example, he finds chiastic patters in each chapter of Daniel 1-6. Boyd Luter has identified Daniel 7 as a chiasmus, pointing to vv. 13-14 discussing the Son of Man coming

⁵¹ Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 59.

⁵² Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*, 50.

⁵³ Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*; Also, Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of the Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), notes a number of chiastic structures throughout the book of Genesis.

⁵⁴ Boyd Luter and Richard Rigsby, "The Chiastic Structure of Ruth 2," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 3 (1993): 49-58; "An Adjusted Symmetrical Structuring of Ruth," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 39, no. 1 (March 1996): 15-28; See also, Boyd Luter and Barry C. Davis, *God behind the Seen: Expositions of the Books of Ruth and Esther*, Expositor's Guide to the Historical Books (Grand Rapids: Baker Bk House, 1995).

on the clouds and his dominion being everlasting as the focal center.⁵⁵ Lund also finds chiasmus in the prophets, especially Isaiah⁵⁶ and Habakkuk, the entirety of which he and Walker see as being one large chiasmus.⁵⁷ Some of the most extensive work done in identifying chiasm in narrative sections of the Old Testament has been done by Yehuda Radday. In his work, he seeks to prove that many narrative sections of the Old Testament are chiastically built, and that recognizing this is a key to properly interpreting many narratives. He identifies and defends the existence of chiasm in virtually every narrative book.⁵⁸ Though certain examples of chiasm in the Old Testament may be disputed, the overwhelming consensus of scholars, especially those who have done in depth study on the topic, is that the prevalence and importance of chiasmus in Hebrew literature cannot be ignored.

Chiasmus in the New Testament

Having established the use of chiasmus among ancient near eastern writers, and specifically those that wrote the Hebrew Scriptures, this study will now turn to the New Testament in order to show that the use of chiastic structuring was still in practice by the time these writings were composed. Lund concludes that, despite Greek literary influence, there remained in the first century A.D. a residue of the Semitic form among the writers of the New Testament, which lent itself to the use of symmetric parallelism and chiasmus in their writings.

⁵⁵ Boyd Luter, “The ‘Preaching Texts’ of the Apocalypse (Dan 7:13 and Zech 12:10): Fulfillment and Theological Significance,” *Criswell Theological Review* 12, no. 1 (September 2014): 23–47.

⁵⁶ Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 64ff.

⁵⁷ Lund and Walker, “The Literary Structure of the Book of Habakkuk.”

⁵⁸ Yehuda T. Radday, “Chiasmus in Hebrew Biblical Narrative,” in *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis*, ed. John W. Welch (Hildesheim, Germany: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1998), 50–117.

In fact, the entirety of his work in *Chiasmus in the New Testament* was “...devoted to the tracing of the Hebrew literary influence on the Greek text of the New Testament; more definitely, they [the pages therein] discuss one particular Hebrew form, namely the extensive use of inverted order commonly called chiasmus.”⁵⁹ To be sure, the Hebrew literary forms must have influenced the writers of the New Testament, as they would have been greatly familiar with and influenced by the writings of the Old Testament, but the distinction between Greek and Semitic influence in the New Testament may not have been as clear as Lund believed.

According to Welch, chiasmus, being employed to varying degrees, appears in Greek and Latin literature from the time of Homer through to the later Roman writers.⁶⁰ Augustine Stock, in his “Chiastic Awareness and Education in Antiquity,” has shown that the educational practices from Homeric, Hellenistic, and Roman periods (1000 B.C. to A.D. 500) lent themselves well to the use and recognition of chiasmus. He explains that in Roman times, children had to learn the alphabet forwards, backwards, and then both ways at once, for example alpha-omega, beta-psi, gamma-chi...mu-nu, commenting that, “This exercise could not help but to contribute to chiastic awareness.”⁶¹ Other features of Greek and Roman education such as the importance of rhetoric likely contributed to an awareness of chiastic forms as well. Stock, who is specifically concerned with Mark’s Gospel in this work, says, “Mark, then, was writing to readers/hearers well-equipped by their education to recognize and appreciate chiasmus,”⁶² and, based on his findings concerning ancient education and the influence of Hebrew forms from in the Old Testament, the same could be said for all readers/hearers of the New Testament writings in the first century.

⁵⁹ Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 28–29.

⁶⁰ Welch, *Chiasmus in Antiquity*.

⁶¹ Stock, “Chiastic Awareness and Education in Antiquity,” 24.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 26.

If, then, the original audiences of the New Testament writings were predisposed to recognize and appreciate chiastic structuring, it should come as no surprise that Lund and many following him have identified chiasms throughout the New Testament. In the writings of the Apostle Paul, numerous chiastic structures have been identified. Concerning Paul's style, Lund acknowledges that many have found it difficult. He says, "[Paul's writings] suffer from a diffuse and repetitious style, which, at times, makes it difficult to construe his sentences. Even when there is no difficulty in following his thought, his literary style appears heavy and cumbersome."⁶³ However, he goes on to explain that, with a proper understanding of Paul's Hebrew heritage, his style should not be seen as literarily deficient, but rather one that fuses literary conventions of his time with those of common in the Old Testament, such as regular use of chiasmus.⁶⁴ 1 Corinthians has been particularly identified by scholars as containing many examples of chiastic structuring. Lund identifies smaller sections where chiastic structuring is used, such as 1 Cor. 11:8-12, and, interestingly, notes that it is a chiastic structure made up of even smaller inverted parallelisms:

A For the man is not
of the woman,
but the woman
of the man.

B For neither was the man created
for the woman,
buth the woman
for the man.

C For this cause the woman ought to have authority
upon her head because of the angels.

⁶³ Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 139–40.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 143–44.

B' Nevertheless, neither is the woman
without the man,
nor the man
without the woman, in the Lord

A' For as the woman is
of the man,
so is also man
by the woman; but all things are of God.⁶⁵

Other sections of 1 Corinthians have been proposed as chiasms as well, including: 9:1-27,⁶⁶ 10:1-11:34,⁶⁷ 11:34b-14:40,⁶⁸ 12:31-14:1,⁶⁹ 15:35-37.⁷⁰ While this list gives a sampling of the chiastic structures identified within 1 Corinthians, Breck, pointing to the several examples of chiasm in this letter, states, “These passages (and we could point to many others here and elsewhere in the apostle’s writings) indicate...that Paul ‘thought’ chiastically,” that his process of reasoning was shaped and given expression by the principles of concentric parallelism. Even in the heat of debate he draws upon those principles...”⁷¹ Perhaps most interesting for the present study, as they demonstrate well the existence of larger chiasms, are the proposals for the letter being arranged as a single long chiasm. Welch proposes the following arrangement:

I: Introduction (1:1-9)

II: Division in the Church regarding Leadership:
Resolution in Christ crucified (1:10-2:5)

⁶⁵ Ibid., 148.

⁶⁶ Joachim Jeremias, “Chiasmus in Den Paulusbriefen,” *Zeitschrift Für Die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft Und Die Kunde Der Älteren Kirche* 49, no. 3–4 (1958): 145–56.

⁶⁷ Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language*.

⁶⁸ Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*.

⁶⁹ Welch, *Chiasmus in Antiquity*.

⁷⁰ Jeremias, “Chiasmus in Den Paulusbriefen.”

⁷¹ Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language*, 217.

- III: Man is led by the Spirit of God (2:6-4:21)
- IV: Sexual Problems within the Church (5:1-7:40)
- IV': Idolatry within the Church (8:1-11:34)
- III': Man is led by the Gifts of God (12:1-14:40)
- II': Divisions in the Church regarding Resurrection:
Resolution in Christ resurrected
- I': Conclusion (16:1-24)⁷²

Breck concurs that Paul consciously and intentionally structured the letter chiastically, but he offers the following modified structure:

- A** (1:1-9): Opening greetings.
- B** (1:1-17): Parties create division [Stephanas named].
- C** (1:18-2:5): Christ crucified.
- D** (2:6-16): Revelations of the Spirit.
- E** (3:1-4:21): Ministries of the apostles.
- F** (5:1-6:19): Abuses in the Body (Church).
- G** (7:1-40): Women (in the community).
- H** (8:1-13): Freedom: the obligation not to scandalize others.
- I** (9:1-2): Paul as an apostle is free in Christ.
- H'** (9:3-11:1): Freedom: the obligation to serve others.
- G'** (11:2-16): Women (in worship).
- F'** (11:17-34): Abuses in the Body (Lord's Supper).
- E'** (12:1-31a): Ministries of the people.
- D'** (14:1-40): Manifestations of the Spirit.
- C'** (15:1-58): Christ resurrected.

⁷² Welch, *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, 216f.

- B'** (16:1-18): Jerusalem collection creates unity [Stephanas named].
- A'** (16:19-24): Closing greetings.⁷³

1 Corinthians demonstrates well the presence in Paul's writings of shorter and longer chiasmic structures, but his use of chiasmus is not limited to this letter.

Paul's use of chiasmus has been identified in many of his other writings as well. One particularly noteworthy instance is 2 Corinthians 1:12-7:16. As Craig Blomberg explains in his article, "The Structure of 2 Corinthians 1-7," understanding this section as an extended chiasmus can help answer previously contested questions concerning structure and unity of this letter. After thoroughly discussing the criteria for identifying chiasms (which will be discussed in depth below), Blomberg concludes that 1:12-7:16 should be understood in light of the following structure:

- A** 1:12-22 – The Corinthians can rightly boast in Paul
- B** 1:23-2:11 – grief and comfort over the painful letter; hope for the forgiving offender
- C** 2:12-13 – looking for Titus in Macedonia
- D** 2:14-4:6 – a series of contrasts – belief vs. unbelief, centered on Christians as the letters of the living God, in glory being transformed into his image
 - a** 2:14-16a – death vs. life
 - b** 2:16b-3:3 – false vs true approaches to ministry
 - c** 3:4-18 – old covenant vs. new
 - b'** 4:1-2 – false vs. true approaches to ministry
 - a'** 4:3-6 – darkness vs. light
- E** 4:7-5:10 – surviving and triumphing despite every hardship (esp. vv. 8-10)
- F** 5:11-21 – theological climax: the ministry of reconciliation
- E'** 6:1-10 – surviving and triumphing despite every hardship (esp. vv. 8-10)
- D'** 6:11-7:4 – a series of contrasts – belief vs. unbelief, centered on Christians as the temple of the living God, in light being transformed into his holiness

⁷³ Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language*, 217-218. Breck sees 1 Cor. 12:31b-13:13 as an extemporaneous element within the epistle, though it does, itself, display a chiasmic pattern. .

- a** 6:11-13 – widen your hearts
- b** 6:14-7:1 – separate yourselves from uncleanness
- a'** 7:2-4 – open your hearts
- C'** 7:5-7 – finding Titus in Macedonia
- B'** 7:8-13a – grief and comfort over the painful letter; joy after forgiving the offender
- A'** 7:13b-16 – Paul can rightfully boast in the Corinthians⁷⁴

This is another, very convincing, example of an extended chiasmus, which contains shorter chiasms within. Romans 10:9-10 is argued by both Jeremias and Breck to be chiastically structured, though they differ slightly on the precise form.⁷⁵ Breck also identifies chiastic structuring and believes it can add to proper understanding to other noteworthy passages in Paul's writings such as the Christological hymn of Philippians 2:5-11 and the much discussed passage concerning the relationship of husbands to wives in Ephesians 5:21-33.⁷⁶ Many other examples of chiasmus in the Pauline corpus exist, though they are too numerous to list here.⁷⁷ What is clear from the examples given and the many others identified by scholars, is that chiasmus is an important literary structure in Paul's letters, and its recognition is significant.

Throughout the General Epistles, less instances of chiastic structuring have been identified, though there are still some examples proposed, especially by Welch. He proposes a "loose" chiastic structuring for James, and somewhat more convincingly provides a chiastic

⁷⁴ Blomberg, "The Structure of 2 Corinthians 1-7."

⁷⁵ Jeremias, "Chiasmus in Den Paulusbriefen"; Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language*.

⁷⁶ Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language*, 222–33; See also, Boyd Luter and Michelle V. Lee, "Philippians as Chiasmus: Key to the Structure, Unity and Theme Questions," *New Testament Studies* 41, no. 1 (January 1995): 89–101 in which the authors argue that Philippians is a single extended chiasmus.

⁷⁷ See especially Welch, *Chiasmus in Antiquity*; Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*; Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*; Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language*; Man, "The Value of Chiasm for New Testament Interpretation."

outline for Jude.⁷⁸ Study of the book of Hebrews has proven more fruitful in the area of chiasmus research. Victor Rhee sees both Hebrews 1:1-14⁷⁹ and 10:19-39⁸⁰ as chiasms, while others such as Vanhoye, in his widely recognized structuring of Hebrews, have shown the entire book to be arranged as an extended chiasmus.⁸¹

Concerning Revelation, Lund proposes a chiastic structure for the entire book, though this is based on his understanding that several sections have been relocated by later editors. Others, such as Kenneth Strand and Michelle Lee have proposed overarching chiastic structures for the entirety of Revelation.⁸² Lund, in addition to proposing that Revelation is an extended chiasmus also finds chiastic structures throughout Revelation, e.g. the last series of seven angels, 17:1-22:5.⁸³ While Breck does not propose a chiastic pattern for Revelation, he does believe that, “Examples of authentic chiasmus can be found throughout the writing...,”⁸⁴ which include 9:17d-18, 14:9b-11, and 21:1-4.

Though there is less evidence of chiasmus in the non-Pauline epistles and Revelation, or at least less work has been done in this area, there is no shortage of evidence for chiastic structuring in the Gospels and Acts. John’s Gospel has received much attention from a few

⁷⁸ Welch, *Chiasmus in Antiquity*.

⁷⁹ Victor Rhee, “The Role of Chiasm for Understanding Christology in Hebrews 1:1-14,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 131, no. 2 (2012): 341–62.

⁸⁰ Victor Rhee, “Christology, Chiasm, and the Concept of Faith in Hebrews 10:19-39,” *Filologia Neotestamentaria* 16 (2003): 33–48.

⁸¹ Albert Vanhoye, *La structure littéraire de l’Épître aux Hébreux*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1976); *A structured translation of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964); *Structure and Message of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1989).

⁸² Kenneth Strand, “Chiastic Structure and Some Motifs in the Book of Revelation,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 16, no. 2 (1978): 401–8; Michelle V. Lee, “A Call to Martyrdom: Function as Method and Message in Revelation,” *Novum Testamentum* 40, no. 2 (April 1998): 164–94.

⁸³ Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 323ff.

⁸⁴ Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language*, 201.

scholars on this topic. Notably, Peter Ellis, in his “Inclusion, Chiasm, and Division in the Fourth Gospel,” has examined the entirety of John’s Gospel with regard to chiasmus and has found its use to be pervasive throughout. He, in addition to finding smaller chiasms throughout John, believes the entire book to be structured chiastically. While the many chiasms detected by Ellis are too numerous to give here, a very brief outline of the overarching chiastic structure he proposes for the Gospel of John is as follows:

- A** Part I: 1:19-4:3 – Witness and Discipleship
- B** Part II: 4:4-6:15 – Response: Positive and Negative
- C** Part III: 6:16-21 – The New Exodus
- B’** Part IV: 6:22-12:11 – Response: Positive and Negative
- A’** Part V: 12:12-21:25 – Witness and Discipleship⁸⁵

The prologue is noticeably absent from the proposed outline given by Ellis, and, though it is distinct from the rest of John’s Gospel, it too, he explains is constructed chiastically.⁸⁶ The evidence for chiastic structuring of the prologue and its importance is supported by the work of Culpepper and Staley as well.⁸⁷ Ellis is so convinced of the presence and importance of chiasmus in the Gospel, he states:

In completing the chiastic analysis of John's gospel, what has been far more significant than detecting inclusions and chiasms, has been the recognition of a total and persuasive consistency in the style of the author. For those who put little stock in inclusions and even less in chiasms, this consistency of style should buttress the contention, previously almost impossible to prove, that one man and one man only is responsible for the overall composition of this gospel.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Ellis, “Inclusion, Chiasm, and the Division of the Fourth Gospel,” 281.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 284.

⁸⁷ R. Alan Culpepper, “The Pivot of John’s Prologue,” *New Testament Studies* 27, no. 1 (October 1980): 1–31; Jeffrey Lloyd Staley, “The Structure of John’s Prologue: Its Implications for the Gospel’s Narrative Structure,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 48, no. 2 (April 1986): 241–64.

⁸⁸ Ellis, “Inclusion, Chiasm, and the Division of the Fourth Gospel,” 279. Each chiastic layer, according to Ellis, is made up of five sequences, which are themselves constructed chiastically as well.

Other scholars have also detected the presence of chiastic structures in John, and some even concur with the overall chiastic structuring of the entire gospel.⁸⁹

As already noted above, Augustine Stock's article, "Chiastic Awareness and Education in Antiquity," was written primarily to show the likelihood that the original audience of Mark's Gospel would have understood and appreciated the presence of chiasmus in that work. He argues that Mark did, in fact, effectively employ that literary device in 2:1-3:6 and 3:20-35 as proposed by Wilfrid Harrington in his commentary on Mark.⁹⁰ Lund, in his discussion of the Gospels, notes several instances of chiasmus in Mark, e.g., 2:13-3:8,⁹¹ and Benson Goh proposes that chiasmus is especially important in Mark 11 and 12.⁹² Breck sees chiastic structures as especially prevalent in Mark, citing 1:12-13, 9:2-10, 10:46-52 as clear examples, and he further breaks down Mark's Gospel into individual units, almost all of which contain chiastic structures or concentric parallelism. He states, "In fact it is no exaggeration to say that the entire Second Gospel is structured according to the principles of concentric parallelism."⁹³

Luke and Acts are also shown to contain chiasmus in several places. Breck gives special attention to the Lukan infancy narrative, in which he finds several chiasms: 1:7-25; 1:28-38; 1:68-78, the "Benedictus" of Zechariah; and 2:41-51, the story of Jesus at the Temple.⁹⁴ He

⁸⁹ See, Welch, *Chiasmus in Antiquity*; Breck, "Chiasmus as a Key to Biblical Interpretation"; Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language*.

⁹⁰ Stock, "Chiastic Awareness and Education in Antiquity"; See also Wilfrid J. Harrington, *Mark* (Wilmington, DE: M. Glazier, 1990).

⁹¹ Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 229ff.

⁹² Benson Goh, "The Charge of Being Deluded Interpreters of Scripture: A Reassessment of the Importance of Chiasms in Mark 11-12," *The Journal of Inductive Biblical Studies* 2, no. 1 (2015): 30-61, <https://doi.org/10.7252/JOURNAL.02.2015S.03>.

⁹³ Breck, "Chiasmus as a Key to Biblical Interpretation," 123. It should be noted that Breck does make a distinction between concentric parallelism and chiasmus, inasmuch as he believes a true chiasmus must contain a clearly defined central element that is the focus of the structure.

⁹⁴ Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language*, 99ff.

likewise notes that Luke contains chiasmus in parables such as the great banquet, 14:16-24, and the parable of the two sons, usually referred to as the prodigal son, 15:11-32.⁹⁵ Charles Talbert points to the journey of Jesus to Jerusalem, specifically Luke 10:21-18:30, as an extended chiasmus. He explains, “From the foregoing analysis of the Third Evangelist's use of his sources in the central section of the Gospel it appears that there are certain definite signs that Luke deliberately adapted his materials in order to achieve the chiastic structure...”⁹⁶ He also observes that Luke has used the same chiastic structuring in the narrative of Paul’s journey, which ends in Jerusalem, Acts 15:1-21:26.⁹⁷ Kenneth Wolfe has gone so far as to propose that Luke has set up both volumes, Luke and Acts, in a chiastic pattern, or ring structure as he refers to it. Less what he takes to be the introductory material of each book, Luke 1:1-4:13, the birth of Jesus to the beginning of his ministry, and Acts 1:1-11, which he takes to be a summary of the Luke’s Gospel and introduction of the theme of Acts, he gives the following structure for Luke and Acts together:

- A** Galilee (Luke 4:14-9:50)
- B** “Journey to Jerusalem” – through Samaria and Judea (Luke 9:51-19:40)
- C** Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-24:49)
- D** Ascension (Luke 24:50-51)
- C’** Jerusalem (Acts 1:12:8:1a)
- B’** Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1b-11:18)
- A’** To the end of the earth (Acts 11:19-28:31)⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Ibid., 152-153. Breck also notes the use of chiasmus in other places in Luke as well, but these demonstrate well his contention that it is not an uncommon feature in Luke’s Gospel.

⁹⁶ Talbert, *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes, and the Genre of Luke-Acts*, 56.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 56–57.

⁹⁸ Wolfe, “The Chiastic Structure of Luke-Acts and Some Implications for Worship,” 67.

While the proposed overarching chiastic structure of Luke-Acts is interesting, it has not, to date, been taken up by many scholars as a likely feature. However, along with other New Testament writings, Luke and Acts have also been shown to contain shorter and longer sections, which are constructed chiastically.

Matthew's Gospel, with which the present study is primarily concerned, also contains numerous examples of chiasmus. Lund pointed to shorter passages such as Matthew 13:13-18 and longer discourses like the missionary discourse, 10:5-11:1, and Jesus' discourses on authority and the law, 12:22-45 as examples of chiasmus in the First Gospel.⁹⁹ He also devotes significant space to the Sermon on the Mount in order to demonstrate that chiasmus determines the organization of the entire sermon as well as many of the individual units within.¹⁰⁰ Welch and Breck seem to agree on this, and Welch following Lund offers this outline of Matthew 4:25-8:1:

- X: Introduction: Multitudes, mountain, teaching (4:25-5:2)
- Y: Observations on the Nature and Function of the Church (5:2-19)
- Z: The Higher Quality of Christian Righteousness:
 - It is Higher than that of Jew or Gentile (5:17-18, 20-47)
- Z': The Higher Quality of Christian Righteousness:
 - It is Perfection according to the Golden Rule (5:48-7:12)
- Y': Observations on the Nature and Function of the Church (7:13-27)
- X': Conclusion: Teaching, mountain, multitudes (7:28-8:1)¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 229ff; See also Lund, "The Influence of Chiasmus upon the Structure of the Gospel According to Matthew."

¹⁰⁰ Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 241ff.

¹⁰¹ Welch, *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, 235-36.

Welch also points out that many of Jesus' parables in Matthew are chiasmic, such as the parable of the wheat and tares, Matt. 13:24-30, and the parable of the ten bridesmaids, Matt. 25:1-13.¹⁰² John Nolland gives a number of examples of chiasmic structures in Matthew,¹⁰³ and 1979, David Wenham proposed a still widely accepted chiasm in Matthew 13.¹⁰⁴ In addition, Charles Talbert lists several alternative chiasmic structures for Matthew 10,¹⁰⁵ and Luter has also published a chiasmic structuring of the end of Matthew, 27:50-28:20, in dealing with the subject of the presence and roles of women disciples in the Gospels.¹⁰⁶ Others have identified chiasmic structures in Matt. 1:18-25,¹⁰⁷ Matt. 1-2,¹⁰⁸ Matt. 11-12,¹⁰⁹ Matt. 21-25,¹¹⁰ and even the Gospel as a whole.¹¹¹ Breck also noting chiasmic structuring throughout the Gospel of Matthew,¹¹² explains it is quite pervasive in the First Gospel to the point that, "...the author relied on

¹⁰² Welch, *Chiasmus in Antiquity*.

¹⁰³ John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2005), 25–26.

¹⁰⁴ David Wenham, "The Structure of Matthew 13," *New Testament Studies* 25, no. 4 (July 1979): 516–22.

¹⁰⁵ Charles H. Talbert, *Matthew*, Paideia (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 129–30.

¹⁰⁶ A. Boyd Luter, "Women Disciples and the Great Commission," *Trinity Journal* 16, no. 2 (1995); See also, Boyd Luter and Kathy McReynolds, *Women as Christ's Disciples: Models in the New Testament Church for Contemporary Women Today*, 2nd ed. (Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 2003).

¹⁰⁷ Jan Lambrecht, "Matthew 1,18-25: A Chiasmic Vignette? A Close Reading," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 89, no. 1 (April 2013): 97–101, <https://doi.org/10.2143/ETL.89.1.2985324>.

¹⁰⁸ Pizzuto, "The Structural Elegance of Matthew 1-2."

¹⁰⁹ Boerman, "The Chiasmic Structure of Matthew 11-12."

¹¹⁰ Jacob J. Scholtz, "Behold the Glory of the King: The Chiasmic Structures of Matthew 21-25," *In Die Skriflig* 49, no. 1 (2015): 40–47, <https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v49i1.1856>.

¹¹¹ See Lohr, "Oral Techniques in the Gospel of Matthew"; VanderWeele, "Some Observations Concerning the Chiasmic Structure of the Gospel of Matthew"; Derickson, "Matthew's Chiasmic Structure and Its Dispensational Implications."

¹¹² See esp. Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language*, 105ff.

chiasmus more than most interpreters have been aware.”¹¹³ As Gary Derickson states, “The presence of chiasms in Matthew’s Gospel is commonly accepted,”¹¹⁴ and yet, there have been relatively few well-received proposals of chiastic structures in the section of Matthew in which the proposal that is the focus of this paper (i.e., 16:13-18:20) is found. One reasonably well-known older example is Paul Gaechter’s view of interlocking chiasms in Matthew 14:1-16:20 and 16:13-17:17 (with 16:13-20 being the overlapping text found in both structures).¹¹⁵ A more recent example is Charles Talbert’s inverted parallel structuring of Matthew 16:21-17:27.¹¹⁶ However, as this study will show, the proposed structure spanning from 16:13-18:20 is more compelling than even these proposals and is a stronger candidate for being a legitimate chiasmus. From the discussion above, it has been shown that chiasmus is present throughout the Scriptures and most certainly in the First Gospel. It is with this in mind that the present study will seek to demonstrate the existence of the newly identified chiastic structure in Matthew 16:13-18:20, but first some criteria must be established for identifying and establishing the existence of such a structure.

Identifying Chiastic Structures and Their Meaning

As has been discussed at length, numerous chiastic structures have been identified throughout both the Old and New Testaments, and of particular importance for this study, especially in the Gospel of Matthew, but in order to rightly evaluate the existence of such a

¹¹³ Ibid., 106.

¹¹⁴ Derickson, “Matthew’s Chiastic Structure and Its Dispensational Implications,” 425.

¹¹⁵ Paul Gaechter, *Das Matthäus Evangelium: ein Kommentar* (Innsbruck: Tyrolia, 1964), 468–584.

¹¹⁶ Talbert, *Matthew*, 201–12.

structure, some criteria must be established. Though the importance of Lund's work in establishing the popularity of the study of chiasmus is undisputed, his method in identifying such structures is viewed by many, even the authors of the preface to the 1992 reprint of his *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, as somewhat loose.¹¹⁷ How, then, can one know if a passage, especially an extended section of Scripture, should truly be regarded as chiastic in order to evaluate it as such? In his article, "The Structure of 2 Corinthians 1-7," Blomberg offers nine helpful suggested criteria for detecting extended chiasmus:

1. There must be a problem in perceiving the structure of the text in question, which more conventional outlines fail to resolve... If a more straightforward structure can adequately account for the textual data, recourse to less obvious arrangements of the material would seem, at the very least, to risk obscuring what was already clear.
2. There must be clear examples of parallelism between the two "halves" of the hypothesized chiasmus, to which commentators call attention even when they propose quite different outlines for the text overall. In other words, the chiasmus must be based on hard data in the text which most readers note irrespective of their overall synthesis. Otherwise it is too simple to see what one wants to see and to impose on the text an alien structural grid.
3. Verbal (or grammatical) parallelism as well as conceptual (or structural) parallelism should characterize most if not all of the corresponding pairs of subdivisions. The repetitive nature of much biblical writing makes it very easy for general themes to recur in a variety of patterns.
4. The verbal parallelism should involve central or dominant imagery or terminology, not peripheral or trivial language. Ancient writers often employed key terms as catchwords to link passages together, although the material they considered central does not always match modern preconceptions of what is important.
5. Both verbal and conceptual parallelism should involve words and ideas not regularly found elsewhere within the proposed chiasmus. Most unpersuasive proposals fail to meet this criterion; while the pairings suggested may be plausible, a little ingenuity can demonstrate equally close parallelism between numerous other pairs of passages which do not support a chiastic whole.
6. Multiple sets of correspondences between passages opposite each other in the chiasmus as well as multiple members of the chiasmus itself are desirable. A simple ABA' or ABB' A' pattern is so common to so many different forms of rhetoric that it usually yields few startlingly profound insights. Three or four members repeated in inverse sequence may be more significant. Five or more elements paired in sequence usually resist explanations which invoke subconscious or accidental processes.
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. If a proposed chiasmus

¹¹⁷ Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, xiv–xxi.

frequently violates the natural "paragraphing" of the text which would otherwise emerge, then the proposal becomes less probable.

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. Having to argue that one or more of the members of the reverse part of the structure have been shifted from their corresponding locations in the forward sequence substantially weakens the hypothesis; in postulating chiasmus, exceptions disprove the rule!¹¹⁸

Welch also offers a helpful and more extensive list in his article, "Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating the Presence of Chiasmus":

1. Objectivity: The proposed pattern, the inverted parallel order, is clearly evident in the text.
2. Purpose: There is a clear literary reason for the author's use of a chiasm.
3. Boundaries: A chiasm is stronger if it operates across a literary unit as a whole and not only upon fragments or sections which overlap or cut across significant organizational lines intrinsic to the text.
4. Competition with other forms: Chiasmus is more dominant in a passage when it is the only structuring device employed there. Chiasmus becomes less significant to the extent that a competing literary device or explanation of the arrangement of the words or thoughts more readily accounts for an apparently chiastic placement of elements.
5. Length: The longer the proposed chiasm, the higher its degree of chiasticity. In other words, a chiasm composed of six words introduced in one order and then repeated in the opposite order is more extensively chiastic than a structure composed of three repeated words.
6. Density: The more compact the proposed structure, or the fewer irrelevancies between its elements, the higher the degree of chiasticity.
7. Dominance: A convincing analysis must account for and embrace the dominant nouns, verbs, and distinctive phrases in the text.
8. Mavericks: A chiasm loses potency when key elements in the system appear extraneously outside the proposed structure.
9. Reduplication: If the same word or element appears over and over within the system, the likelihood is greater that some other kind of repetition (including random repetition) is predominant in the passage instead of chiasmus.
10. Centrality: The crux of a chiasm is generally its central turning point. Without a well-defined centerpiece or distinct crossing effect, there is little reason for seeing chiasmus. Inverting is the essence of chiasmus, so the clearer the reversal at the center point, the stronger the chiasticity of the passage.
11. Balance: Ideally, the elements on both sides of the proposed focal point should be nearly equal, in terms of number of words, lines, or elements.

¹¹⁸ Blomberg, "The Structure of 2 Corinthians 1-7," 5-7.

12. Climax: A strong chiasm will emphasize the central element of the passage as its focal climax.
13. Return: A chiasm is more complete where its beginning and end combine to create a strong sense of return and completion.
14. Compatibility: The chiasticity of a passage is greater when it works comfortably and consistently together with the overall style of the author.
15. Aesthetics: Further factors become relevant in assessing a passage's degree of chiasticity, such as the author's fluency with the form; consistency in sustaining the structure, balance, and harmony; pliability at the turning point; and meaningful applications of the form that do not resort to subtleties so obscure as to be esoteric or awkward.¹¹⁹

Other scholars have offered criteria for identifying and evaluating the likelihood of the presence of chiasmus as well, such as Lund, though his criteria are not as clearly systematized.¹²⁰ Mark Boda, in his article, “Chiasmus in Ubiquity: Symmetrical Mirages in Nehemiah 9,” primarily gives negative categories, pointing out errors that have commonly occurred leading to false identification of chiasmus.¹²¹ While both of these sources are helpful, their criteria can essentially be subsumed under those already given by Blomberg and Welch.

Since Welch and Blomberg have provided the most cogent lists of criteria for identifying chiasmus, it will be best to evaluate their proposed criteria and establish which will be used to assess the proposed Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasmus. Looking back to Welch’s list, several of Blomberg’s criteria fit within the same categories as those given by Welch, though there are

¹¹⁹ Welch, “Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating the Presence of Chiasmus.”

¹²⁰ Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*.

¹²¹ Boda, “Chiasmus in Ubiquity”; See also David J. Clark, “Criteria for Identifying Chiasm,” *Linguistica Biblica* 35 (1975): 63–72. Clark’s work, rather than actually offering criteria, seeks to analyze and raise question concerning the criteria proposed by Joanna Dewey, which are, “(1) content - the theme or themes of each pericope, (2) form or structure - the type of narrative and/or dialogue of which the pericope is composed, (3) language - primarily the occurrence of catchwords...(4) setting, and (5) theology.”; See Joanna Dewey, “Literary Structure of the Controversy Stories in Mark 2:1-3:6,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 92, no. 3 (September 1973): 394–401.

some unique criteria given by Blomberg. If the two lists are combined together, it would form a list as follows¹²²:

Criteria for presence of chiasmus	Welch	Blomberg
Objectivity	1. The proposed pattern, the inverted parallel order, is clearly evident in the text.	
Purpose	2. There is a clear literary reason for the author's use of a chiasm.	
Boundaries	3. A chiasm is stronger if it operates across a literary unit as a whole and not only upon fragments or sections which overlap or cut across significant organizational lines intrinsic to the text.	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. If a proposed chiasmus frequently violates the natural "paragraphing" of the text which would otherwise emerge, then the proposal becomes less probable.
Competition with other forms	4. Chiasmus is more dominant in a passage when it is the only structuring device employed there. Chiasmus becomes less significant to the extent that a competing literary device or explanation of the arrangement of the words or thoughts more readily accounts for an apparently chiastic placement of elements.	1. There must be a problem in perceiving the structure of the text in question, which more conventional outlines fail to resolve... If a more straightforward structure can adequately account for the textual data, recourse to less obvious arrangements of the material would seem, at the very least, to risk obscuring what was already clear.
Density	5. Length: The longer the proposed chiasm, the higher	6. Multiple sets of correspondences between

¹²² Welch has helpfully combined both his own criteria and those of Blomberg in a chart on his website - <https://chiasmusresources.org/criteria-chart>. Welch's chart actually displays the criteria of several other authors as well, but, as stated above, these essentially all fall within the categories given by Welch and Blomberg.

