

## The Rhetorical Function of Chiasmus in Acts 2:2-4



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### I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this article is to identify chiasmus in Acts 2:2-4, evaluate the probability that the arrangement is chiasmic, and propose and evaluate possible functions of the arrangement in the immediate context of Acts 2 and the broader context of Luke-Acts. In brief, chiasmus is inverted parallelism. Ian Thomson has defined it more thoroughly as a “bilateral symmetry of four or more elements about a central axis, which may itself lie between two elements, or be a unique central element, the symmetry consisting of any combination of verbal, grammatical or syntactical elements, or, indeed, of ideas and concepts in a given pattern.”<sup>1</sup>

The modern study of chiasmus is sometimes thought to have started with the brief treatment of the subject in Johannes Bengel’s *Gnomon Novi Testamenti* (1742)<sup>2</sup> and Robert Lowth’s *De Sacra Poesi*

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<sup>1</sup> Ian H. Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters* (JSNTSup 111; Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 25–26.

<sup>2</sup> Translated into English in John Albert Bengel, *Gnomon of the New Testament* (ed. Andrew R. Fausset; trans. James Bandinel and Andrew R. Fausset; 2 vols.; 3rd ed.; Philadelphia, PA: Smith, English, and Co./New York: Sheldon and Co., 1860).

*Hebraeorum Praelectiones Academicae* (1753).<sup>3</sup> These early discussions of chiasmus (or related forms of parallelism) did not hold the attention of most scholars until the publication of Nils Lund's 1942 volume, *Chiasmus in the New Testament: A Study in Formgeschichte*.<sup>4</sup> The next major treatment of the subject came in 1981 in a volume of essays entitled *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis*.<sup>5</sup> In the last three decades since that time, a plethora of chiasmic structures (large and small) have been proposed throughout the Hebrew Bible and the Greek New Testament. Especially controversial among many scholars is the legitimacy of macro-chiasms, structures which are said to span across multiple chapters or entire books of the biblical text.<sup>6</sup>

## II. A PROPOSAL OF CHIASMUS IN ACTS 2:2-4

Using the preliminary definition of chiasmus proposed by Thomson, Acts 2:2-4 (in fig. 1 below) exhibits a "bilateral symmetry" of seven elements, one element which comprises "a unique central element," the

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<sup>3</sup> Translated into English in Robert Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of Hebrews* (trans. G. Gregory; 4th ed.; London, UK: Tegg and Co., 1839). Others who followed Bengel and Lowth include John Jebb, *Sacred Literature* (1820); Thomas Boys, *Tactica Sacra* (1824); and John Forbes, *Symmetrical Structure of Scripture* (1854).

<sup>4</sup> Nils Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament: A Study in Formgeschichte* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1942). One of the most significant contributions of Lund is his attempt to identify criteria for identifying chiasmus. He names seven "laws" of chiasmic structures: (1) The center is the turning point of the passage; (2) The center often introduces an antithetical idea and a change in the trend of thought; (3) Identical ideas often occur in the extremes and at the center; (4) Ideas at the center of one chiasmic structure might be contained in the extremes of another system; (5) Certain terms tend toward certain positions in a structure; (6) Larger literary units are often introduced and concluded by "frame-passages"; (7) Both chiasmic lines and alternating lines often occur within a single unit (40-41). Lund goes on to describe instances of chiasmus in the Old Testament, the epistles of Paul, the Gospels, and the book of Revelation.

<sup>5</sup> John W. Welch, ed., *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis* (Hildesheim, Germany: Gerstenberg, 1981).

<sup>6</sup> For discussions of criteria for identifying chiasmus, see Welch, *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, 9-15; D. J. Clark, "Criteria for Identifying Chiasm," *LB* 35 (1975): 63-72; Craig Blomberg, "The Structure of 2 Corinthians 1-7," *CTR* 4.1 (1989): 3-20; Thomson, *Chiasmus*, 27; M. J. Boda, "Chiasmus in Ubiquity: Symmetrical Mirages in Nehemiah 9," *JSOT* 71 (1996): 55-70; David A. deSilva, "X Marks the Spot? A Critique of the Use of Chiasmus in Macro-Structural Analyses of Revelation," *JSNT* 30.3 (2008): 343-371.

symmetry consisting of a combination of “verbal elements” (B, C, C', B') and “ideological concepts” (A, A').

