

Parallels

Synonymous Parallelism

The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it;
for he founded it upon the seas
and established it upon the waters. (Ps. 24:1-2)

Antithetical Parallelism

“A fool gives full vent to his anger,
but a wise man keeps himself under control.” (Proverbs 29.11)

Chiastic Parallelism

“The torrent would have gone
over us;
Then **over us**
would have gone the raging waters.” (Psalm 124.4-5)

How parallelism helps us understand a passage:

1. One statement can clarify another

Isaiah 55:6

John 6:40 and 6:54

2 Timothy 2.13

“If we are faithless,
he will remain faithful
for he cannot disown himself.”

2. One statement can amplify the other

Psalm 62:11-12

Core Seminars—How to Study the Bible Class 9: Structure & Parallelism



“And God spoke all these words ...” (Exodus 20.1)

I. Structure

Two questions to ask about structure

Has the author divided his material into sections?
How do those sections fit together?

Examples of structure

- At the book level: Daniel 1-9
- At the chapter level: Isaiah 40
- The importance of structure: 1 Corinthians 13

How to find structure

- Look for recurring words or themes
- In narratives, look for scene changes
- In dialog, look at who is talking
- Identify progression of thought or argument

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How to use structure

- Give each section a title
- Identify how the pieces fit together
- Outline your passage
- Memorize your passage

Class Exercise: John 18:12-27

Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jewish leaders that it would be good if one man died for the people. Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard, but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the servant girl on duty there and brought Peter in. "You aren't one of this man's disciples too, are you?" she asked Peter. He replied, "I am not." It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself. Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. "I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus replied. "I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said." When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby slapped him in the face. "Is this the way you answer the high priest?" he demanded. "If I said something wrong," Jesus replied, "testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?" Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest. Meanwhile, Simon Peter was still standing there warming himself. So they asked him, "You aren't one of his disciples too, are you?" He denied it, saying, "I am not." One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, "Didn't I see you with him in the garden?" Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow.

Some Common Types of Structure in the Bible

Bookends

Book-level example: Romans. Beginning: "Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among **all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith.**" (Romans 1.5)

End: "... But now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the Eternal God, so that **all nations might believe and obey him.**" (Romans 16.26)

Passage-Level Example: Sermon on the Mount: Mathew 5:3-10

Chiasms

Class Exercise: Genesis 11:1-8 --The Tower of Bable

Now the whole world

had one language and a common speech ...

they found a plain in Shinar and settled there.

They said to each other, "Come, let us make bricks ..."

Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower ...

But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building ...

The Lord said, "Come, let us go down and confuse ..."

It was called Babel--because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world

(Other Chiasm examples: Daniel 2-9 (chapter chiasm), John 1.1-2, and Jonah 1.4-15)