	<p>its degree of chiasticity. In other words, a chiasm composed of six words introduced in one order and then repeated in the opposite order is more extensively chiastic than a structure composed of three repeated words.</p> <p>6. The more compact the proposed structure, or the fewer irrelevancies between its elements, the higher the degree of chiasticity.</p>	<p>passages opposite each other in the chiasmus as well as multiple members of the chiasmus itself are desirable. A simple ABA' or ABB' A' pattern is so common to so many different forms of rhetoric that it usually yields few startlingly profound insights. Three or four members repeated in inverse sequence may be more significant. Five or more elements paired in sequence usually resist explanations which invoke subconscious or accidental processes.</p>
Significant words take dominance	7. A convincing analysis must account for and embrace the dominant nouns, verbs, and distinctive phrases in the text.	4. The verbal parallelism should involve central or dominant imagery or terminology, not peripheral or trivial language. Ancient writers often employed key terms as catchwords to link passages together, although the material they considered central does not always match modern preconceptions of what is important.
No stray elements	8. Mavericks: A chiasm loses potency when key elements in the system appear extraneously outside the proposed structure.	
Elements may be repeated	9. Reduplication: If the same word or element appears over and over within the system, the likelihood is greater that some other kind of repetition (including random repetition) is predominant in the passage instead of chiasmus	5. Both verbal and conceptual parallelism should involve words and ideas not regularly found elsewhere within the proposed chiasmus. Most unpersuasive proposals fail to meet this criterion; while the pairings suggested may be plausible, a little ingenuity can demonstrate equally close

		parallelism between numerous other pairs of passages which do not support a chiasmic whole.
The center has significance	<p>10. Centrality: The crux of a chiasm is generally its central turning point. Without a well-defined centerpiece or distinct crossing effect, there is little reason for seeing chiasmus. Inverting is the essence of chiasmus, so the clearer the reversal at the center point, the stronger the chiasmaticity of the passage.</p> <p>11. Balance: Ideally, the elements on both sides of the proposed focal point should be nearly equal, in terms of number of words, lines, or elements.</p> <p>12. Climax: A strong chiasm will emphasize the central element of the passage as its focal climax.</p>	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.
Symmetry		2. There must be clear examples of parallelism between the two "halves" of the hypothesized chiasmus, to which commentators call attention even when they propose quite different outlines for the text overall. In other words, the chiasmus must be based on hard data in the text which most readers note irrespective of their overall synthesis. Otherwise it is too simple to see what one wants to see and to impose on the text an alien structural grid.

		<p>3. Verbal (or grammatical) parallelism as well as conceptual (or structural) parallelism should characterize most if not all of the corresponding pairs of subdivisions. The repetitive nature of much biblical writing makes it very easy for general themes to recur in a variety of patterns.</p> <p>9. Ruptures in the outline should be avoided if at all possible. Having to argue that one or more of the members of the reverse part of the structure have been shifted from their corresponding locations in the forward sequence substantially weakens the hypothesis; in postulating chiasmus, exceptions disprove the rule.</p>
Sense of Closure	13. Return. A chiasm is more complete where its beginning and end combine to create a strong sense of return and completion.	
Compatibility	14. Compatibility. The chiasticity of a passage is greater when it works comfortably and consistently together with the overall style of the author.	
Aesthetics	15. Aesthetics. Further factors become relevant in assessing a passage's degree of chiasticity, such as the author's fluency with the form; consistency in sustaining the structure, balance, and harmony;	

	<p>pliability at the turning point; and meaningful applications of the form that do not resort to subtleties so obscure as to be esoteric or awkward.</p>	
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The combining of the two lists is helpful here, as it allows for evaluation and discussion of the criteria in a more efficient manner.

Evaluation of the Welch/Blomberg Criteria for Extended Chiasmus

Concerning the first criterion listed in the chart, that of “Objectivity,” Welch explains that the pattern must be clearly and objectively observable in the text. He says:

If a proposed chiasm consists of elements that are objectively observable in the text, rather than depending on distant parallels or clever linkages that require imaginative commentary to explain, it is more likely that the chiasmic character of the text is strong and less likely that the reader has imposed an arrangement upon the text which he or she alone has brought to it. The more evident an arrangement, the greater the degree of chiasticity.”¹²³

While it makes sense that objectively observable data to support a chiasmic structure would lead to greater chiasticity (as Welch refers to it) of the passage in question, this criterion does not really tell us anything about what that data is. In his argument for objectivity, what is “objectively” observable in the text — how many similarities are required, how much “imaginative commentary” is too much, etc. — is ultimately left to the reader and becomes subjective. It seems that he is saying something along the lines of, “it’s more likely to be a

¹²³ Welch, “Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating the Presence of Chiasmus” <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1389&index=1>.

chiasm if it's clearly chiastic," which is ultimately unhelpful in assessing the likelihood of the presence of a chiasm. This category will, therefore, not be used in assessing the proposed chiasmus in the next chapter.

The criterion of "Purpose" is somewhat more helpful, though it still seems to be vulnerable to the charge of subjectivity on the part of the observer. Welch is makes the important point the chiasmus can be useful for several purposes, e.g., emphasizing the central point, making important comparisons or contrasts, aiding in memorization, etc., however, it is hard to imagine a scenario in which someone proposing a chiastic structure for a passage would not argue that it has a clear purpose. The issue then becomes whether or not the reader is convinced that the proposed purpose for the chiasm is convincing, which, again becomes somewhat subjective. This criterion can be helpful, though it should be seen as a secondary category to more objectively observable data from the text.

Welch and Blomberg, along with other scholars,¹²⁴ note the importance of "Boundaries" in identifying the presence of chiasmus. Welch and Blomberg are essentially in agreement that the proposed chiasm should fit within the natural boundaries of the text in which it is found. In other words, it should not violate the intrinsic organization of the text, i.e., natural paragraphing or other organizational lines agreed upon by most scholars. If, for example, a proposed chiasmus repeatedly violates natural organizational lines, it would be less probable that the chiasmus exists. Blomberg cites Ellis's proposed chiastic structuring of John's Gospel, specifically the separation of 4:39-45 from 4:4-38, as a prime example of this problem.¹²⁵ While Ellis's proposed structure does not necessarily violate the natural paragraphing of the text, it does seem that it

¹²⁴ See especially, Boda, "Chiasmus in Ubiquity."

¹²⁵ Blomberg, "The Structure of 2 Corinthians 1-7," 7.

may unnaturally divide the literary unit: the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman.¹²⁶ While Ellis's structuring may cut across this literary unit, it could be argued that the chiasmic structures that make up the narrative complement one another while still allowing for this to be read as a single unit made up of distinct chiasms. What is important to note, though, is that clear violations of natural boundaries should be weighed in the likelihood of a proposed chiasmic structure.

Concerning competition with other forms, both authors agree that chiasmus is more likely when it is not in competition with some other structuring device. Blomberg explains, "There must be a problem in perceiving the structure of the text in question, which more conventional outlines fail to resolve. This criterion singlehandedly casts serious doubts over many recent proposals."¹²⁷ He believes that proposals for chiasmic structuring of Mark,¹²⁸ 1 Corinthians,¹²⁹ and John's Gospel¹³⁰ are all doubtful, because he believes more straightforward outlines of these texts already exist.¹³¹ Blomberg believes that, if, what he refers to as a "more straightforward structure" adequately accounts for the textual data, then, "recourse to less obvious arrangements of the material would seem, at the very least, to risk obscuring what was already clear."¹³² However, this brings into question what one considers to be a straightforward structure. Following Blomberg's apparent logic here, chiasmus is only likely to be present if no other

¹²⁶ Ellis, "Inclusion, Chiasm, and the Division of the Fourth Gospel."

¹²⁷ Blomberg, "The Structure of 2 Corinthians 1-7," 5.

¹²⁸ M. Philip Scott, "Chiastic Structure: A Key to the Interpretation of Mark's Gospel," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 15, no. 1 (January 1985): 17-26.

¹²⁹ Kenneth E. Bailey, "The Structure of 1 Corinthians and Paul's Theological Method with Special Reference to 1 Cor 4:17," *Novum Testamentum* 25, no. 2 (April 1983): 152-81.

¹³⁰ Ellis, "Inclusion, Chiasm, and the Division of the Fourth Gospel"; Marc Girard, "La Composition Structurale Des 'signes' Dans Le Quatrième Évangile," *Studies in Religion* 9, no. 3 (1980): 315-24.

¹³¹ Blomberg, "The Structure of 2 Corinthians 1-7," 5. (See Blomberg's footnote 8).

¹³² Ibid.

structure that seems more probable to the modern reader does not account for the data. It is fair to say, as Welch does, that, “Chiasmus becomes less significant to the extent that a competing literary device or explanation of the arrangement of the words or thoughts more readily accounts for an apparently chiastic placement of elements.”¹³³ However, it is not necessary to simply discount the existence a proposed chiasm based on the existence of what seems to be an already straightforward outline or structure given for a text, as Blomberg appears to do.

Under the criterion of “Density” in the chart, Welch combines both length and density as evidence for a chiasm. The longer a proposed chiasm and the fewer irrelevancies contained therein both lend credibility to its existence. Blomberg concurs that a shorter chiastic pattern is less significant than one with three or four members repeated in inverse order, and five or more inversely paired elements usually resist other explanations.¹³⁴ The length and density of proposed chiasm are important for establishing the existence of a chiasm as well as the potential for significant insights to be gained from identifying and studying it as such.

The next criterion in the chart deals with “Significant Wording” within a chiastic structure. This criterion is one that lies at the heart of detecting a chiasm and understanding its significance. Both Welch and Blomberg agree that for a proposed chiasmus to be convincing, the inverse parallelism must involve dominant imagery and terminology rather than just peripheral or trivial language. Parallelism of significant terminology, along with conceptual parallelism, which will be addressed below, is a highly significant indicator of the existence of chiasmus.

Stray elements, or “Mavericks,” as Welch refers to them, are key elements found within a chiasmus that also appear extraneously outside the proposed structure. Welch explains:

¹³³ Welch, “Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating the Presence of Chiasmus” <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1389&index=1>.

¹³⁴ Blomberg, “The Structure of 2 Corinthians 1-7,” 6–7.

The analyst is open to the charge of selectively picking and choosing among the occurrences of this element if some of its occurrences in the text are arbitrarily ignored. What is omitted from an analysis is often just as indicative as what is included when one turns to evaluating the creative success and conceptual value of a proposed chiasm.¹³⁵

While it is possible for key elements to appear in other places throughout a text, it would seem to lend more credibility to a proposed structure if the key terms and concepts are found only within the structure. Conversely, it does not seem improbable that a biblical author, while writing about important topics, may come back to the same topics at various times, some of those instances occurring within a chiastic structure in order to make a point about that term or concept more clearly or emphatically. Stray elements, like the criterion of purpose mentioned above, should, then, be seen as possibly a secondary criterion to those dealing with more objective features.

Repetition of elements in a chiasmus, what Welch refers to as “Reduplication,” can actually count against the likelihood of its existence if those elements are found over and over again within the proposed structure. Blomberg explains, “Both verbal and conceptual parallelism should involve words and ideas not regularly found elsewhere within the proposed chiasmus... while the pairings suggested may be plausible, a little ingenuity can demonstrate equally close parallelism between numerous other pairs of passages which do not support a chiastic whole.”¹³⁶ While repetition of key terms and concepts is important in the parallel structuring of chiasms, other types of repetition are possible and the regular recurrence of the same key elements may point to one of these other types of repetition being employed rather than a chiastic structure.

Another important criterion for determining the existence of a chiasmus is the significance of the “Central Element.” Welch and Blomberg agree that the center of the chiasm,

¹³⁵ Welch, “Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating the Presence of Chiasmus” <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1389&index=1>.

¹³⁶ Blomberg, “The Structure of 2 Corinthians 1-7,” 6.

either a single central “layer” or two corresponding central “layers,” will form the climax of the chiasmic structure. This is highly significant for detecting chiasmus and for gleanings of interpretive significance from an identified chiasmic structure. Breck emphasizes the importance of the central element in a chiasmus, stating:

[A]uthentic chiasmus, produces balanced statements, in direct, inverted or antithetical parallelism, constructed symmetrically about a central idea...Because of its central focus, chiasmus accentuates the main idea or theme the writer is concerned to convey to his readers. It serves, therefore, as an indispensable key for determining the literal sense of a scriptural passage.”¹³⁷

Concerning the importance of a climax at the center for detecting chiasmus, Blomberg emphasizes the fact that the central element must be a passage worth of such a position in terms of either its ethical or theological significance,¹³⁸ and Welch points to the importance of inversion or reversal in the central element as strong evidence of chiasmaticity.¹³⁹ While the theological or ethical significance of a central element may be debatable, identifying a central, climactic element in the structure is vital for supporting the existence of chiasmus and its interpretation.

Closely related to the criterion of a significant central element is the criterion of “Symmetry” or parallelism. Chiasmus is essentially defined as an inverted parallel structure, so there should be clear parallels (verbal and/or conceptual) on both sides of the central element. Though Welch includes his need for balance under the criterion of significance of the center, it fits well here with the idea of symmetry as well. He explains that, ideally, the elements on both sides of the central element should be nearly equal concerning the number of words, lines, or

¹³⁷ Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language*, 16–17.

¹³⁸ Blomberg, “The Structure of 2 Corinthians 1-7,” 7.

¹³⁹ Welch, “Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating the Presence of Chiasmus”
<https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1389&index=1>.

elements, and Blomberg echoes this, emphasizing the importance of avoiding ruptures in the outline. Blomberg goes further, though, in emphasizing the need for symmetry, stating, “There must be clear examples of parallelism between the two ‘halves’ of the hypothesized chiasmus, to which commentators call attention even when they propose quite different outlines for the text overall.”¹⁴⁰ While parallelism (and the corresponding symmetry of the structure) are no doubt vital to the existence of a chiastic structure, Blomberg may be going a bit far in declaring a need for previous attention to have been called to the parallels prior to the chiasmus being detected. Nonetheless, symmetry and verbal/conceptual parallelism being evident in most, if not all, of the corresponding layers is a highly significant factor in detecting chiasmus.

The last three criteria given by Welch, which have no correspondence with the criteria given by Blomberg, are “Sense of Closure” (or “Return”), “Compatibility,” and “Aesthetics.” The criterion of return/sense of closure is significant because, as already mentioned, a strong chiasmus will demonstrate balance or parallelism in the corresponding layers, and this is even more important in the outer or beginning and ending layers, those that would be labeled A and A’. Of the significance of this criterion Welch says, “Second in importance to the central crossing effect in a lengthy chiasm is the way the chiasm begins and ends. The overall structure becomes more apparent when the boundaries are clearly defined and where the passage begins and ends similarly.”¹⁴¹ Certainly, the author would want to clearly indicate where the chiasmus begins and ends with a very evident demonstration of parallelism and completion, so this criterion should indeed weigh heavily in determining the existence of a chiasm.

¹⁴⁰ Blomberg, “The Structure of 2 Corinthians 1-7,” 5.

¹⁴¹ Welch, “Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating the Presence of Chiasmus” <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1389&index=1>.

“Compatibility,” according to Welch, is the idea that the existence of chiasmus is more likely when it fits with the style of the author. If, indeed, an author has used chiasmus or other related forms of parallelism elsewhere in his writing, it would seem more likely that a meaningful chiasm may be present, though based on the weight of other evidence, it would be difficult to discount the presence of chiasmus based on this criterion alone.

Concerning “Aesthetics,” Welch says:

Finally, there is room for subjective appreciation. Computers alone cannot identify chiasmus. Since human readers must judge an author’s artistic success, further factors become relevant in assessing a passage’s degree of chiasticity, such as the author’s fluency with the form; consistency in sustaining the structure, balance, and harmony; pliability at the turning point (which yet does not draw undue attention to itself); and meaningful applications of the form that do not resort to subtleties so obscure as to be esoteric or awkward.¹⁴²

While the aesthetic component is certainly important for understanding the value of chiasmus for the intended audience, those who would have been familiar with the use of the form, it is difficult to see how effectively this criterion could be used to detect chiasmus. Welch seems to include this criterion simply to say that there is room for subjectivity in detecting chiasmus. While this is duly noted, other criteria given are much more valuable for the present student seeking to determine the existence of chiasmus in a given passage.

Based on the above discussion and evaluation of the criteria presented by Blomberg and Welch for determining the presence of chiasmus, the following criteria seem to be the most significant and useful for the present study.

1. Parallelism and Symmetry – evidence of parallelism between corresponding layers and symmetry of the overall structure

¹⁴² Ibid. <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1389&index=1>.

2. Central significance – the central layer(s) contains idea(s) important enough to be the climax of the entire structure
3. Dominance of significant words/phrases/themes – parallelism between corresponding layers involves dominant imagery/terminology/ideas, not trivial/peripheral language
4. Closure/Return – beginning and end create sense of completion/closure, strong parallelism between the outer layers of the proposed structure
5. Density – more sets of corresponding layers and fewer irrelevancies between point to a greater likelihood that the proposed structure is a legitimate chiasmus and that the author was intentional in structuring it as such
6. Repeated Elements - Few or no repeated elements throughout the structure – verbal and conceptual parallels involve words or ideas not found elsewhere in the proposed structure
7. Boundaries – proposed structure divides text at natural breaks and does not violate natural “paragraphing” of the text
8. Primary structuring device is chiasmus – limited competition with other forms, possible problem perceiving structure that chiasmus helps to explain
9. Compatibility – chiasmus compatible with author’s style, and chiasms are found elsewhere in author’s writings
10. Purpose – author has a clear literary reason for use of chiasmus

These ten criteria can further be divided into tiers of significance. The first tier, those that should be seen as carrying the most weight in evaluating a proposed chiasmus is criteria 1-4. Criteria 5-8 make up the second tier, as they are important, but do not speak to strictly necessary elements of chiasmus. The third tier, then, is criteria 9-10. These final two criteria, while they may lend support to the existence of a chiasmus determined to exist based on the preceding

criteria, are less substantial, for the reasons discussed above. In the following chapter, the proposed chiasmus in Matthew 16:13-18:20 will be evaluated using these criteria with more weight given to tier 1 criteria, then tier 2, and finally tier 3.

The following chart gives a helpful visual representation of the criteria to be used and their division into the three tiers of relevance:

A Graded Synthesis of Criteria for Extended Chiasmus (Dodson)

Tier	Criterion	Description
1 – Critical Components	Parallelism and Symmetry	There is evidence of parallelism between corresponding layers of proposed chiasmus and a symmetrical arrangement of those layers
	Significance at center	A central element of ethical or theological significance toward which the author desires the entire structure to point
	Dominance of important words/phrases/themes	Parallelism between symmetrical layers involves significant words, phrases, and or themes, not trivial language or ideas
	Closure/Return	The beginning and end, the outermost layers, create a sense of completion or closure – there is strong parallelism between the beginning and ending elements
2 – Strong Supporting Evidence	Density	More sets of corresponding layers and fewer irrelevancies within lead to a higher likelihood of the presence of chiasmus
	Repeated elements	Verbal and/or conceptual parallels should involve words or ideas that are not found elsewhere in the proposed chiasmus

	Boundaries	Proposed chiasmus divides the text at natural breaks and does not violate the natural structuring of the text
	Primary structuring device	Chiasmus is the primary structuring device and is not in competition with other proposed structures for the text – there is some difficulty in perceiving the structure of a text, which chiasmus helps to overcome
3 – Marginal Supporting Evidence	Compatibility	Chiasmus is compatible with the author’s style – chiasmus found elsewhere in the author’s writing(s)
	Purpose	There is a clear literary reason for the use of chiasmus

The Value of Chiasmus

Apart from simply identifying the existence of a chiasmus, which, as has been shown, many scholars have done for passages throughout the Old and New Testaments, it is important to recognize the value a chiasm has for adding understanding to the author’s intended meaning of the passage. An example on a small scale can be seen in a shorter chiastic structure found in Matthew 7:6, which reads, “Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces” (NASB). To the mind accustomed to thinking in a linear fashion, it may sound as though the swine will be doing both the trampling as well as the turning and tearing. However, understood chiastically or as inverted parallelism, the meaning becomes much clearer.¹⁴³

- A** Do not give what is holy to dogs
- B** and do not throw your pearls before swine

¹⁴³ Man, “The Value of Chiasm for New Testament Interpretation,” 146.

B' or they will trample them under their feet
A' and they will turn and tear you to pieces.

This structure follows a pattern common in Greek and Roman rhetoric known as the *hysteron-proton* or “last-first” model. Breck comments, “The real meaning of the passage cannot be discerned unless we read it ‘spirally,’ from the extremities toward the center ($A \rightarrow A' \rightarrow B \rightarrow B'$): ‘If you give what is holy to dogs, they will turn on you; if you throw pearls before swine, they will trample them under foot.’”¹⁴⁴ Another example of this can be seen in Philemon 5:

A because I hear of your love
B and of the faith
B' which you have toward the Lord Jesus
A' and toward all the saints¹⁴⁵

Philemon’s faith is not in both the Lord Jesus and the saints. Rather, by understanding it chiastically, one can properly understand that Paul has heard of his love for all the saints and his faith toward the Lord Jesus. These, of course, are brief examples of simple *hysteron-proton* patterns, but they do show the importance of recognizing inverted parallelisms and chiastic structures. This may also point to the way in which simple direct parallelism could develop into more sophisticated chiastic structures.¹⁴⁶

If comprehending chiastic structuring is necessary for rightly understanding even shorter passages such as those discussed above, it is even more important for much longer chiastic sections. Breck explains that, “The benefits of chiastic and related rhetorical forms were in fact

¹⁴⁴ Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language*, 26.

¹⁴⁵ This is a somewhat weaker example than that seen in Matt. 7:6, as it is possible that πίστιν here could be translated “faithfulness,” which would make it less necessary to read this verse in light of the *hysteron-proton* model.

¹⁴⁶ Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language*, 26–27.

many, both to the biblical authors and to their readers.”¹⁴⁷ Ancient authors had to organize and internally structure their work by some means other than paragraph, punctuation, spacing, etc., as these conventions did not exist. They used means, such as inclusion to frame literary units, and concentric parallelism, or chiasmus, to provide stress on important themes and focus the reader’s/hearer’s attention on the central message of the unit. Chiasmus was also an important mnemonic device, as the original audiences would have sought to memorize the message of the author as they heard it, and the repetition of key words and ideas building to the central theme would have aided in this. In addition to the practical benefits, concentric parallelism and chiasmus would also have had important aesthetic value for the original audiences.¹⁴⁸ Welch expresses well this aesthetic value of chiasmus:

Whereas the primary concern of an ancient writer, and especially a biblical writer, was certainly not to create chiastic compositions for their own sakes, skilled writers would have no difficulty applying this form and artistic composers would seize upon such an opportunity under suitable circumstances to take great advantage of the powers which the form itself affords...More than now, beauty was synonymous with form.¹⁴⁹

The minds of the ancient audiences would have recognized and appreciated both the usefulness and power the chiastic form offered.

While the modern reader of Scripture may not easily be able to appreciate the aesthetic qualities of the chiastic form, as Breck says, “To detect parallel and chiastic structures is no less important for today’s exegete or, indeed, for any reader of Scripture. Failure to do so has led interpreters to weave some rather fantastic theories to explain apparent irregularities in the

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 53.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 53-54. Breck does make a distinction between concentric parallelism and chiasmus, in that chiasmus, in his view, always contains a key central element, while concentric parallelism, such as Matt. 7:6, may not. Thus, to Breck, they are distinct, but the principles for rightly identifying and understanding them are largely the same.

¹⁴⁹ Welch, *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, 14.

composition and style of individual biblical writings.”¹⁵⁰ While many studies have been done to identify chiastic structures, little impact has been made concerning how they affect interpretation, but if the exegete seeks the literal meaning of the text, that is the author’s intended meaning, one must respect the literary forms of passages.

How, then, should the contemporary exegete who seeks to respect the literary forms of biblical passages be informed by the presence of chiasmus? Two primary features of chiasmus can aid interpreters in understanding the literal meaning of a passage. First, the central element, or two complementary central elements, most often highlight the major focus of the chiasmus, (i.e., of the entire passage encompassed within the structure). Second, complementary pairs within the chiastic structure are valuable, in that one member can help clarify the other, and together they often convey a composite meaning.¹⁵¹

To read chiastic passages properly, then, one must be able to identify the complimentary pairs and the central element(s), and then read them in such a way that they inform one another. While it may seem contradictory, chiastic passages can and should be read linearly, in that the movement from line to line still has a chronological or thematic narrative flow, and spirally, in that, “progression from line to line also describes a spiral or, more accurately, a helical movement from the extremities (inclusion) toward the thematic center.”¹⁵² By doing this, the interpreter of Scripture can more accurately handle the text in such a way as to rightly understand its literal meaning.

Studies in recent decades have led to the identification of chiasmus throughout the Old and New Testaments, though certainly not all possible examples have been rightly identified as

¹⁵⁰ Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language*, 54.

¹⁵¹ Man, “The Value of Chiasm for New Testament Interpretation,” 147.

¹⁵² Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language*, 52.

such, and not all possible instances have been identified. It is, then important to identify and study chiastic structures where they do exist. As Welch says, “[W]herever chiasmus demonstrably exists, its potential impact on interpretation and textual analysis stands to be profound,” and, “...its contribution to theological exegesis and the spiritual appreciation of sacred literatures is often highly significant.”¹⁵³ With this in mind, this study will now seek to establish that chiasmus is indeed present in Matthew 16:13-18:20, and that it is highly significant both for understanding that passage and for biblical ecclesiology.

¹⁵³ Welch, *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, 14–15.

CHAPTER 2: CHIASMUS AND MATTHEW 16:13-18:20

As discussed above, chiasmus has been observed and studied in Matthew's Gospel for decades. However, the chiastic structure in Matthew 16:13-18:20 which will be explained below has apparently gone undetected until quite recently. Even so, the evidence for it being a legitimate example of chiasmus is quite strong. Further, the meaning of this proposed literary structure is, in its own right, very significant, as is the relationship it evidences to "clues" found through much of the First Gospel.

As proof for these claims, the remainder of this chapter will evaluate Matthew 16:13-18:20 against the criteria given in the chart, "A Graded Synthesis of the Criteria for Extended Chiasmus" (see Chapter One), in order to show that there is strong evidence to support it as a legitimate chiastic structure and discuss how reading a passage chiastically can significantly affect its understanding and interpretation. These ideas will then be taken into consideration as they apply to this particular passage, in light of understanding it as a chiasmus.

The Structure of Matthew 16:13-18:20

At best, it is perplexing why the proposed chiastic structure of Matthew 16:13-18:20 has not been identified prior to the work done recently by Dodson and Luter.¹⁵⁴ As has been noted, Matthew 16:17-18 has been studied by numerous scholars and interpreters and is held by most to

¹⁵⁴ Luter and Dodson, "Hidden in Plain View: An Overlooked Chiasm in Matthew 16:13-18:20."

be a very important ecclesiological passage.¹⁵⁵ However, relatively few works have made a strong connection between Matthew 16:13-20 and 18:15-20, which passages contain the only uses of the ἐκκλησία in the Gospels, and which this study will show to be the outer layers of the proposed literary structure, i.e., a chiasmus.

Several articles have addressed the passages together in discussion of the similar language, especially that of “binding” and “loosing,” and possible implications.¹⁵⁶ Most major commentaries note the similar wording and structure of the phrasing as well.¹⁵⁷ Thus, it is difficult to see why there has not, at the very least, been discussion of these passages as an *inclusion*. However, no such evaluation seems to exist.

Matthew 16:13-20 and 18:15-20 as Literary Bookends

Duvall and Hays define an *inclusio* as a passage containing the same or very similar wording at the beginning and end of a passage, which they also refer to as bracketing.¹⁵⁸ David Dorsey refers to *inclusio* as a “sandwich structure,” that is, beginning and ending a unit on the

¹⁵⁵ Burgess, *A History of the Exegesis of Matthew 16*; Cullmann, *Peter*; Ferda, “The Seventy Faces of Peter’s Confession”; Thomas J. Finley, “‘Upon This Rock’: Matthew 16.18 and the Aramaic Evidence,” *Aramaic Studies* 4, no. 2 (July 2006): 133–51, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477835106073790>; Kemp, “The Blessing, Power and Authority of the Church”; Robinson, “Peter and His Successors”; Schreiner, “Peter, the Rock”; M. Jack Suggs, “Matthew 16:13-20,” *Interpretation* 39, no. 3 (July 1985): 291–95; Turner, “Matthew among the Dispensationalists”; Benedict Viviano, “Peter as Jesus’ Mouth: Matthew 16:13-20 in the Light of Exodus 4:10-17 and Other Models,” *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* 37, no. 1 (1998): 226–52. There are numerous examples of detailed study of this passage to be found in commentaries on Matthew as well.

¹⁵⁶ Syreeni, “Between Heaven and Earth”; Hiers, “‘Binding’ and ‘Loosing,’” June 1985; Cronjé, “A Study of the Theological and Ecclesiological Consequences of Jesus’ Pronouncements in Matthew 16”; Cadbury, “The Meaning of John 20.”

¹⁵⁷ Hagner, *Matthew*; France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 2007; Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*; Talbert, *Matthew*; Turner, *Matthew*.

¹⁵⁸ J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God’s Word: A Hands-on Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible*, Third edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 102.

same note,¹⁵⁹ while John Nolland calls it “framing.”¹⁶⁰ The point here is certain terminology that is generally important, or scarcely used wording, should be understood as bookends or brackets around a larger unit of Scripture.

To make a strong case for Matthew 16:13-20 and 18:15-20 as the “bookends” for 16:13-18:20, it is not necessary to go any further than comparing the following data:

16:13-20: Ἐλθὼν δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἰς τὰ μέρη Καισαρείας τῆς Φιλίππου ἠρώτα τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ λέγων· τίνα λέγουσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι εἶναι τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου; οἱ δὲ εἶπαν· οἱ μὲν Ἰωάννην τὸν βαπτιστήν, ἄλλοι δὲ Ἡλίαν, ἕτεροι δὲ Ἰερεμίαν ἢ ἓνα τῶν προφητῶν. λέγει αὐτοῖς· ὑμεῖς δὲ τίνα με λέγετε εἶναι; ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ Σίμων Πέτρος εἶπεν· σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος. Ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτῷ· μακάριος εἶ, Σίμων Βαριωνᾶ, ὅτι σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα οὐκ ἀπεκάλυψέν σοι ἀλλ’ ὁ πατήρ μου ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς. καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ σοὶ λέγω ὅτι σὺ εἶ Πέτρος, καὶ ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ οἰκοδομήσω μου τὴν **ἐκκλησίαν** καὶ πύλαι ᾧδου οὐ κατισχύσουσιν αὐτῆς. δώσω σοὶ τὰς κλεῖδας τῆς βασιλείας τῶν οὐρανῶν, καὶ ὃ ἐὰν **δήσης** ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἔσται **δεδεμένον** ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς, καὶ ὃ ἐὰν **λύσης** ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἔσται **λελυμένον** ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.¹⁶¹

ἐκκλησία (16:18); δέω and λύω “bind and loose” (twice each in 16:19)

18:15-20: Ἐὰν δὲ ἁμαρτήσῃ [εἰς σὲ] ὁ ἀδελφός σου, ὑπάγε ἔλεγχον αὐτὸν μεταξὺ σοῦ καὶ αὐτοῦ μόνου. ἐὰν σου ἀκούσῃ, ἐκέρδησας τὸν ἀδελφόν σου· ἐὰν δὲ μὴ ἀκούσῃ, παράλαβε μετὰ σοῦ ἓτι ἓνα ἢ δύο, ἵνα ἐπὶ στόματος δύο μαρτύρων ἢ τριῶν σταθῇ πᾶν ῥῆμα· ἐὰν δὲ παρακούσῃ αὐτῶν, εἰπὲ τῇ **ἐκκλησίᾳ**· ἐὰν δὲ καὶ τῆς **ἐκκλησίας** παρακούσῃ, ἔστω σοι ὥσπερ ὁ ἐθνικὸς καὶ ὁ τελώνης. Ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν· ὅσα ἐὰν **δήσητε** ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἔσται **δεδεμένα** ἐν οὐρανῷ, καὶ ὅσα ἐὰν **λύσητε** ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἔσται **λελυμένα** ἐν οὐρανῷ. Πάλιν [ἀμὴν] λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐὰν δύο συμφωνήσωσιν ἐξ ὑμῶν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς περὶ παντὸς πράγματος οὗ ἐὰν αἰτήσωνται, γενήσεται αὐτοῖς παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς. οὐ γὰρ εἰσὶν δύο ἢ τρεῖς συνηγμένοι εἰς τὸ ἐμὸν ὄνομα, ἐκεῖ εἰμι ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν.

ἐκκλησία (twice in 18:17); δέω and λύω “bind and loose” (twice each in 18:18)

¹⁵⁹ Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*, 24.

¹⁶⁰ Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 25.

¹⁶¹ Unless otherwise noted, the Greek text is from NA28.

The word ἐκκλησία is found only in Matthew 16:18 and in 18:17 in the Gospels, which certainly qualifies it as scarcely used and significant. As for δέω and λύω, though neither verb is uncommon in the New Testament, or the Gospel of Matthew, for that matter, the combination of the two, this binding and loosing formula, is seen only in Matthew 16:19 and 18:18. As France says concerning 18:18, “The commission given to Peter in 16:19 is repeated almost verbatim except that the verbs are now plural, addressed to the disciples as a group...”¹⁶² This is another clear example of rarely used, significant language. These usages give strong evidence of an *inclusio* formed by these passages.

The first aspect of interpretive help provided by locating an *inclusio* is that it defines the textual limits of a passage to be studied. The second aspect is that, according to Duvall and Hays, the “bookends” provide “critical context for understanding the bracketed material”¹⁶³ (i.e., the text of Matthew 16:21-18:14). This will be discussed more fully below.

The Remaining Layers of the Matthew 16:13-18:20 Chiasm

If Matthew 16:13-18:20 is indeed a chiasmus, an inverted parallel structure, then 16:13-20 is the A layer of the structure and 18:15-20 is A' layer. The following pairings are proposed as the B through F layers of the overall chiastic structure, along with brief comments about the significant echoed, opposite, complementary, or illustrative wording in moving from the first to the second member of each pair.¹⁶⁴

The next two layers after the first and last section would be:

¹⁶² France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 2007, 696.

¹⁶³ Duvall and Hays, *Grasping God's Word*, 102.

¹⁶⁴ Dorsey, *Literary Structure*, 31.

- B 16:21-23: Ἀπὸ τότε ἤρξατο ὁ Ἰησοῦς δεικνύειν τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ ὅτι δεῖ αὐτὸν εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα ἀπελθεῖν καὶ πολλὰ παθεῖν ἀπὸ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων καὶ ἀρχιερέων καὶ γραμματέων καὶ ἀποκτανθῆναι καὶ τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ ἐγερθῆναι. καὶ προσλαβόμενος αὐτὸν ὁ Πέτρος ἤρξατο ἐπιτιμᾶν αὐτῷ λέγων· Ἰλεώς σοι, κύριε· οὐ μὴ ἔσται σοι τοῦτο. ὁ δὲ στραφεὶς εἶπεν τῷ Πέτρῳ· ὕπαγε ὀπίσω μου, σατανᾶ· **σκάνδαλον** εἶ ἐμοῦ, ὅτι οὐ φρονεῖς τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλὰ τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων.