One may observe the ideological relationship between (A) *egeneto* ... *ēchos* (a sound came) and (A') *erxanto lalein heterais glōssais* (they began to speak in other tongues), both of which are phenomena produced by the Holy Spirit. The sound is said to (B) *eplērosen holon ton oikon* (fill the whole house) and (B') *eplēsthēsan pantes* (all were filled). The Spirit fills the house (C) *hou ēsan kathēmenoi* (where they were sitting), and the tongues (C') *ekathisen<sup>7</sup> eph' hena hekaston autōn* (sat upon each one of them). The central statement of the chiasmic structure becomes the axis: *kai ōphthēsan autois diamerizomenai glōssai hōsei pyros* (tongues distributed as fire appeared to them).

<p>A και <b>ἐγένετο</b> ἄφνω ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ <b>ἦχος</b> ὡς περ φορομένης πνοῆς βιαίας <i>And a sound came suddenly from heaven as a mighty rushing wind.</i></p> <p>B και <b>ἐπλήρωσεν</b> ὅλον τὸν οἶκον <i>And it filled the whole house</i></p> <p>C οὗ ἦσαν <b>καθήμενοι</b> <i>where they were sitting.</i></p> <p>D και ὠφθῆσαν αὐτοῖς διαμεριζόμεναι γλῶσσαι ὡσει πυρός <i>And tongues distributed as fire appeared to them.</i></p> <p>C' και <b>ἐκάθισεν</b> ἐφ' ἓνα ἕκαστον αὐτῶν, <i>And it sat upon each one of them.</i></p> <p>B' και <b>ἐπλήσθησαν</b> πάντες πνεύματος ἁγίου <i>And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.</i></p> <p>A' και <b>ἤρξαντο λαλεῖν</b> ἐτέραις γλῶσσαις καθὼς τὸ πνεῦμα ἐδίδου ἀποφθέγγεσθαι αὐτοῖς. <i>And they began to speak with other tongues just as the Spirit was giving to them to speak.</i></p>
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Fig. 1. Chiasmic Structure of Acts 2:2–4.

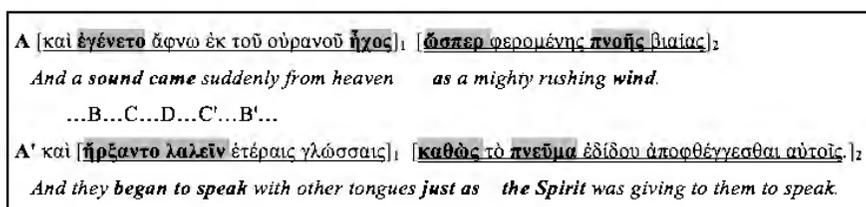
### III. NON-CHIASMIC SYMMETRY

In addition to the chiasmic structure observed above, this passage

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<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that two important NT manuscripts (X and D) contain the plural *ekathisan* rather than the singular *ekathisen* reflected in the NA27. The plural form would suggest *glōssai* as the subject of the clause, and the singular may suggest *pyros* as the subject (denoting the distribution of individual tongues or flames resting on each one of them—*ep' hena hekaston autōn*). The singular reading is more likely original since it is the more difficult of the two.

exhibits further symmetry through non-inverted parallels. In his seven laws of chiasmus, Lund notes: “There is frequently a mixture of chiasmic and alternating lines within one and the same unit.”<sup>8</sup> While Lund fails to elaborate on this point, Thomson explains it as follows: “In a chiasmus ABC...C'B'A', it is sometimes apparent that a given pair of elements (say B and B') can each be resolved into two sub-elements, B<sub>1</sub> and B<sub>2</sub>, and B<sub>1</sub>' and B<sub>2</sub>', where the sub-elements occur without inversion of order. This gives AB(B<sub>1</sub>B<sub>2</sub>)C...C'B'(B<sub>1</sub>'B<sub>2</sub>')A'. In this case, there is no inversion of order of the sub-elements.”<sup>9</sup> The extremities of the chiasm proposed in Acts 2:2–4 seem to exhibit this characteristic as illustrated in figure 2 below.



