

Examples of Biblical Chiasms

Chiasm (or chiasmus): a sequence of ideas, phrases, and/or clauses that is presented and then repeated back in reverse order.

- In a proper chiasm, the main point or key focus is usually expressed at the center of the structure
- The parallel lines (A and A', B and B', etc.) explain, clarify, and expand on each other, building up to some primary focal point.

Mark 2:27 (KJV):

A – The Sabbath

B – was made for man,

B' – and not man

A' – for the Sabbath.

Structure: ABB'A'

Key Focus: The Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28).

Matthew 20:16 (KJV):

A – So the last

B – shall be first,

B' – and the first

A' – last.

Structure: ABB'A'

Key Focus: Many be called, but few chosen (Matt. 20:16)

Genesis 9:6 (ESV):

A – Whoever sheds

B – the blood

C – of man,

C' – by man

B' – shall his blood

A' – be shed.

Structure: ABCC'B'A'

Key Focus: In the Image of God Made He Man (Gen. 9:6).

John 4:23-24 (KJV):

A – But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth:

B – for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.

C – God is a Spirit:

B' – and they that worship Him

A' – must worship Him in spirit and truth.

Structure: ABCB'A'

Key Focus: God is a Spirit, and thus ought to be worshiped as such.

1 John 3:9 (KJV):

A – Whosoever is born of God

B – doth not commit sin;

C – for His seed remaineth in Him:

B' – and he cannot sin,

A' – because he is born of God.

Structure: ABCB'A'

Key Focus: Those truly born of God will remain in Him.

1 Peter 1:23-25 (KJV):

A – Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God,

B – which liveth and abideth for ever.

C – For all flesh is as grass,

D – and all the glory of man as the flower of grass.

C' – The grass withereth,

D' – and the flower thereof falleth away:

B' – But the Word of the Lord endureth forever.

A' – And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.

Structure: ABCDC'D'B'A'

Key Focus: Although our flesh is fleeting, the Word of God is eternal.

Proverbs 6:16-19 (KJV):

These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto Him:

A – A proud look,

B – a lying tongue,

C – and hands that shed innocent blood,

D – an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations,

C' – feet that be swift in running to mischief,

B' – A false witness that speaketh lies,

A' – and he that soweth discord among brethren.

Structure: ABCDC'B'A'

Key Focus: It is the wickedness of the heart and its products that the Lord hates.

Genesis 3:5-22 (KJV):

A – **Becoming like Gods:** Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil (3:5)

B – **Clothing Their Nakedness:** They sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons (3:7)

C – **The Unnamed Wife:** Adam and his wife hid themselves (3:8)

D – **The Questioning of Adam:** And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him (3:9-12)

E – **The Questioning of Eve:** And the LORD God said unto the woman (3:13)

F – **The Cursing of the Serpent:** And the LORD God said unto the serpent (3:13-15)

E' – **The Cursing of Eve:** Unto the woman He said (3:16)

D' – **The Cursing of Adam:** And unto Adam He said (3:17-19)

C' – **The Named Wife:** Adam called his wife's name Eve (3:20)

B' – **Clothing Their Nakedness:** Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skin, and clothed them (3:21)

A' – **Becoming like Gods:** The man is become as one of Us, to know good and evil (3:22)

Structure: ABCDEF'E'D'C'B'A'

Key Focus: God responds to and/or redeems every aspect of mankind's sin through the defeat of the Serpent in the Gospel.

The Sermon on the Mount May Have a Chiastic Structure

(Matt. 5:1 – 8:1):

A – The Context: The Crowds Gather, Jesus Ascends the Mountain, and He Speaks (5:1-2)

B – Intro: Beatitudes (3rd Person) and Persecution (2nd Person) (5:3-16)

C – Main Section Intro: The Law and the Prophets (5:17-20)

D – Deepening the Law of Moses: Anger, Lust, Divorce, Oaths, Retaliation, Love (5:21-48)

E – Righteousness Before God: No Hypocrisy in Almsgiving and Prayer (6:1-6)

F – Teaching on Prayer: No Empty Phrases (6:7-8)

G – The Lord's Prayer (6:9-13)

F' – Teaching on Prayer: The Need for Forgiveness (6:14-15)

E' – Righteousness Before God: No Hypocrisy in Fasting (6:16-18)

D' – Deepening the Law of Moses: Possessions, Anxiety, Judgment, Asking (6:19-7:11)

C' – Main Section Conclusion: The Law and the Prophets (7:12)

B' – Conclusion: False Prophets (2nd Person) and the Rock (3rd Person) (7:13-27)

A' – The Context: Jesus Finishes Speaking, He Descends the Mountain, and the Crowds are Amazed (7:28-8:1)

Structure: ABCDEFGF'E'D'C'B'A'

Key Focus: Because Christ has fulfilled the Law and the Prophets, those to whom the Kingdom of God is given recognize their sinful and creaturely position before God, wish to see His will accomplished in their lives, and trust in Him for all their needs.