σκάνδαλον: Peter, an “offense” to Jesus going to the Cross

- B’ 18:7-14: Οὐαὶ τῷ κόσμῳ ἀπὸ τῶν **σκανδάλων**· ἀνάγκη γὰρ ἐλθεῖν τὰ **σκάνδαλα**, πλην οὐαὶ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ δι’ οὗ τὸ **σκάνδαλον** ἔρχεται. Εἰ δὲ ἡ χεὶρ σου ἢ ὁ πούς σου σκανδαλίζει σε, ἔκκοψον αὐτὸν καὶ βάλε ἀπὸ σοῦ· καλὸν σοὶ ἐστὶν εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν ζωὴν κυλλὸν ἢ χωλὸν ἢ δύο χεῖρας ἢ δύο πόδας ἔχοντα βληθῆναι εἰς τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον. καὶ εἰ ὁ ὀφθαλμός σου σκανδαλίζει σε, ἔξελε αὐτὸν καὶ βάλε ἀπὸ σοῦ· καλὸν σοὶ ἐστὶν μονόφθαλμον εἰς τὴν ζωὴν εἰσελθεῖν ἢ δύο ὀφθαλμοὺς ἔχοντα βληθῆναι εἰς τὴν γέενναν τοῦ πυρός. Ὁρᾶτε μὴ καταφρονήσητε ἐνὸς τῶν μικρῶν τούτων· λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν ὅτι οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτῶν ἐν οὐρανοῖς διὰ παντὸς βλέπουσιν τὸ πρόσωπον τοῦ πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς. Τί ὑμῖν δοκεῖ; ἐὰν γένηται τι ἀνθρώπῳ ἑκατὸν πρόβατα καὶ πλανηθῇ ἓν ἐξ αὐτῶν, οὐχὶ ἀφήσει τὰ ἐνενήκοντα ἐννέα ἐπὶ τὰ ὄρη καὶ πορευθεὶς ζητεῖ τὸ πλανώμενον; καὶ ἐὰν γένηται εὐρεῖν αὐτό, ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι χαίρει ἐπ’ αὐτῷ μᾶλλον ἢ ἐπὶ τοῖς ἐνενήκοντα ἐννέα τοῖς μὴ πεπλανημένοις. οὕτως οὐκ ἔστιν θέλημα ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς ἵνα ἀπόληται ἓν τῶν μικρῶν τούτων.

σκάνδαλον: Woe upon those causing “offense” for “little ones”

It should be noted here that four of only five uses of the noun σκάνδαλον in Matthew (and in the Gospels, there is only one other instance in Luke 17:1, a parallel passage to Matthew 18:7ff.) occur in these two sections, once in 16:23 and three times in 18:7. In the proposed B and B’ layers, rarely used, key terminology is found in both passages, and there is a clear conceptual link concerning God’s interests as opposed to those of man. In 16:21-23, Peter, who had just answered the question correctly about who Jesus is in 16:15-16, allows himself to be used as Satan’s instrument, becoming a stumbling block to Jesus by trying to convince Him to bypass His predicted upcoming death in Jerusalem. This, Jesus says, is because Peter is setting his mind not on the things of God, but on those of men. The pairing with 18:7-14 shows that, to Jesus, causing the stumbling of a small child who has believed in Him is a very serious spiritual

offense, and the discussion of cutting off one's hand or foot if it causes one to stumble and the leaving of the 99 to find the one shows the contrast between the things of God and those of man.

The C and C' layers are proposed as follows:

- C 16:24-28: Τότε ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ· εἴ τις θέλει ὀπίσω μου ἐλθεῖν, ἀπαρνησάσθω ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἁράτω τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀκολουθείτω μοι. ὃς γὰρ ἐὰν θέλῃ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ σῶσαι ἀπολέσει αὐτήν· ὃς δ' ἂν ἀπολέσῃ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ εὕρήσει αὐτήν. τί γὰρ ὠφεληθήσεται ἄνθρωπος ἐὰν τὸν κόσμον ὅλον κερδήσῃ τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ζημιωθῇ; ἢ τί δώσει ἄνθρωπος ἀντάλλαγμα τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτοῦ; μέλλει γὰρ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἔρχεσθαι ἐν τῇ δόξῃ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ μετὰ τῶν ἀγγέλων αὐτοῦ, καὶ τότε ἀποδώσει ἐκάστῳ κατὰ τὴν πράξιν αὐτοῦ. Ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι εἰσὶν τινες τῶν ὧδε ἐστώτων οἵτινες οὐ μὴ γεύσονται θανάτου ἕως ἂν ἴδωσιν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενον ἐν τῇ **βασιλείᾳ** αὐτοῦ.

Coming after Christ: Denying self and giving up your life; Every man will be repaid according to his deeds; Son of Man's kingdom (βασιλεία)

- C' 18:1-6: Ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ὥρᾳ προσήλθον οἱ μαθηταὶ τῷ Ἰησοῦ λέγοντες· τίς ἄρα μείζων ἐστὶν ἐν τῇ **βασιλείᾳ** τῶν οὐρανῶν; καὶ προσκαλεσάμενος παιδίον ἔστησεν αὐτὸ ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν καὶ εἶπεν· ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ἐὰν μὴ στραφῇτε καὶ γένησθε ὡς τὰ παιδιά, οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθῃτε εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν. ὅστις οὖν ταπεινώσει ἑαυτὸν ὡς τὸ παιδίον τοῦτο, οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ μείζων ἐν τῇ **βασιλείᾳ** τῶν οὐρανῶν. καὶ ὃς ἐὰν δέξηται ἓν παιδίον τοιοῦτο ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου, ἐμὲ δέχεται. Ὃς δ' ἂν σκανδαλίσῃ ἓνα τῶν μικρῶν τούτων τῶν πιστευόντων εἰς ἐμέ, συμφέρει αὐτῷ ἵνα κρεμασθῇ μύλος ὀνικὸς περὶ τὸν τράχηλον αὐτοῦ καὶ καταποντισθῇ ἐν τῷ πελάγει τῆς θαλάσσης.

Greatest in the kingdom (βασιλεία); Childlike faith and humility; Good deeds, receiving a little one in His name commended and bad deeds, causing a believing little one to stumble, will be worse than being drowned

In the C and C' layers, two complementary ways of approaching the proper attitude related to spiritual growth in relation to Christ are explained. While the verbal links between these two passages are not as strong, the conceptual link is quite clear. There is clear progression, from the discussion of coming after Christ by humbling oneself and giving one's life, to being the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven by having childlike faith and humility. From a spiritual "adult" angle, it is necessary for a person to lose their current worldly life, to deny themselves, in

order to find true life in Christ (16:24-28). From a “childlike” spiritual angle, the one with simple faith and humility is “the greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (18:1-5). Jesus also promises that when he comes in the glory of his father, he will repay each man’s deeds; those who receive those who are humble like little children in Jesus name are equated with receiving him, while those who cause one of the little ones (μικρός) to stumble are to receive punishment, something worse than being drowned in the sea.

The fourth set of parallel passages can be seen in 17:1-8 and 17:24-27.

- D 17:1-8: Καὶ μεθ’ ἡμέρας ἕξ παραλαμβάνει ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὸν Πέτρον καὶ Ἰάκωβον καὶ Ἰωάννην τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀναφέρει αὐτοὺς εἰς ὄρος ὑψηλὸν κατ’ ἰδίαν. καὶ μετεμορφώθη ἔμπροσθεν αὐτῶν, καὶ ἔλαμψεν τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ὡς ὁ ἥλιος, τὰ δὲ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο λευκὰ ὡς τὸ φῶς. καὶ ἰδοὺ ὥφθη αὐτοῖς Μωϋσῆς καὶ Ἡλίας συλλαλοῦντες μετ’ αὐτοῦ. ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ Πέτρος εἶπεν τῷ Ἰησοῦ· κύριε, καλὸν ἐστὶν ἡμᾶς ὧδε εἶναι· εἰ θέλεις, ποιήσω ὧδε τρεῖς σκηνάς, σοὶ μίαν καὶ Μωϋσεῖ μίαν καὶ Ἡλίᾳ μίαν. ἔτι αὐτοῦ λαλοῦντος ἰδοὺ νεφέλη φωτεινὴ ἐπεσκίασεν αὐτούς, καὶ ἰδοὺ φωνὴ ἐκ τῆς νεφέλης λέγουσα· οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα· ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ. καὶ ἀκούσαντες οἱ μαθηταὶ ἔπεσαν ἐπὶ πρόσωπον αὐτῶν καὶ ἐφοβήθησαν σφόδρα. καὶ προσῆλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ ἀψάμενος αὐτῶν εἶπεν· ἐγέρθητε καὶ μὴ φοβεῖσθε. ἐπάραντες δὲ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτῶν οὐδένα εἶδον εἰ μὴ αὐτὸν Ἰησοῦν μόνον.

Seeing heavenly glory on earth: the true *heavenly* glory of Jesus, God’s Son

- D’ 17:24-27: Ἐλθόντων δὲ αὐτῶν εἰς Καφαρναοὺμ προσῆλθον οἱ τὰ δίδραχμα λαμβάνοντες τῷ Πέτρῳ καὶ εἶπαν· ὁ διδάσκαλος ὑμῶν οὐ τελεῖ [τὰ] δίδραχμα; λέγει· ναί. καὶ ἐλθόντα εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν προέφθασεν αὐτὸν ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγων· τί σοι δοκεῖ, Σίμων; οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς ἀπὸ τίνων λαμβάνουσιν τέλη ἢ κῆνσον; ἀπὸ τῶν υἱῶν αὐτῶν ἢ ἀπὸ τῶν ἀλλοτρίων; εἰπόντος δέ· ἀπὸ τῶν ἀλλοτρίων, ἔφη αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· ἄρα γε ἐλεύθεροί εἰσιν οἱ υἱοί. ἵνα δὲ μὴ σκανδαλίσωμεν αὐτούς, πορευθεὶς εἰς θάλασσαν βάλε ἄγκιστρον καὶ τὸν ἀναβάντα πρῶτον ἰχθὺν ἄρον, καὶ ἀνοίξας τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ εὐρήσεις στατήρα· ἐκεῖνον λαβὼν δὸς αὐτοῖς ἀντὶ ἑμοῦ καὶ σοῦ.

Respecting earthly authority so as not to offend, using the illustration of “sons”: Jesus pays a tax to an *earthly* king

In the proposed D and D’ pair, the connection may not seem as clear, since there is no specific similar terminology, which readily connects the two. However, a strong connection can be made by way of understanding the contrast between the two, which is a common feature of

parallelism. The heavenly glory and authority of the transfigured Christ, the preview, so to speak, of him coming in his kingdom (17:2-5), is contrasted with that of earthly kings who levy taxes (17:24). Jesus, who is demonstrated to Peter, James, and John, to be the Son of God, the true King in 17:1-8, chooses, for the time being to live under the authority of the earthly king by paying the tax, albeit by miraculous provision (17:25-27).

The E and E' layers, those just before the central layer, are found in 17:9-13 and 17: 22-23.

E 17:9-13: Καὶ καταβαινόντων αὐτῶν ἐκ τοῦ ὄρους ἐνετείλατο αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγων· μηδενὶ εἴπητε τὸ ὄραμα ἕως οὗ ὁ **υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου** ἐκ νεκρῶν **ἐγερθῇ**. Καὶ ἐπηρώτησαν αὐτὸν οἱ μαθηταὶ λέγοντες· τί οὖν οἱ γραμματεῖς λέγουσιν ὅτι Ἠλίαν δεῖ ἐλθεῖν πρῶτον; ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν· Ἠλίας μὲν ἔρχεται καὶ ἀποκαταστήσει πάντα· λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν ὅτι Ἠλίας ἤδη ἦλθεν, καὶ οὐκ ἐπέγνωσαν αὐτὸν ἀλλ' ἐποίησαν ἐν αὐτῷ ὅσα ἠθέλησαν· οὕτως καὶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου μέλλει πάσχειν ὑπ' αὐτῶν. τότε συνῆκαν οἱ μαθηταὶ ὅτι περὶ Ἰωάννου τοῦ βαπτιστοῦ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς.

Explaining the corporate rejection of John the Baptist to Peter, James and John; coming suffering... resurrection of Jesus (Jesus' second prediction in Matthew of resurrection, i.e., beyond death, the first being in 16:21)

E' 17:22-23: Συστρεφομένων δὲ αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ Γαλιλαίᾳ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς· μέλλει ὁ **υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου** παραδίδοσθαι εἰς χεῖρας ἀνθρώπων, καὶ ἀποκτενοῦσιν αὐτόν, καὶ τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ **ἐγερθήσεται**. καὶ ἐλυπήθησαν σφόδρα.

The betrayal, death and resurrection of Jesus (the third prediction of His death and resurrection)

In the E and E' layers, there are both verbal and conceptual parallels. Though neither the phrase Son of Man (υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου) nor the verb raised (ἐγείρω) are rare, the pairing of the two is, in fact, uncommon. The specific phrasing of the Son of Man being raised is used only five times in the New Testament, the two instances in E and E', once in Matthew 20:18-19, and twice in Luke. Luke 9:22 is in the passage that parallels Matthew's account of Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ and Jesus' earlier prediction of his coming death and resurrection, and

Luke 24:7 is a reference back to Jesus' prediction while they were gathered with him in Galilee (Mt 17:22-23, E') of his coming suffering and being raised. There is then, good reason to see E and E' as containing a significant parallel in wording.

Concerning the conceptual relationship between the two, understanding the inverted parallel structure here helps explain the insertion of Jesus' prediction of His betrayal and resurrection where it would otherwise seem quite awkward. However, by understanding that it is connected with, and continues from, His discussion of the rejection and killing of John the Baptist, it fits quite easily. Jesus first makes it clear to the inner circle of His closest disciples that His kingdom program has been delayed because the prophesied Elijah figure/forerunner (i.e., John the Baptist) has been rejected and killed, just as He Himself soon would be (17:9-13). Then, He reiterates to all 12 of His closest disciples His prediction of His death/resurrection for the third time in a span of 30 verses [16:21; 17:9, 12; 17:22-23]), this time adding the idea of being "betrayed into the hands of men" (17:22).

The final pairing, F and F', which form the important central point of the proposed structure, are found in 17:14-18 and 17:19-20[21].¹⁶⁵

F 17:14-18: Καὶ ἐλθόντων πρὸς τὸν ὄχλον προσῆλθεν αὐτῷ ἄνθρωπος γονυπετῶν αὐτὸν καὶ λέγων· κύριε, ἐλέησόν μου τὸν υἱόν, ὅτι σεληνιάζεται καὶ κακῶς πάσχει· πολλάκις γὰρ πίπτει εἰς τὸ πῦρ καὶ πολλάκις εἰς τὸ ὕδωρ. καὶ προσήνεγκα αὐτὸν τοῖς μαθηταῖς σου, καὶ οὐκ ἠδυνήθησαν αὐτὸν θεραπεῦσαι. ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν· ὦ **γενεὰ ἄπιστος καὶ διεστραμμένη**, ἕως πότε μεθ' ὑμῶν ἔσομαι; ἕως πότε ἀνέξομαι ὑμῶν; φέρετέ μοι αὐτὸν ὧδε. καὶ ἐπέτιμην αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ τὸ δαιμόνιον καὶ ἐθεραπεύθη ὁ παῖς ἀπὸ τῆς ὥρας ἐκείνης.

Healing a demon-possessed boy in the context of a "faithless" (ἄπιστος) and "perverted" (διαστρέφω) "generation" (γενεά), whose time is short (ἄπιστος is used only 5x in the Gospels and only here in Matthew), (διαστρέφω is rare in the NT, used only here in Matthew, 2x in Luke, one being the parallel to Mt 17:17, 3x in Acts, and 1x in Philippians), (γενεά is not particularly rare, but the specific

¹⁶⁵ Matthew 17:21 is included in the text in NA27, though it is discussed in the textual apparatus (p. 48). The verse is not included in the text of UBS4 Revised or NA28.

phrase “faithless generation” is used only here and in the parallel verses in Mark and Luke.¹⁶⁶

F’ 17:19-20 [21]: Τότε προσελθόντες οἱ μαθηταὶ τῷ Ἰησοῦ κατ’ ἰδίαν εἶπον· διὰ τί ἡμεῖς οὐκ ἠδυνήθημεν ἐκβαλεῖν αὐτό; ὁ δὲ λέγει αὐτοῖς· διὰ τὴν **ὀλιγοπιστίαν** ὑμῶν· ἀμὴν γὰρ λέγω ὑμῖν, ἐὰν ἔχητε **πίστιν** ὡς κόκκον σινάπεως, ἐρεῖτε τῷ ὄρει· τούτῳ· μετάβα ἔνθεν ἐκεῖ, καὶ μεταβήσεται· καὶ οὐδὲν ἀδυνατήσῃ ὑμῖν.

Problem of “little faith” by the 12 disciples (ὀλιγοπιστία here is only use in Scripture, while the cognate ὀλιγόπιστος is used elsewhere in Matthew only in 6:30, 8:26, 14:31, and 16:8, the last three of which focus on the 12 and are significant for this study, and once in Luke 12:28, which is a parallel to Mt 6:30); “faith” (πίστις) “the size of a mustard seed”

In the central layers, there are significant uses of rare terminology as wells as a discussion of theological significance that warrants its position at the center of the proposed structure and brings to a climax what has been built from the outer layer (more on this will be discussed below). What first appears to be one of a number of similar encounters in which Jesus heals a demon-possessed person must, on further consideration, be seen as a more significant event for two reasons. First, the wording Jesus uses to describe not just the immediate crowd, but the entire wider Jewish populace of the day,¹⁶⁷ “unbelieving and perverted generation”¹⁶⁸ (17:17a); and second, Jesus’s unprecedented questions: “How long will I be with you? How long will I endure you?”¹⁶⁹ (17:17b). By contrast, though the “little faith” of the 12 disciples is initially presented in a seemingly negative light, it is quickly spoken of as a great positive, very much the

¹⁶⁶ Note: In the middle third of Matthew, there are six significant uses of γενεά [11:16; 12:39, 41, 42, 45; and 16:4, all pointing ahead to the use in 17:17].

¹⁶⁷ In certain respects, the view presented here in brief agrees with that of France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 660–661. However, France concludes that the “generation” (γενεά) does not reach “the point of no return” until Matthew 23:34–36 (660), whereas the current writer believes that is precisely what Matthew is portraying in 17:17.

¹⁶⁸ Author’s translation.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

opposite of the unbelieving surrounding “generation,” the foundation for great future spiritual works (17:20).

Evaluation of the Likelihood of Chiasticity in Matthew 16:13-18:20

Having discussed the corresponding layers in the proposed Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasmus, it will be valuable to evaluate the structure in its entirety based on the synthesis of criteria given in the previous chapter to assess the likelihood of the existence of extended chiasmus in this passage. In the following section, the proposed structure will be considered in light of each of the ten criteria given in the chart, “A Graded Synthesis of Criteria for Extended Chiasmus (Dodson),” and the overall likelihood of chiasticity of the passage based on these evaluations will be discussed. As a point of reference and for the sake of clarity in the following discussion, a brief outline of the proposed structure would be as follows:

A (16:13-20) ἐκκλησία (only here and 18:17 in Gospels); “bound and loosed”

B (16:21-23) Peter, a stumbling block (σκάνδαλον) to Jesus going to the Cross

C (16:24-28) Discipleship: Giving up your life; Son of Man’s βασιλεία

D (17:1-8) The true *heavenly* glory of Jesus, God’s Son

E (17:9-13) Rejection of John the Baptist; coming suffering...
resurrection of Jesus (υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου/ἐγείρω)

F (17:14-18) Healing in the face of a γενεὰ ἄπιστος καὶ
διεστραμμένη, whose time is short (ἄπιστος and διαστρέφω
only used here in Matthew; *see γενεά usage below)

- F'** (17:19-20 [21]) Problem of ὀλιγοπιστία/ὀλιγόπιστος by the μαθηταὶ; πίστις “the size of a mustard seed”
- E'** (17:22-23) The betrayal, death and resurrection of Jesus (υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου/ἐγείρω)
- D'** (17:24-27) Jesus not recognized as the Son of the true King, pays a tax to an *earthly* king
- C'** (18:1-6) Greatest in the βασιλεία: Childlike conversion and humility
- B'** (18:7-14) Woe on stumbling blocks (σκάνδαλον)
- A'** (18:15-20) ἐκκλησία (twice); “bound and loosed” (δέω and λύω) (twice)¹⁷⁰

Concerning the Tier 1 criteria, those most critical to demonstrating the existence of chiasmus, the proposed structure in Matthew 16:13-18:20 meets all four to varying degrees. The first criterion, “Parallelism and Symmetry,” required a demonstration of parallelism between the corresponding layers their arrangement in a symmetrical fashion. As discussed above, the A/A', B/B', E/E', and F/F' layers contain significant verbal parallels. This is especially true in the A/A' layers with the use of ἐκκλησία and the combination of δέω and λύω in the unique binding and loosing formula, which are parallels one cannot help but recognize. Though these parallels have been acknowledged in many works and commentaries, a clear connection between the two has, until very recently, eluded scholars. Concerning the C/C' and D/D' layers, the parallels are primarily conceptual. In the C/C' pairing, though there is some verbal parallel with the use of the word kingdom (βασιλεία), this is not a strong parallel due to the commonality of the word throughout the Gospel of Matthew. However, the conceptual parallel is quite strong, in that both passages, when paired together, clearly complement one another in the discussion of being part

¹⁷⁰ Luter and Dodson, “Hidden in Plain View: An Overlooked Chiasm in Matthew 16:13-18:20.”

of Christ's kingdom and spiritual growth. The D/D' layers also parallel one another on a conceptual level by way of contrast between Jesus' heavenly glory and earthly humility, as discussed above.

As can be clearly seen in the outline above, there is an elegant symmetrical pattern in the arrangement of the corresponding sections. Further, if one looks at the two halves of the structure (A-F and F'-A'), they are quite close to the same length. In a passage made up of over 1,200 words (in Greek¹⁷¹), the two halves are within about 70 words of one another in length, which further adds to the demonstration of symmetry is the chiasmus. Between the strong verbal/conceptual parallels found in the corresponding layers and their symmetrical arrangement, the proposed structure quite convincingly meets Criterion 1, "Symmetry/Parallelism."

Criterion two, "Significance at the center," requires the central element(s), or layer(s), of a chiasmus to be something of theological or ethical significance that the author would see as worthy to be the climax of or idea to which he is pointing in the entire structure.¹⁷² At the center of this chiasmus, the F/F' layers, is what may seem, at first glance, to be a simple telling of an encounter where Jesus' casts out a demon, but there is actually much theological significance in these verses. Jesus contrasts the present, faithless and perverted generation with those who have even little faith. The theological significance of little faith as opposed to faithlessness is very important, as will become clearer in the subsequent discussion of interpretation of the passage that makes up the chiasmus. Thus, Matthew 16:13-18:20 does, though it requires further discussion, meet the criterion of "Significance at the center."

¹⁷¹ Cf. NA28

¹⁷² Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*, 39–41. It should be noted here, that, in a chiasmus with an even number of layers, which the proposed structure is, Dorsey sees the position of prominence in such a structure as the outer two layers rather than at the center. Even if this is the case, the two central layers in such a chiasmus should still be understood as significant, since they are that to which the rest of the structure builds. While, for interpretive purposes, Dorsey's understanding of the most prominent layers being the outer ones is valuable, the import of a significant pair of central elements should not be dismissed.

“Dominance of important words/phrases/themes” is also demonstrated in this chiasmus. As already discussed under Criterion 1, “Parallelism and Symmetry,” there are clear verbal links and parallels in the A/A’, B/B’, E/E’, and F/F’ layers, and clear conceptual correspondence in the C/C’ and D/D’ layers (see discussion above). These verbal and conceptual parallels between the corresponding layers of the chiasm are not based on insignificant, peripheral, or trivial language or ideas. Rather, they are based on language and themes that are biblically significant, and especially so in light of the rarity of many of the parallel words and phrases and the theological significance of the topics that are paralleled in the corresponding layers.

There may be no criterion which Matthew 16:13-18:20 more clearly meets than that of “Closure/Return.” This criterion requires the outermost layers of the chiasmus to create a sense of closure or completion and there to be strong parallelism between those layers. A and A’ in this structure have what are arguably the strongest parallels of any of the proposed layers. It was, in fact, the clear parallels between Matthew 16:13-19 and 18:15-20 (and lack of a satisfactory explanation of the link between them) that first drew the attention of the present author and his colleague and caused them to investigate the passage further, ultimately leading to the discovery of the chiastic structuring of the passage in question.

Though these parallels between A and A’ have been discussed above, they warrant further observation here in order to demonstrate again the strength of the connection between the two. Ἐκκλησία is only used in the Gospels in Matthew 16:18 and in 18:17. This undoubtedly qualifies ἐκκλησία as scarcely used, and since Jesus is discussing here, not just a gathering of some sort, but the building of “His Church” and part of the role of that church, which is certainly very significant. There is also a strong verbal and conceptual connection regarding the use of δέω and λύω, the “binding and loosing” formula. Though neither δέω nor λύω is rare in Matthew’s Gospel, this specific formula is used only in these two passages, A and A’, and the words Jesus

says to directly to Peter are repeated nearly verbatim to the group of disciples in 18:18.¹⁷³ Again, rare phrasing and a topic of great significance are seen here, and what Jesus appears to be doing is expanding the command he has given Peter in 16:13-19 to the group of disciples in 18:15-20, which very well fits with the A' layer bring closure or completion to the structure by use of return to the language and theme(s) of the A layer. Again, the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasmus meets the criterion of "Closure/Return" remarkably well, and, thus, it should be noted meets all four of the tier one criteria for extended chiasmus quite well, which strongly indicates the legitimacy of this proposed chiastic structure.

The Tier Two criteria from the Graded Synthesis of Criteria for Extended Chiasmus, "Density," "Repeated elements," "Boundaries," and "Primary structuring device," though, unlike the Tier One criteria, do not speak to strictly necessary elements of chiasmus, do provide strong supporting evidence that such a structure is present. The criterion of "Density" actually involves two elements working in tandem that give support to the presence of chiasmus. First, the number of paired elements involved speaks to the likelihood of the presence of chiasmus. Blomberg explains the correspondence between the greater number of elements and the presence of significant chiastic structuring:

Multiple sets of correspondences between passages opposite each other in the chiasmus as well as multiple members of the chiasmus itself are desirable. A simple ABA' or ABB' A' pattern is so common to so many different forms of rhetoric that it usually yields few startlingly profound insights. Three or four members repeated in inverse sequence may be more significant. Five or more elements paired in sequence usually resist explanations which invoke subconscious or accidental processes.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 2007.

¹⁷⁴ Blomberg, "The Structure of 2 Corinthians 1-7," 6-7; Though it is difficult to give precise statistical qualifications to what number of elements warrants an intentional extended chiastic structure, one attempt to do so can be seen in Radday, "Chiasmus in Hebrew Biblical Narrative" See especially the Appendix pp.116-117.

Thus, the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasmus, with six paired elements, demonstrates what would be, according to Blomberg, a high number of members that point to intentionally being structured as such by the author. The second aspect, “Density,” is what Welch refers to as “tightness in the text,” or the compactness of the structure. He explains that: “The more compact the proposed structure, or the fewer irrelevancies between its elements, the higher the degree of chiasticity. Tightness in the text is indicative of greater craftsmanship, rigor, focus, intention, and clarity... Thus, if a proposed chiasm involves only a few terms spread out over a long text, it has a low density.”¹⁷⁵ On this aspect of the criterion of “Density,” the proposed chiasmus in Matthew does not perform as well, as it is based on key terms and ideas that are spread over a long text, therefore it would be considered less compact, in this respect, than many shorter inverted parallelisms, though this lack of compactness is almost certain to befall most, if not all, extended chiasms. Thus, while Matthew 16:13-18:20 might be considered to lack “tightness” in the structure, it does display a high number of paired elements, which would allow it to meet the criterion of “Density” fairly well.

Concerning “Repeated elements,” i.e., the presence of verbal or conceptual parallels in the paired elements not found elsewhere in the proposed structure, the chiasmus in question performs quite well. Many of the verbal and conceptual elements that link the proposed layers, as discussed above, have been shown to be relatively rare in either the New Testament as a whole, within the Gospels, and/or within Matthew’s Gospel. More to the point though, the words, phrases, and or concepts that have been shown to link the layers to one another in the proposed chiasmus are not repeated elsewhere within the structure, which would blur the lines of where the pairings should actually be seen.

¹⁷⁵ Welch, “Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating the Presence of Chiasmus,” 6–7.

“Boundaries,” the next of the Tier Two criteria, speaks to the proposed chiasmus dividing the text at natural breaks. The Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasmus meets this criterion remarkably well, as it follows the natural structuring of the text, that has been seen by the majority of other interpreters, even though they did not recognize the presence of the chiastic structure itself. The beginning (16:13) and end (18:20) are well recognized as natural paragraph breaks in the text, as can be observed in most major Bible translations and numerous commentaries. In addition, all the proposed layers divide the text at what have regularly been observed to be the natural paragraph breaks. If the proposed structure was seen to be dividing the text in the middle of natural paragraphs, or even separating sections of sentences into different layers, it would weigh against the likelihood of a true chiasmus. But, that is not at all the case here and the structure meets this criterion fully.

The final criterion in Tier Two, “Primary structuring device,” is likely the most important of the principles in this tier for the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasmus. For the probability of chiasticity to be increased, in Welch’s view, chiasmus should be the primary structuring device employed in the passage in question. In other words, the less competition there is from other proposed methods of structuring, the more likely it is that a passage is chiastic, assuming, of course, that the other criteria for chiasmus are met.¹⁷⁶ Similarly, Blomberg’s first criterion for detecting chiasmus, which falls under this category in the “Graded Synthesis” Chart, states:

There must be a problem in perceiving the structure of the text in question, which more conventional outlines fail to resolve... If a more straightforward structure can adequately account for the textual data, recourse to less obvious arrangements of the material would seem, at the very least, to risk obscuring what was already clear.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 6.

¹⁷⁷ Blomberg, “The Structure of 2 Corinthians 1-7,” 5.

As discussed above, Blomberg goes a bit far in that he seems to be saying that virtually any other proposed structure would more straightforwardly account for the arrangement of the text. That is an overstatement, based on the prevalence of chiasmus now recognized throughout Scripture, and more pointedly for the present study, in the Gospel of Matthew.

Nonetheless, the presence of other proposed structures, especially one or more that are widely accepted by scholars, would weaken the likelihood that the passage in question is, in fact, chiastically structured. However, that is not the case at all for the passage in question.

Though scholars, as noted above, have frequently noted the likely connection of what have been called here the A and A' layers based on the uses of the word ἐκκλησία and the virtual verbatim repetition of the “binding and loosing” formula, none have proposed a literary structure that successfully connects the two.¹⁷⁸ While there are numerous proposals for the overall structuring of Matthew, with which the proposed structure spanning from 16:13-18:20 may be seen to be in competition, it only requires looking at the introductions to several major scholarly commentaries on Matthew to see that there is little, if any, consensus on this issue.

Scholars have proposed various structures for Matthew including: the author following the arrangement of the Pentateuch, a threefold division of the Gospel, divisions based on the five major discourses, and even various overarching chiastic structures.¹⁷⁹ However, as France says, “Although much study has been devoted to the structure of Matthew in recent years, there has been little consensus as to the best analysis. The reason for this is not lack of data, but rather that

¹⁷⁸ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 2007; Hagner, *Matthew*; Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*; Talbert, *Matthew*; Turner, *Matthew*; Burgess, *A History of the Exegesis of Matthew 16*; Cullmann, *Peter*; Ferda, “The Seventy Faces of Peter’s Confession”; Finley, “Upon This Rock”; Kemp, “The Blessing, Power and Authority of the Church”; Robinson, “Peter and His Successors”; Schreiner, “Peter, the Rock”; Turner, “Matthew among the Dispensationalists”; Viviano, “Peter as Jesus’ Mouth.”

¹⁷⁹ Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 58ff; Hagner, *Matthew*, 1ff; Turner, *Matthew*, 8ff; France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 2007, 2ff.

Matthew contains almost too large a variety of structural elements. There is apparently too much to comprehend under any single analysis of the structure.”¹⁸⁰

Since there is so little agreement as to how Matthew is actually structured as a whole, there is little reason to see the proposed chiasmus in competition with any one prevailing overarching structure. Also, there is virtually no competition from other structuring devices proposed for the passage in question. At least, that is the case inasmuch as they account for the connection of the 16:13-20 and 18:15-20, which, as has been demonstrated, is pointed out by numerous scholars and, therefore, calls for some discussion of how they should be understood in conjunction with one another. As such, this criterion strongly supports the likelihood of Matthew 16:13-18:20 as being a legitimate chiasmus.

In the final level of the “Graded Synthesis,” Tier Three, are the criteria of “Compatibility” and “Purpose.” “Compatibility” speaks to use of chiasmus being compatible with the author’s style and being found elsewhere in his writings. As discussed above in Chapter 1, numerous examples of chiasmus have been detected throughout Matthew’s Gospel,¹⁸¹ many of which have been widely accepted by scholars. There is no doubt, then, that the proposal of a chiastic structure in Matthew is compatible with the author’s style and that chiasmus is found elsewhere within his writing.

The criterion of “Purpose,” the idea that the author has a clear literary reason for employing chiasmus, is a bit more difficult to discern without first accepting the structure as

¹⁸⁰ Hagner, *Matthew*, 1–2.

¹⁸¹ Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 229–41; Lund, “The Influence of Chiasmus upon the Structure of the Gospel According to Matthew”; Welch, *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, 235ff; Wenham, “The Structure of Matthew 13,” 516ff; Talbert, *Matthew*, 129–30, 201–12; Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 25–26; Luter, “Women Disciples and the Great Commission”; Luter and McReynolds, *Women as Christ’s Disciples*; Lambrecht, “Matthew 1,18-25”; Pizzuto, “The Structural Elegance of Matthew 1-2”; Scholtz, “Behold the Glory of the King”; Lohr, “Oral Techniques in the Gospel of Matthew”; VanderWeele, “Some Observations Concerning the Chiastic Structure of the Gospel of Matthew”; Derickson, “Matthew’s Chiastic Structure and Its Dispensational Implications”; Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language*, 105ff; Gaechter, *Das Matthäus Evangelium*, 468ff.

chiastic, in order to see what the author may be trying to convey by its use. However, as will be shown in later discussion, Matthew does, in fact employ this structure to make a point concerning the themes found within Matthew 16:13-18:20.

