

Chiastic Q

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In my paper on the Lukan travel narrative, I argued that much of Luke 9:57—18:14 is from Q. Here I want to demonstrate the likeliness that Luke was considering one source with little interruption for this portion of his gospel by considering the structure of Q. In his commentary on Q, Fleddermann argues that Q sets out to answer two questions: “Who is Jesus?” and “What does it mean to be his disciple?”¹ Many have noted that Q 3:1 – 7:35 functions as a unit, beginning and ending with the relationship between John and Jesus, who is at each end identified as ὁ ἐρχόμενος.² Some, including Fleddermann, have argued that this section is chiastic.³ Notably, a number of scholars have also attempted to demonstrate a chiastic structure to the Lukan travel narrative,⁴ but have ultimately failed because some passages do not fit the chiasm. Blomberg therefore argues that the chiastic nature of the travel narrative must be due to Luke’s source rather than to Luke’s own creativity.⁵ Blomberg seems to be correct here, but because he was working from the assumption that the parables in the travel narrative come from a source other than the Q material, he limits the chiasm to the parables and postulates a “parables source” that includes Luke 10:25-37; 11:5-8, 11-13; 12:13-21, 35-38; 13:1-9; 14:1-6, 7-24, 28-

¹ Harry T. Fleddermann, *Q: A Reconstruction and Commentary* (Biblical Tools and Studies; Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 102.

² T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1949), 39-71; Arland D. Jacobson, *The First Gospel: An Introduction to Q* (Sonoma, Calif.: Polebridge, 1992), 24, 127, 156; John Dominic Crossan, *In Fragments: The Aphorisms of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), 156; Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The Jesus Tradition in Q* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1997), 8-11; Alan Kirk, *The Composition of the Sayings Source: Genre, Synchrony, and Wisdom Redaction in Q* (NovTSup 91; New York: Brill, 1998), 364-397; Fleddermann, *Q*, 112-114.

³ Kirk, *Composition*, 364-397; Allison, *Jesus Tradition*, 8-11; Fleddermann, *Q*, 112-114.

⁴ See, for example, M. D. Goulder, “The Chiastic Structure of the Lucan Journey,” *TU 87* (1964): 195-202, and Charles H. Talbert, *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes, and the Genre of Luke-Acts* (Missoula: SBL, 1974), 51-52.

⁵ Craig L. Blomberg, “Midrash, Chiasmus, and the Outline of Luke’s Central Section,” in *Studies in Midrash and Historiography* (ed. R.T. France and David Wenham; vol. 3 of *Gospel Perspectives*; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983), 217-261.

33; 15:1-32; 16:1-13, 19-31; 17:7-10; 18:1-8, 9-14.⁶ We have argued, however, that most, if not all, of these passages are from Q. Moreover, Blomberg recognizes that the Q material here coheres topically with the nearest parable and therefore suggests that Luke rearranged his Q material to fit the outline of the chiasmic parables source.⁷ A more likely explanation is that Q is itself chiasmic, with the first chiasm answering Fleddermann’s first question, “Who is Jesus?” and the second chiasm answering the second question, “What does it mean to be his disciple?” The second chiasm could be outlined as follows:

A. 7:36 – 8:3	A’. 23:27 – 24:12	Love and Forgiveness
B. 9:57 – 10:24	B’. 22:14-38	Mission
???	C’. 19:11-27	Faithfulness
D. 10:25-37	D’. 18:9-14	Pride and Self-Justification
E. 11:1-13	E’. 18:1-8	Prayer
F. 11:14-26, 29-36	F’. 17:20-37	The Presence of the Kingdom
G. 11:37-52; 12:1-12	G’. 17:1-10	Israel’s Failed Leadership
H. 12:13-21	H’. 16:14-31	Riches
I. 12:22-59	I’. 16:1-13	Wise Management
J. 13:1-9	J’. 15:1-32	Repentance
K. 13:10-21, 23-35	K’. 14:1-35	The Cross and the Sabbath Rest

According to this outline, Luke has inserted into his Q material only two pericopes in Luke 9:57 – 18:14: Mary and Martha (10:38-42) and the Ten Lepers (17:11-19), which are notably the only two pericopes that are predominantly narrative rather than discourse. Perhaps Luke added the story of Mary and Martha where he did to prevent the reader from

⁶ Blomberg, “Midrash,” 243.