**Fig. 2. Sub-elements in the Chiasmic Structure of Acts 2:2-4.**

The corresponding sub-elements proposed in figure 2 are A<sub>1</sub> and A<sub>1</sub>', both indicating phenomena produced by the Spirit (noise and tongues, respectively), and A<sub>2</sub> and A<sub>2</sub>', both beginning with comparative markers (*hōsper* and *kathōs*) introducing clauses which provide a fuller description of the event narrated in the respective preceding clauses. Further, *pnoēs* in A<sub>2</sub> and *pneuma* in A<sub>2</sub>' are lexically similar, both derived from *pneō*. If the sub-elements proposed above are legitimately present, the chiasmic structure might be abbreviated as follows: A(A<sub>1</sub>A<sub>2</sub>)BCDC'B'A'(A<sub>1</sub>'A<sub>2</sub>').

<sup>8</sup> Lund, *Chiasmus*, 41.

<sup>9</sup> Thomson, *Chiasmus*, 27 n. 79.

<p>A [καὶ ἐγένετο ἄφνω ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἦχος]<sub>1</sub> [ὡσπερ φερομένης πνοῆς βιαίας]<sub>2</sub>  <i>And a sound came suddenly from heaven as a mighty rushing wind.</i>                  ...B...C...</p>
<p>D [καὶ ὤφθησαν αὐτοῖς διαμεριζόμεναι γλῶσσαι]<sub>1</sub> [ὡσεὶ πυρὸς]<sub>2</sub>  <i>And there appeared to them distributed tongues as fire.</i>                  ...C'...B'...</p>
<p>A' καὶ ἤρξαντο λαλεῖν ἑτέραις γλώσσαις]<sub>1</sub> [καθὼς τὸ πνεῦμα ἐδίδου ἀποφθεγγεσθαι αὐτοῖς]<sub>2</sub>  <i>And they began to speak with other tongues just as the Spirit was giving to them to speak.</i></p>

**Fig. 3. Sub-elements in center of the chiasmic structure of Acts 2:2-4.**

Having established the possibility of the sub-elements noted above, the presence of corresponding sub-elements in the chiasmic center will be proposed (see fig. 3). The addition to the proposal at this point attributes correspondence between D<sub>1</sub>, the manifestation of tongues made visible, and A<sub>1</sub> and A<sub>1</sub>', the descriptions of other manifestations of the Holy Spirit. With reference to D<sub>2</sub>, correspondence is attributed between the comparative *hōsei* (introducing an explanation of the clause which precedes it) and the similar function of the comparatives in A<sub>2</sub> and A<sub>2</sub>'. If this is the case, the chiasmus in Acts 2:2–4 might now be abbreviated as follows: A(A<sub>1</sub>A<sub>2</sub>)BCD(D<sub>1</sub>D<sub>2</sub>)C'B'A'(A<sub>1</sub>'A<sub>2</sub>').

#### IV. PROBABILITY OF INTENTIONAL CHIASMUS

The goal here is to briefly investigate the probability that the parallels are *intentionally* arranged and are not imposed on the text by the interpreter. Chiasmus is less likely in instances where the respective components of the structure divide sentences or clauses in unnatural places. In Acts 2:2–4, the chiasmic structure lines up well with the natural division of the clauses. Every line is an independent clause beginning with *kai*, with the exception of line C which is a relative clause. The presence of this clause (*hou ēsan kathēmenoi*) lends to the intentionality of the arrangement since it seems necessary for the chiasmic structure, not the narrative proper. Further, the chiasmic structure does not compete with other structural markers and, in fact, ends the paragraph which starts in 2:1 (the next paragraph in 2:5 is marked with *de*). Verse 1 functions to establish a new narrative setting in Luke's usual style of using non-aorist verbs (or verbals). Verse 2, where the chiasmic structure commences, begins the simple description of the event on the narrative mainline using aorist verbs. Structural markers such as chiasmus serve to set apart

significant passages in ancient Greek texts, especially considering that most written works were written *scriptio continua*, a style reflected in Codex Sinaiticus, for example (see fig. 4 below).<sup>10</sup>