Overall, the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasmus finds strong support from most of the criteria in the “Graded Synthesis of Criteria for Extended Chiasmus.” In Tier One, the proposed structure meets criteria one and three, and is overwhelmingly supported by criterion four, and, while it does require further discussion, will be shown to meet criterion two as well. In Tier Two, three of the four criteria strongly support Matthew 16:13-18:20 as a legitimate chiasmus. Though it meets one aspect of the criterion of “Density” well—the presences of multiple paired elements, it is not what one would consider as a tightly structured chiasmus, and therefore, only somewhat meets this criterion. The other three criteria in Tier Two, however, provide strong supporting evidence that this passage can be seen as chiastic. Finally, the Tier Three criteria, though they are less significant in the weight they carry, support this passage as chiastic as well. There is compelling evidence based on the evaluation of Matthew 16:13-18:20 that it is, in fact, a legitimate chiasmus and should, therefore, be studied as such.

CHAPTER 3: THE MEANING OF THE MATTHEW 16:13-18:20 CHIASM

Firmly establishing the existence of a chiasmus spanning from Matthew 16:13-18:20, as was done in Chapter 2, may seem to be a discussion reserved for Bible scholars to debate among themselves, with little value for the typical reader. However, that is far from true. As John Breck explains:

The benefits of chiastic and related rhetorical forms were in fact many, both to biblical authors and to their readers...To detect parallel and chiastic structures is no less important for today's exegete or, indeed, for any reader of Scripture. Failure to do so has led interpreters to weave some rather fantastic theories to explain apparent irregularities in the composition and style of individual biblical writings...Above all, however, respecting the literary form of biblical passages goes far towards throwing light on the *literal sense* of the text. Understanding and elucidating that sense remains the exegete's primary task.¹⁸²

Since proper exegesis calls for the identification of literary structures like chiasms and respecting them in the process of interpretation, then that task should be undertaken with Matthew 16:13-18:20.

While the initial part of this process is evaluating the passage itself as chiasmus and discerning its meaning as such, it is also necessary to understand its role in the larger context of the Gospel of Matthew. So, first, a discussion of how one can “read a passage chiastically” will be given. Then, the meaning of Matthew 16:13-18:20 in light of this chiastic structuring will be addressed. Since Matthew 16:17-18 has long been regarded throughout church history as a crucial, and often contentious, passage for New Testament interpreters,¹⁸³ especially as it concerns the meaning of the phrase, “upon this rock, I will build my church,” it is important to

¹⁸² John Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language: Chiasmus in the Scriptures and Beyond* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1994), 53–55. Here, Breck further explains in his endnote that, in order to discover what he calls the spiritual sense of the text, the meaning that God intends for the Church and the world in each generation, one must uncover the literal sense of the text, i.e., the author's intended meaning.

¹⁸³ Robert H. Gundry, “A History of the Exegesis of Matthew 16:17-19 from 1781 to 1965,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 97, no. 1 (March 1978): 142–43.

discuss here some of the most prominent understandings of this passage to see which, if any, are well supported by the chiastic reading of 16:13-18:20.

The Effects of Reading A Passage Chiastically

To properly understand a passage chiastically (i.e., as inverted parallelism) is to identify the structural key given by the author himself. Without this key, meaning may certainly be discerned from passages within the structure, but the overall force of the whole will likely be lost. According to Blomberg, the significance of grasping such a structural key, "...differs little from that of any other type of outline: it better enables the expositor to follow the author's progression of thought and to emphasize the points he emphasized and to subordinate those he subordinated."¹⁸⁴

There are, however, important differences in chiastic structuring and what modern interpreters think of when imagining an outline. Those differences consist of the way the thought of the author progresses (i.e., not strictly linearly, as modern prose would do) and the way in which points of emphasis are shown (i.e., not with a major point supported by minor points before moving on to the next major point).

Ronald Man, in his helpful article, "The Value of Chiasm for New Testament Interpretation," explains that there are two major characteristics of chiasmus that primarily aid interpreters in discerning the meaning of a biblical passage: first, the central element or pair of elements, which are typically the focal point of the entire chiastic passage, and second, the complementary pairs that make up the chiasm, each of which can elucidate the other member,

¹⁸⁴ Blomberg, "The Structure of 2 Corinthians 1-7," 15.

and both of which work together to form a composite meaning.¹⁸⁵ While virtually all scholars who study chiasmus agree that the center of the structure is important, it should also be noted that there are those, such as David Dorsey, who believe the most prominent pairing in an even-numbered symmetrical pattern to be the outer layers. Dorsey explains that, much like a passage framed by an inclusio, “The place of prominence in an even-numbered symmetry (e.g., a-b-c-c’-b’-a’) is generally at the beginning and the end rather than in the middle.”¹⁸⁶ Here he cites as an example Exodus 21:2-22:27 [21:2-22:26], which features 10 symmetrically arranged units in which, “The most important units are the outer ones (21:2-17; 22:18-27 [22:17-26]), dealing with capital offenses and kindness to the poor, and not the central ones (21:33-22:9 [21:33-22:8]), which deal with more mundane cases involving loss of property.”¹⁸⁷ In dealing with a chiasmus, which has an even-numbered symmetry, as Matthew 16:13-18:20 does, this potential feature of prominence in the outer layers, must surely be kept in mind.

The complementary pairs elucidating one another and the building of the whole chiasm toward the central passage is, as Breck describes it, an example of *intensification* virtually always seen in biblical parallelism. Breck, building on the works of James Kugel¹⁸⁸ and Robert Alter,¹⁸⁹ describes intensification in all forms of parallelism as a pervasive feature of biblical literature. He explains:

The studies by Kugel and Alter confirm the theory that biblical parallelism is never truly “synonymous.” The “What’s more” factor – describing a movement of intensification,

¹⁸⁵ Man, “The Value of Chiasm for New Testament Interpretation,” 148.

¹⁸⁶ Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*, 41; See also, John Beekman, John Callow, and Michael Kopese, *The Semantic Structure of Written Communication* (Dallas, TX: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1981): 119ff.

¹⁸⁷ Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*, 41.

¹⁸⁸ James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

¹⁸⁹ Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985).

specification or completion from A to B – describes the very essence of Hebrew poetry and prose. What is true of the Hebrew Bible in this respect is true as well of much of the writings of the early Church. Gospels, Epistles and other New Testament and post-apostolic works likewise structure both poetic and prose passages according to the “What’s more” principle.¹⁹⁰

This “What’s more” factor (i.e., the movement of ideas which intensifies, specifies, or completes) is what Breck, borrowing from Alter, refers to as *focusing*. Focusing, he explains, is seen, not only in straightforward parallelism (A→A’→B→B’) but is equally well expressed by the use of chiasmus.

Chiasmus, in fact, lends itself to this characteristic of focusing in several directions. First, and commonly, there is the “natural” (especially in the mind of the modern reader) narrative movement from line to line, from beginning to end. Then, the focusing movement can also be seen in the parallel couplets (A’ intensifies, specifies, or completes A, B’ focuses B, etc.). Finally, all the corresponding pairs move toward the central element(s), which form the conceptual or thematic center. Breck describes this as a spiraling movement, which, “on the one hand produces the forward or focusing movement from line to line and strophe to strophe, and on the other provides meaning to the passage by focusing upon...its thematic center.”¹⁹¹

To summarize the above discussion, chiastic passages “combine a forward narrative development with this concentric flow, to produce a double movement from beginning to end and from the extremities toward the center.”¹⁹² Hence, the analogy of a spiral.

¹⁹⁰ Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language*, 36.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 41.

Breck gives several examples in which this focusing can be seen and how it can be informative for the interpreter.¹⁹³ He includes one somewhat longer example from the New Testament, John 20:3-10, which demonstrates this idea quite well.

Breck believes it to be structured chiastically as follows:

- 4: Peter came out with the other disciple, and they went toward the tomb.
- 3: They both ran, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached to the tomb first.
- 2: and stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there,
- 1: but he did not go in.
- 0: Then Simon Peter came, following him,
- 1': and went into the tomb.
- 2': He saw the linen clothes lying, and the napkin, which had been on his head, not lying with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself.
- 3': Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not know the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.
- 4': Then the disciples went back to their homes.¹⁹⁴

He explains that structuring in this way allows the author to convey a complex set of affirmations. In that regard, he states:

By its concentric structure, the passage conveys a dual message. On the one hand, it provides two valid (i.e., male – Deut 19:15) witnesses to the fact that the tomb was empty and the gravecloths were lying in a particular way. On the other, it establishes the Beloved Disciple as the first to reach the tomb and witness the linen cloths, and as the first to “believe”: “he saw and believed” is the foundational experience of those who encounter the Johannine Jesus and receive him as Lord and Son of God... Yet at the same time, the evangelist affirms Peter’s “primacy” among the disciples by having him enter the tomb first... The evangelist’s concern, however is to stress the *priority of the Beloved Disciple’s witness, relative to that of Peter*. Chiastic parallelism... with heightening or intensification from the first statement to its “prime” complement, conveys to the

¹⁹³ Ibid., 37ff. e.g., Psalm 8, 1 John 3:9, Jeremiah 2:27c-28, 1 John 1:6-7, Psalm 72, Genesis 32:24-32, Genesis 39:1-23, 1 Samuel 18:14-30. .

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 49.

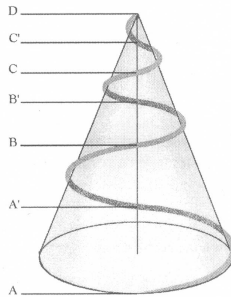
Gospel's readers the point that Petrine "primacy," while acknowledged, is of less importance than the witness of the disciple who "sees and believes."¹⁹⁵

This demonstrates the understanding that can be drawn from rightly identifying and interpreting a chiasmic structure, while a typical "straightforward" reading does not allow a reader to grasp as fully what the evangelist is seeking to convey here.¹⁹⁶

What seems clear from previous studies of chiasmus is that one must not assume that the "straightforward," or linear, reading provides the extent of the meaning conveyed when such an

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 49–50.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 50–52. Though it does become somewhat difficult to follow, Breck's further discussion of helical movement may be helpful for some in conceptualizing the intensifying movement in an extended chiasmus. The proper reading of chiastically structured passages, understanding that there is a narrative movement that is complemented by a concentric flow toward and away from its center of meaning, is best demonstrated, Breck believes, by what he describes as an upward spiraling movement typical of a helix, and thus, "The most appropriate image for this phenomenon is that of a 'conical helix,' in which movement begins from a broad base, then spirals upward toward the point that represents the conceptual center. Presupposing an A:B:C:D:C':B':A' pattern, for example, A:A' are both farther apart from each other and farther from the central axis than B:B'. This means that B:B' are *heightened* relative to A:A', as C:C' are relative to B:B'. The "point" or D is both the concluding point of the upward movement and the central axis of the cone. Thus, it serves as the "conceptual center" that both ends and gives structure to the movement as a whole." This can be illustrated by the following figure:



Breck goes on to explain that, though, the "what's more" and helical characteristics are not as evident in some instances of chiasmus as others, they are typical of both prose and poetry to the point that they can be considered normative for chiasmus in Scripture, and give six points that summarize the movements of chiasmic structures:

- 1) The second verset of a line intensifies, specifies or completes the first: A→B (A...../ → B.....//).
- 2) The second parallel line or couplet intensifies, specifies or completes the first: 2→2'; 1→1'; or A→A'; B→B'.
- 3) The second strophe of the chiasmic pattern intensifies, specifies or completes the first: I→II.
- 4) The first strophe "descends" toward the conceptual center, whereas the second strophe ascends from it.
- 5) Movement from line to line produces a chronological or thematic narrative flow "from beginning to end," "from A to Z": 2→1→0→1'→2'.
- 6) Finally, progression from line to line also describes a spiral or, more accurately, a helical movement from the extremities (inclusion) toward the thematic center: 2→2'→1→1'→0.

elegant literary structure is employed by the author. To fully understand the author's intended meaning for the reader, one must seek to discern what the author sought to convey by the use of chiasmus. This means the passage must be examined in such a way that allows the reader to see how the parallel pairs inform and focus one another and, ultimately, how the chiasmus builds from its outer frame (i.e., the significant A/A' layer) to the central element(s), which often form(s) the climax of the passage contained within the structure.

It should be noted here that, while much is made of the chiasmus building to the central element(s), this does not necessarily exclude Dorsey's contention that the place of prominence in an even-numbered symmetry is in the beginning and end. Recall that the focusing discussed above means to intensify, specify, or complete. If, then, the place of prominence is seen to be the outer layers, the inner layers, especially the central one(s), will intensify, specify, and/or complete the essential idea conveyed at the beginning and end of the structure. The Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasmus will now be examined in the light of this discussion.

A Chiastic Reading of Matthew 16:13-18:20

Matthew 16:13-20 and 18:15-20 (what have been called here the A and A' layers) have been given much attention over the centuries by those studying the Gospel, because of the important place on Peter's confession Jesus as the Messiah, and because of the noticeable similarities between the two passages, i.e., the uses of ἐκκλησία and the "binding and loosing formula." For this reason, attention must be called again to the issue of position of prominence as espoused by Dorsey. It would make sense that these two sections, which are so clearly related, and arguably the most debated among interpreters, are quite significant in this chiasmus. Following Dorsey's contention that the two outer units are the most important, that would mean the A/A' layer is the

most prominent part of the structure. Therefore, it must be considered not only at the beginning of the interpretation of the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasm (i.e., as the outer layer of the structure), but, to some extent, in regard to all the pairings within (i.e., layers ‘B’ through ‘F’), as the overarching conceptual “glue” of the entire structure. With the “interpretive grid” for chiasmus in mind, Matthew 16:13-18:20 can now be carefully examined chiastically by moving through the chiastic structure beginning with the outer (‘A’) pairing toward the inner (‘F’) layer.

Layer 1: A 16:13-20/A’ 18:15-20

As noted earlier, these two passages are the only uses of ἐκκλησία in the Gospels, and many interpreters have noted the significance of these occurrences and the repetition of the “binding and loosing” formula. In light of the identification of the larger chiasmus, of which these two uses are found in the outermost layer, it can be seen that they are indeed connected.

Before examining the meaning of the two parts of the A pairing further, however, it is of significance to note that both Matthew 16:13-20 and 18:15-20 have also previously been identified as smaller inverted parallel structures:

A: 16:13-20

a (16:13-16) Who do you all (i.e., the disciples) say I am? Peter confesses Jesus is the Christ (Messiah)

b (16:17-18a) The blessing of the Divine revelation to Peter (i.e., “Little Rock”)

c (16:18b) Christ will build His ἐκκλησία, and it will not be overpowered by the gates of Hades

b’ (16:19) The keys of the kingdom of heaven; binding and loosing

a’ (16:20) Charges the disciples to tell no one He is the Christ (Messiah)

A': 18:15-20

a (18:15-16) first steps of rebuking brother who has sinned: privately, then with *two or three* witnesses

b (18:17a) If sinner refuses listen to two or three, tell it to the ἐκκλησία

c (18:17b) If sinner refuses to listen to the ἐκκλησία: remove them, as a heathen or tax collector

b' (18:18) Binding and loosing (i.e., by the ἐκκλησία)

a' (18:19-20) The presence of Christ in regard to the prayer of two or the assembly of *two or three*¹⁹⁷

While it is possible that the legitimacy of these two smaller structures could be contested, it is still beneficial to examine what they help to reveal. The two smaller chiasms in A and A' clarify that the focus of both parts is His ἐκκλησία,¹⁹⁸ which Jesus announces He will build (in the future) in 16:18. In the center of the A (16:13-20) structure, the emphasis seems to be that those entering Christ's ἐκκλησία by a similar testimony to that of Peter are in no danger of being lost to Hades. However, in the twin structure of A' (18:15-20), unwillingness to listen to the correction of the ἐκκλησία is to result in at least temporary expulsion from the ἐκκλησία. Also significant in comparing these structures is that, though Peter is in some sense given the "keys" to the kingdom of heaven in 16:19, which is clearly somehow related to the ἐκκλησία, 18:18 makes it clear that the ἐκκλησία, even if it as small as two or three people, is, apparently as much as Peter, involved in whatever is meant by binding and loosing.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ Luter and Dodson, "Hidden in Plain View: An Overlooked Chiasm in Matthew 16:13-18:20," 32.

¹⁹⁸ Though ἐκκλησία is not used previously in Matthew, and not at all in the three other Gospels, it would hardly be a strange term to Jewish ears, given that there are some 75 uses of ἐκκλησία in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (i.e., LXX), usually referring to the worshiping community of Israel, often in the Wilderness. Also, Luke records Stephen employing the same sense of ἐκκλησία in Acts 7:38.

¹⁹⁹ Luter and Dodson, "Hidden in Plain View: An Overlooked Chiasm in Matthew 16:13-18:20." Luter and Dodson also point out that, in regard to the understanding of the center of the wider chiasm (17:17), a key identification in 16:18—the meaning of "the rock" (πέτρος)—is likely echoing Deuteronomy 32:4, where God

Whether one agrees with the existence of these structures (i.e., in Matt 16:13-20 and 18:15-20) or not, it is clear something of great import is being said by Jesus about His ἐκκλησία and about the idea of “binding and loosing.”²⁰⁰ After all, those are the key—and quite clear—links between the two outer passages of this lengthy chiasmus.

Since, as seen above, the layered pairs in a chiasmus inform one another, one would expect to see A' somehow intensifying A. Thus, it should be asked how that is the case here.

In answer to that question, Matthew begins in the A layer (16:13) with Jesus asking a question about his identity, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” Jesus then narrows specifically to the disciples (16:15), “But who do you (plural) say I am?” Then, narrowing even further, Peter, as the representative of the group of disciples, answers by correctly identifying who Jesus really is (16:16): “You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.”

To Peter, Jesus responds (16:17-18) that he is blessed, God has revealed this to him, and “upon this rock” (ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ) Jesus will build His ἐκκλησία, which will not be overpowered by the gates of Hades. Then, Jesus tells Peter (16:19) that he will give Peter the keys to the kingdom of heaven and that whatever he binds or looses on earth will have been bound or loosed in heaven. Jesus then (16:20) warns his disciples not to tell anyone his identity,

Himself is called “the Rock.” That point becomes even more significant when it is recognized that the very center of the wider inverted parallel structure is clearly echoing Deuteronomy 32:20.

²⁰⁰ While the binding and loosing language certainly has great significance in these passages and is key to identifying the link between the two outer layers of the chiasm, the meaning of this formula has been somewhat elusive. It is likely that the meaning is influenced by the Rabbinic usage, but there are various ways in which this can be interpreted. See esp. Richard H Hiers, “‘Binding’ and ‘Loosing’: The Matthean Authorizations,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 104, no. 2 (June 1985): 233–50; and Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*; See also, J Duncan M Derrett, “Binding and Loosing (Matt 16:19, Matt 18:18, John 20:23),” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 102, no. 1 (March 1983): 112–17; Dennis C Duling, “Binding and Loosing: Matthew 16:19; Matthew 18:18; John 20:23,” *Forum* 3, no. 4 (December 1987): 3–31; Stephen C. Haar, “Binding and Loosing: A ‘key’ Function in Hearing and Applying Scripture,” *Lutheran Theological Journal* 45, no. 3 (December 2011): 208; Joel Marcus, “The Gates of Hades and the Keys of the Kingdom (Matt 16:18-19),” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 50, no. 3 (July 1988): 443–55; Mark Allan Powell, “Binding and Loosing: A Paradigm for Ethical Discernment from the Gospel of Matthew,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 30, no. 6 (December 2003): 438–45. While the meaning of binding and loosing will not be discussed at length in this work, the chiastic understanding of Matthew 16:13-18:20 may eventually shed new light on the best way to interpret this language (see Areas for Further Research below).

that he is the Messiah, which implies that they must have understood, in some sense, along with Peter, that Jesus is the Messiah as well.

Clearly, there is a narrowing movement in this passage from the wider scope of men/mankind, who do not correctly identify Jesus as Messiah, to the narrower group of disciples who do, at least in some sense, at this point understand him as Messiah, and further to Peter, who, as the representative of the disciples, actually confesses Jesus as Messiah. Those who understand Jesus' identity and confess him as Messiah, then, are the foundation upon which he will (future tense) build his ἐκκλησία. Jesus then closes by instructing that they should not reveal his identity as Messiah to anyone.

The corresponding A' section gives further insight into this issue of identity and building of the church. In the A' section, there is a broadening movement by which the author further clarifies the A section. Matthew begins with Jesus instructing one individual to go to another to show him his fault (18:15), then moves to a broader group of two or three witnesses that should be taken if the offender does not listen to the individual (18:16). Then, if the one who sins does not listen to the two or three, Jesus instructs that what is at issue be told to the ἐκκλησία (18:17), which seems to imply a larger group. Refusal to listen even to the ἐκκλησία is to result in the one who has sinned being treated as a "Gentile" or "tax collector."

Jesus then, after using the key ἐκκλησία terminology, repeats virtually verbatim the "binding/loosing" formula he spoke to Peter in the A layer, this time in the second person plural. Then, Jesus apparently further clarifies what this binding/loosing formula means by explaining (18:19) that, "if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it will be done for them by My Father who is in heaven."

Jesus goes on to say (18:20), "For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst." Jesus here returns to the issue of identity, but in this instance, it

is those who gather in his name, who identify with his name, in whose midst he will be when they are together.²⁰¹ These, then, are the ones who, like the disciples and, like Peter, rightly identify him as Messiah and confess him. These are the ἐκκλησία that Jesus *will* build.

Layer 2: B 16:21-23/B' 18:7-14

As discussed above, four of only five total uses of the noun σκάνδαλον in Matthew's Gospel occur in the B/B' pairing, which, in addition to showing the connection between the two layers, also points to something important being said about what it means to be a “stumbling block.” Moving from B to B' demonstrates the seriousness of the spiritual consequences of being a σκάνδαλον and causing a “little one” to stumble (the cognate verb σκανδαλίζω).

In the B part of the pairing (16:21-23), Jesus explains that, in order for his ἐκκλησία to be built, it is necessary for him to go to Jerusalem, suffer at the hands of the religious leaders of Judaism, die and be resurrected (16:21). Peter, who here seems to be anything but a “rock,” as Jesus referred to him in 16:18, goes so far as to rebuke Jesus, and is thus said by Jesus to be a σκάνδαλον or “stumbling block” to his mission (16:22-23). This, Jesus says, is because Peter's mind is on the interests of man rather than on those of God.

Remembering that there is forward narrative progression in the chiasmus, this puts in stark contrast Peter's confession of Jesus as Messiah—when his mind is set on the things of God, (i.e., what Jesus' Father revealed to him [16:17]), with his rebuke of Jesus—when his mind is set on the interests of man. This is what makes him a σκάνδαλον rather than a πέτρα (i.e., part of the bedrock on which Jesus will build his ἐκκλησία).

²⁰¹ It is important to note here that every use of the phrase “my name” in Matthew's Gospel has a future connotation, cf. Mt. 10:22; 18:5; 19:29; 24:5; 24:9.

The B' portion of the pairing (18:7-14) intensifies this discussion of being a σκάνδαλον by explaining how serious it is for anyone to be a spiritual stumbling block to even the “little ones” becoming part of the kingdom of heaven and the ἐκκλησία. Jesus pronounces “woe” on the world because of the stumbling blocks, which are necessary, but warns against being the one through whom the σκάνδαλον comes (18:7). He goes on to state strikingly that it is better to cut off one’s own hand or foot or pluck out one’s own eye—surely very costly measures in terms of worldly things—than to let them cause one to stumble (18:8-9).

This, then, would seem to demonstrate the result of having one’s mind set on things of the interests of man and the world. Being more concerned about these things than the things of God would cause one to stumble and thus become a σκάνδαλον to others. Conversely, having one’s mind set on the things of God is demonstrated by concern for the “little ones” and leaving the 99 to find the one (18:10-13). For, as Jesus says in 18:14, “it is not *the* will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones (i.e., those who will be part of his ἐκκλησία) perish.

Again, keeping in mind the narrative progression of the passage, the B' layer not only intensifies the B layer, but also provides the context for, and is simultaneously informed by, the section which will follow, the A' layer, which was discussed above. This helps to explain why the narrative proceeds from here to the discussion of church discipline. Not only is it a serious spiritual offense to be a σκάνδαλον to one that will enter the ἐκκλησία, but, the ἐκκλησία must also not allow anyone who is a σκάνδαλον—as even Peter himself, who represents the rock on which Jesus will build His ἐκκλησία, can become a σκάνδαλον—to continue as part of the ἐκκλησία without properly dealing with him or her, in keeping with Jesus’ principles stated in Matthew 18:15-20 (i.e., A').

Layer 3: C 16:24-28/C' 18:1-6

Jesus, after explaining that He will build his ἐκκλησία and rebuking Peter for being a stumbling block by trying to keep him from being killed, then says that it is not enough to simply stay out of the way and let things happen. If anyone wants to come after Jesus, they must not only allow him to suffer and be killed, but they are to take up their own crosses as well (16:24). In order for anyone to avoid losing his life, he must not try to preserve it. Rather, one must deny himself and lose his own life in order to truly find it and gain his reward when Jesus comes in the glory of His Father. For when He does come, He will repay each one according to his works (16:25-27).²⁰² The urgency of this willingness to lose one's life to follow Jesus is furthered by Jesus's statement that some of those standing with him would not die before seeing him coming in His kingdom (16:28).²⁰³ What Jesus seems to be saying here is that true discipleship is not just a matter of letting Jesus go to the cross, and it is not even enough to avoid being a stumbling block by avoiding focusing on worldly things (cf. B layer). Rather, true discipleship is denial of self, even to the point of giving up one's own life—and there is no time to waste in doing so.

The second part of this pairing, C', depicts the disciples questioning Jesus as to who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, to which Jesus responds by calling a child to himself and using him as an example (18:1-2). According to Jesus, not only does childlike faith and humility

²⁰² It should be noted here that many English translations, such as NASB, NKJB, and ESV, render the Greek ψυχή as life in v. 25 and soul in v. 26. However, others, such as CSB and NET, rightly render it life as in v. 25, which better shows the connection and continuation of the point Jesus is making.

²⁰³ R.T. France explains well what Jesus means here, as He is most likely referring to them being witnesses of His Transfiguration, His coming in His kingship: "The point is that while some of them are still alive it will become clear to those with the eyes to see it that Jesus the Son of Man is enthroned as King...Six days later (an unusually precise time-connection in Matthew, which suggests a deliberate linking of the two pericopae 16:24-28 and 17:1-8) just three of those who heard Jesus' words in 16:28 were to witness a 'vision' (17:9) of Jesus in heavenly glory. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 2007, 641; See also, Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*.

make one the greatest in the kingdom of heaven but being converted and becoming like children is actually a requirement to enter into the kingdom of heaven (18:3-4). He then describes the massive difference in receiving one such child in His name—which is equivalent to receiving Jesus himself—and causing a “little one” who believes in Him to stumble, which is worse than being tied to a millstone and drowned.

As discussed briefly in Chapter Two, Jesus is using His teaching on childlike faith and humility in C' (18:1-6) to explain further the concept of truly following him (discipleship) as explained in C (16:24-28). If one wants to be a true disciple, one must be willing to deny himself (i.e., his own worldly interests) and take up his cross (i.e., be willing to suffer). But, even more than this, one must be converted, have his direction/focus changed (presumably from that of an average adult, which would be on worldly self-interests) and become humble, like a child. Jesus's “payment” of each one according to his practice (16:27) is further clarified in that receiving a child will be rewarded as equivalent to receiving Jesus himself and there will be some kind of punishment worse than drowning for anyone who causes a believing little one to stumble (18:5-6). This pair works in tandem to show two integral characteristics for true discipleship—that is, for those who confess Him as Messiah and will be part of His ἐκκλησία: 1) total commitment/giving up one's life; and 2) childlike humility.

In addition to the intensification/clarification the C' section provides for C, it is also important to note the narrative movement in the chiasmic structure as well. The C layer, as mentioned above, moves the discussion from Peter being a σκάνδαλον by having his mind set on worldly things to the need to do more than just avoid being a stumbling block, but instead to value Jesus more than one's own life, in order to truly follow Him. C' simultaneously informs the C layer, while also providing the preceding context for the B' layer and the further discussion of the seriousness of being such a σκάνδαλον.

Layer 4 D 17:1-8/D' 17:24-27

Within the larger framework of the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiastic structure as a whole, the D layer, which encompasses the Transfiguration of Jesus, the appearance of Moses and Elijah, and the announcement by the Father of Jesus as His beloved Son, confirms Peter's confession of Jesus as the Messiah (16:15-16). At the same time, it moves forward the understanding of what that means, i.e., that He is not just the awaited Messiah but in fact the Son of God, clothed in heavenly glory, the glory of God Himself.

It seems that the meeting with Moses and Elijah (17:3) has to do with the coming ἐκκλησία announced earlier (16:18) in the wake of rejection of John the Baptist as the offered Elijah figure (11:14; see Malachi 4:5), which brought about a delay in the previous kingdom plan. The primary focus within this layer seems to be sonship, as God announces Jesus as His own Son, one who shares in God's own glory. Since this would certainly be a position of great authority, even if they didn't fully recognize Jesus's divinity at this point, it seems strange that there would be a need for the Father to command them to listen to His Son. However, in light of Peter's previous reaction to Jesus's revelation that he would be killed and raised on the third day, this sets up the following E layer, where Jesus will again explain to them His upcoming suffering/death and resurrection. If, for Peter, James, and John, there was any question of who Jesus really was, that would have been removed by what they experienced here. Jesus is God's very Son, and He shares in his glory and authority.

At first glance, the D' layer may not appear to correspond in any way one would expect to see in paired layers of a chiasmus. Some might even say it seems out of place in the narrative progression of the passages as well. By way of contrast, though, D' gives important clarification to the D layer. Jesus, who is shown to be the Son of God, the Heavenly King, should be exempt,

like the sons of earthly kings, from doing something as menial as paying taxes. However, Jesus, who shares the heavenly glory of the Father, humbles himself to earthly authority.

Jesus, as the Messiah whom they had confessed and whose glory they had seen, was not going to build his ἐκκλησία by overthrowing earthly authorities and establishing an earthly kingdom at that time. To the contrary, He will build his ἐκκλησία by humbling himself to those earthly authorities, eventually to the point of death. Not only does his humility build on the progression toward the center of the chiasm concerning the building of His ἐκκλησία, it also models the humility Jesus will discuss concerning true discipleship, what it means to truly follow Him, in the C' layer that follows (18:1-6).

Layer 5 E 17:9-13/E' 17:22-23

In 17:9-13, the E layer, Jesus echoes the command he gave immediately following Peter's confession that the disciples tell no one He is the Christ by commanding them that they should tell no one of what they had seen concerning his transfiguration until after he had risen from the dead. He explains that the coming of Elijah as the forerunner had already happened through John the Baptist. Like the corporate rejection and killing of John the Baptist as the Elijah figure, Jesus would also suffer and die at the hands of men as well. This is the second prediction in Matthew of Jesus's coming suffering and resurrection (cf. 16:21), though, having been told by God during the transfiguration event to listen to Jesus, the disciples do not dispute Him, as Peter had done earlier (16:21-23).

To further emphasize his point, in E' (17:22-23) Jesus makes his third prediction concerning his death and resurrection. He tells the disciples in no uncertain terms that He will be delivered into the hands of men, that they will kill Him, and that He will be raised from the dead

on the third day. This, of course, grieves the disciples, but again underscores that Jesus's ἐκκλησία is not being built in the way many would have expected. Rather, that building process would be through the death and resurrection of the Son of Man. Again, not only does this reiterate the prediction in E, but also sets the stage for Jesus humbling himself to earthly authorities by paying taxes in D' (17:24-27).

Layer 6 F 17:14-18/F' 17:19-20[21]

In the final (i.e., middle) pairing of the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasmus, as in the initial pairing, it appears the two layers may themselves be smaller chiasms within the larger chiasmus framework. The proposed smaller chiastic structures are as follows:

F 17:14-18

- a (17:14-15) A man comes to Jesus whose son has seizures
- b (17:16) Jesus's disciples unable (ἡδυνήθησαν) to heal the boy
- c (17:17a) "O unbelieving (ἄπιστος) and perverted (διαστρέφω) generation (γενεά)!"
- b' (17:17b) The time is short that Jesus will be with them
- a' (17:17c-18) The boy comes to Jesus and He casts out the demon

F' 17:19-20

- a (17:19) Jesus's disciples ask why they were unable (ἡδυνήθημεν) to cast out the demon
- b (17:20a) Because of your little faith (ὀλιγοπιστία)
- c (17:20b) If you have faith (πίστις) as a mustard seed

b' (17:20c) The mountain will move, if you tell it to

a' (17:20d) Nothing will be impossible (ἀδυνατήσει) for you!²⁰⁴

Admittedly, the chiastic structuring is less obvious here. Nevertheless, whether or not one accepts the validity of the smaller chiasms within the large structure, what is quite evident in this pairing (F, F') is that Jesus is certainly saying something about faith.

Jesus's reaction in the F layer to the man's request concerning his son initially seems strong and even surprising. However, if one has tracked the previous uses of γενεά in Matthew (excluding the genealogy in 1:1-17), Jesus's frustration and anger with the present "generation" clearly grows progressively.²⁰⁵ It is probable that Jesus is even here echoing Deuteronomy 32:20, in which God says, "I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end *shall be*; For they are a perverse generation, Sons in whom is no faithfulness." This very similar wording is then followed in 21a by a description of God being provoked to jealousy and anger. In 21b God's intent to provoke Israel to jealousy is stated by using בְּלֹא-עָם, literally "not a people," and to anger with בְּגֵוֹי נָבָל, "a senseless nation."

Jesus has come to the point with the present generation—that is, the present generation of Jewish people to whom he had revealed himself as Messiah—at which he will no longer be with them and put up with their faithlessness and perversion. Paul makes this point in Romans 10:19 when he references Deut 32:21 and explains that Israel had their chance to attain righteousness by faith in Jesus when he presented himself as their Messiah. But, since they did not, God would

²⁰⁴ Luter and Dodson, "Hidden in Plain View: An Overlooked Chiasm in Matthew 16:13-18:20," 34–35.

²⁰⁵ Cf. Mt. 11:16, 21-24; 12:39, 41, 42, 45; 16:4

use the Gentiles (i.e., not a people, a people with no sense of godliness) to provoke Israel to jealousy and a desire to return to God.²⁰⁶

Assuming that the structuring of the smaller chiasms in F and F' is correct, it is no doubt significant that the center of F (17:17a) focuses on ἄπιστος, “faithless,” and the center of F' (17:20b) focuses on πίστις, “faith” (both c in the smaller chiasms). Whether or not one accepts the legitimacy of the smaller chiastic structures, however, does not negate the fact that Jesus clearly contrasts the ἄπιστος καὶ διεστραμμένη generation in F with the ὀλιγοπιστία of the disciples and the πίστις the size of a mustard seed.