⁷ Blomberg, “Midrash,” 244-247.

overemphasizing works based on an unbalanced reading of the parable of the Good Samaritan. He likely also added the references to Jesus' journey to Jerusalem at 13:22 and 17:11 and may have decided to place the Ten Lepers story with the second of these references. Once these pericopes are removed, what remains is chiastic, though there seems to be no parallel to Q 19:11-27. It is possible that the parallel overlapped Mark's parable of the Wicked Tenants and was thus skipped over until Luke came to the proper place in the Markan narrative. This would explain why Matthew and Luke agree against Mark in alluding to Isa 8 and Dan 2 after the quotation of Psalm 118, but this is of course highly speculative. The above outline also includes passages that have not yet been discussed in this paper, most notably 7:36 – 8:3 and 23:27 – 24:12. A strong case can be made for the inclusion of these passages, but due to space constraints the case must be made elsewhere. Regardless, a case can be made for a chiastic structure here that includes every Q pericope that has been proposed by this paper.

Q 9:57 – 10:24 and 22:14-38: Mission. The allusion to Q 10:4 (“Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals”) in Luke 22:35-36 (“When I sent you without purse or bag or sandals, . . .”) suggests that the two passages parallel one another. Luke 22:35-36 is part of a lengthier pericope that is primarily words of Jesus and that contains two verses that have a Matthean parallel and are therefore included in CEQ. Other parallels between Q 9:57 – 10:24 and Luke 22:14-38 can be noted. First, both passages emphasize the nearness of the kingdom (10:9, 11; 22:16, 18; βασιλεία occurs four times in each passage; no other Lukan pericope has as many occurrences of βασιλεία). Second, both passages anticipate rejection. Third, the promise that the disciples would “eat and drink” at Jesus’ table and judge the twelve tribes of Israel (22:30) echoes the offer to the seventy-two to “eat and drink” what is provided as wages for their labor (10:7) as well as the call to wipe from their feet the dust of every city that rejects them (10:10-11).

Finally, the call to “become as the youngest” (22:26) echoes the confession that God has revealed these things to children (10:21).

Q 10:25-37 and 18:9-14: Pride and Self-Justification. We argued above that Luke 10:25-37 is from Q. The parable of the Good Samaritan is Jesus’ response to a man who “wants to justify himself.” The word δικαιώω is used in reference to a person only two other times in Luke (Luke/Q 16:15; 18:14). The latter, the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, is a clear parallel to Q 10:25-37. It is spoken to “some who trust in themselves that they are just” (18:9). The two parables begin similarly (ἄνθρωπός τις κατέβαινε ἀπὸ Ἱερουσαλήμ, 10:30; ἄνθρωποι δύο ἀνέβησαν εἰς τὸ ἱερόν, 18:10). Each parable has an expected hero (priest/Levite, Pharisee) who does the wrong thing and an expected villain (Samaritan, tax collector) who does the right thing and is ultimately justified.⁸ In both parables the expected hero remains at a distance (ἀντιπαρήλθεν, σταθεὶς πρὸς ἑαυτὸν) from the one on whom God has compassion. Finally, these are the only two parables with a fixed location, and in both cases the location is given “to show that God’s service is not localized in the temple along lines of conventional understanding.”⁹

Q 11:1-13 and 18:1-8: Prayer. Twice in Luke Jesus teaches on prayer, both times emphasizing persistence in prayer. In both passages one person goes to another (καὶ πορεύσεται πρὸς αὐτὸν μεσονυκτίου καὶ εἶπη αὐτῷ, 11:5 / καὶ ἦρχετο πρὸς αὐτὸν λέγουσα, 18:3) expecting to receive something he/she lacks. In both cases the request is first refused (11:7; 18:4) and then a concessive first class condition (εἰ καὶ οὐ + 1st person indicative verb + διὰ γε, a construction found in the NT only at Luke 11:7-8 and 18:4) is given to explain why the person changes his mind. In both cases the reason given is the first person’s persistence – he/she has “caused

⁸ Blomberg, “Midrash,” 240.