The second major factor which suggests authorial intentionality is the balanced arrangement of obvious parallels, both lexically (*eplēpōsen* and *eplēsthēsan*, *kathēmenoi* and *ekathisen*) and ideologically (*egeneto ... ēchos* and *erxanto lalein*). Of the seven lines, nearly every part of every clause corresponds with another. The inverted lines are nicely balanced, and the parallels occur in similar places within their respective clauses. The dense symmetry creates a near rhythmic effect as one reads the text aloud. Since it seems, then, that the structure is intentional, an investigation of its function is in order.

## V. THE RHETORICAL FUNCTION OF CHIASMUS IN ACTS 2:2-4

There is debate in general as to the function of chiasmus in a text. Explicit references to chiasmus in ancient discussions of rhetoric do not seem to appear until the fourth century AD.<sup>11</sup> Thomson notes, however, that the modern understanding of chiasmus might be exemplified by certain features of a number of ancient *figurae elocutionis*, including *commutatio* and *figurae*.<sup>12</sup> As for function, Thomson suggests that in relation to the text, chiasmus might be used for artistic expression, as a mnemonic device, and/or as a structuring device; In relation to an argument, chiasmus might be used to aid in the movement of thought or to enhance content.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Welch gives four possible purposes of chiasmus: highlighting a main point by placing it in the center, marking center, marking significant contrasts, aiding memorization, or providing a sense of closure in a selected passage.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The arrow in fig. 4 marks the beginning of Acts 2:2 in the text.

<sup>11</sup> George A. Kennedy points out what seems to be the first reference to the term in Pseudo-Hermogenes which he dates around the fourth century AD; see Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 28.

<sup>12</sup> Thomson, *Chiasmus*, 14.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 34–41.

<sup>14</sup> John W. Welch and Daniel B. McKinlay, *Chiasmus Bibliography* (Provo, UT: Research Press, 1999), 162.



Fig. 4. Acts 2:2-4 in Codex Sinaiticus.<sup>15</sup>

In regard to Acts 2:2-4, could the chiasmic structure have been utilized for aid in memorization? The density and symmetry would certainly lend to its use as a mnemonic device. But how does one determine whether it was ever used this way? It is impossible to assert one way or another. Perhaps Luke was not the originator of the chiasmic structure and the dense arrangement in Acts 2:2-4 was present in an earlier source that Luke utilizes. In this case, the arrangement might reflect an early Christian formulation of the Pentecost event that was easily memorized. Again, it is impossible to prove. It seems that the case for Lukan origination of the chiasmic arrangement is more compelling, however, as the following paragraphs will attempt to show.

Two observations relating to the immediate context of Acts 2:2-4 are now in order. First, in regard to structural functions, it has already been established that the chiasm ends the paragraph started in 2:1. Further, the *inclusio* established by A and A' nicely encloses the account of the

<sup>15</sup> Note that figure 4 depicts only a portion of the relevant page in Codex Sinaiticus. The right two columns of Greek text which appear on the original page have been omitted.

descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Second, if the chiasm successfully marks off the account as significant, then the chiasmic structure may serve to highlight the climactic fulfillment of the promise of the Spirit anticipated in Acts 1:5 and 1:8. This possibility will be investigated further below, especially as it relates to Luke-Acts as a whole.