Perhaps the best way to understand ὀλιγοπιστία here is as inadequacy or imperfection of faith²⁰⁷ rather than littleness of faith, as it is typically rendered. This helps clarify the contrast Jesus is making. The disciples are distinct from the faithless and perverted generation of Israel that has rejected Jesus, but their faith is not adequate at this point, for they do not yet fully understand all the Jesus is doing, as evidenced by the fact that in the immediately following verses, E', Jesus has to tell them again that he will be killed and raised on the third day. Once they do adequately understand, though, even very small faith in the Gospel will yield amazingly big results (cf. Mt. 13:31ff.).

As the center of the larger chiasmus spanning from Matthew 16:13-18:20, according to most scholars who study chiastic structures, F and F' should hold a place of importance in interpreting the overarching structure. That being that case, it seems there is something very important about the role played by faith. At this point, that appears to be referring to adequate faith in the truth of who Jesus is and in the future building of Jesus's ἐκκλησία.

²⁰⁶ Cf. Luter and Dodson, “Hidden in Plain View: An Overlooked Chiasm in Matthew 16:13-18:20,” 34–35.

²⁰⁷ Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Victoria, B.C: Trafford, 2005), Electronic Edition.

A Brief Summary of the Meaning of the Matthew 16:13-18:20 Chiasmus

Having outlined the layers of the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasm, rather than going into great detail about the meaning of each layer, as it is beyond the scope of this present work, it will be most helpful here to briefly summarize the meaning of the chiasmus layer by layer in order to lay the foundation for examination of how the chiastic reading relates to the rest of Matthew's Gospel and, ultimately, its ecclesiological implications.²⁰⁸ This is the case, because, as noted previously, the outer layers of an even numbered chiasmus occupy the positions of prominence, so something very important about the ἐκκλησία is being said in this structure.

A Layer

A – Those who rightly identify Jesus and confess Him as Messiah are narrowed down to Peter as the rock on which Jesus will build His ἐκκλησία. As such, Peter is given the keys to Kingdom of Heaven and authority to bind and loose.

A' – Those who share in Peter's confession and gather in Jesus' name are likewise given authority to bind and loose.

Jesus' ἐκκλησία will be built on the rock of those who rightly identify Him as Messiah,²⁰⁹ and the ἐκκλησία and its authority to "bind and loose" will be widened from those who make up the rock to all those who gather in Jesus' name.

²⁰⁸ Because Matthew 16:17-19 is such an important and widely discussed passage, a more detailed examination of these verses in light of the chiastic reading has been given below in the Appendix.

²⁰⁹ For further discussion of the meaning of "on this rock," see Appendix.

B Layer

B – Even Peter, who has just confessed Jesus as Messiah has become a stumbling block when his mind is not on God’s interests

B’ – It is far better to suffer in a worldly sense than to become a stumbling block and having concern for “little ones” is an indication of having a mind set on things of God rather than those of man.

There are, in the building of Jesus’ ἐκκλησία, two great dangers: setting your mind on man’s interests—possibly influenced by Satan—and becoming a stumbling block, especially to “little ones,” those with childlike faith.

C Layer

C - True discipleship is denial of self, even to the point of giving up one’s own life and there is no time to waste in doing so.

C’ – Childlike faith and humility make one the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, and, in fact, being converted and becoming like a child is actually a requirement to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Receiving a child in His name is like receiving Him and causing a child to stumble has grave consequences.

Jesus’ ἐκκλησία will be made up of those who are willing to give up their life—their worldly concerns—and those with childlike faith. They must be willing to suffer and to receive those with childlike faith, while being on guard not to cause any to stumble.

D Layer

D – Jesus is transfigured before Peter, James, and John, and He is confirmed as the true Son of God.

D – Jesus teaches Peter to be humble and not to offend earthly authorities.

Jesus, who is preparing to build his ἐκκλησία, is simultaneously the glorified Son of God and humble enough to submit to earthly authority.

E Layer

E – The Elijah figure has already come and been rejected by the religious leaders, and, likewise, Jesus will be rejected and suffer at their hands.

E' – Jesus predicts again that he will be delivered over to be killed, and He will be raised on the third day.

Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection are apparently closely linked to the building of His ἐκκλησία.

F Layer

F – The unbelieving and perverted generation (γενεά) is being rejected.

F' – Those who have even mustard seed-sized faith will do great things.

Those with faith, even mustard seed sized faith—i.e., those with childlike faith—rather than those who make up the faithless and perverted generation, will make up Jesus’ ἐκκλησία.

Connecting the Matthew 16:13-18:20 Chiasmus to the Rest of Matthew

Having examined the meaning of the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasmus, it will now be important to examine its connection to the rest of Matthew’s Gospel. Concerning the preceding chapters of Matthew, there are ten literary pointers that actually build up to the chiasm. The following chart lays out these key words²¹⁰:

<i>Term/Phrase</i>	<i>Initial use in Matt</i>	<i>Key use(s) in Matthew prior to chiasm</i>	<i>Relevant section(s) of chiasm</i>
Kingdom of Heaven	3:2	4:17; 11:11, 12; 13:10-17	16:28; 18:1-4
Disciples	5:1	Used an average of 2.5 times per chapter throughout Matthew	Used an average of 4.5 times per chapter in the chiasm
Stumbling block/Cause to sin/ Offense	5:29, 30	11:6; 13:21, 41, 57; 15:12	16:23; 17:27; 18:6, 18:7 (3X)
Rock	7:24, 25	7:24, 25	16:18
Faith	8:10	8:10, 13; 9:2, 22, 28-29; 15:28	17:20
Little Faith	6:30	8:26; 14:31; 16:8	17:20
Least/Little one(s)/ Small children	11:11	11:25	18:6, 10, 14
John the Baptist/ Elijah	3:1-2	11:1-13; 14:1-12	17:3-4, 10-13
Generation	1:17 (3X)	11:16; 12:39, 41-42, 45; 16:4	17:17
Revealed	11:25, 27	11:25, 27	16:17

²¹⁰ Adapted from Luter and Dodson, “Hidden in Plain View: An Overlooked Chiasm in Matthew 16:13-18:20,” 30.

Jesus, like John the Baptist (Matt. 3:2), began His public ministry in Galilee, proclaiming: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (4:17). Due to the lack of repentance by those who had seen many of Jesus’ miracles, He declares repeatedly that those of that γενεά will be judged very harshly (11:16, 21-24; 12:39, 41, 42, 45; 16:4), leading directly to His very strong words in 17:17. John the Baptist was offered to Israel as the Elijah figure, who was predicted to come in Mal. 4:5, but he was rejected and killed (Matt. 14:6-12; 17:10-13), requiring the postponement of that prophecy’s fulfillment (17:10-13).

Jesus states that the “secrets of the kingdom of heaven” will only be understood by His disciples (13:10-17), by little children (11:25) and by those to whom God sees fit to reveal certain things (11:25-27), such as Peter (16:17). Jesus also states: “If anyone is not offended (σκανδαλίζω) because of Me, he is blessed” (11:6), which implies that those who are offended are something akin to being cursed. Those offended ones included the people in Jesus’s hometown of Nazareth (13:57) and the Pharisees (15:12).

“Apostles” is only used once (10:2) in the First Gospel. Matthew’s characteristic way of referring to the 12 is as the “disciples.” On three occasions, the 12 “disciples” are said to have “little faith” (ὀλιγοπιστία/ὀλιγόπιστος [8:26; 14:31; 16:8]), in comparison to a Roman centurion (8:10, 13), two blind men (9:28, 29) and a Canaanite woman (15:8), all of whom are commended by Jesus for their faith. Additionally, humble, childlike faith is characteristic of the one who is “greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (18:1-6).

The only other use of “rock” (πέτρος) and “build” (οἰκοδομέω) together in Matthew besides in 16:18 is in 7:24-25. It thus appears quite possible that Jesus’s short parable of the wise man building his house (οἰκία) on a foundation of rock (πέτρος) at least partly sets the stage for Jesus’ proclamation that He would build His ἐκκλησία on the rock.²¹¹

²¹¹ Ibid., 30–31.

What seems to be happening here is that the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasmus is functioning as a sort of lens that helps to focus much of what Jesus has been saying and teaching earlier in the Gospel. This chiastic structure becomes a significant turning-point in the Gospel, which helps to reorient the reader's understanding to the fact that Jesus is now about to do something new and different. He is going to build His ἐκκλησία, not with or founded upon the current faithless and perverted γενεά, who have rejected Elijah/John the Baptist *en masse* and, even in light of all the miracles He had done in their presence, will reject and kill Him as well. Jesus, like that wise man who built his house on the rock, is going to build his ἐκκλησία on those who, based on revelation from God, confess Him as Messiah and with those who are humble and have even mustard seed-sized faith.

These key words and ideas point forward toward the chiasm in 16:13-18:20, which does appear to function as a focal point. Not only is the chiasm a focal point of ideas building up from earlier in Matthew, but it also appears point to (or be pointed back to by) ideas in the remainder of the Gospel. Therefore, it is imperative to understand how the chiasm then relates to what happens in the remainder of the First Gospel.

The central portion of the chiasmus points to what happens in Matthew 18-28. There are, passages that reflect on the unbelieving and perverted generation (cf. Mt 23, esp. verse 36) in contrast to those who believe/have faith (cf. 21:21; 23:23). Πιστεύω, which has already been seen in 18:6, is also in 21:22, 25 and alongside πίστις in 21:32, plus Matthew 21:32 and 27:42 which fits the pattern seen in 16:13-18:20. What emerges as the common factor in these faith/believe passages is that it is only “little ones” or unexpected hearers who trust Jesus. The “religious” leaders and their followers, who make up the γενεά Jesus rejects, had already rejected Him.

There is, then, in Matthew 18-28 a two-pronged progression. One track follows those in the (mustard seed-sized) faith category, while the other track follows the faithless and rebellious generation, both individually and corporately. It is those of faith who, along with those who are already disciples (another term used extensively in Matt 16-18), who form the core “building material” for Jesus’ ἐκκλησία. In keeping with the discussion of the meaning of 16:17-19 above, they, along with Peter, form the “rock” on which Jesus will build His ἐκκλησία—at least until the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), when the ministry of the Holy Spirit will indwell God’s people and the New Covenant, Spirit-empowered building of the ἐκκλησία begins.

All of this ultimately points to the connection of the chiasm with the Matthean statement of the Great Commission in 28:16-20. In order to see the link between the larger 16:13-18:20 chiasmus and the Matthean Commission, it will be helpful to return briefly to the A/A’ layer, which, as discussed above, helps set the stage for and holds a position of prominence in this even-numbered chiastic structure. Recall that the A and A’ sections were proposed to be chiastically structured in themselves, in addition to forming that outer layers of the larger chiasmus.

A – 16:13-16:20:

- a** (16:13-16) Who do you all (i.e., the μαθηταί) say I am? Peter confesses Jesus is the Christ (Messiah)
- b** (16:17-18a) The blessing of the Divine revelation to Peter (i.e., “Little Rock”)
- c** (16:18b) Christ will build His ἐκκλησία, and it will not be overpowered by the gates of Hades
- b’** (16:19) The keys of the kingdom of heaven; binding and loosing
- a’** (16:20) Charges the disciples (μαθηταί) to tell no one He is the Christ (Messiah)

Assuming the chiastic structure of the A layer is accurate, the two outer layers (a/a') both refer to the disciples (μαθηταί), while the central section (c) contains Jesus' statement that He will build His ἐκκλησία. Even if this chiastic structure is disputed, at the very least the references to μαθηταί form an inclusio for this paragraph, which centers on Jesus as the Messiah and the building of His ἐκκλησία. All of this points to an important connection between the disciples and the church and that the terms ἐκκλησία and μαθηταί are closely related. That being the case, the idea of the ἐκκλησία should be in mind when one hears the command to make disciples (μαθητεύω) in the Great Commission (28:19).

A' - 18:15-18:20:

a (18:15-16) first steps of rebuking a brother who has sinned: privately, then with *two or three* witnesses

b (18:17a) If sinner refuses listen to two or three, tell it to the ἐκκλησία

c (18:17b) If sinner refuses to listen to the ἐκκλησία: remove them, as a heathen or tax collector

b' (18:18) Binding and loosing (i.e., presumably by the ἐκκλησία, evidenced by the switch to second person plural)

a' (18:19-20) The presence of Christ in regard to the prayer of two or the assembly of *two or three*

The A' layer is located within a larger discourse, in which Jesus is speaking to his disciples (cf. 18:1). Here, in the a/a' sections, the references to "two or three" are prominent features, while references to the ἐκκλησία are found in the inner layers (or within the inclusio of verses referring to "two or three" if one does not accept the chiastic structuring of 18:15-20 proposed). Since Jesus is speaking to his disciples, this seems to form something of preview of what is to happen in the future when Jesus will build His ἐκκλησία. Here it is made clear that the

authority of “binding and loosing” will be given to the μαθηταί/ἐκκλησία, not to any particular individual. As in the A layer, there seems to be in the A’ layer a strong link between the ἐκκλησία and μαθηταί, which should again point the reader to the future command given by Jesus to make disciples in the Great Commission.

It is also worth noting that scholars, such as R. T. France, have pointed out an important link in the text of Matthew’s Gospel which connects the Great Commission passage to at least the opening layer of the 16:13-18:20 chiasm. France asserts that the Gospel of Matthew seems to be structured using a geographical framework. He explains that most of the first four chapters form what he calls the prologue and then:

...from 4:17 onward Jesus’ ministry in Matthew, as in Mark, is set entirely in and around Galilee until Jesus announces his intention to travel south to Jerusalem in 16:21. Like Mark, Matthew offers a substantial body of material, particularly concerned with the reorientation and training of the disciples, on the journey between Galilee and Jerusalem...[A]t the end of the Jerusalem phase of the story there will be a dramatic return to Galilee (28:16-20), so that the messianic mission is triumphantly relaunched in the place where it had originally begun...²¹²

What France is saying here is very important, as it gives an additional clear connection between Jesus’ declaration that He would build His ἐκκλησία in 16:13-20—the *last thing*, according to Matthew’s Gospel, that He did in Galilee before going to Jerusalem and being killed—and the Great Commission in 28:16:20—the *last thing* He did and final command he gave to them in the First Gospel, for which He also specifically returned to Galilee (which certainly seems to have been to purposely make this point). In addition to the connections discussed thus far, the evidence that shows the Great Commission is the method by which Jesus would fulfill his declaration that He would build His ἐκκλησία is abundant in the book of Acts (which will be discussed in the next chapter).

²¹² France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 2007, 4.

Concluding Ideas Concerning the Matthew 16:13-18:20 Chiasmus

As one thinks back through what has been presented in this chapter, it becomes clear that the chiastic structure of Matthew 16:13-18:20 is a turning point in Jesus' mission. As evidenced by the A-F layers of the chiasm, Jesus is rightly identified as the Messiah, the Son of God, but those whose minds are not set on the things of God and who are not willing to give up their lives are a stumbling block to God's plan, even tools of Satan. Jesus, just like John the Baptist, the Elijah figure, will be rejected and suffer at the hands of the religious leaders of Israel, and this rejection of Jesus as Messiah by the vast majority of Israel will result in Jesus' corporate rejection of this unbelieving and perverted *γενεά* of Israel as the centerpiece of God's plan.

In rightly identifying Jesus as Messiah, His disciples—with Peter as the leader—will become at least the initial building blocks of Jesus's *ἐκκλησία* (possibly the foundation stones [Eph 2:20]), joined by those “little ones” with childlike faith—faith like a mustard seed. The future end result of the building process would be a number of local *ἐκκλησίαι* in which every individual really counts (Matt 18:15-20)—like going after the one sheep, beyond the 99—an *ἐκκλησία* that has the authority to bind and loose, like Peter (and the apostles [16:19]), but (now) without any hint of the apostolic leadership being needed to call the shots.²¹³

The Matthean Commission, then, effectively picks up the clues and implications stated above and lays out precisely how the task of building the *ἐκκλησία* will be carried out in the time ahead (in the power of the Spirit [Acts 1:8]): 1) win the building blocks (i.e., disciples) evangelistically (28:19a) from “all the nations”; 2) baptizing the converts (28:19b), so they will identify with Jesus, not Israel—or even the previous ministry of John the Baptist; and 3) teaching

²¹³ This seems to be demonstrated in Acts 14:21-23, i.e., local churches founded apostolically, but soon after organized and placed under the ongoing leadership of appointed elders (i.e., no longer the apostles).

the converts to full obedience (29:20a), so they will be maturing disciples who can in turn win more disciples, building Christ's ἐκκλησία one "living stone" at a time (cf. 1 Pet 2:4-5).

CHAPTER 4: THE OUTWORKING OF JESUS FULFILLING HIS PROMISE FROM MATTHEW 16:13-18:20 CHIASMUS

The Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasmus has been shown to be highly significant. In fact, it serves as a sort of lens through which interpreters can begin to recognize the First Evangelist's ecclesiological understanding. Thus, it seems necessary to examine not only its implications for Matthew's Gospel, but also for the other significant portion of the New Testament that speaks directly of the building of Jesus' ἐκκλησία: the book of Acts. This chapter will discuss the Great Commission as the means by which Jesus fulfills the promised building of His ἐκκλησία by: 1) establishing the theological connection between Matthew's Gospel and Acts; 2) showing how this building process is exhibited in the early chapters of Acts; and 3) demonstrating that Luke intentionally points back to the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasm and the Matthean version of the Great Commission in Acts 2:1-6:1, in order to alert the reader that this is, in fact, what is happening in the succeeding narrative.

The Matthean Commission as the Methodology Fulfilling Jesus' Declaration that He Would Build His Church

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, there is a strong exegetical link between the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasm and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20). Therefore, it is not stretching things to conclude that the Matthean Commission is in some important ways related to Jesus' building his Church, as he promised in the A layer of the Matthew 16:13-18:20

chiasm. However, in reading the book of Acts with the chiastic understanding of 16:13-18:20 and its connections to the remainder of Matthew in mind, the link between the chiasmus and the concluding Great Commission becomes even clearer. As is seen with high visibility in Acts, that Commission is the method by which Jesus will accomplish the building of His ἐκκλησία.

Connecting Matthew to Acts: Theological Priority

Upon evaluating Matthew 16:13-18:20 as a legitimate chiasm, it becomes evident that certain theological themes found within this chiasmus fit together closely with some of the most important theological themes in Acts 1-14. What is of primary interest and helps establish what appears to be a strong link between Matthew's Gospel—especially the 16:13-18:20 chiasm—and the Book of Acts, is the use of the word ἐκκλησία.

In order to clearly grasp the connection, it is most helpful to: 1) examine the uses of ἐκκλησία in the Gospels and Acts; 2) discuss the *absence* (or omission) of ἐκκλησία in Luke's Gospel and its conspicuous *presence* in Acts; 3) and examine what seems to be a seamless dovetailing of the uses in Matthew's Gospel with the uses in Acts. What this collectively demonstrates is the likelihood of what has been called Matthean Theological Priority.²¹⁴

As previously discussed in evaluating Matthew 16:13-18:20, the word ἐκκλησία is significant terminology that connects the A and A' layers of that structure, in large part because of how exceedingly rare it is in the Gospels. In fact, of the 113 times it is found in the New Testament, it is used only three times in the Gospels, and all three are in the A and A' layers of the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiastic structure. By contrast, there are 23 uses of ἐκκλησία in Acts,

²¹⁴ This material is largely derived from research previously done by this author in A. Boyd Luter and Nicholas Dodson, "Matthean Theological Priority?: Making Sense of Matthew's Proto-Ecclesiology in Acts 1-14."

19 of which refer to the New Testament church—or as Jesus calls it, His ἐκκλησία.²¹⁵ The following chart can help visualize this disparity:

<i>NT Book</i>	<i>Number of uses of ἐκκλησία</i>	<i>Passages in which ἐκκλησία is found</i>
Matthew	3	16:18; 18:17 (2x)
Mark	0	
Luke	0	
John	0	
Acts	23	5:11; 7:38; 8:1, 3; 9:31; 11:22, 26; 12:1, 5; 13:1; 14:23, 27; 15:3, 4, 22, 41; 16:5; 18:22; 19:32, 39, 41; 20:17, 28

Certainly, there is more going on with the Gospels/Acts uses of ἐκκλησία than a mere statistical anomaly. It is quite surprising that the key ecclesiological term used in the New Testament is found in Matthew and not the other Gospels, especially in light of the fact that Matthew is widely considered to be the most Jewish of the Gospels. Though other important ecclesiological-related terms do appear in the other Gospels (e.g., μαθητής is used frequently in the other three Gospels), it is only Matthew that actually points ahead beyond Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension to the beginning of His ἐκκλησία, which, in the course of the history of the New Testament era, is precisely where the Book of Acts is located.²¹⁶

²¹⁵ Acts 7:38 refers to the worshipping community of Israel in the Wilderness—in keeping with common LXX usage—and Acts 19:32, 39, 41 refer to a chaotic public “assembly” in Ephesus—in keeping with wider secular usage of the era.

²¹⁶ While this is not a naïve claim that all the Gospels were written before the Book of Acts, it is an affirmation that the events recorded in the Gospels focus on the life and ministry of Jesus, which historically preceded the events recorded in Acts.

Considering the content of the chart above, it is not necessarily strange that Acts contains 19 uses of the word ἐκκλησία in reference to the church, or even that 12 of those occur in chapters 1-14 (more on this below). What is strange, however, is that the Gospel of Luke, the first part of the two-part work (Luke-Acts) by the Third Evangelist, contains no uses of ἐκκλησία whatsoever. It is as if ἐκκλησία suddenly appears in Acts out of nowhere, though it is a virtual certainty that Luke was fully aware of the usage of the ἐκκλησία terminology for the church of Jesus Christ at the time he wrote his Gospel.

Now, it is admitted that the long-held scholarly consensus of Markan Priority, which assumes that the Gospel of Mark was the earliest of the Gospels and, thus, would be a written source for Luke “about the events fulfilled among us” (cf. Luke 1:1),²¹⁷ and the fact that there are no instances of ἐκκλησία in Mark, aligns with the absence of ἐκκλησία from the Third Gospel. However, the fact that ἐκκλησία is used prominently in Acts while being entirely absent from the Gospel of Luke demands some explanation.

Since, as discussed above, the Gospel of Matthew includes three uses of ἐκκλησία which fit almost seamlessly with the uses of ἐκκλησία in Acts (see discussion below), an obvious explanation seems to be that the First Gospel is Luke’s source for his ecclesiological content in Acts.²¹⁸ If, however, Luke did draw heavily on Matthew’s Gospel in the writing of Luke-Acts,

²¹⁷ It is almost as common for scholars to believe that Luke also utilized the hypothetical document ‘Q’ (short for *Quelle*, a German word meaning “source”).

²¹⁸ A. Boyd Luter and Nicholas Dodson, “‘Matthean Theological Priority?’: Making Sense of Matthew’s Proto-Ecclesiology in Acts 1-14.” Until around AD 1800, virtually no extant writing expressed any other view than that the reason why Matthew is placed first in the order of the Gospels is because it was written first. However, while it is not the purpose of this presentation to argue for Matthean Priority, based on the observation that Luke apparently drew upon the First Gospel in writing Acts, it also seems reasonable to hypothesize that the Gospel of Matthew was available—in some form, at least—when Luke conducted his research toward writing both the Third Gospel and Acts. What is meant here by “in some form” is that Luke apparently did not get his Matthean-oriented understanding of the ekklēsia that is played out in Acts 1-14 from a ‘Q’ source. Had he done so, Luke certainly would have included material like Matthew 16:18 and 18:17 in the Third Gospel. It is possible, though, as Papias’s phraseology has been taken by not a few over the centuries, that the initial published version of Matthew was written in Hebrew or Aramaic and may have predated the Gospel of Mark.

why would he have refrained from the use of ἐκκλησία in his first volume? A plausible explanation²¹⁹ is that Luke, in deference to Matthew as an eyewitness, was not seeking to supplant the First Gospel, but to supplement it. In that deference, Luke chose to withhold treatment of something as theologically important as the development of the ἐκκλησία until his second volume. In other words,

...[T]he best alternative as to why Dr. Luke echoes the Proto-Ecclesiology of the Gospel of Matthew in Acts 1-14, but does not cite the First Gospel in the Gospel of Luke is out of respect for Matthew's "eyewitness"/apostolic role: not wanting to duplicate the highly-respected predictive ecclesiology of the Gospel of Matthew.²²⁰

Though one can only speculate why Luke may have made this choice, it is at least quite plausible that he indeed constructed the Third Gospel as a substantial supplement to the content that was already available in Matthew's Gospel (and Mark's). The supplementary material he used was found in doing his research (cf. Lk 1:1ff) concerning Jesus' life and ministry, but he chose to develop the fulfillment of the Matthew's "proto-ecclesiology" in his second volume, Acts, which is largely about the growth/building of the ἐκκλησία.

There is good evidence to suggest that "Luke considered the Gospel of Matthew to be: 1) more significant than Mark as a source for at least the theological content that informed his extensive ecclesiological references in Acts; and 2) worth respecting/honoring by choosing not to

²¹⁹ Ibid. A less likely possibility exists to explain the ἐκκλησία-related silence in the Gospel of Luke: The Gospel of Matthew could have appeared during the time between the publication of the Third Gospel and the Book of Acts. If so, Matthew would have made available to Dr. Luke to inform the inclusions of ekklēsia in Acts 1-14. However, since it is common for scholars to date the authorship of The Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts no more than three years apart, and Matthew and Luke may well have been in distant parts of the Roman Empire when they were writing, the time window is probably too narrow to allow for the copying and spread/availability of the First Gospel to wherever Luke may have been as he was preparing to write Acts.

²²⁰ Ibid., 72.

repeat what he knew regarding Matthew's Proto-Ecclesiology in the Third Gospel, but instead building upon it in the Book of Acts."²²¹

The Fulfillment of Matthew 16:13-18:20 through the Great Commission Seen in Acts 1-14²²²

Typically, when Jesus' proclamation, "I will build my church," is read in Matthew 16:18, readers do not grasp that He explained later in Matthew how it was to be carried out. Having demonstrated that Jesus' declaration is part of a larger chiastic structure, and that the chiastic structure plays a significant role in the Gospel as a whole and is exegetically connected to the Great Commission, it is clearly seen that the explicit command given in Matthew 28:16-20 is, in fact, the method by which Jesus would build his ἐκκλησία.

This becomes still more evident as one views the highly likely ecclesiological connection between Matthew's Gospel and Acts. The following exegetical/theological conclusion is quite clear from a comparison of a number of relevant passages in Acts: The "church" (ἐκκλησία) that Christ predicted He would build in the Gospels is seen in Acts to be composed of the building blocks of "disciples" (μαθηταί) fashioned according to the steps of Christ's Commission. Essentially, this means that, in Acts, the term ἐκκλησία is interchangeable with the μαθηταί gathered corporately. At the same time, the μαθηταί, as individual followers of Jesus, are the ἐκκλησία, primarily viewed as scattered for ministry or by persecution.

²²¹ Ibid., 73.

²²² This material largely derived from work previously present by this author in Nicholas A. Dodson and A. Boyd Luter, "Matthetical Ecclesiology: An Exegetical Examination of Disciples as the Building Blocks of the Church" (Everyday Theology Conference, Lynchburg, VA, March 20, 2015).

Matthew 28:16-20 stands as one of the most crucial passages for Matthew's Gospel. After all, it is both the climax of Matthew's resurrection narrative and the conclusion to the entire Gospel. Of Matthew 28:16-20, Hagner says;

[H]ere [the disciples] receive their commission in the famous words that have become the hallmark of the Gospel of Matthew. For these words, perhaps more than any others, distill the outlook and various emphases of the Gospel...this pericope is basic to the narrative framework of the entire Gospel since it stresses authority and teaching—emphases found in every section of the Gospel.²²³

The connection noted by Hagner is especially important to the 16:13-18:20 chiastic structure, since 28:16-20 is so closely related to 16:13-20 and 18:15-20, the A and A' layers of the chiasmus. Here it should be recalled that, as discussed above, the Great Commission is, according to France, the point in the narrative where there is, "...[A] dramatic return to Galilee (28:16-20), so that the messianic mission is triumphantly relaunched in the place where it had originally begun...",²²⁴ and that the Messianic Mission is to build the Jesus' ἐκκλησία by making disciples.

Matthew 28:16-20 reads:

But the eleven *disciples* proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. "Go therefore and make *disciples* of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."²²⁵

²²³ Donald Alfred Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, Word Biblical Commentary, v. 33B (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1993), 881.

²²⁴ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 4.

²²⁵ Discussion of the Great Commission is often limited to verses 18-20 or even 19-20, but it is important to include verses 16-17 as well, in order to see that the command to make disciples is specifically given to his closest disciples," the remaining eleven apostles (i.e., after the betrayal and subsequent death of Judas Iscariot).

Verse 16 makes it clear that Jesus is addressing the eleven “disciples” (i.e., apostles), those remaining of his twelve closest followers, and, after explaining to them that he has been given all authority, Jesus gives them one command, μαθητεύσατε, “you (pl.) make disciples” (v. 19). This is the only imperative voice verb in verses 19-20 and is thus the primary focus of the entire Matthean Commission. This command (i.e., to “make disciples”) is accomplished by the action of the three participles in 19-20: πορευθέντες, “go(ing)”; βαπτίζοντες, “baptizing”; and διδάσκοντες, “teaching.”

It is the contention of some that these participles, because they are syntactically subordinate to μαθητεύσατε, take on the force of the force of an imperative.²²⁶ However, it is exegetically more likely to understand them as spelling out the process of what it means to “make disciples.”²²⁷ While it may be correct to translate πορευθέντες as an imperative “go,” as is done in most English translations, given that it is in the emphatic position and the command to “make disciples” can’t begin until one goes (i.e., evangelistically), it still is not equal in force to the imperative “make disciples.”²²⁸ As has been noted by many, last words are lasting words. Thus, μαθητεύσατε, as the concluding command in the concluding pericope of the entire 28 chapters of Matthew’s Gospel, is of utmost importance.

A further very important, but often overlooked, aspect of Matthew 28:16-20 is its *theological location* in the post-resurrection period. Jesus clearly undertook to make disciples during his ministry in a manner similar to what he commands his followers to do. This is especially evident from passages such as John 4:1, which says, “...the Pharisees had heard that

²²⁶ Cf. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*.

²²⁷ E.g., David L. Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 689–91; See also France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 2007.

²²⁸ This is accurate if this participle is, as Wallace contends, attendant circumstance. See, Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament with Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 640ff.

Jesus was making and baptizing (μαθητὰς ποιεῖ καὶ βαπτίζει) more disciples than John.”

However, it is crucial to observe that all of Jesus’ disciple-making activities were carried out prior to his death and resurrection. The Matthean Commission, by contrast, takes place after the cross/resurrection, during the period of the transition to the New Covenant (cf. Luke 22:20 [“the New Covenant in My blood”]). So, even though Jesus, the maker of the New Covenant, was already on the scene, all the Gospel narratives take place under the Old Covenant theologically *until the post-Resurrection setting*. And, even then, it is not until Pentecost that the promised power source of the New Covenant, the Holy Spirit (cf. Ezekiel 36:26-27), is poured out.

Of course, it is through the empowerment of the Spirit that the Great Commission is to be carried out to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Thus, it is fair to conclude that the steps of Jesus’ disciple-making activities that He chose to continue into the New Covenant, then, are commanded to be carried out in the new era ahead in a way similar—but not identical—to what he himself did in the conclusion of the Old Covenant era. This can be seen in the making of disciples/building the church in the book of Acts.

Jesus’ disciple/church building process carried out in Acts

Several passages in the book of Acts demonstrate that the church Jesus intended to be built is, in fact, composed of disciples (i.e., as its building blocks). An examination of these passages clearly demonstrates this to be the case.²²⁹

²²⁹ It should be noted here, in order to avoid any confusion, that it is not the contention of this work that the existence of the church is limited only to instances in which the words ἐκκλησία and/or μαθηταί are used, nor is the case being made that the beginning of the church is delayed until Acts 5 when ἐκκλησία is first used by Luke. This will be made clear in the following chapter, as the theological implications of this exegetical study are expounded.

Acts 5:11 says, “And great fear came over the whole *church*, and over all who heard of these things...” This verse contains the first use of the word “church” (ἐκκλησία) in Acts. The context indicates that this “whole church” over which the fear came due to the death of Ananias and Sapphira was the entirety of those who had believed in Christ and were gathering together and sharing everything in common. In the verses that immediately follow, more believers are added to the Lord while Peter and the other apostles are performing signs and are threatened by the Jewish authorities.

In Acts 6:1, the text reads, “Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food.” It is this same group in Jerusalem that is referred to as the church in 5:11 which is here denoted as the “disciples” (μαθηταί).

Interestingly, this is the first instance of the word μαθηταί in Acts. And, it seems from these first uses of both key terms in Acts that “church” is used in 5:11 as the way to indicate the group as a whole, while “disciples” is used in 6:1 because a more individual perspective of the group is warranted by the distinction being discussed between the Hellenist and Hebrew disciples/members of the church.

It is also worth noting here that the next use of μαθηταί—only one verse later—in 6:2 is in conjunction with πλῆθος, which, in some translations, is rendered “congregation.” It is even possible in this and some other passages in Acts for πλῆθος to be understood as a virtual equivalent term to ἐκκλησία.²³⁰

²³⁰ Cf. Felix Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick William Danker, *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

The next set of verses that is helpful to examine are:

Acts 6:7 – The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the *disciples* continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem...

Acts 8:1 – Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the *church* in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

8:3 – But Saul began ravaging the *church*, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.

Acts 9:1 – Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the *disciples* of the Lord, went to the high priest.

After the seven *διάκονοι* are appointed in the early part of Acts 6, verse 7 tells of the number of “disciples” increasing in Jerusalem. After Stephen is seized and gives his speech (6:8-7:60), Luke then refers to the group of believers in Jerusalem in 8:1 and 8:3 as the “church,” whom Saul is persecuting. In 9:1, after many from among the “church” were scattered, Saul continues “breathing threats and murder” against them, but they are here referred to as “disciples of the Lord.” Thus, it is abundantly clear that, in the verses listed above, Luke uses both *μαθηταί* and *ἐκκλησία* to refer to the same people in Jerusalem.

Throughout Acts 9, those who believed on Jesus are repeatedly referred to as “disciples”:

Acts 9:10 – Now there was a *disciple* at Damascus named Ananias...

Acts 9:19b – Now for several days he [Saul] was with the *disciples* who were at Damascus...

Acts 9:25 – but his *disciples* took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a large basket.

Acts 9:26 – When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the *disciples*, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a *disciple*...

This includes Ananias, who was sent by the Lord to Saul, those with whom Saul associates after his conversion and who helps him escape from Damascus, and the believers in Jerusalem he tried to associate with when he arrived there. *Μαθητής* is used here, though in a

somewhat indirect way, to refer to Saul himself, who, after the scales fell from his eyes, was immediately baptized (perhaps an echo of the Matthean disciple-making process given in the Commission in Matt. 28:19).