⁹ Blomberg, “Midrash,” 240.

trouble” (παρέχω + κόπος; the word κόπος occurs nowhere else in either Q or Luke). In both cases Jesus follows the parable with an explanation of how it applies to prayer (11:9-10; 18:6-8); both explanations contain the expression λέγω ὑμῖν. In both cases Jesus also follows the parable with a rhetorical question assuring the reader that God is more generous than the person in the parable.¹⁰

Q 11:14-26, 29-36 and 17:20-37: The Presence of the Kingdom. Though Luke breaks up the pericope by adding verses 27-28, Q 11:14-26, 29-36 were certainly viewed as one unit in Q as the narrative introduction (11:14-16) introduces both challenges that are addressed in this pericope. Q 17:20-37 parallels Q 11:14-26, 29-36 in a number of ways. First, the lament against “this generation” (Q 11:29, 30, 31, 32) is taken up again in Q 17:25. Second, just as Q 11:30-32 compares “the Son of Man” to Jonah and then to Solomon, Q 17:26-33 compares “the days of the Son of Man” to the days of Noah and then to the days of Lot. The wording is remarkably similar (compare, e.g., 11:30 and 17:26). Third, in both Q 11:20 and 17:20-21 Jesus tells the Pharisees that the kingdom has already come, an idea not explicated elsewhere. Fourth, in both Q 11:29 and 17:20 Jesus explains that a sign will not be given. Fifth, the word ἀστραπή (lightning), which occurs only these two times in Q, is used in both Q 11:36 and 17:24 to refer to the clarity with which the days of the Son of Man should be recognized.

Q 11:37 – 12:12 and 17:1-10: Israel’s Failed Leadership. We have already argued that Luke 11:53-54 is a Lukan conclusion to the Q passage and was not in Q. Therefore, Q 11:37 – 12:12 was originally one pericope rather than two. Both this passage and Q 17:1-10 begin with woes, each set of woes concluding with how the censured has been the downfall of others (11:44, 52; 17:2) and therefore severe judgment is announced (11:50; 17:2). In both passages these woes are immediately followed by the phrase προσέχετε ἑαυτοῖς. The word προσέχω occurs nowhere

¹⁰ Blomberg, “Midrash,” 241.

else in Q. Q 11:37 – 12:12 continues with an exhortation to fear God and acknowledge him before men, while Q 17:1-10 continues with an exhortation to put faith in God and serve him freely.

Q 12:13-21 and 16:14-31: Riches. Both Q 12:13-21 and Q 16:14-31 begin with a narrative introduction involving someone who loves money. Then Q 12:14 alludes to Exod 2:14 in a way that contrasts Moses with Jesus, while Q 16:16 contrasts the time of the Law and the Prophets with the present era in which the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached. After this each passage contains a parable about a foolish rich man. The two parables begin with similar expressions (ἀνθρώπου τινὸς πλουσίου εὐφόρησεν ἡ χώρα, 12:16; Ἄνθρωπος δὲ τις ἦν πλούσιος, . . . εὐφραίνόμενος καθ’ ἡμέραν λαμπρῶς, 16:19). In both parables the rich man has many “goods” (ἀγαθά, which is used as a substantive in Luke only at 1:53; 12:18-19; 16:25), leading him to “celebrate” (εὐφραίνω; 12:19; 16:19), but then he loses the goods when he dies.¹¹ Thus the point of both parables is that earthly riches do not benefit a person (and may even harm him/her) once life is done.