In the broader context of Luke-Acts, Luke has a theological motivation to emphasize the manifestation of the Spirit, especially as it is related in the center of the chiasm— *kai ōphthēsan autois diamerizomenai glōssai hōsei pyros*. Luke’s motivation and purpose for writing Acts seem to lie in the purpose statement of the first volume in Luke 1:1–4.<sup>16</sup> Here Luke states that his purpose for writing (1:3) is *hina epignōs peri hōn katēchēthēs logōn tēn asphaleisan* —“in order that you might recognize the certainty of words concerning which you have been instructed” (1:4). Though commentators disagree as to the significance of this statement and the meaning of *tēn asphaleisan*, many still agree that Luke is attempting to provide assurance to his audience—regarding major events of the Jesus/early-church tradition which he will go on to record in Luke-Acts.<sup>17</sup> Luke’s purpose is sometimes construed as “social legitimation” of one sort or another—perhaps legitimation related to Roman rule, Gentile inclusion in the church, God’s faithfulness to Israel, or a number of other issues.<sup>18</sup> George Bonnah has recently argued that

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<sup>16</sup> There are essentially three views regarding the unity of Luke and Acts, the first and second of which are compatible with the argument presented in this article: (1) The two comprise two-volumes of the same literary project (a common view in recent decades, argued as early as Henry J. Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts* [New York: Macmillan, 1927]); (2) Acts is composed as a sequel to Luke (or is similarly related), but the two do not represent a singular planned project (see Mikeal C. Parsons and Richard I. Pervo, *Rethinking the Unity of Luke and Acts* [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993]); (3) Luke and Acts are written by different authors, and therefore any unity between the two must be explained without reference to shared authorship (see Patricia Walters, *The Assumed Authorial Unity of Luke and Acts: A Reassessment of the Evidence* [SNTSMS 145; Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009]).

<sup>17</sup> Loveday Alexander, for instance, suggests that 1:4 may just be a “conventional afterthought.” See Alexander, *The Preface to Luke’s Gospel: Literary Convention and Social Context in Luke 1.1-4 and Acts 1.1* (SNTSMS 78; Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 142. For a recent discussion of the meaning of □σφ□λεια along with a new proposal, see Rick Strelan, “A Note on □σφ□λεια (Luke 1.4),” *JSNT* 30.2 (2007): 163–171.

<sup>18</sup> See Gregory E. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephos, Luke-Acts, and Apologetic Historiography* (NovTSup 64; Leiden, Germany: Brill, 1992); Jacob Jervell, *Luke and the People of God: A New Look at Luke-*

the author of Luke-Acts uses the Holy Spirit to “legitimate his narrative” in two ways: (1) The author’s presentation of the relationship between the Holy Spirit and Scripture; and (2) The author’s presentation of the Holy Spirit’s responsibility in the church’s mission (as one who empowers and directs).<sup>19</sup>

In regard to the relationship between the Spirit and Scripture, Bonnah discusses two passages in which Septuagint quotations are attributed to the Spirit and suggests that the two form an *inclusio* around the book of Acts (1:16; 28:25). He thus asserts, “The Holy Spirit...is responsible for all that the narrator has to relate to Theophilus and the entire [*sic*] readers of Acts.”<sup>20</sup> While this conclusion may be a bit of an overstatement, Luke certainly uses the Holy Spirit to validate a number of things in Luke-Acts, including divine promises, ministry (as seen in John the Baptist, Jesus, and a number of characters in Acts), and most significantly, to validate Jesus’ resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God (see esp. Acts 2:33). Indeed, Luke’s portrayal of the Holy Spirit throughout Luke-Acts, including the narration of the Pentecost event, seems to relate often to the purpose of writing given in Luke 1:4.

Related to this is one of the primary ways Luke seems to fulfill his purpose for writing—through an emphasis on the sovereignty of God, especially as demonstrated in the fulfillment of divine promises. In this regard, Bock states that “the center of Luke’s concern is a detailed discussion of God’s plan . . . ” which is “. . . supported by the note of promise and fulfillment in the Gospel and Acts, especially as it relates to the Scriptures.”<sup>21</sup> Similarly, Talbert speaks of promise-fulfillment in terms of the fulfillment of prophecy, observing that prophecies are made through three channels in Luke-Acts: the Jewish Scriptures, living prophets, and heavenly beings.<sup>22</sup> He concludes: “The evangelist takes

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*Acts* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1972); R. L. Brawley, *Luke-Acts and the Jews: Conflict, Apology, and Conciliation* (SBLMS 33; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1987).