Then, in Acts 9:31, Luke somewhat abruptly changes his terminology: “So the *church* throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.” Based on the preceding discussion of the use of “disciples” in Acts 9, Luke might have expected to say, “So the *disciples* throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria....” Instead, he says, “So the *church* throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria enjoyed peace....” Clearly referring to the same people he has called “disciples” throughout this pericope, Luke now refers to them as a whole by calling them the “church.”

Significantly, immediately after Luke explains that they enjoyed peace after the departure of Saul to Tarsus, he also adds that the church was “being built up and going on in the fear of the Lord.” “Being built up,” οἰκοδομουμένη, is from the same verb used in Matthew 16:18 (i.e., “I *will build* my church”). Since this is the only use of this theologically significant verb (οἰκοδομέω) in Acts related to the church, there is a very high likelihood that it is an echo of Jesus’ proclamation about building his church.

That especially appears to be the case if one takes the view that, in Matthew 16:18, Jesus is asserting that, on the rock—that is, on Peter and those who, along with him, confess Jesus as the Messiah—he will build his church. If this understanding is correct, the wording “the church... being built up” in this context carries with it the implication that the church is being built up of, and by, those proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah (cf. Acts 9:28).

Further along in the narrative of Acts, 11:25-26 reads, “And he [Barnabas] left for Tarsus to look for Saul; and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year

they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.” This passage contains some of the strongest evidence for Luke’s use of μαθηταί and ἐκκλησία as being virtually interchangeable. Here, he explains that Barnabas, after finding Saul in Tarsus, goes with him and meets with the church (i.e., referring to the corporate body) and teaches a great number of people there. Then, referring to the individuals members of the church, he explains that these *disciples* in Antioch were the first to be called Christians.²³¹

Next, on his First Missionary Journey, after Paul was stoned and left for dead at Lystra, he got up and left for Derbe with Barnabas and, significantly for this study, “made disciples” there (Acts 14:21). Then, they returned to the cities in that area where they had already made disciples, in order to strengthen the believers and also to appoint leaders for them in each local church.

Acts 14:20-23 – “But while the *disciples* stood around him, he got up and entered the city. The next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe. After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many *disciples*, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the *disciples*, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, ‘Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.’ When they had appointed elders for them in every *church*, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”

From an exegetical standpoint, it should be observed that here, though it is the exact same groups of people of whom they made *disciples*, strengthened, and appointed elders for, those groups are now referred to as corporate entities (i.e., local *churches*), and they have elders appointed for them. In addition to the clear usage here of “disciples” and “church” in reference to the same people, Luke also uses the verb μαθητεύω in 14:21, the same verb that is the spotlighted command (“make disciples”) in Matthew’s Great Commission passage (which is particularly noteworthy, as will be addressed further below).

²³¹ Here the reader sees that “Christians” is yet another interchangeable term for “disciples” and “church” in Acts, but one not used nearly as commonly as the other two words.

From Derbe, Paul and his group returned to Syrian Antioch. At that point, Acts 14:27-28 states, “When they had arrived and gathered the *church* together, they began to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. And they spent a long time with the *disciples*.” Thus, in Syrian Antioch, they gathered together the corporate entity—the *church*—to report what had taken place on their first missionary journey. Then, in talking about staying with them, presumably on a more personal/individual basis, Luke explains that Paul and Barnabas spent a long time with the *disciples*. Once again, it is clear that “church” and “disciples” are used in this passage interchangeably, referring to the same people.

A final example of this interchangeability can be seen in Acts 20:28-30:

Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

Paul here admonishes the overseers, those responsible to shepherd the *church* of God in Ephesus. He refers to “the church” as “the flock,”²³² and explains that some of the members of that flock will be drawn away by “wolves.”²³³ Those members are specifically called “disciples.” The link may nowhere be clearer in Acts than in this passage that “church” and “disciples” refer to the same people.²³⁴

²³² “Flock” is thus yet another lesser-used interchangeable term with “disciples,” “church” and “Christians” (see the discussion above on Acts 11:26). Yet another sparingly-used interchangeable term is “the Way” (e.g., Acts 9:2).

²³³ That is, by false teachers (i.e., wolves in shepherds’ theological clothing, so to speak).

²³⁴ Though it is beyond the scope of this work, it is interesting to note that this instance is found in a speech attributed to Paul. Though the style of the wording seems quite Lucan, there is no reason to believe Paul did not give this speech, and so it is possible that this evidences Paul’s use of *ekklēsia* and *mathētai* to refer to the same groups as well. Cf. I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary*, 1st American ed., The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1980), 328ff.

Luke's Lone Use of Μαθητεύω

As mentioned above in the discussion of Acts 14:20-23, Luke uses the same verb meaning “make disciples” that is found in the Great Commission in Matthew. Since the use of μαθητεύω is so exegetically significant in Matthew 28:16-20, a brief discussion of this word is warranted.

Μαθητεύω is used only four times in the NT, three of which are in Matthew's Gospel (Matt. 13:52, 27:57, 28:19). The only other use is in the passage under examination: Acts 14:21.

It stands to reason that the only non-Matthean usage of this verb, and the only occurrence chronologically *after* Jesus gave his Great Commission, would be especially significant. This instance seems unquestionably to be an echo by Luke of Matthew's use of μαθητεύω in 28:19. By specifically using this word and echoing Jesus' Commission found in Matthew, which by no coincidence is on Paul's first missionary journey, Luke is showing that the goal of making disciples given in Matthew is one and the same as building the church(es) of Jesus.

A Lingering Question

The observant reader will note that, as has been clearly shown, in Acts there is a dovetailing of the uses of significant ecclesiological terminology such as the ἐκκλησία, μαθηταί, and μαθητεύω. However, it seems strange that Luke would choose to wait until chapter five of Acts to begin using the word ἐκκλησία and, even stranger still, until chapter six to begin using μαθητής, a term which is prevalent throughout Luke's Gospel. As with the question of why he chose not to use “church” in his first volume, one might likewise question why he does not begin using it earlier in his second volume, especially if, as is widely held, the church actually began at Pentecost with the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2).

Perhaps this can best be explained not by simply appealing to Luke's deference to Matthew's Gospel in ecclesiological matters, as argued above, but rather by a closer look at some of the exegetical data in the first four chapters of Acts, which looks back to the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasm. What seems to be the case is that, after setting the stage in Acts 1 for what is to follow, Luke is, in fact, using significant ideas and themes in Acts 2-4 which point back to important ideas/themes from Matthew's Gospel, especially the chiasm in Matthew 16-18. In so doing, Luke is demonstrating that the very thing Jesus proclaimed he would do is beginning to happen. He constructs his narrative to show that it is Jesus's church which is being established and built in Acts 2:1-5:10.

Something of great significance in this discussion is that, even as conspicuous as the absence of ἐκκλησία terminology is in the first four chapters of Acts, it may be that the absence of μαθητής is at least as significant. Luke uses μαθητής regularly in his Gospel (32 times). However, his last use of μαθητής in the Third Gospel is in 22:45, leaving more than two chapters at the end of his first volume and more than four chapters at the beginning of his second volume completely silent concerning μαθητής terminology.

Now, it is not as if Luke does not refer to followers of Jesus within these chapters. When he does, though, in Luke he calls them "the eleven and...all the rest" (Lk 24:9) or "the eleven and those who were with them" (24:33). Then, in Acts 1-4, he refers to them as "apostles," "those who received his word," "those who believed," and the like.

It appears this is done intentionally, since Luke used μαθητής so extensively in the earlier chapters of his Gospel and then from Acts 6 onward. Thus, what makes the most sense of this apparently intentional absence is that Luke withholds using "disciple(s)"—just as he does with ἐκκλησία—to make the point that there is some difference/distinction between being the μαθηταί

of Jesus prior to his death and resurrection and being His μαθηταί after He has been raised and ascended.

The distinction is that, in Acts, the μαθηταί of Jesus are the ἐκκλησία he said he would build. There is something new that is very important happening, beginning in the earlier chapters of Acts: precisely what Jesus said would happen in Matthew 16:13-18:20.²³⁵ Further indicators of this will be discussed below.

Chiastic Structuring of Acts 2

If Luke is, in Acts 2:1-5:10, pointing back to the prediction of Jesus about building his church and the chiastic structure in Matthew 16:13-18:20, it is not unreasonable to think that he might use some kind of chiastic pointer as well. This seems to be exactly the case in the second chapter of Acts.

Thus, it will be helpful for the purposes of this dissertation to briefly examine the chiastic structuring of Acts 2.²³⁶ First, the proposed chiastic structure will be laid out. Next, a discussion of the layers of the chiasm and the pointers back to Matthew will be undertaken.

A 2:1-4 –

- a When the day of Pentecost had come, they were *all together* in one place.
- b And suddenly there came *from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind*,
- c and *it filled the whole house* where they were sitting

²³⁵ Likely another indicator of Matthean theological priority, as discussed above.

²³⁶ Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary Vol. 1 : Introduction and 1:1-2:47* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 86 It is valuable to note that Keener, among others, while not identifying the entire chapter as chiastic, does identify chiastic structuring within Peter's sermon, specifically Acts 2:23-36 (possibly even a complex, double chiasmus). See also, Kenneth E Bailey, *Poet and Peasant and through Peasant Eyes: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables of Luke ; Two Volumes in One* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 65ff.

b' And there appeared to them *tongues as of fire* distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them.

a' And *they were all filled* with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

B 2:5-11 – Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, *devout men from every nation under heaven*. And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language. They were amazed and astonished, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? "And how is it that we each hear *them* in our own language to which we were born? "Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both *Jews and proselytes*, Cretans and Arabs-- we hear them in our *own* tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God."

C 2:12-13 – And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, "*What does this mean?*" But others were mocking and saying, "They are full of sweet wine."

D 2:14-21 – But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: "Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words. "For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is *only* the third hour of the day; but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: 'AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,' God says, 'THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND; AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS; EVEN ON MY BONDSLAVES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, I WILL IN THOSE DAYS POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT And they shall prophesy. 'AND *I WILL GRANT WONDERS IN THE SKY ABOVE AND SIGNS ON THE EARTH BELOW*, BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND VAPOR OF SMOKE. 'THE SUN WILL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME. 'AND IT SHALL BE THAT *EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.*'

E 2:22-23 – "*Men of Israel*, listen to these words: *Jesus* the Nazarene, *a man attested to you by God* with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, *you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.*

F 2:24-28 – "But *God raised Him up again*, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power."For David says of Him, 'I SAW THE LORD ALWAYS IN MY PRESENCE; FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, SO THAT I WILL NOT BE SHAKEN. 'THEREFORE MY HEART WAS GLAD AND MY TONGUE EXULTED; MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL LIVE IN HOPE; BECAUSE *YOU WILL NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO HADES*, NOR ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY. 'YOU HAVE MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF

LIFE; YOU WILL MAKE ME FULL OF GLADNESS WITH YOUR PRESENCE.'

G 2:29-31 – "Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch *David that he both died and was buried*, and his tomb is with us to this day. And so, because he was a prophet and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT *one OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE*, *he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ*, that HE WAS NEITHER *ABANDONED TO HADES*, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY.

G' 2:32-33 – "This *Jesus God raised up again*, to which we are all witnesses. "Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and *having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit*, *He has poured forth this which you both see and hear*.

F' 2:34-35 – "For *it was not David who ascended into heaven*, but he himself says: 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET.'"

E' 2:36 – "Therefore let *all the house of Israel* know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ-- *this Jesus whom you crucified*."

D' 2:37-39 – Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" Peter *said* to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized *in the name of Jesus Christ* for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will *receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*. "For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, *as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself*."

C' 2:40 – And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "*Be saved from this perverse generation!*"

B' 2:41 – So then, *those who had received his word were baptized*; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.

A' 2:42-47 –

a They were *continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship*, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.

b And *all those who had believed* were together and had *all things in common*;

b' and they *began* selling their property and possessions and were *sharing them with all*, as anyone might have need.

a' Day by day *continuing with one mind* in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

It is beyond the intended scope of this dissertation to argue at length for the chiastic structuring of Acts 2.²³⁷ However, since there is scholarly support for chiastic structuring being present in Acts 2 (see footnote 22), it is appropriate at this point to proceed with discussion of the proposed chiasm in order to identify and discuss important themes and key words that link back to the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasm and the method of its fulfillment: the Matthean Commission.

In A (2:1-4) and A' (2:42-47), immediately before the events of Pentecost (A) and continuing thereafter (A'), there is an important theme of being gathered together. At the start of Pentecost, it says, "They were all together in one place," and, assuming Luke is continuing from the end of chapter one, this is referring to at least the eleven apostles plus Matthias, having just been added to their number, and the rest of the 120 that were together in the upper room. Then, in A', it is not only the apostles and the 120, but all those who believed (i.e., including the "about 3,000" mentioned in 2:41) were together with them. Also, in A, the signs of God's presence are demonstrated²³⁸ and they are filled with the Holy Spirit, while in A' the apostles continue to perform signs and wonders while those who had believed are sharing things in common, continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, and continuing with one mind.

The B layer show the beginning of the fulfillment of the Matthean Commission—"making disciples" of "all the nations" (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη [Matt. 28:19])—as there were men

²³⁷ It should be noted that, by briefly examining the proposed chiasm in Acts 2, it appears to meet several criteria as listed in the "Graded Synthesis of Criteria for Extended Chiasmus" given in Chapter 1: 1. Symmetry and Parallelism appear to be displayed by the structure as a whole; 2. Significance at the Center – the crux of Peter's sermon, it was Jesus who was raised from the dead, not David, who would sit on David's throne; 3. Closure/Return – the idea of the followers of Jesus being gathered together is common to the two outer layers, etc. Fuller examination of this structure and evaluation against the criteria will certainly be beneficial in the future, but is, at this point, beyond the scope of this work (see Areas for Further Research below).

²³⁸ The house where they were staying being filled with the noise of a mighty, rushing wind perhaps echoing God's presence filling the Tabernacle (Ex 40:35-36) and the Temple (1 Kg 8:10-11), and the presence of fire being a common OT indicator of God's presence (e.g., the burning bush, pillar of fire, God descending on Mount Sinai in fire, etc.), though this time the fire does not descend on a place but on a people.

present in Jerusalem “from every nation (παντὸς ἔθνους) under heaven.” In B’, about 3,000 of those from every nation receive Peter’s words and are baptized. Here, the first two elements of the Great Commission are seen, the making of disciples and baptizing them, while the third, teaching them all Jesus had commanded, is seen immediately afterwards in A’ (2:42).

While the crowds are perplexed and confused in C, asking “What does this mean?”, C’ seems likely to be Peter’s answer to this question and an applicational point responding to all he has said in between (D through D’): “Be saved from this perverse generation!” Interestingly, this is the only use of γενεά in Acts that is not a direct reference to an Old Testament passage or group. Relatedly, in Matthew 17, at the midpoint of the 16:13-18:20 chiasm, Jesus refers to the “faithless and perverted generation” (γενεὰ ἄπιστος καὶ διεστραμμένη), which Luke here calls a “crooked generation” (τῆς γενεᾶς τῆς σκολιᾶς), with both passages echoing wording from Deuteronomy 32:5 (echoed in Acts 2:40) and 32:20 (echoed in Matt 17:17). Therefore, it seems quite certain that this is another pointer back to what Jesus said in the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasm.

D is the beginning of Peter’s Pentecost sermon. In this section, he gives an extended quotation from Joel 2:28-32. D’ shows the present ways in which the prophecy is being fulfilled (i.e., through the response to Peter’s sermon) and will be fulfilled in the future.

Craig Keener does not identify these layers as part of the chiastic structuring specifically, but he does recognize important features of the sections D and D’ above which show that the two smaller passages are certainly linked to one another:

Though the speech purports to be a spontaneous composition, it reflects the sort of careful structure that could be marred by even minor changes at points (cf. Cic. Or. Brut . 70.232). The speech’s end echoes its beginning, in good rhetorical fashion, on two points: baptism in Jesus’s name (Acts 2:38) fulfills “calling on the Lord” (2:21), and the promise

of the Spirit (2:38) alludes to Joel's quoted words in 2:17–18... The peroratio (closing exhortation) of 2:40 echoes the end of 2:21 ("saved").²³⁹

Thus, the building of Jesus' ἐκκλησία, as described in the Matthew chiasm, is being fulfilled by those who are repenting and calling on His name, which is also shown in Acts 2 to be the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Those who repent and are baptized in Jesus' name have called on the name of the Lord and been saved. These are the ones the Lord has called to Himself.

As seen above, D and D' form the introduction and conclusion of Peter's speech. E begins the content of the speech.²⁴⁰ Peter calls the "men of Israel" to hear him and then refers to

²³⁹ Keener, *Acts*, 862–63; See also, Ben Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009).

²⁴⁰ Keener, *Acts*, 864. Within what Keener calls the inclusio of 2:14–21 and 2:37–39, he identifies the chiastic structuring of Acts 2:23–36 (which is roughly the textual material referred to above as E through E') as follows:

- A This one . . . you crucified and killed (Acts 2:23)
- B But God raised him up . . . (2:24)
- C David says + Psalm 16 quote involving right hand (2:25–28)
 - a. Men, brothers,
 - b. it is necessary to speak
 - c. to you boldly (2:29)
- D the patriarch David died . . . (2:29)
- E Being therefore a prophet, and knowing (2:30)
- F that God had sworn an oath to him (2:30)
- G that he would set one of his descendants upon his throne (2:30)
- H he foresaw and spoke (2:31)
- I of the resurrection of Christ (2:31)
- J that he was not abandoned to Hades (2:31)
- J' nor did his flesh see corruption (2:31)
- I' This Jesus God raised up (2:32)
- H' of that we are all witnesses (2:32)
- G' Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God (2:33)
- F' having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit (2:33)
- E' he has poured out this [phenomenon] which you see and hear (2:33)
- D' For David did not ascend into the heavens (2:34)
- C' But he himself says + Psalm 110 quote involving right hand (2:34–35)
 - c. Assuredly therefore
 - b. let it be known to
 - a. all the house of Israel (2:36)
- B' that God has made him Lord and Christ (2:36)
- A' this Jesus, whom you crucified (2:36)

Jesus as the one attested by God with signs and wonders but who, “you [the people of Israel] nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.” Then, in E’, Peter, pointing again to “all the house of Israel,” explains that God has made Jesus Lord and Christ (as attested by signs and wonders), and again identifies the house of Israel as the ones who crucified Him.

The parallels between these pairings (i.e., the A through E layers) are quite clear, and there are also significant links to the Matthew chiasm in regard to Jesus’ being delivered over and crucified according to God’s plan by the people of Israel (note especially E and E’—as Jesus predicted multiple times in Matthew 16:13-18:20—and in Jesus being identified as Lord and Christ [E’])—as is prevalent in the A section of the Matthew chiasm.

F and F’ reference Jesus being raised up from the dead and ascending. While F does this directly, F’ does so by way of contrast to David, who Peter says was not the one who ascended—assuming that ascension required that one had to be resurrected first. There are also quotations from Davidic Psalms in both sections. In F, Psalm 16 is cited and in F’ there is a quotation from Psalm 110, both of which citations contain references to the “right hand.” Thus, these two sections are clearly linked, and the references to Jesus being raised up and not being abandoned to Hades (possibly an allusion to the Gates of Hades not prevailing against the building of the church in Matt 16:18) point the reader back to the chiastic structure in Matthew.

In the central layer (G and G’), Peter explains that, though David died and was buried—in other words, his flesh *did* see decay—he was actually prophesying in the Psalm about Jesus as Messiah, who did *not* decay, but rather was raised from the dead. Jesus is the descendant of David who sits at the right hand of God and has received the promise of the Holy Spirit and is pouring forth what the people of Israel or now seeing and hearing. There is clear contrast here between David, the king who died and decayed, and Jesus, the king who died but was raised to

sit at the right hand of God and who is still pouring forth the Spirit to fulfill what He said he would do (i.e., build His ἐκκλησία).

In addition to the chiastic structuring of Acts 2, which itself (along with the clues found within) points back to what Jesus proclaimed He would do in the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasm, there are numerous other clues/echoes found in Acts 2:1-6:1 that point the reader back to the Matthew Chiasm and its method of fulfillment: the Matthean Great Commission. The following chart summarizes the clues/echoes/pointers in Acts 2:1-6:1 and the corresponding reference in Matthew to which they seem to point:

Clue/Pointer	Reference in Acts 2:1-6:1	Reference in Matthew
followers of Jesus gathered together	2:1, 44	18:15-20
believers (<i>pisteuō</i>)/faith (<i>pistis</i>)	2:40, 44; 3:16; 4:4, 32	17:14-18 - as opposed to the <i>apistos genea</i> ; 17:19-20[21] (<i>pistis</i> the size of a mustard seed)
In/on/by Jesus' name	2:21 (name of the Lord), 38; 3:6, 16 (x2); 4:10, 12, 17, 18, 30; 5:28, 40, 41	18:5, 20
be saved from this corrupt generation (<i>skolios genea</i>)	2:40; 4:12 – salvation in no one else, and no other name...by which we must be saved (presumably from the corrupt <i>genea</i>);	17:17 – unbelieving (<i>apistos</i>) and perverted (<i>diastrephō</i>) <i>genea</i>
Repent/turn away from this crooked <i>genea</i>	3:19 – repent and return (<i>epistrephō</i>); 3:26 – God raised up His Servant to bless you by turning (<i>apostrephō</i>) each one of you from his wicked ways	17:17 – unbelieving (<i>apistos</i>) and perverted (<i>diastrephō</i>) <i>genea</i>
God has made Jesus both Lord and Messiah	2:36; 3:13	16:16-17; 17:1-8, 24-27; 28:18 (all authority in heaven and on earth)
Jesus crucified according to God's plan	2:23, 36; 3:18; 4:10-11, 27-28	16:21; 17:12, 22-23
Resurrection of Jesus	2:24-35; 3:15, 26; 4:2, 10	16:21; 17:9, 23

Jesus wasn't abandoned to Hades	2:27, 31 (these are the only two uses in Acts)	16:18 (only 3 other references in the Gospels)
Two or more agreeing together	3:1-5	18:19
The builders (<i>oikodomoî</i>) rejected Jesus, the chief cornerstone	4:11	16:13-20 – Jesus will build (<i>oikodomeō</i>) His church
Satan	5:3 – Peter asks Ananias, “Why has Satan filled your heart?”	16:23 – Jesus tells Peter, “Get behind me Satan...”
Employing the keys to the kingdom/binding and loosing	5:1-10	16:13-20; 18:15-20
Minds on human/wordly concerns rather than those of God	5:1-10	16:23-26
<i>Ekklēsia</i>	5:11	16:13-20; 18:15-20
Disciples increasing in number	6:1	28:19
Teaching of the Apostles	2:42	28:20
Every nation	2:5 (παντὸς ἔθνους)	28:19 (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη)
Believers were <i>baptized</i>	2:38, 41	28:19
Jesus is the one with all authority (i.e., who sits on the throne of David at God's right hand)	2:22-36; 3:13	28:18

Having examined the exegetical data concerning Acts 2:1-6:1 and the connections/pointers back to the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasm, it becomes fairly obvious why Luke delayed his use of ἐκκλησία until Acts 5:11 and μαθηταί—which has been shown above to be interchangeable in Acts with ἐκκλησία—until 6:1. Luke did not “jump into” using these significant ecclesiological terms in order to be completely clear about what was being

established and built in his early narrative in Acts.²⁴¹ It is not an already existing ἐκκλησία to which Jesus is referring. It is something distinct from the Old Testament ἐκκλησία of Israel, as well as from any other ἐκκλησία/gathering which may have come to the mind of the readers of his second volume (i.e., Acts). Instead, it is the ἐκκλησία of Jesus, the one he proclaimed He would build in Matthew 16:13-20, then gave a small preview of what was to be built in 18:15-20, before explaining the method of building in the Matthean Commission (28:18-20).

The Need for Further Ecclesiological Examination

In examining the lone ecclesiological passages in Matthew 16:13-20 and 18:15-20 with the understanding that they are closely linked both as part of the larger chiasmus (16:13-18:20) and to the early chapters of Acts (i.e., the history of the beginning of the church, which Jesus had declared he would build), several realizations about the early part of Acts have been clarified. First, Luke, in his second volume, has repeatedly provided significant pointers/clues back to the chiasm in Matthew and the Great Commission in Matthew 28:16-20. Second, Luke withholds the use of foundational and significant ecclesiological terminology (ἐκκλησία and μαθητής) until Acts 5:11 and 6:1. This indicates, third, that Luke, by showing deference to Matthew's Gospel as it concerns what is being called in this work "proto-ecclesiology"—or, at the least, assuming his readers would have some knowledge of it—is establishing that it is specifically the ἐκκλησία that Jesus said he would build that is in fact being established and built up in the earlier chapters of Acts.

²⁴¹ Again, this is not to say that the beginning of the ἐκκλησία of Jesus is delayed until the first use of this word, as will be shown below, but simply to say that Luke's delay in using this terminology is intentionally pointing to something, an ἐκκλησία, that did not exist until Jesus began building it.

Also, once Luke does begin to use ἐκκλησία and μαθητής in the Book of Acts, there is clear—and abundant—evidence that he uses the terms interchangeably, leading to the conclusion that “making disciples” (μαθητεύω – the command in the Great Commission) is the intended means by which Jesus’ ἐκκλησία was being built.

Without question, the two ἐκκλησία passages in Matthew and the accounts in Acts highlighted above are crucial for establishing a fully biblical ecclesiology. However, an examination of several prominent systematic theology works in use in various Evangelical institutions currently reveals that this is not the case.²⁴² Christian theologies typically introduce ecclesiology by discussing the meaning of the word ἐκκλησία in Scripture and the related Hebrew words translated as such in the Septuagint, then move on quickly to examining biblical images of the church, etc. Though there are often references to the ἐκκλησία passages in Matthew in this context, the nature of their connection to the actual establishment of the church in Acts (as mentioned above) is virtually non-existent. Also, if the relationship between the methodology laid out in the Matthean Commission is mentioned at all, it is typically not until the discussion of the role of the church in evangelization where disciple making is addressed. As can be concluded from the discussion above, since the methodology developed in the Matthean Commission is clearly the means by which Jesus intended His church to be built, this de-emphasis (or minimalizing) is problematic, to say the least.

Because the existence of the chiastic structuring of Matthew 16:13-18:20 has, in modern scholarship, only recently been proposed and in this dissertation has been, for the first time, established and fleshed out, the significant correlation between Matthew’s proto-ecclesiology

²⁴² See especially Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013); See also Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994); Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systemic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999); Norman L. Geisler, *Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2002).

and the beginning of the church in Acts remains to be carefully examined in terms of how it relates to biblical ecclesiology. Based on the exegetical data provided in this and the preceding chapters, the following chapter will seek to carefully develop a concise biblical theology of the Proto-Ecclesiology of the Church by addressing the ecclesiologically-significant findings of the chiasmic reading of the Matthew 16:13-18:20, its connection to the following chapters of Matthew—especially the Matthean Commission—and the establishment of Jesus' ἐκκλησία through disciple making seen in Acts 1-14.

CHAPTER 5: ECCLESIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF UNDERSTANDING MATTHEW

16:13-18:20 AS CHIASMUS

As noted at the end of Chapter 4, the establishment of the existence of the chiasmic structure in Matthew 16:13-18:20—a section of Scripture bookended by the only two passages containing the uses of ἐκκλησία in Gospels—is, in itself, an indication that something highly significant is being said about the church within these verses. The bookend passages of that extended inverted parallel structure, Matthew 16:13-20 and 18:15-20, i.e., the outer layers (A/A') of the chiasmus, are often cited in discussions of ecclesiology. However, their connection as part of the larger literary structure lends itself to numerous further exegetical insights regarding what Jesus in Matthew's Gospel is actually saying about the ἐκκλησία.

In addition to the establishment of the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasm itself, it has also been noted that there are significant pointers/connections within the structure to the remainder of Matthew's Gospel and, specifically, to the establishment/building of Jesus' ἐκκλησία through the Great Commission at the close of Matthew's work (28:16-20). Then, with such an understanding of the exegetical significance of the chiasm and its connection to the Matthean Commission, it has become clear that the most significant portion of Scripture concerning the beginnings and early growth of the church, i.e., Acts 1-14, is intimately connected with these passages in Matthew as well (see chapter 4 above).²⁴³ In other words, Luke's ecclesiological understandings are influenced by and dependent on the "Proto-Ecclesiology" seen in Matthew's Gospel.²⁴⁴

²⁴³ See especially Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2013; See also Grudem, *Systematic Theology*; Ryrie, *Basic Theology*; Geisler, *Systematic Theology*.

²⁴⁴ A. Boyd Luter and Nicholas Dodson, "Matthean Theological Priority?: Making Sense of Matthew's Proto-Ecclesiology in Acts 1-14."

Since the chiasm in Matthew 16:13-18:20 and the connections between that chiastic structure, the Matthean Great Commission, and the outworking of Jesus' proclamation through the fulfilling of that Commission in Acts 1-14 are only now being thoroughly investigated in this dissertation, it is now vitally important to examine the implications these findings have for a biblically-grounded theology of the church. Following: 1) an initial discussion of the exegetical foundations for ecclesiology; 2) the implications of the findings presented in preceding chapters on those foundational elements; and 3) on specific ecclesiological issues—notably, the relationship of the church to Israel and the beginning of the church—will be examined; and 4) a brief discussion on how these findings impact practical ecclesiological concerns will be given.

Biblical Foundations for Ecclesiology

There has been, especially since the mid-twentieth century, much written concerning the church. However, as Millard Erickson explains, there has been a movement away from ecclesiology as doctrine (i.e., the study of the nature of the church, or what it actually is/ought to be) toward ecclesiology as a study of what the church has been and how it functioned. While helpful insights can be gained from studying the church in relation to its existence in the world and how it has functioned, this approach is ultimately problematic, because it has led to, "...a relative de-emphasis on the theory or doctrine of the church, and a tendency for practical concerns, rather than biblical teaching, to dictate the understanding of the church."²⁴⁵

²⁴⁵ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2013, 951.

Even among some within Evangelicalism, it has become popular to include culture and social science considerations as sources/tools for developing ecclesiology.²⁴⁶ Erickson goes on to elaborate lucidly on the problems arising from this trend:

Attempting to define the church in terms of its dynamic activity avoids making any kind of statement regarding the nature of the church. This may lead to...the approach of the transformers, who make significant alterations in the content of doctrine in order to meet changing situations in the world. But the question arises, If the definition of the church is to undergo frequent change in order to relate it to its contemporary world, in what sense is there continuity with what has preceded? Or, in other words, why continue to call it the church? What is the common thread identifying the church throughout all the changes?²⁴⁷

What becomes clear is that, in order to have a proper understanding of ecclesiology, it is necessary to have a firm grasp of what the church really is/ought to be. That leads to understanding of how it should function in the world, rather than reliance on the visible manifestations and interactions of the church in the world to drive one's understanding of what the church actually is. This requires a reliance on an unchanging foundation—the Word of God—to develop a correct ecclesiology.

Gregg Allison lays out a clear path to such a proper, biblical ecclesiology:

As a doctrine of evangelical theology, ecclesiology considers biblical affirmations about the church and synthesizes all those teachings into a coherent whole, thereby setting forth what evangelicals are to believe about the church. This systematic theology of the church is developed in conjunction with other disciplines. “Exegetical theology seeks to determine the meaning of biblical texts. Biblical theology describes the progressive revelation found in Scripture by examining the theology of its various groupings...It also traces the many themes in these biblical groupings and notes their development over time...Historical theology is the study of the interpretation of Scripture and the formulation of the doctrine by the church of the past.” Through solid interpretation of all relevant text of Scripture treating the topic of the church (exegetical theology), careful consideration of themes about the church...and how they relate to each other (biblical theology) and aided by wisdom from the past in terms of a chastened tradition concerning

²⁴⁶ Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 25ff.; See also, Stanley J Grenz, “Die Begrenzte Gemeinschaft (‘The Boundaried People’) and the Character of Evangelical Theology,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45, no. 2 (June 2002): 301–16.

²⁴⁷ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2013, 953–54.

the church (historical theology), a systematic theology of the church—ecclesiology—is developed.²⁴⁸

Allison goes on to acknowledge that, while there are differing positions among theologians on the issue, attention to and recognition of the sufficiency of Scripture for and as the foundation of theology is an appropriate hallmark of evangelical theology, built upon the Protestant affirmation of the sufficiency of Scripture *in toto*, i.e., that, “...Scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly.”²⁴⁹ It is with these affirmations of Scripture as the basis for evangelical theology, specifically ecclesiology, in mind that this work now turns to the examination of fresh ecclesiological implications offered by the establishment of the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasmus and the subsequent findings relating to the Great Commission and Acts.

A Case in Point: Millard Erickson’s Biblical-Philological Definition of the Church

Before addressing specific ecclesiological issues, such as where in Scripture the church begins, it is valuable to examine the ways in which the chiastic reading of Matthew 16:13-18:20 may have significant influence on the way the church is defined and, as such, its effects on the very beginning point of ecclesiology. Millard Erickson’s *Christian Theology*, originally published in 1983 and now in its third edition, is one of the most widely-used Evangelical

²⁴⁸ Gregg R Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 33; See also, Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine: A Companion to Wayne Grudem’s Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 23–33.

²⁴⁹ Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 127.

systematic theologies available, and what follows, hopefully, reflects the utmost respect and acknowledgment of Erickson's contribution to contemporary evangelical theology. As already noted above, Erickson acknowledges that the church cannot be properly defined empirically or dynamically, and thus explains that, in order to understand what the church is/does or ought to be/should do. He states: "These questions cannot be answered without addressing the issue of the nature of the church, and there is no better place to begin than with the biblical testimony itself."²⁵⁰

This is certainly in keeping with the affirmation set forth by Allison concerning the sufficiency of Scripture, but it does not, strictly speaking, follow the methodology set forth in terms of moving from exegetical theology to biblical theology to historical theology to a systematic theology of the church. While Erickson does seek to understand the meaning of the word ἐκκλησία in the New Testament, his method falls short in this respect: while evaluating the meaning of the Hebrew word often translated ἐκκλησία in the LXX and the Hellenistic meaning of ἐκκλησία are valuable contributions, Erickson does not provide a clear exegetical theology of ἐκκλησία from all the relevant New Testament passages. Now, it must be acknowledged that this may not be entirely possible in a work seeking to be as comprehensive as *Christian Theology*. Yet, the question must still be raised whether or not Erickson's approach does justice to what is necessary in defining "church" in terms of the wider New Testament usage.

For example, as Erickson begins his biblical-philological definition of the church, he mentions the uses of ἐκκλησία in Matthew 16 and 18 only in passing:

The word "church" and cognate terms in other languages (e.g., *Kirche*) are derived from the Greek word κυριακός (*kuriakos*), "belonging to the Lord." They are, however, to be understood in light of the New Testament Greek term ἐκκλησία (*ekklēsia*). While this is a common word, its occurrences are unevenly distributed through the New Testament. The only instances in the Gospels are in Matthew 16:18 and 18:17, both of which are somewhat disputed. It does not appear in 2 Timothy, Titus, 1 or 2 Peter, 1 or 2 John, or

²⁵⁰ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2013, 954.