Q 12:13-59 and 16:1-31: Wise Management. Q 12:13-59 and 16:1-31 contain two parables about a “steward” (οἰκονόμος, only here in Luke-Acts) entrusted with his master’s “possessions” (ὕπαρχοντα). In both parables we hear the steward’s internal monolog about “my master” (ὁ κύριός μου). In the first parable the steward is called “faithful and wise” (ὁ πιστὸς οἰκονόμος ὁ φρόνιμος, 12:44). The word πιστός occurs elsewhere in Luke only in Luke 19:17 (from Q) and in the conclusion of the second parable (16:10-12). The word φρόνιμος occurs elsewhere in Luke only in the second parable, where it describes the steward and those of this world who are like him (16:8). In each parable the servant is commanded for the way he “acts” (ποιέω, 12:43; 16:8; cf. 12:47-48). Furthermore, the first parable concludes that of everyone to

¹¹ Blomberg notes as well that only in these two parables does the main character die (“Midrash,” 241).

whom much (πολύς) was given, much (πολύς) will be required (12:48). The second parable concludes that the one who is faithful in a little is also faithful in much (πολύς), while the one who is unjust in a little is also unjust in much (πολύς, 16:10). The first parable is introduced with a command to “sell your possessions, give alms, [and] make for yourselves [ποιήσατε ἑαυτοῖς] purses that do not grow old, an inexhaustible treasure in the heavens” (12:33). The second parable is concluded with a command to “make for yourselves [ἑαυτοῖς ποιήσατε] friends from unjust mammon, so that when it runs out they will receive you into eternal dwellings” (16:9). Likewise Q 16:12 questions who would give to you “what is your own” (τὸ ὑμέτερον, i.e. true, eternal riches) if you have been unfaithful in what is someone else’s, while Q 12:31-33 assures the disciples that they need not fear for the Father is pleased to give to them the kingdom and eternal treasures.

Q 13:1-9 and 15:1-32: Repentance. In Luke 13:1-9 Jesus gives two examples that express the need for repentance, closing each example with the same exhortation: “No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish” (13:3, 5). Then Jesus tells the parable of the Barren Fig Tree as a call for Israel to repent. In Luke 15:1-32 Jesus gives two examples that express the joy repentance brings, closing each with a similar exhortation: “In the same way I tell you that there is more joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (15:10, cf. v. 7). Twofold repetition of μετανοέω occurs elsewhere only in Q 17:3-4, where the parallel is not nearly as strong. Furthermore, as in Q 13:1-9, the two examples in Q 15:1-32 are followed by a parable (the Prodigal Son) which calls for Israel (the older brother) to repent. The two passages parallel each other in form, structure, and emphasis.¹²

¹² William R. Farmer, “Notes on a Literary and Form-Critical Analysis of Some of the Synoptic Material Peculiar to Luke,” *NTS* 8 (1961-62): 301-316; Blomberg, “Midrash,” 242.

Q 13:10-21, 23-35 and 14:1-35: The Cross and the Sabbath Rest. The Lukan travel narrative contains two Sabbath healings (13:10-17; 14:1-6). Jesus' defense of his actions is similar in both cases (13:15-16; 14:5) as is the inability of his adversaries to respond (13:17; 14:6). Both healings then lead into a discussion about the spread of the kingdom of God to outsiders (13:18-30; 14:15-24), the fact that Israel's leaders will miss the eschatological banquet (13:23-28; 14:15-24), the need for humility (13:30; 14:7-14), and the need to bear the cross (13:31-35; 14:25-34).

It is thus clear that Q is chiastic, not only at Q 3:1 – 7:35, but also at Q 9:57 – 22:38 (or possibly 7:36 – 24:12). These parallels are not due to Luke's arrangement of the material, for Luke repeatedly obscures the chiastic arrangement. They indicate instead that Luke worked from a chiastic source, namely Q, which is about twice as long as the double tradition.