<sup>19</sup> George Kwame Agyei Bonnah, *The Holy Spirit: A Narrative Factor in the Acts of the Apostles* (SBB 58; Stuttgart, Germany: Verlag Katholishes Bibelwerk, 2007), 266, 269–390.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 266.

<sup>21</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 1:1–9:50* (BECNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1994), 27–28.

<sup>22</sup> Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (rev. ed.; Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2002), 263–64; cf. William Kurz who sees promises or prophecies in two categories: (1) biblical promises; and (2) prophecies of biblical characters within the narrative—Kurz, “Promise and Fulfillment in Hellenistic Jewish Narratives and in Luke and Acts,” in *Jesus and the Heritage of Israel: Luke’s Narrative Claim upon Israel’s*

pains to show its fulfillment in the course of his narrative.”<sup>23</sup> The following paragraphs will attempt to trace this promise-fulfillment theme as it relates to the Holy Spirit and Pentecost.

One of the major prophetic promises in the Luke-Acts narrative is introduced in Luke 3:16 in the words of John the Baptist: “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” Some debate exists as to whether or not this is a reference to the account of Pentecost presented in Acts 2.<sup>24</sup> In view of the similar reference to the Pentecost baptism by Jesus in Acts 1:5—“Because John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not after many of these days”—it would seem strange if Luke did not intend for the link between Luke 3:16 and Acts 2 to be made.<sup>25</sup> Turner is right to suggest that even if John the Baptist’s statement in Luke 3:16–17 anticipated eschatological judgment, John’s viewpoint must be distinguished from the viewpoint of the narrator himself.<sup>26</sup> Turner concludes: “Luke himself came to see the Baptist’s promise of 3.16–17 fulfilled in an unanticipated way, mainly beyond Pentecost (Acts 1.5; 11.16).”<sup>27</sup>

Luke has Jesus hinting at the promise of the Holy Spirit in Luke 11:13: “. . . how much more will your Father from heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?” Later, Jesus anticipates the presence of the Spirit with the disciples as he describes a future time of persecution: “For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that hour what you must say” (Luke 12:12). At the end of the Gospel, Jesus makes a final statement to his disciples: “And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you; but you remain in the city until you are clothed with power from on high” (24:49). This power from on high is surely a reference to the promise—the Holy Spirit whom Jesus will send. In addition, note that the word translated “remain” (*kathisate*) in Luke 24:49 is the same verb which describes the action of the Holy Spirit (in terms of “tongues as fire”) in relation to the disciples in Acts 2:3 (*kai ekathisen eph’ hena*

*Legacy* (vol. 1 of *Luke the Interpreter of Israel*; ed. David P. Moessner; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999): 147–70.

<sup>23</sup> Talbert, *Reading Luke*, 263–64.

<sup>24</sup> For a helpful discussion of the issues, see Max Turner, *Power from on High: The Spirit in Israel’s Restoration and Witness in Luke-Acts* (JPTSUP 9; Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 170–87.

<sup>25</sup> Further support for a link between Luke 3:16 and Acts 2 may come from συμπληροῦσθαι in Acts 2:1. Tannehill argues that the infinitive clause suggests the fulfillment of the prophecies about the coming Spirit in Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4–5, 8. See Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts* (vol. 2: *The Acts of the Apostles*; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990), 26–27.

<sup>26</sup> Turner, *Power from on High*, 186–87.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

*hekaston autōn*). Further, as established above, this clause in Acts 2:3 corresponds in the chiasmic arrangement with the relative clause in the previous verse: *hou ēsan kathēmenoi*. Thus, it is at least possible that a wordplay of sorts exists between the command to “sit” (*kathisate*) in wait for the Holy Spirit in Luke 24:49, the “sitting” (*kathēmenoi*) of the disciples in the house in Jerusalem in Acts 2:2, and the fulfillment of the earlier promise as the tongues of fire “sit” (*ekathisen*) on the disciples in Acts 2:3.