Jude. There is little significance to its absence from 1 and 2 John, since it is found in 3 John; from 2 Timothy and Titus, since it is found in 1 Timothy; and from Jude, since this book is so brief. More surprising, however, is its absence from Peter's letters...²⁵¹

While the issue with Erickson "jumping over" the exegetical theology of ἐκκλησία should be duly noted, he does address to some degree the biblical theology of the church through its use by various authors and recurring themes related to the church, what he calls "biblical images." If, however, the importance of the chiasmic structure connecting the uses of ἐκκλησία in Matthew 16 and 18 is correct, then much more than such a cursory mention of these occurrences is surely warranted.²⁵²

Beginning with the philological definition of the term is unquestionably a valid place to start a discussion on the meaning of "church" in the New testament.²⁵³ However, a more extensive exegetical theology of ἐκκλησία in the passages in Matthew must be undertaken if one seeks to develop a full-scale New Testament theology of the church. Erickson's work demonstrates the too common tendency of theologians to more or less skip over the passages in Matthew that contain ἐκκλησία unless they are utilized to address points that have often been used to advocate for a certain ecclesiological position (e.g., Roman Catholic polity, the role of church in disciplining members, etc.).

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 464–66. Grenz, in his initial definition of the church, focuses on the meaning of ἐκκλησία. He addresses the Old Testament meaning and the meaning of ἐκκλησία in the Roman cultural milieu, but he, like Erickson, also mentions the uses of ἐκκλησία in Matthew 16 and 18 only in passing. He says, "These Old Testament references may have formed the background for Jesus' promise that he would build his congregation (Matt. 16:18; 18:17). Regardless of the genesis of the dominical declaration, the early Christians clearly believed that our Lord himself had instituted the church." "

²⁵³ While it is acknowledged that defining the "church" as a concept cannot be limited simply to the definition of a single word, and Erickson does go beyond this to examine recurring themes or biblical images of the church, the point of this discussion is simply to say that defining key terms is important, and to define ἐκκλησία properly in the context of the New Testament requires properly understanding the literary context of the passages in which it is found, specifically the passages in Matthew.

However, given that there is much more to Matthew 16:13-20 and 18:15-20 than simply being the only two passages in the Gospels that include ἐκκλησία—i.e., that they are part of a larger literary structure closely connected to the Great Commission and Acts as well—the foundational role they play in understanding the nature of Jesus’ ἐκκλησία must be recognized. Even if one chooses to address the nature of the church beginning with the kind of philological approach Erickson employs, the weight of the findings so far in this dissertation make it clear that Jesus’ ἐκκλησία is quite distinct from any other ἐκκλησία that may have come to mind for the earliest readers of the New Testament works.

The Matthew 16:13-18:20 Chiasm and Key Issues in Ecclesiology

Two key issues in ecclesiology on which the chiastic interpretation of Matthew 16:13-18:20 and the subsequent connections to the Great Commission and Acts have bearing are: 1) the relationship between the church and Israel; and 2) the beginning of the church. These two issues are interrelated in the sense that one’s understanding of the relationship between the covenants and, by extension, between the church and Israel—i.e., whether or not there is continuity, discontinuity, or some mediating position between the two—plays a key role in whether one sees the church as actually beginning at some point after the coming of Christ or as extending all the way back to the time of the patriarchs. As such, the contribution to the discussion of the relationship between the church and Israel will be addressed before moving to address what the chiastic reading may contribute to the understanding of the beginning of the church.

The Matthew 16:13-18:20 Chiasm and the Continuity/Discontinuity of Israel and the Church

The topic of continuity/discontinuity of the church and Israel is a quite extensive one, and it is far beyond the scope of this work to address it in full. However, it is useful to briefly summarize the general tenets of the two major positions in order to have a clear basis for understanding how understanding the chiasm in Matthew 16:13-18:20 might contribute to this discussion.

Gregg Allison gives a helpful summary of the two positions in *Sojourners and Strangers*:

...the relationship between the church and Israel is viewed differently by two opposing perspectives. Broadly speaking, from a continuity position, the people of Israel under the old covenant and Christians of the new covenant are both part of the people of God, joined together under the one covenant of grace. Furthermore, the church has replaced Israel—or it fulfills the promises made to Israel—such that the Jews as a national people hold no special place in the salvific work of God either now or in the future...Broadly speaking, from a discontinuity position, while the people of Israel and the church of the new covenant are both part of the people of God, significant disparate elements—e.g., differences in the old covenant for the people of Israel and the new covenant for the church, the diversity of experience of the Holy Spirit, incorporation of Christians into the body of Christ, the character of the old covenant people (mostly Jews, with a smattering of Gentiles attached to Israel) in contrast with the new covenant people (Jews and Gentiles as one new entity, with a majority of the latter)—underscore the distinctions between the two. Furthermore, the church has not replaced Israel nor fulfilled all of the promises made to Israel, and given the Old Testament promises (affirmed in Romans 11) of a bright future for the Jews, a significant divine work awaits them, including their large-scale conversion and national restoration.²⁵⁴

Even from this brief summary, it is fairly clear that that Allison holds to a discontinuity position, but his assessment of the two positions, broadly speaking, seems to be eminently fair.

As representative of the continuity position, which sees the church as essentially taking the place of Israel, Wayne Grudem says, “The church is the community of all true believers for all time...all those whom Christ died to redeem, all those who are saved by the death of Christ.

²⁵⁴ Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 88–89.

But that must include all true believers for all time, both believers in the New Testament age and believers in the Old Testament age as well.”²⁵⁵ This position holds that the church can be seen from the patriarchal period all the way through the New Testament and what is seen in the New Testament is simply a continuation of true believers from Old Testament times onward; there is no essential difference.²⁵⁶ In support of this idea, Grudem (and others such as Erickson, McGrath, and Berkhof) appeal to the historic position of the church on this issue. Even Allison admits that, “For most of the church’s history, the relationship between the church and Israel was regarded as one of continuity and substitution.”²⁵⁷ Grudem also points to, “the many New Testament verses that understand the church as the ‘new Israel’ or new ‘people of God,’”²⁵⁸ such as Romans 2:28-29, in which Paul seems to indicate that a true Jew is one whose heart has been cleansed by God rather than one who is physically circumcised; Romans 4:11-12, 16, 18, and 9:6-8 which suggest that Abraham is the spiritual father of all who believe, not just the physical father of ethnic Israel; and Romans 9:25, which explains that those who believe are now God’s people. He goes on to reference Philippians 3:3, in which Paul says Christians are the true circumcision; Ephesians 2:13-20, and 3:6 which speak to the unity of Jewish and Gentile believers with no indication of a future plan for Israel; Heb 8, especially verse 8-10, in which the author quotes the Lord’s promise in Jeremiah 31:31-34 to make a new covenant with Israel and says that new covenant has been made with the church; and 1 Peter, which frequently speaks of

²⁵⁵ Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 853.

²⁵⁶ See, Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*.

²⁵⁷ Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 82.

²⁵⁸ Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 861.

New Testament Christians in terms of Old Testament imagery and promises given to Jews, especially 2:4-10.²⁵⁹

While all of those who hold the continuity position believe the church has replaced Israel in some sense, some believe that it has fully replaced Israel, and Israel has forfeited its right to the promises of God, while others, like Erickson and Grudem, believe that there will still be something special for national Israel in the future. Erickson sums up his understanding of this future blessing, explaining, "...the church is the new Israel. It occupies the place in the new covenant that Israel occupied in the old. Whereas in the Old Testament the kingdom of God was peopled by national Israel, in the New Testament it is peopled by the church. There is a special future coming for national Israel, however, through large-scale conversion to Christ and entry into the church."²⁶⁰ Among theologians, even those within Evangelicalism, this position is not at all uncommon.

The other major perspective within Evangelicalism concerning the relationship of Israel to the church largely stems from the understanding of classical dispensationalism, which began to challenge the historic continuity/replacement view in the nineteenth century. While variant understandings of dispensationalism have arisen in recent decades that do not hold as strictly to the tenets of classical dispensationalism concerning, e.g., the church as a parenthesis in God's plan, spiritual blessings for the church vs. earthly blessings for Israel, and the like, all of these dispensational approaches still recognize that there is discontinuity between Israel and the church.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 853ff; See also, Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*; Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 4th ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007); Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2013.

²⁶⁰ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2013, 966.

According to Allison, in what he calls the moderate discontinuity view, which he holds, lack of continuity between the Israel and the church can be clearly seen in certain salvation experiences, such as, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, who permanently indwells Christians and gives them spiritual gifts.²⁶¹ Henry Thiessen and Vernon Doerksen elaborate on the distinctions that the discontinuity position sees in the New Testament between the church and Israel:

While there is a connection between the saved of all ages (John 10:16; Rom. 11:16, 24; 1 Pet. 2:9), and there is a people of God throughout the various ages, Christianity is not new wine poured into old wineskins. Rather, it is new wine in new wineskins (Matt. 9:17). That the church is not a continuation of the old system is seen from several arguments. First, Israel and the church are not synonymous terms. Paul distinguished between Jews, Gentiles, and the church (1 Cor. 10:32). Further, Paul speaks of the church as one new man (Eph. 2:14; cf. Col 3:11), composed of believing Jews and believing Gentiles. And finally, God has yet a future for Israel. Paul, in Rom. 11, outlines the chronology of God's future dealings with Israel. She is the olive branch which has now been broken off while the wild olive has been grafted into the trunk. It is during the time of the wild olive branch that the church is God's instrument on earth. That the kingdom did not come in the days of Christ is attested to by the question of the disciples, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). The counsel of James at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:13-21) suggests that the early church saw itself as something quite different than the continuation of Israel.²⁶²

While Allison is somewhat more moderate on the discontinuity issue than Thiessen, he still believes that "... the dissimilarities are significant enough so as to maintain the distinction between the church and Israel," and to hold to, "...a future fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies directed to a national Israel, including the salvation of many Jewish people and restoration to the land of Israel."²⁶³

As with the issue of defining the church, as discussed above, references to the passages in Matthew 16 and 18 in discussion of the church's continuity/discontinuity with national Israel are

²⁶¹ Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 88.

²⁶² Henry C. Thiessen and Vernon D. Doerksen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1992), 309.

²⁶³ Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 88.

quite limited in major theological works of recent decades, if they are noted at all. However, as the issue of the relationship of Israel and the church is important for other aspects of one's ecclesiology, Matthew 16:13-18:20, along with the subsequent findings, have been shown to be of great ecclesiological importance. It begs asking how the findings set forth so far in this dissertation might speak to this issue of Israel and the church.

At first glance, it may seem that there is little contribution to this issue, as the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasm does not *directly* address Israel as distinct from the church. However, the chiasm does repeatedly speak of Jesus suffering at the hands of the chief priests, Pharisees, Scribes, rulers, etc., of *Israel*. While this data does not, in itself, mean there is a distinction or discontinuity between Israel and the church, Jesus' strong words concerning the "generation" to which he was preaching the Kingdom of Heaven—the unbelieving and perverted γενεά (see Matt 17:17) addressed at the very center of the chiasm—serve to demonstrate that the church Jesus says He will build in 16:18, His ἐκκλησία—the primary referent of the entire chiastic structure—will be something new and distinct from the present generation of Israel, which had previously rejected Him (see, e.g., Matt 11:20-24; 16:4).

In addition to the rejection of the unbelieving and perverted γενεά, the fact that Jesus says "My Church," not just "the church" or "a church," forcefully reflects the uniqueness of His ἐκκλησία. Donald Hagner, commenting on this issue in Matthew, says:

As the community of the kingdom, this is a new eschatological people...there is an obvious and inevitable discontinuity with Israel...Very significant here is Jesus' reference to "my church," where the pronoun, preceding the noun in the Greek, is emphatic: μου τὴν ἐκκλησίαν ("my church"). The church is the community of *Jesus*, a designation that stands in remarkable contrast to the phrase *qahal YHWH*, "community of the Lord" (LXX: ἐκκλησία κυρίου, e.g., Deut. 23:1-2; 1 Chr. 28:8; Mic. 2:5; cf. Neh. 13:1; Lam. 1:10).²⁶⁴

²⁶⁴ Hagner, "Holiness and Ecclesiology," 172–73.

While Hagner's main point here is not specifically to argue for the discontinuity approach to ecclesiology, he makes an extremely important exegetical point that must not be overlooked. In fact, while Hagner points out the emphatic pronoun and the evidence for Jesus' ἐκκλησία standing in contrast to the ἐκκλησία κυρίου in the Old Testament, the evidence seen so far in this study from the chiastic structure found in Matthew 16:13-18:20 goes even further. There, Jesus continually shows the opposition from the Jews—especially their leaders—to His mission to build His ἐκκλησία and the distinct mindset/mentality that being his disciple/a part of His ἐκκλησία will entail, most notably in the A/A', C/C', and F/F' layers.

Another aspect of the chiastic structure relevant to this discussion is the fact that, as mentioned above, the chiasm in Matthew 16:13-18:20 functions as a sort of lens and turning-point in Matthew's Gospel. In Chapter Three of this dissertation (see above), it was shown that key ideas/themes point forward from earlier in Matthew to the chiastic structure, while a number of aspects of the chiasm point forward to what is to come in the remainder of the First Gospel. Having established the significant connection between the chiastic structure in Matthew 16:13-18:20 and the Matthean version of the Great Commission in 28:16-20, i.e., that the essence of the Great Commission—"making disciples" of "all the nations"—is the method by which Jesus intended to build His ἐκκλησία, and with the understanding that the chiastic structure is a lens/focal point/turning-point in the Gospel of Matthew, clarity is brought to the relationship between the Great Commission at the end of Matthew and a previous commission with some striking similarities (and differences) given by Jesus earlier in the Gospel.

Matthew 10:1-15 says:

Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him. These

twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: “Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give. Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, or a bag for your journey, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support. And whatever city or village you enter, inquire who is worthy in it, and stay at his house until you leave that city. As you enter the house, give it your greeting. If the house is worthy, give it your blessing of peace. But if it is not worthy, take back your blessing of peace. Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet. Truly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.

Here, Jesus sends out the Twelve Apostles specifically to “the lost sheep of Israel” (10:6) and, in fact, tells them not to even go anywhere near the Gentiles or Samaritans. Though the similarities to the Matthean Great Commission are interesting, the distinctions are even more so. Jesus gave the Twelve “authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness” (10:7) and says to them, “...as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons” (10:8).

It is clear that Jesus’ emphasis here is for the Twelve to go out with the good news of the kingdom to the people of Israel, but—as is made clear in the remainder of chapter 10—he fully anticipates that the Twelve will have trouble and meet resistance to their message. Next, in Matthew 11-15, though Jesus continues teaching and doing miracles, there is a recurring theme of lack of understanding and rejection of Jesus by the leaders and people of Israel—e.g., Jesus’ denouncement of the unrepentant cities where he had done many works (11:20-24), the Pharisees conspiring against Him (12:14), the scribes and Pharisees seek a sign, even though Jesus has already done many in their midst (12:38ff), Jesus is rejected in his home town of Nazareth (13:53ff), scribes and Pharisees challenge Jesus concerning His disciples’ failure to follow tradition of hand washing (15:1ff), Pharisees and Sadducees come again asking for a sign (16:1ff).

This comes to a head in Matthew 16:1-12, when Jesus denounces the leaders of Israel as an “evil and adulterous generation” (γενεὰ πονηρὰ καὶ μοιχαλὶς) for their failure/lack of willingness to see the signs right in front of them, then warns his disciples not to be like them; not to be infected by “the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (i.e., their unsound teaching [16:11]).²⁶⁵ This sets the stage for the chiastic structure in which Jesus declares that He will build *His ἐκκλησία* and provides a kind of preview of what that new/distinct ἐκκλησία will look like.

In a real sense, all of the material in the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiastic structure is prompted by the rejection of the message of Jesus and the Twelve concerning the kingdom, leading to the conclusion that Jesus is now going to begin doing something distinctively new and different. He is not restoring the kingdom of Israel at that time (see Acts 1:6). Instead, he is going to build His ἐκκλησία, which, as demonstrated above in the discussion of Acts, is something altogether different. Jesus is not sending His messengers to Israel now to build His ἐκκλησία; rather, He is sending them to “all the nations” (Matt 28:19).

Jesus’ message of the kingdom had been rejected by Israel and its leaders (Matt 10:1ff.), so Jesus sends out his messengers to all nations (28:19), in order to build His church (16:13-18:20). Thus, it is seen that the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasm functions as a key piece of scriptural support (i.e., exegetical ecclesiology) for the discontinuity between Israel and the church.

In addition to the chiastic structure in Matthew 16:13-18:20 and the surrounding context, including the remainder of the First Gospel, especially the Great Commission, there is, as discussed above, evidence of discontinuity between Israel and the church demonstrated in the

²⁶⁵ While Jesus here denounces the unsound teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees, it becomes increasingly clear, especially in the chiasm that Jesus’ message is more widely rejected by the whole faithless and perverted generation of Israel, except for the few believing followers of Jesus, which leads to his rejection of the wider generation, not just its leadership.

connection between 16:13-18:20 and the early part of the Book of Acts. In chapter 4 of the dissertation, the exegetical data concerning Acts 2:1-6:1 and the connections/pointers back to the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasm reveal quite clearly that Luke delayed his use of ἐκκλησία until Acts 5:11 and μαθηταί—which has been shown above to be interchangeable in Acts with ἐκκλησία—until 6:1 for an important reason. Luke did not begin using these significant ecclesiological terms because he was being very clear about what was being established and built in the early part of his second volume (i.e., the church of Jesus Christ).

In Acts, it was not some already existing ἐκκλησία to which Jesus is referring, such as the Old Testament ἐκκλησία of Israel (or ἐκκλησία κυρίου). Nor was it any other ἐκκλησία/gathering which may have come to the minds of his readers. Rather, it is the ἐκκλησία of Jesus, the one He proclaimed He would build in the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasmus.

Again, while Acts is often referred to in the discussion of the continuity/discontinuity between Israel and the church, its connection to: 1) this newly identified chiastic structure in Matthew; and 2) the subsequently discussed/identified deference of Luke to Matthew's Gospel in ecclesiological (or at least proto-ecclesiological) matters serves as significant, fresh evidence pointing to the idea that there is a distinction between Israel and the church; there is discontinuity between the Old and New Testament people of God.

The work presented here does point to the discontinuity between the church and national Israel. However, it should not be inferred that the church has either replaced Israel or that God has permanently cut off Israel from His plan. More will be discussed on this issue below, but it is important to keep in mind moving forward that this evidence of distinction/discontinuity, Jesus' rejection of the unbelieving and perverted γενεά in Jesus's day does not in any sense mean total rejection of the people of Israel from God's future plans.

The Matthew 16:13-18:20 Chiasm and Its Implications for the Beginning of Jesus' ἐκκλησία

Within Evangelicalism, broadly speaking, there are three predominant views concerning the beginning of the church. First, there are those who, in accordance with their understanding of the church as the continuation of believing Israel from the Old Testament, believe that the church has been in existence since the Patriarchal period. For example, Grudem says of the origins of the church:

Jesus Christ himself builds the church by calling his people to himself. He promised, "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18) ...But this process whereby Christ builds the church is just a continuation of the pattern established by God in the Old Testament whereby he called people to himself to be a worshipping assembly before him. There are several indications *in the Old Testament* that God thought of his people as a "church," a people assembled for the purpose of worshipping God.²⁶⁶

Grudem largely follows the thought of Louis Berkhof concerning the beginning of the church, though Berkhof goes even further and is more explicit in his explanation of the existence of the church in the Old Testament. He says:

...the Church existed in the old dispensation as well as in the new, and was essentially the same in both, in spite of acknowledged institutional and administrative differences... The Church is essentially, as was pointed out in the preceding, the community of believers, and this community existed from the beginning of the old dispensation right down to the present time and will continue to exist on earth until the end of the world.²⁶⁷

On this view, since the church has existed since the beginning of history, there is no clear "beginning" of the church, at least not in the sense that it can be discerned in Scripture--except to say that it began at the same point history began.

Second, on the "opposite end" of the ecclesiological spectrum, as far as the beginning of the church is concerned, is the position that Jesus' ἐκκλησία, as distinct and discontinuous with

²⁶⁶ Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 853–54.

²⁶⁷ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 632.

national Israel, has a clear beginning which can be seen in the New Testament. According to Allison:

From the perspective of Jesus Christ during his earthly ministry, the church was a future reality. Specifically, with reference to Peter's confession of Christ's identity, Jesus explained that "on this rock I will build [οικοδομήσω (oikodomēsō), future tense] my church" (Matt. 16:18). This future point was not specified, but other New Testament affirmations demarcate it as subsequent to the death, resurrection, and ascension (e.g., Matt. 16:21). Only after these events would the Father exalt the Son; only as the crucified, resurrected, and ascended Lord over all would Jesus become the head of the church, which is his body (Eph. 1:19-23)...the church began at Pentecost and did not exist prior to that event...²⁶⁸

Especially important in Allison's discussion of the beginning of the church are specific markers indicating that it did not take place until after Pentecost. Christ baptizes His followers with the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13; Jn. 1:33) in order to incorporate them into the church, which did not take place until Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4), and the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not distributed to the followers of Jesus until after his ascension (Eph. 4:7-11). In addition, "The extreme contrast between the bumbling, self-centered, fearful followers before the crucifixion and resurrection and the perceptive, self-sacrificing, courageous missionaries after Pentecost must be attributed in part to the sending and outpouring of the Spirit..."²⁶⁹ The marks, distinctive to the church, then point to the fact that the church actually came into existence at Pentecost, according to Allison (and many others following dispensationalist/progressive dispensationalist views).²⁷⁰

Third is a position somewhere in between the two already discussed. Erickson, while affirming that the church has replaced Israel (see discussion of Erickson's position on the

²⁶⁸ Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 80–82.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 81–82.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 80ff.

relationship of the church and Israel above), also affirms that the church has a clear beginning in the New Testament. As he explains:

It is notable, however, that Jesus makes only two references to the church (Matt. 16:18; 18:17), and that in the former case he is speaking of the future (“I will build my church”). The fact that Luke never uses ἐκκλησία in his Gospel but employs it twenty-four times in Acts is also significant. It would seem that he did not regard the church as present until the period covered in Acts... We conclude that the church originated at Pentecost... Does this mean that we who are now part of the church will be forever in a separate grouping from the Old Testament believers? I would suggest, instead, that those who were part of Israel prior to Pentecost have been incorporated into the church... Israel was not, then, simply succeeded by the church; Israel was included within the church. The people of God are truly one people; the body of Christ is truly one body.²⁷¹

Thus, Erickson actually gives very little evidence to support his conclusion that the church began at Pentecost. But, in holding to the idea that the church and Israel are distinct, it would seem quite important to show why any distinction/starting point at all is seen in the New Testament.

The preceding summary of the three positions is admittedly somewhat heavy on quotations from the various authors. However, this is very helpful for the purpose of recognizing that all three (representative) theologians point to Matthew 16:18 in support of their widely varying views on the beginning of the church. Grudem sees it as confirming the pattern of the church that has existed in all ages, while the other two see it as pointing to a future act of building that will take place. Allison sees it as the future building of something new/distinct from Israel. Erickson takes it to mean the future building of the church, but with a lack of clarity as to what the distinction is apart from the initiation of the New Covenant (more on this below).

What is highly significant to point out here is that, without proper exegetical context for the meaning of Matthew 16:18, i.e., understanding it in light of it being part of a larger chiastic structure, that key verse is susceptible to being interpreted to fit widely divergent ecclesiological views/understandings (e.g., what it means in relation to the beginning of the church). This

²⁷¹ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2013, 969–70.

somewhat amazing divergence accentuates the need for the exegetical clarification the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasmus provides in regard to the beginning of the ἐκκλησία which Jesus said he would build.

What is immediately obvious—and which is pointed out by many studying the beginning of the church, including Allison and Erickson, as discussed above—is that Jesus uses the future tense (οἰκοδομήσω) when He declares that he will build His ἐκκλησία in Matthew 16:18. What is less frequently noted is the future-oriented nature of both Matthew 16:13-20 and 18:15-20, the very important outer (A and A') pairing of the chiastic structure. In Matthew 16:13-20, after Jesus probes the disciples concerning the understanding of who He is and Peter's confession of Him as Messiah, not only does Jesus declare in 16:18 that He “will build” (οἰκοδομήσω) His ἐκκλησία, but He also declares that the gates of Hades “will not prevail” (κατισχύσουσιν) against it. Then, in 16:19, Jesus says, “I will give” (δώσω) the keys to the kingdom of heaven, which is followed by the binding and loosing statement (καὶ ὃ ἐὰν δήσῃς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἔσται δεδεμένον ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς, καὶ ὃ ἐὰν λύσῃς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἔσται λελυμένον ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς), which contains two future perfect periphrastics (future indicative of εἰμί with a perfect passive participle).

In 18:15-20, Jesus begins with a potential situation, as evidenced by the presence of the third class conditional structure, which, in this case, could be a hypothetical but more likely is a future occurrence.²⁷² Jesus then gives the binding and loosing formula again in 18:18 (ὅσα ἐὰν δήσητε ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἔσται δεδεμένα ἐν οὐρανῷ, καὶ ὅσα ἐὰν λύσητε ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἔσται λελυμένα ἐν οὐρανῷ)—almost verbatim with that in 16:19—again containing the future perfect periphrastic, and in 18:20 declares that, “if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done (γενήσεται) for them by my Father in heaven.” In understanding the two passages together (as

²⁷² See, Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 696ff. Though it is beyond the scope of this work to make an in-depth argument for which understanding of third class condition is correct here, the general sense of what follows would seem to indicate that the probable future occurrence is the best understanding.

was done earlier in interpreting the Matt 16:13-18:20 chiasmus), and realizing that, in addition to bracketing the entire structure, the A' portion clarifies/intensifies the A portion in some manner, the future/not-yet-present nature of the church seems to be highlighted.

Also notable in the chiastic structure is the overall future orientation of the material contained within, which seems to point to an imminent beginning for the church Jesus declared he would build. In the remaining internal layers of the chiastic structure, there is a repeated theme of Jesus having to suffer and die at the hands of the Jewish religious leaders and then be raised on the third day (16:21-22; 17:9-12; 17:22-23). In addition to the repeated pointing to His coming suffering, death, and resurrection, there is also a tenor of the way things will be in the time ahead throughout the structure. Jesus says in 16:25, “For whoever would save his life will lose (ἀπολέσει) it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find (εὕρήσει) it” and, in 16:27, “The Son of Man is going to come (μέλλει ἔρχεσθαι) ...He will repay (ἀποδώσει),” clearly pointing to future events. In 17:17, he exclaims, “You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you?,” indicating a point in the near future in which He will no longer bear with them. Then, in 18:1-14, as discussed in more detail in the interpretation of the 16:13-18:20 chiasm above, Jesus seems to be pointing to the need for humility and the proper attitude for true discipleship in the church. Thus, by understanding the chiasmus as a whole, rather than simply taking 16:18 and 18:17 as independent references to the church, it is abundantly clear that this immensely important ecclesiological section is pointing toward sometime in the future in its references to the church Jesus declared He would build.

Does the Matthew 16:13-18:20 Chiasm Support the Beginning of Jesus’ ἐκκλησία at Pentecost?

This evidence, inasmuch as it points to the discontinuity with national Israel and to a future beginning for the church, perhaps after the death and resurrection of Jesus, is most in line

with the view espoused by Allison. But, whether or not the chiastic structure and the subsequent connections to the latter part of Matthew and the early chapters of Acts points to that future beginning as the Day of Pentecost remains to be evaluated.

It is often argued that the beginning of the church and the inception of the New Covenant are simultaneous. As such, the events of the Day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2 are what demarcates the beginning of the church. But, is there more that should be taken into account biblically before drawing such a far-reaching theological conclusion? The answer is yes, and it is necessary to go back to the Old Testament to amass the evidence for that assertion.

As early as the context leading up to, and immediately following, Deuteronomy 30:1-10, when the Mosaic covenant is being renewed, there are hints that the Mosaic Covenant will be a failure due to the sin of the people of Israel, and it will be replaced by a new covenant. This takes place much later, as spoken of by the prophet Jeremiah:

"Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. "They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." (Jer. 31:31-34)

The wording here makes it clear that this "new covenant" will be superior to the old covenant, as the law will be written on their hearts of God's people, they will have personal, intimate knowledge of the Lord, and He will deal with their sin through forgiveness.

This expectation of a new covenant is then heightened in the oft-recognized parallel passage in Ezekiel:

"For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will

cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. (Ezek. 36:24-27)

The themes of forgiveness (here represented by “sprinkling with clean water”) and a renewed/new heart are repeated from Jeremiah, but Ezekiel adds a third element: a new spirit, the Spirit of God Himself, who will be put into the people of God, causing them to obey rather than disobey, as they had done in their failure to keep the laws of the Mosaic covenant. This indwelling of God’s Spirit is unprecedented to this point in the history of God’s people.²⁷³

From these passages in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, however, it is not at all clear that the new covenant God is promising through these prophets is for anyone other than the nation of Israel. However, Joel picks up remarkably similar themes in 2:28-32a:

"It will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions. Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, Blood, fire and columns of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness And the moon into blood Before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD Will be delivered.

As Allison explains, “Joel’s prophecy anticipates a fresh, future, unprecedented outpouring of the same Spirit that would significantly eclipse his old covenant work. Indeed, the Spirit would be poured out on all people: men and women, young and old, slave and free.”²⁷⁴ So, while Joel continues similar themes for the new covenant, his prophecy begins to reveal that it will go beyond just the people of Israel.

²⁷³ Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 70ff.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 71–72.

This prophecy from Joel is, of course, the passage that Peter quotes in total in Acts 2, and, as such, demonstrates clearly that Pentecost is the inception of the New Covenant. There is then compelling evidence that, from the perspective of the New Testament writers, the recipients of the New Covenant are not simply the people of national Israel, but both Jews and Gentiles who are in Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 3; Heb. 8:6-12; Eph. 2:11ff.; Mt. 26:27-28). Allison concludes:

...the church is the church of the new covenant. Like the other covenants found in Scripture, the new covenant (1) is unilateral, established by God and God only. Indeed, the provision for this covenant—the death of Jesus...—“was foreknown before the foundation of the world” (1 Pet. 1:20)...(2) creates a structured relationship between God and his covenant partners, who consist of people “from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Rev. 5:9)...(3) features binding obligations, which some have summarized as “the Great Commandment” (Matt. 22:37-40) and “the Great Commission” (Matt. 28:19-20)...(4) involves two covenantal signs: baptism, the sign of entrance into new covenant relationship with God and into the covenant community, the church; and the Lord’s Supper, the sign of ongoing new covenant relationship with God and the covenant community, the church.²⁷⁵

The evidence from the Old Testament clearly points to a new covenant that will in some way replace the old covenant, the recipients of which will be all people rather than specifically national Israel.²⁷⁶ And, as is indicated by Allison, the evidence from the New Testament writers shows that the recipients are all people who are in Christ, i.e., the church that Jesus declared he would build. So, the new covenant and the church are inextricably linked in some way.

Therefore, in one sense, it may be correct, based on the preceding evidence, to understand the formal beginning of Jesus’ ἐκκλησία as contemporaneous with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and initiation of the New Covenant in Acts 2. However, in light of the new exegetical data

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 78.

²⁷⁶ While it is not expressly stated that the new covenant will be with anyone other than Israel, what seems to be happening is, at the point of Peter’s preaching at Pentecost, the formal building of the church begins with the seed (see analogy below) of those from among Israel with mustard-seed sized faith, which grows into the larger entity of the church, at which point the gentiles are grafted in (cf. Rom. 11) as part of the church and partakers of the New Covenant.

from the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasmus and its subsequent connections to the rest of Matthew and the early part of Acts, presented earlier in this dissertation, more must be said concerning the beginning of the church as it relates to those followers of Jesus in the period between the chiastic structure and the events of Acts 2.

Allison hints at such an understanding when he says, "...I conclude that the disciples were prepared for future leadership in his church, which came into existence at Pentecost. The nascent form was established during Jesus' earthly ministry and awaited the Spirit's vital breath to enliven and empower it, thereby constituting the church the living body of Christ."²⁷⁷ What the chiastic reading of Matthew 16:13-18:20 does, then, is to sketch a clearer picture of what that "nascent form" is and provide a way to understand what Jesus is doing concerning His ἐκκλησία in Matthew 18-28 and Acts 1, in order to categorize (spiritually) those followers of Jesus in this interim period.

One could simply say that Jesus is preparing his disciples for leadership in His church during this interim period, as Allison does. But, given that Jesus has rejected the unbelieving and perverted generation of Israel, it seems to leave the Apostles and those with "mustard seed"-sized-faith (see Matt 17:19) theologically stranded, so to speak. This group is likely not a small number, taking into account that Paul says Jesus appeared to "more than 500 brethren at one time" (1 Cor. 15:6) during the post-resurrection period, and in Acts about 120 brethren were gathered together in the upper room (Acts 1:15), and John says that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John the Baptist (John 4:1-2). Depending on how much overlap there is between the 500 to whom Jesus appeared and the 120 gathered in the upper room, not to mention those followers of Jesus from outlying areas who were not part of these groups, and the "little ones" (see Matt 18:1ff.) who were following Him, it seems reasonable to conclude that

²⁷⁷ Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 82.

during this period there were at least 600 followers of Jesus (brethren), and perhaps significantly more.

It appears that there are basically three options for categorizing these “brethren” in the period between Jesus’ declaration that He would build His church and the events at Pentecost in Acts 2: 1) they are still part of the Old Testament ἐκκλησία of Israel (ἐκκλησία κυρίου); 2) they are in some kind of theological limbo, essentially free-floating until Pentecost; or 3) they are connected in a significant way to Jesus’ ἐκκλησία, even prior to its full establishment/empowerment at Pentecost.

The first option seems highly unlikely. That seems to be the case especially in light of Jesus’ rejection of the present, faithless generation of Israel and the indications in the chiasmic structure and, beyond that, He is doing/building something new and distinct (see above).

The second option seems to be that taken by Allison, though he doesn’t say it in such explicit terms. He notes the marked distinction between the, “...bumbling, self-centered, fearful, followers before the crucifixion and resurrection and the perceptive, self-sacrificing, courageous missionaries after Pentecost...” and concludes that, “...the disciples were prepared by Jesus for future leadership in his church, which came into existence at Pentecost.”²⁷⁸

However, to simply say that Jesus was preparing them for leadership in the future ἐκκλησία—though that is certainly true of the Apostles and a few others—falls short of doing justice to what was actually taking place, especially in light of the significant number of Jesus’s followers that would have likely been effectively “free-floating” spiritually during that interim period, awaiting the time when they would take up leadership to be exercised in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Suffice it to say here that the best conclusion among the three options is that the chiasmic reading of Matthew 16:13-18:20 and its further implications for the remainder of Matthew and

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 81–82.

