

Hermeneutics

Session 4

Biblical Genres: Poetry

Parallelism

Psa. 5:0 TO THE CHOIRMASTER: FOR THE FLUTES. A PSALM OF DAVID.

Psa. 5:1 Give ear to my words, O LORD;

consider my groaning.

Psa. 5:2 Give attention to the sound of my cry,

my King and my God,

for to you do I pray.

Psa. 5:3 O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice;

in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch.

Parallelism of Psalm 54

- Psa. 54:1 O God, save me by your name
 and vindicate me by your might.
- Psa. 54:2 O God, hear my prayer;
 give ear to the words of my mouth.

Types of Parallelism

- Synonymous Parallelism (similar thoughts)
- Antithetic Parallelism (contrasting thoughts)
- Synthetic Parallelism (additional thoughts)

Synonymous Parallelism

IDENTICAL: Uses the same, or nearly the same words

Prov. 6:2 **if you are snared in the words of your mouth,**
 caught in the words of your mouth,

SIMILAR: A similar thought, but the language or figures of speech are different

Psa. 24:2 **for he has founded it upon the seas**
 and established it upon the rivers.

INVERTED: The order of thought between the paralleled lines is reversed.

Is. 11:13b **Ephraim shall not be jealous of Judah,**
 and Judah shall not harass Ephraim.

Antithetic Parallelism

SIMPLE: *The contrast between opposing thoughts is expressed in two lines.*

Prov. 14:34 **Righteousness exalts a nation,**
 but sin is a reproach to any people.

COMPOUND: *There are two or more lines in each part of the contrast.*

Is. 1:3 **The ox knows its owner,**
 and the donkey its master's crib,
 but Israel does not know,
 my people do not understand."

Synthetic Parallelism (Cumulative)

Psa. 1:1 Blessed is the man
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;

Psa. 1:2 but his delight is in the law of the LORD,
and on his law he meditates day and night.

Job's first speech (Job chapter 3)

The theme of day and night in Job 3:3-10

Job 3:4 Let that day be darkness!
 May God above not seek it,
 nor light shine upon it.

Job 3:5 Let gloom and deep darkness claim it.
 Let clouds dwell upon it;
 let the blackness of the day terrify it.

Job's first speech (Job chapter 3)

The theme of day and night in Job 3:3-10

Job 3:6 That night—let thick darkness seize it!
 Let it not rejoice among the days of the year;
 let it not come into the number of the months.

Job 3:7 Behold, let that night be barren;
 let no joyful cry enter it.

Form of Job 3:11

Job 3:11 “Why did I not **die** at **birth**,
come out from the womb and **expire**?”

Example of Synonymous Parallelism

- Similar thought in both lines

Subtype is Inverted Synonymous Parallelism

- In the first line, “die” comes before “birth”
- In the second line, “come out from the womb” comes before “expire”

Form of Job 3:9-10

Job 3:9 Let the stars of its dawn be dark;
let it hope for light, but have none,
nor see the eyelids of the morning,

Job 3:10 because it did not shut the doors of my mother's womb,
nor hide trouble from my eyes.

Example of Synthetic Cumulative Parallelism:

- The lines of verse 9 escalate up a staircase of emotion
- Verse 10 finishes the thought

Interpretive Principles

- Poetry, like in the Psalms, uses emphatic language
- Examine the parallelism of the poetry
- The Psalms express the full range of human emotion
 - Calvin: the Psalms are “the anatomy of all the parts of the soul”
- The Psalms are inspired by the Holy Spirit, and express truth
- Imprecatory psalms are to be handled with care, but have meaning to us today