

The Chiasmic Structure of Luke 1:1-20 (Angelic Prophecy of John the Baptist's Birth)

Luke 1:1-25 consists of two overlapping chiasmic structures. The first one is from Luke 1:1-20 and the second is from Luke 1:5-25. Here, I share Luke 1:1-20. Often, similar elements on opposite sides of the central axis teach us theology, as in the present case with elements D and D'. These combine to teach us that the significance of the temple incense service was that it represented prayers of the saints to God. This is taught explicitly in Revelation 8:3-4 – Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. **He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.** ⁴ **And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand.**

A) Luke 1:1-4 – Ensuring the Good News is Accurately Transmitted

1. set in order a narrative of *those things which have been fulfilled among us*
2. who from the beginning were *eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us*
3. *that you may know* the certainty of those things in which you were instructed

B) Luke 1:5-7b – Faithful Despite Adversity

1. and they were both *well advanced in years*
2. *they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*

C) Luke 1:7a – The Problem of Barrenness

- *But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren*, and they were both well advanced in years

D) Luke 1:8-11 – The Incense Service

- *his lot fell to burn incense* when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of *the people was praying outside at the hour of incense*. Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of *the altar of incense*.

E) Luke 1:12 – And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

D') Luke 1:13a – Prayers of the Saints

- But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, *for your prayer is heard*”

C') Luke 1:13b-15 – The Solution to Barrenness – Life

- *your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth.* For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.

B') Luke 1:16-18b – Unbelief Despite the Promise

1. For I am an *old man, and my wife is well advanced in years*
2. . . . to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and *the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.*”

A') Luke 1:18a-20 – Assurance that the Glad Tidings are True

1. you did not believe *my words which will be fulfilled* in their own time
2. was sent to speak to you and *bring you these glad tidings*
3. *How shall I know this?*