Acts support the third option: that the followers of Jesus were, during the period of time between Matthew 18 and Acts 2, connected in some significant way to Jesus' ἐκκλησία. The chiasm in Matthew 16:13-18:20 points to certain things that Jesus' followers would/should do as His disciples/part of His ἐκκλησία. Though these have been discussed at length above in the interpretation of the chiasm, it will be helpful here to review some of these points briefly.

Jesus gives "the keys to the kingdom" in Matthew 16:19 (which would be fulfilled by Peter's preaching at Pentecost and the miracles the Apostles are able to do in Acts 2-5) and the "binding and loosing," mentioned in both Matthew 16:19 and 18:18 (this may be seen in the instance of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5). Jesus also says in the chiasm: "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me," (Matt. 16:24) and speaks of losing one's life to save it (16:25-26). Then, in chapter 18, Jesus also points out that becoming like children and child-like humility are necessary for entrance into the kingdom and whoever receives a little one in His name receives Him.

By understanding Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiastically, then, it is seen that Jesus is already putting key elements of His ἐκκλησία in place in the "interim" period between the declaration to build His church and the pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost. For example, the Apostles, who are confirmed to be the foundation of the church (cf. Eph. 2:20; as well as the twelve foundation stones of the wall of the New Jerusalem in Rev. 21:14), are introduced to the fact that Jesus is doing something new and distinct, and those who have confessed him as Messiah will be what His ἐκκλησία is built on. They exercise the keys to the kingdom (Matt. 16:19) and the binding and loosing (16:19; 18:18) through Peter's preaching at Pentecost and the miracles the Apostles are able to do in Acts 2-5, and in the encounter with Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5. Then, examples of humbling/taking up one's cross can be seen in disciples of Jesus, such as Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, who went to Pilate to request Jesus' body, and buried it, and the

women disciples who are at the crucifixion and return to the tomb. Even little children come to Jesus (Matt. 19:13ff.), in addition to others throughout the remainder of Matthew who truly believe (see 17:20).

Therefore, it seems quite clear that at least some pieces of the church are in place/being put into place virtually from the time Jesus declares He will build His ἐκκλησία (16:18). How then should this period (and this group of people) be understood if not in some kind of theological limbo awaiting the full empowerment at Pentecost?

Perhaps the best way to understand this is by use of an analogy that Jesus himself used. In the central layers of the chiasmus in Matthew 16:13-18:20, Jesus contrasts the faithless and perverted generation of Israel with those who have faith like a mustard seed. In the context, this is faith, even very small at this point, in Jesus as the Messiah, for it from those who, like the Apostles (initially Peter), confess Him as Messiah that Jesus will build His church.

Just a few chapters earlier, Jesus uses the parable of the mustard seed to explain that the kingdom of heaven, though it will start very small, will grow into something immense. This seems to be the case with the followers of Jesus between Matthew 16:18 and Acts 2: Those with faith are part of the seed, the very small grain, which will become an immense body called the ἐκκλησία of Jesus in the book of Acts.

Another analogy in line with what Jesus says in the chiasmus is that those with mustard-seed-sized faith are like building blocks Jesus is gathering in His early ἐκκλησία-building program. The building plan has been laid out (in the chiasm and the Matthean Great Commission), the Apostles are the foundation (as mentioned above), and those who take up their cross/humble themselves like children are the materials being gathered for the construction to begin, and Jesus himself will, after his death, burial, and resurrection, become the chief cornerstone (cf. Acts 4). It would seem, then, that they are more than simply faithful followers

awaiting the building project to begin, but rather they are already part of Jesus's ἐκκλησία to be built. That is, in the same sense that materials (perhaps like custom-made pieces) that are gathered to be used in a building project are already in some sense part of the thing to be built.

In sum, what happens in Matthew 18-28 through Acts 1 seems to be an initiatory stage that overlaps the theological twilight of the old covenant period, while a number of the things highlighted in the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasm play out—especially the Jesus's suffering, death, and resurrection—setting the stage for the coming of the New Covenant at Pentecost. It thus seems best to say that those who are followers of Jesus during the period from the end of Matthew 18 through Acts 1 form what might be called the proto-ἐκκλησία (the seed), which will develop into the full-fledged ἐκκλησία (the large tree) with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit when the New Covenant begins in Acts on the Day of Pentecost.

Concluding Thoughts on Ecclesiological Implications

Without any reasonable doubt, the passages in Matthew containing the only uses of the word ἐκκλησία (Matthew 16:18 and 18:17) in the Gospels, words spoken by Jesus himself, have exceedingly important implications for ecclesiology. It has been demonstrated in this chapter that properly understanding them in light of their place in a larger chiastic structure (i.e., 16:13-18:20) sheds new light on a proper understanding of what the church is, its relationship to national Israel, and the beginning of Jesus' ἐκκλησία. While the findings here do not *drastically* differ from previous theological positions concerning the church, they do provide clear evidence that the proto-ecclesiology in Matthew appears to have substantially influenced the development of Luke's ecclesiology in the earlier chapters of Acts. These findings support an understanding of the church as something both new and distinct from Israel. Also, while it seems accurate to

say that the *formal* beginning/*full empowerment* of Jesus's ἐκκλησία took place on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), it is also the case that the seed of the church, the proto-ἐκκλησία, began during the portion of Jesus's ministry covered by Matthew 18-28 through Acts 1.

CONCLUSION

As stated at the outset of this dissertation, the purpose of this work has been to establish the connection of the two passages in Matthew containing the only uses of the word ἐκκλησία in the Gospels (Matt 16:13-20 and 18:15-20) through demonstrating that they are part of a larger literary structure called a chiasmus. Since this structure has, until quite recently,²⁷⁹ been undetected by New Testament scholarship (i.e., modern or otherwise), significant evidence was required to establish its legitimacy.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 1 of this work showed that chiasmus is an oft-used and important literary device in Scripture. While inverted parallelisms were a common device used by Hebrew writers in the Old Testament,²⁸⁰ chiasmus was used with some frequency by the New Testament authors, including Matthew.²⁸¹

²⁷⁹ Luter and Dodson, “Hidden in Plain View: An Overlooked Chiasm in Matthew 16:13-18:20.”

²⁸⁰ Alden, “Chiastic Psalms”; Boadt, “A”; Breck, “Chiasmus as a Key to Biblical Interpretation”; Ceresko, “Function of Chiasmus in Hebrew Poetry”; Ceresko, “The A”; Dorsey, “Literary Structuring in the Song of Songs”; Lund, “The Presence of Chiasmus in the Old Testament”; Luter, *Song of Songs*; Radday, “Chiasmus in Hebrew Biblical Narrative”; Shea, “The Chiastic Structure of the Song of Songs.”

²⁸¹ Blomberg, “The Structure of 2 Corinthians 1-7”; Craig Blomberg and Jennifer Foutz Markley, *A Handbook of New Testament Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010); Boerman, “The Chiastic Structure of Matthew 11-12”; Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language*; Breck, “Chiasmus as a Key to Biblical Interpretation”; Culpepper, “The Pivot of John’s Prologue”; Dewey, “Literary Structure of the Controversy Stories in Mark 2”; Paul Gaechter, *Die literarische Kunst im Matthäus-Evangelium* (Stuttgart: KBW, 1969); Girard, “La Composition Structurelle Des ‘signes’ Dans Le Quatrième Évangile”; Rhee, “The Role of Chiasm for Understanding Christology in Hebrews 1”; Jeremias, “Chiasmus in Den Paulusbriefen”; Lohr, “Oral Techniques in the Gospel of Matthew”; Lund, “The Influence of Chiasmus upon the Structure of the Gospels”; Lund, “The Influence of Chiasmus upon the Structure of the Gospel According to Matthew”; Pizzuto, “The Structural Elegance of Matthew 1-2”; Scholtz, “Behold the Glory of the King”; Scott, “Chiastic Structure”; Stock, “Chiastic Awareness and Education in Antiquity”; Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*; Vanhoye, *Structure and Message of the Epistle to the Hebrews*; Welch, *Chiasmus in Antiquity*.

Even though many are accused of seeing such structures where they may not exist, certain criteria have been consistently proposed by various authors, especially to evaluate the existence of extended chiasms.²⁸² While the criteria given by scholars such as Welch, Breck, and Blomberg are particularly helpful, it proved necessary to synthesize these criteria into a more serviceable single set of criteria for evaluating the chiasmus in question (i.e., Matthew 16:13-18:20). This synthesis resulted in the development of the following set of criteria, which are separated into tiers of significance:

A Graded Synthesis of Criteria for Extended Chiasmus (Dodson)

Tier	Criterion	Description
1 – Critical Components	Parallelism and Symmetry	There is evidence of parallelism between corresponding layers of proposed chiasmus and a symmetrical arrangement of those layers
	Significance at center	A central element of ethical or theological significance toward which the author desires the entire structure to point
	Dominance of important words/phrases/themes	Parallelism between symmetrical layers involves significant words, phrases, and or themes, not trivial language or ideas
	Closure/Return	The beginning and end, the outermost layers, create a sense of completion or closure – there is strong parallelism between the beginning and ending elements
2 – Strong Support	Density	More sets of corresponding layers and fewer irrelevancies within lead to a higher likelihood of the presence of chiasmus

²⁸² See especially, Blomberg, “The Structure of 2 Corinthians 1-7”; Welch, “Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating the Presence of Chiasmus”; Welch, *Chiasmus in Antiquity*; Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language*.

	Repeated elements	Verbal and/or conceptual parallels should involve words or ideas that are not found elsewhere in the proposed chiasmus
	Boundaries	Proposed chiasmus divides the text at natural breaks and does not violate the natural structuring of the text
	Primary structuring device	Chiasmus is the primary structuring device and is not in competition with other proposed structures for the text – there is some difficulty in perceiving the structure of a text, which chiasmus helps to overcome
3 – Marginal Supporting Evidence	Compatibility	Chiasmus is compatible with the author’s style – chiasmus found elsewhere in the author’s writing(s)
	Purpose	There is a clear literary reason for the use of chiasmus

This “Graded Synthesis of Criteria for Extended Chiasmus,” which has been very useful in evaluating and establishing the legitimacy of the chiastic structuring of Matthew 16:13-18:20, should be of further value for future work in determining the validity of other proposed larger chiastic structures in the New Testament. In addition, it is the hope of this author that, beyond demonstrating more conclusively whether the passages in question are part of such a structure, these graded criteria will be a contribution to broader fields of literary criticism and the study of Scripture as a whole.

Chapter 2 was devoted to laying out the proposed structure of the chiasmus in Matthew 16:13-18:20 and demonstrating the ways in which the corresponding layers complement one another. After displaying the structure of the chiasmus, the “Graded Synthesis of Criteria for Extended Chiasmus” was used to evaluate the likelihood that the structure is, in fact, a valid chiasmus. The results of this evaluation show that the evidence for the validity of the existence

of this structure in Matthew 16:13-18:20 is quite strong. Thus, the proposed inverted parallel structuring should be taken seriously.

Having therefore established the existence of this structure in Chapter 2, it was the task of Chapter 3 to evaluate the meaning of the structure as a whole. While a merely straightforward reading of the passages encompassed in wider section being studied (i.e., Matt 16:13-18:20) has led to widely divergent understandings of their significance, a chiastic reading allows new light to be shed on their significance. The chiastic reading of Matthew 16:13-18:20 not only lends clarity to the meaning of the verses within the structure, as the corresponding layers help to inform one another through amplification, contrast, intensification, etc., but other significant insights were revealed as well. For example, not only does understanding the passage as chiastic help one better understand the passage itself, but it has been shown to be quite significant in the overall understanding of the Gospel of Matthew as well. The chiasm, in essence, functions as a sort of turning point or lens as the clues or pointers from earlier in the Gospel build up to the chiasm. In addition, there are significant ideas within the chiasm that point forward, connecting it to the remainder of Matthew's Gospel, especially the Matthean statement of the Great Commission (28:16-20), as well as beyond to the Book of Acts.

Since the ἐκκλησία passages in Matthew 16 and 18 and the Book of Acts are of such obviously great ecclesiological significance, any connection between them must necessarily also be of great importance. Therefore, Chapter 4 carefully examined those two passages, resulting in several important discoveries. In Acts, especially Acts 2:1-6:1, Luke provided important pointers back to the chiasm in Matthew 16:13-18:20 and to the Great Commission statement in Matthew 28:16-20. Notably, Luke withholds the use of the most foundational and significant ecclesiological terminology (ἐκκλησία and μαθητής) until Acts 5:11 and 6:1, indicating he is at pains to establish that it is the ἐκκλησία that Jesus said he would build—not some other

ἐκκλησία—that is, in fact, being established and built up in the earlier chapters of Acts. Also, once Luke does begin to use the terms ἐκκλησία and μαθητής in Acts, there is clear, ample evidence that he uses the two terms interchangeably. Such interchangeability means that “making disciples” (the imperative in the Great Commission in Matt 28:19) is the means by which Jesus intended His ἐκκλησία to be built, and that is precisely what is occurring in moving forward in the narrative of Acts from 5:11 and 6:1.

The first four chapters of the dissertation built the case for the existence of the extended chiasm in Matthew 16:13-18:20, established its meaning as such a sophisticated literary structure, and demonstrated the connections to the Matthean Commission and Acts. Throughout this process, some very significant exegetical insights emerged, both in regard to the chiastic structure in Matthew 16:13-18:20 and the remaining portions of the First Gospel, as well as the Book of Acts. Accordingly, Chapter 5 considered the implications of these exegetical steps forward as to their impact on a biblical ecclesiology. By understanding Matthew 16:13-18:20 as chiasmus, it becomes immediately evident that an attempt to define what the church is, or at least the meaning of ἐκκλησία in the New Testament, must take this crucial passage seriously. Unfortunately, that has not been the case with too many theologians. It seems that, since the connection between the uses of ἐκκλησία in Matthew 16 and 18 has not been previously made—at least not nearly to the extent it has in the current dissertation, surprisingly little value has been given to these passages for carefully understanding what the ἐκκλησία said he would build (Matt 16:18) actually is. However, based on the work done in the previous chapters, it was shown in Chapter 5 that these passages do indeed have much to offer as the exegetical evidence from the extended chiasm and connections to other passages are fleshed out.

Two very significant ecclesiological issues to which the chiastic structure and subsequent connections appear to speak—the continuity/discontinuity between national Israel and the

ἐκκλησία and the beginning of the church—were addressed in Chapter 5. What the exegetical evidence from the chiasmic structure supports is the position that there is discontinuity between Israel and the church, most notably by Jesus’ rejection of the present generation of Israel in order to create something new/distinct: to build His ἐκκλησία. This is evidenced in the chiasm by the juxtaposition of the faithless and perverted γενεὰ (Matt. 17:17) with those who have faith the size of a mustard seed (Matt. 17:20) in the two significant central layers (F/F’) of the structure and through connections to passages such as Jesus sending out of the Twelve in Matthew 10 to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but commissioning his followers in Matthew 28 to make disciples of all the nations. The distinction of the church from Israel is also evidenced by the uniqueness of Jesus’ ἐκκλησία—as opposed to the ἐκκλησία of Israel seen in the Old Testament—which is demonstrated both in the chiasm itself (especially in Matt. 16:18, where Jesus says, οἰκοδομήσω μου τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, [“I will build *my* church”]) and by the connections/pointers in the early chapters of Acts, which reveal Luke’s intentionality in delaying use of the significant ecclesiological terms ἐκκλησία and μαθηταί until 5:11 and 6:1 respectively, to more clearly show that it is the unique ἐκκλησία of Jesus that is being built in his second volume. While this idea of the distinction within national Israel is certainly not a new one, as it has been espoused by those who hold to dispensationalism (to varying degrees) for more than a century, this chapter presented what is certainly fresh evidence in support of that view.

The beginning of the church, which is closely linked to one’s position regarding the relationship between Israel and the church, was also addressed in Chapter 5. While the evidence from the chiasmus in Matthew and the passages connected to it seems, at first glance, to provide evidence for the conclusion that the formal/full beginning of the church took place at Pentecost, in Acts 2, it also provides additional insight into what is happening with those faithful followers of Jesus in the period between His declaration that His ἐκκλησία would be built (Matt 16:18) and

the full-blown beginning of the church. Based on the substantial exegetical evidence compiled in this dissertation, a good bit more can be said theologically concerning this interim period than has been done previously by those who hold to the Acts 2 beginning of the church. What is being set forth here is that, while the full empowerment of Jesus' ἐκκλησία through the coming of the Holy Spirit did indeed take place at Pentecost, contemporaneous with the implementation of the New Covenant, rather than conclude the faithful disciples of Jesus, during the "interim" period, were either still part of the faithless/rejected γενεά or in a kind of theological limbo, it is better to understand them as the "proto-ἐκκλησία." They are, as such, already gathered/prepared foundation stones and building blocks of Jesus' forthcoming ἐκκλησία. This fresh distinction provides both: 1) a clearer understanding of the earliest phase of biblical ecclesiology; and 2) better expresses the fact that, while the *formal* beginning of Jesus' ἐκκλησία did take place at Pentecost, the building process had already begun in a significant way—a much more consequential way than previously espoused by most theologians—during the latter part of Jesus' earthly ministry.

Areas for Further Research

This dissertation has provided substantial evidence for the existence of a chiastic structure in Matthew 16:13-18:20, which, in modern scholarship, previously has gone undetected (prior to the work of this author along with a colleague²⁸³). In addition, this dissertation has developed the chiastic reading of that significant passage, demonstrated its connections to the rest of Matthew—especially the Matthean Great Commission, and to the Book of Acts, and explored some of the important ecclesiological implications of the exegetical evidence gleaned

²⁸³ Luter and Dodson, "Hidden in Plain View: An Overlooked Chiasm in Matthew 16:13-18:20."

from this work. However, these findings are by no means the full extent of what the discovery of this significant chiasmus can lead to. This work, while seeking to be as careful and thorough as possible, has in certain respects only “scratched the surface” of what might be done as a result.

In the more general study of chiastic structure, it is the hope of this author that the “Graded Synthesis of Criteria for Extended Chiasmus” (as seen above), which was developed in this dissertation (based on the work of several preeminent scholars in their study of chiasmus), specifically to evaluate the structure in Matthew 16:13-18:20, will prove to be a valuable tool for the detecting and evaluating of the validity of other such structures within the Scriptures.

A possible initial place for such study would be a fuller evaluation of the proposed chiastic structuring of Acts 2 set forth in Chapter 4 above. It was beyond the scope of this work (and scholarly support already existed for the presence of a chiasm within that chapter of Acts²⁸⁴) to do a full evaluation of the chiastic structure in Acts 2. However, using the “Graded Synthesis of Criteria for Extended Chiasmus” to evaluate this passage would surely be a valuable contribution and may provide further insights into the chapter itself, clearer connections to the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasmus, and even prove to have some additional ecclesiological implications, as this passage is so frequently pointed to as the beginning of Jesus’ ἐκκλησία.

Also, while much research was sifted in the preceding chapters to better grasp the connection between the two ἐκκλησία passages in Matthew—the only two instances where this highly important term is used in the Gospels—by developing the chiastic reading of Matthew 16:13-18:20, it remains to be seen if further insights can be gained concerning the meaning of the specific passages within the chiastic structure itself. As noted above, understanding chiastically structured Scripture is something that would have been much more natural to first century

²⁸⁴ See, Keener, *Acts*; Bailey, *Poet and Peasant and through Peasant Eyes*; Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*.

readers/hearers of the Gospel. Thus, it is quite possible that deeper insights into the meaning of the chiasm itself and of the pericopes within may be developed.

One well-known issue within the structure in which the chiasmic reading developed in this dissertation may lead to further insights is the meaning of the significant binding/loosing language seen in the two outer layers (A/A'). While the repetition, almost verbatim, of this binding and loosing formula helps establish the very strong connection between Matthew 16:13-20 and 18:15-20, there is not previously a strong consensus among scholars as to its actual meaning.²⁸⁵ Perhaps further development of these two passages as corresponding layers in the chiasmus will lead to a better understanding of the ecclesiological implications of this binding/loosing terminology. It is the belief of this author that such further insights would only add to the understanding of Matthew's Gospel and the author's proto-ecclesiology, which has been shown to have influenced Luke's ecclesiology in the Book of Acts.

Since the research presented in this dissertation has demonstrated that there is a strong theological connection between the Gospel of Matthew and the Book of Acts, especially as it concerns the building of the church (i.e., the proto-ecclesiology of Matthew and its outworking in the early chapters of Luke's second volume),²⁸⁶ the existence of the clues/pointers from Matthew ahead to Acts and from Acts back to Matthew may lend further insights into the area of synoptic studies. While it is common for scholars to understand Matthew's Gospel to have been written prior Luke, it is interesting to note that a number of Gospels scholars, such as Richard

²⁸⁵ Derrett, "Binding and Loosing (Matt 16)"; Duling, "Binding and Loosing"; Haar, "Binding and Loosing"; Hiers, "'Binding' and 'Loosing,'" June 1985; Marcus, "The Gates of Hades and the Keys of the Kingdom (Matt 16)"; Powell, "Binding and Loosing," December 2003.

²⁸⁶ A. Boyd Luter and Nicholas Dodson, "'Matthean Theological Priority?': Making Sense of Matthew's Proto-Ecclesiology in Acts 1-14."

Bauckham, do not conclude that the Apostle Matthew wrote the First Gospel.²⁸⁷ Perhaps the evidence of the “theological deference” given by Luke to Matthew’s Gospel, as it pertains to Jesus’ ἐκκλησία as developed here, will shed further light on this issue in the future.

Concerning the theological implications, the evidence that points to a clear distinction between Israel and the church was addressed, as well as the additional insights the exegetical study provided for understanding the beginning of the church. What should be noted is that, while the evidence from the study does support the church as distinct from national Israel, that does not mean (as noted above) Israel is simply cut off and has no future in God’s plan. Proving the discontinuity between Israel and the church does not speak to what will happen to Israel long-term. That “faithless and perverted γενεά” will have its house left desolate (Matt 23:36), not one stone of the Temple left upon another (24:2) when, at the end of the “generation,” Jerusalem and the Second Temple are destroyed by the Romans in AD 70. Then, Jerusalem will be trampled under by the Gentiles until “the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (Lk 21:24). At the conclusion of the “times of the Gentiles,” “the fulness of the Gentiles” will have come in (i.e., be saved), then “all Israel will be saved” (Rom 11:25-26). Thus, Israel is not being permanently eliminated from God’s plan. She is still God’s Old covenant people and she does have a future beyond the judgment of the “faithless and perverted γενεά” of Jesus’s day. So, upon further investigation of the Matthew 16:13-18:20 chiasmus and its subsequent connects, there may well be very significant additional information to be gleaned concerning the future of national Israel as well.

Another area of potential further ecclesiological research is the development of the implications of the chiastic structure in Matthew as they relate not only to the theological

²⁸⁷ E.g., Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), 108–12; See also, Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*; France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 2007.

significance concerning national Israel and the inception of the church, but other areas of ecclesiological interest as well. One such area that shows promise for further investigation related to the chiasmic structure is what might be called characteristics or marks of the church.

Allison identifies seven characteristics of the church:

...the church is (1) *doxological*, or oriented to the glory of God; (2) *logocentric*, or focused on the Word of God, understood to refer to Jesus Christ the incarnate Word and Scripture the inspired Word; (3) *pneumadynamic*, or created, gathered, gifted, and empowered by the Holy Spirit; (4) *covenantal*, or gathered as members in (new) covenant relationship with God and in covenant relationship with each other; (5) *confessional*, or united by both personal confession of faith in Christ and common confession of the historic Christian faith; (6) *missional*, or identified as the body of divinely called and divinely sent ministers to proclaim the gospel and advance the kingdom of God; and (7) *spacio-temporal/eschatological*, or assembled as a historical reality (located in space and time) and possessing a certain hope and clear destiny while it lives the strangeness of ecclesial existence in the here-and-now.²⁸⁸

While these characteristics of the church seem to largely encompass what most (Evangelicals) would agree to be the distinguishing marks of the church, further application of the exegetical evidence from the chiasmus in Matthew, and its connections to the Great Commission and Acts, may give additional support and/or clarity what some of these specific characteristics look like (e.g., the foundational importance of the missional characteristic in that), as addressed above in the discussion of the interchangeability of ἐκκλησία and μαθηταί, which demonstrates that the Great Commission is the means by which Jesus intended His ἐκκλησία to be built—building the church (or “advancing the kingdom,” as Allison calls it) is making disciples.

²⁸⁸ Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 103.

Final Thoughts

After an in-depth examination, it can be said with confidence that there is ample evidence to support the existence of the chiastic structure connecting the two significant ecclesiological passages in Matthew's Gospel (16:13-20 and 18:15-20). What has become evident after the identification of this chiasmus and very careful study of it as such is that the structure not only connects the only two uses of ἐκκλησία in the Gospels, but also serves as something like a lens or turning point through which the focus of the entire book seems to transition *from* the bringing of the good news to the present day γενεά of Israel *to* the new/distinct entity that Jesus is going to build. There are also clear pointers/connection within this passage that link it to Matthew's version of the Great Commission, as well as pointers in the early chapters of Acts that show a major theological reliance of Luke on the proto-ecclesiology of Matthew. Then, as demonstrated in Chapter 5, there are highly significant implications for ecclesiology to be gleaned from this fresh understanding of Matthew 16:13-18:20.

It is the hope of this author that the research and analysis set forth in this dissertation will lead to further clarity in understanding not only this focal passage itself, but also Matthew's Gospel as a whole, and to a more complete, biblically-informed ecclesiology.

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APPENDIX: THE EXEGETICAL/THEOLOGICAL CRUX OF MATTHEW 16:17-19 IN LIGHT OF A CHIASTIC READING

As noted in the introduction to this work, Matthew 16:17-19 is a very well-known and much discussed passage, which is of great significance to New Testament interpreters and theologians, especially those concerned with the nature and structure of the Church. There have been innumerable pages written about this passage, as its interpretation has been a point of great contention, especially between Protestants and Catholics since the Reformation Era. However, even before the Reformation there were disagreements among the Church Fathers. Citing Jean de Launoy's *Opera Omnia*, Burgess explains that among the fathers, "...seventeen said the rock was Peter, eight said the rock was the Apostles and their successors, forty-four said the rock was the faith which Peter had just confessed, and sixteen said the rock was Christ."²⁸⁹ Since the Reformation there have been various interpretations, but most follow along these same lines. Christopher Green helpfully summarizes the options commonly seen among interpreters today. He explains:

There are broadly five ways to understand what Jesus meant, and all five can claim support from both the Early Church and the present...

Option 1: The rock is Peter himself as leader, and the church is the institution he founded...

Option 2: The rock is Peter's confession...

Option 3: The rock is Jesus' teaching...

Option 4: The rock is Jesus himself...

Option 5: The rock is Peter because he has just confessed Christ.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁹ Jean de Launoy, *Joannis Launoii ... Opera omnia ...: tomi quarti pars prima [-secunda]* (sumptibus Fabri & Barrillot sociorum et Marci-Michaelis Bousquet & sociorum, 1731) as cited in, Joseph A. Burgess, *A History of the Exegesis of Matthew 16: 17-19 from 1781 to 1965* (Ann Arbor, MI: Edwards Brothers, 1976), 5.

²⁹⁰ Christopher Green, *The Message of the Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 86–89.

These five options, as Green refers to them, are broad, but they are still representative of the mainstream positions which are held concerning this passage. With that in mind, it will be helpful to examine these options in light of the chiastic reading of Matthew 16:13-18:20, in order to see which of these, if any, helps to clarify the best way to understand Matthew 16:17-19.

Option 1 is the classic position taken by the Roman Catholic Church. Based on this understanding, Peter is the rock on which the church will be built, the leader who would found the institutional church. The Catholic church has used this passage to claim authority over the church for the Pope as the successor of Peter in this role (i.e., with Peter as the first Pope)²⁹¹ As Green points out, there are some assumptions built into this understanding, which call the Roman Catholic interpretation into question: “[F]irst, that Peter was the most senior of the apostles, second that he was the first bishop of Rome and that Rome has a primacy over the other churches, and third that Jesus intended Peter to pass the role of bishop of Rome to his successors, and that he did so.”²⁹²

While these assumptions could be, in themselves, problematic, these issues have been addressed well elsewhere²⁹³ and are beyond the scope of the present work. What is, however, within the scope of this work is to evaluate this interpretation and the underlying assumptions in the context of the now identified chiasmus of which these verses are a part.

In light of the chiastic reading of this passage, in which the corresponding layers inform one another, it seems highly unlikely that Option 1 is the correct way to understand 16:17-19. While many scholars may make good arguments for Peter as the rock, the leader of the church,

²⁹¹ Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*; Curtis Mitch and Edward P. Sri, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010).

²⁹² Green, *The Message of the Church*, 87.

²⁹³ Cf. Ulrich Luz and Helmut Koester, *Matthew 8-20: A Commentary*, Hermeneia--a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001).

when looking at just this passage and the immediately surrounding context, the link to what has been called above the A' layer is, as can now be seen, essential for rightly understanding these verses. Jesus does point out Peter individually in 16:17-19 and, in some sense, gives him “the keys to the kingdom of heaven” and the authority of “binding and loosing,” as discussed above. However, the narrowing that takes place in 16:13-20 down to Peter, who confessed Jesus as the Messiah, is contrasted in the A' layer by a widening to the larger ἐκκλησία: those who gather in His name, to whom He also gives the authority to bind and loose. Also, taking into account that, while this chiasm is about Jesus’s (future tense) building of His ἐκκλησία, as evidenced by the focus of the two outer layers of this even-numbered pair structure, the structure itself points to humility and ultimately faith as foundational for the building of Jesus’ ἐκκλησία. Even within the chiasmus itself, when the disciples ask Jesus who is the greatest among them (18:1)—a passage not commonly directly connected to 16:17-19, but now so in light of the identification of the chiasmus—Jesus could have easily expounded on his declaration from chapter 16, *if* it were in fact about Peter, but He does not do so. It is clear from the chiastic reading of Matthew 16:13-18:20, then, that Option 1 is unlikely.

Option 2, that the rock is Peter’s confession, seems more promising in light of the chiastic reading. According to Green, the main argument for this option is that Peter (πέτρος) and this rock (πέτρα), because they are different genders, point to different subjects—i.e., πέτρος to Simon and πέτρα to words he had spoken. While the argument based on the gender of the nouns may not be convincing for many, it should be taken into account. Also, based on the above examination of the passage in the chiastic structure, there is something about the confession specifically (i.e., that Jesus is Messiah) that is foundational for the building of the ἐκκλησία. At this point, it is best to move on to discussion of the other options and return to Option 2.

Jesus' teaching as the "rock" is the third option given above. Those who follow Option 3, according to Green, often point to Jesus' teaching in Matthew 7:24: "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock." However, Green believes that, even though there are superficial similarities, the cross-reference is too subtle.²⁹⁴ Nothing in the chiastic reading of the passage supports Option 3, and since everything in the larger chiasm points to the idea that the building of the ἐκκλησία will be based on more than just correct teaching, but rather on true discipleship and faith, this does not seem to be the best option.

Option 4 (i.e. that the "rock" is Jesus himself) is attested by many of the church fathers and points to instances of similar language for Jesus and for God in the Old Testament for support. In Matthew 21:42-44, Jesus refers to himself as the cornerstone. Paul, in 1 Cor. 10:4, says that the people of Israel "were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ." Also, "rock" is used as a title for God several times throughout the OT. Again, nothing in the chiastic reading of the passage specifically supports this, and, in the overall context of the chiasm, it becomes clear that Jesus is not pointing to himself as the foundation of the ἐκκλησία He will build. He is instead, repeatedly trying to get the disciples to see that they are the foundation; they will make up the ἐκκλησία.

The last of the major interpretations of Matthew 16:17-19 is Option 5 (i.e., the "rock" is Peter, because he has just confessed Christ). It is plausible that there is a "balancing" of Peter's identification of who Jesus is and of Jesus's of Peter, as is pointed out by many commentators.²⁹⁵ In fact, many contend that the only really natural reading of the passage is that the rock is Peter

²⁹⁴ Green, *The Message of the Church*, 88.

²⁹⁵ Cf. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 2007; Dale C. Allison, ed., *Matthew: A Shorter Commentary* (London ; New York: T & T Clark International, 2004); Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew* and others.

and, if it were not for the Protestant reaction to Catholic interpretation, it is unlikely that anyone would take it differently.²⁹⁶ Allison goes as far as to say,

‘This rock’ has been identified variously with Peter’s faith or confession, with his preaching office, with the truth revealed to him, with the twelve apostles, with Jesus, with Jesus’ teaching, and even with God himself. All this is special pleading. The most natural interpretation of the Greek is that of the Roman Catholic tradition: the rock is Peter.²⁹⁷

It is clear though, as discussed earlier, that there has been a multiplicity of interpretations, ever since the patristic period. So, perhaps Allison is going too far to say that this is the most natural interpretation. However, the idea that “the rock” is Peter, because he has just confessed Jesus as Messiah, holds more promise in light of the chiastic reading above.

As mentioned above, Option 2 can now be revisited, as Option 5 is actually a combination of Options 1 and 2. Many Protestant scholars see Peter as the rock and acknowledge that he has some special role, but they deny the interpretation of Catholic scholars, which leads to understanding Peter to be the first Pope. However, the implications of this position are often not very well fleshed out, because understanding the rock as Peter without understanding it in the context of the larger chiasmus leaves one without any place to go other than to say Peter’s role is in some way significant.

A commentator that does quite well in explaining the meaning here that best fits with the chiastic reading is Craig Keener. Keener explains:

Jesus’ teaching is the *ultimate* foundation for the disciples (7:24-27; cf. 1 Cor 3:11), but here Peter functions as the foundation rock as the apostles and prophets do in Ephesians 2:20-21. Jesus does not simply assign this role arbitrarily to Peter, however; Peter is the “rock” *because* he is the one who confessed Jesus as the Christ in this context (16:15-16). The Gospel has developed Peter’s character to this point, making him the spokesperson

²⁹⁶ Green, *The Message of the Church*.

²⁹⁷ Allison, *Matthew*, 269.

for the disciples, hence the prototypical church leader. Others who share his proclamation also share his authority in building the church (18:18 with 16:19).²⁹⁸

While Keener Does not identify the chiastic structure linking the A and A' layers, he does make the very important connection just seen between 16:19 and 18:18. As discussed above, 16:15-19 narrows down to Peter and his confession, but 18:15-20 widens out to the larger ἐκκλησία. As the rest of the chiastic structure shows, it will be those who share in Peter's proclamation that will build the church, but it will be with something distinct from the present generation of Israel. It will be those who are willing to humble themselves, who are willing to suffer, who have true faith in Jesus as the Messiah who would suffer, die, and be raised again after three days.

²⁹⁸ Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 427.