Recalling Talbert’s assertion that Luke takes pains to demonstrate the fulfillment of promises made in the Old Testament, by living prophets, or by heavenly beings, it should be noted that the promise of the Holy Spirit is attested in Luke-Acts at least in the former two channels. The designation of the Holy Spirit as “the promise” (*epangelia*) in Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4, and Acts 2:33, 39 is significant and likely harkens back to Old Testament promises of a new covenant (cf. Jer 31:33; Ezek 36:26–27). Jesus also participates in the act of promising the Spirit in Luke 24:49 and certainly in Acts 1:5, 8. As Peter follows up the Pentecost baptism with a sermon, he concludes that Jesus himself has poured forth the Spirit (Acts 2:33). In fact, it seems that Peter is arguing that the manifestation of the Spirit witnessed by his audience (2:33c—*ho hymeis [kai] blepete kai akouete*) supports the fact that Jesus has been exalted (2:33a—*tē dexia oun tou theou hpsōtheis*). These early Christological assertions in the book of Acts are essential to Luke’s overall agenda of enabling his audience “to recognize the certainty of words concerning which [they] have been instructed” (Luke 1:4).<sup>28</sup>

In light of the fact that Luke emphasizes the promise-fulfillment motif in reference to the Holy Spirit, one must ask: Why might Luke emphasize the idea at the center of the chiasm in Acts 2:2–4 (i.e., *kai ōphthēsan autois diamerizomenai glōssai hōsei pyros*)? It seems that Luke wants to bring the focus of the reader to the moment in which the baptism of the Spirit was made manifest (*ōphthēsan autois*). The extremities of the chiasm also refer to manifestations of the Spirit—first to the initial entrance of the Holy Spirit into the house (*egeneto...ēchos*), and finally to the phenomenon of tongues produced by the Spirit (*erxanto lalein heterais glōssais*).

The center of the chiasm is unique in that Luke emphasizes a distinct moment of manifestation. The aorist passive *ōphthēsan* indicates a simple event on the narrative mainline, namely that tongues distributed as fire “appeared to them.” Arguably, the anticipation of the subject of *ōphthēsan* throws the focus of the reader forward to the description of the

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. William S. Kurz, S. J., “Hellenistic Rhetoric in the Christological Proof of Luke-Acts,” *CBQ* 42.2 (1980): 171–95.

manifestation (the subject of the verb), *diamerizomenai glōssai hōsei pyros*. While the significance of the event ultimately rests in the speaking of tongues, Luke takes a special interest in highlighting extraordinary supernatural events that are witnessed by others (cf. Acts 2:22, 32, 33; 3:9; 15; 4:13, 33). Thus, the appearance of the distribution of tongues as fire is the climactic fulfillment of the promise of the baptism of the Spirit first mentioned in Luke 3:16, a promise which will arguably continue to be fulfilled as new converts repent and believe throughout the book of Acts.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This article has proposed a chiasmic structure in Acts 2:2-4, determined the high probability that the arrangement reflects authorial intentionality, and proposed and evaluated possible functions of the arrangement in the immediate context of Acts 2 and the broader context of Luke-Acts. The possibility that the dense chiasm was present in the author's source for the Pentecost account has been rejected based on arguments for the probability of Lukan origination. The rhetorical function of chiasmus in the passage has been argued in view of the promise-fulfillment motif in Luke-Acts, especially as the motif relates to the Holy Spirit. In employing chiasmus in Acts 2:2-4, Luke desires to emphasize the manifestation of the Holy Spirit at the moment of the Holy Spirit baptism to indicate a climactic fulfillment of an earlier promise introduced in Luke 3:16 on the lips of John the Baptist and recollected in Acts 1:5 on the lips of Jesus. This is in accordance with Luke's overarching purpose of providing certainty to his readers regarding the Jesus/early-church tradition, as observed in the preface of Luke-Acts (Luke 1:1-4).