

Participles

Introduction

The ancient Greek language loved using the participle. In fact, it is said that it is in Greek that this part of speech fully developed, especially in its use as “the practical equivalent of the hypotactic clause.” However, the aorist participle, which made Greek so powerful did not pass over into Latin. The use of the participle continued in Koiné Greek, especially in literary books, though a certain decline in usage can be observed, for instance in the papyri. In the NT, the historical books surpass the usage in epistles, with Luke leading the pack: his frequent usage is similar to that of other literary works such as Polybius, Strabo and Plutarch.¹

The participle (μετοχή *participation*) is a declinable verbal adjective, i.e., it is in part an adjective and in part a verb.² The name participle (*pars capio*) indicates this double nature, i.e., that it is part verb, part adjective. It expresses the action in relation to the subject or object of the verb (or some other substantive or pronoun) where an infinitive would express the same action in relation to the verb.³

As an adjective, the participle can be inflected in various cases, gender and number, and can admit an article before it. These two characteristics give it the character of a noun (just like any other adjective). It thus follows the rules of agreement like other adjectives. However, unlike the adjective, which represents a quality at rest, the participle represents a quality in action or motion (in fact, some participles end up becoming ‘normal’ adjectives—or are adjectivized—when they lose this quality of representing an action, e.g., συμφέρων *useful*, διαφέρων *superior*).⁴

The verbal nature of the participle is normally seen in a dependent manner, i.e., it is not meant to function independently as a verb.⁵ Due to its verbal nature, therefore, it can

¹ See Archibald Thomas Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Hodder and Stoughton, 1919), 1098–99.

² See Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 613; Herbert Weir Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, trans. Gordon M. Messing (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), § 2039.

³ See Robertson, *Grammar of the GNT*, 1101–2.

⁴ See Robertson, 1110; Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, §§ 1857, 2041.

⁵ Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 613.

show distinctions in voice (active or passive) and tense (present, past, future); it can be complemented in different ways, i.e., by an indirect object, a direct object or by an adverbial complement.⁶

The fact that the participle is dependent on another verb greatly influences how its time and aspect are considered.

Time

In the case of an indicative verb, the point of view of the time of a verb is always the speaker. However, since the participle depends on another verb, the point of view is not absolute, but relative, i.e., it depends on the verb in question. Thus, whereas for an indicative verb, in relation to the speaker, the aorist and perfect tenses refer to past time, the present tense to present time and the future tense to future time, for the participle generally, the aorist and perfect refer to any time before that of the verb it depends on, the present to a time contemporaneous, the future to a time subsequent. The table below shows this in summary form.⁷

| | PAST | PRESENT | FUTURE |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| ABSOLUTE (Indicative) | Aorist | | |
| | Perfect | Present | Future |
| | Imperfect | | |
| | Pluperfect | | |
| RELATIVE (Participle) | Aorist | Present | Future |
| | Perfect | (Aorist) | |
| | Antecedent | Contemporaneous | Subsequent |

This general analysis of time in participles can help to determine whether a certain participle is used with a particular adverbial nuance. Accordingly, since the *purpose* of a main verb is usually carried out after the time of the main verb, a participle of purpose is normally future, sometimes present and almost never aorist or perfect. Similarly, since

⁶ Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, § 2040.

⁷ Table adapted from Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 614.

the *cause* of the action of a main verb usually happens before, causal participles will not be in the future tense. *Result* participles are never in the perfect tense (since this tense refers to the state simultaneous to the main verb resulting from a previously completed action) and *means* participles are normally in the present tense, though the aorist is also amply attested.⁸

Aspect

The aspect of the participle functions for most part like the aspect in the indicative. However, since it is a part of speech with two natures, verbal and adjectival, the strength of aspect is usually affected to some degree. The existence of adjectives that were initially participles (e.g., γέρον, ἄρχων, ἡγεμόν, etc.) is a proof to this fact, since in these cases, the adjectival nature completely suppressed the verbal one.⁹ It is also worth noting that many present participles in the NT are used in generic sentences. Accordingly, they are expected to have a gnomic idea and we would be hard-pressed to insist on aspect in such cases. For instance, in Matt 5,28 πᾶς ὁ ἀπολύων τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ can hardly be understood as having the “habitual” or “repetitive” aspect of the present tense — anyone who continually or repetitively divorces his wife.¹⁰

Common uses of participles

NT Greek still uses participles as they are used in classical Greek, though we do find some changes already occurring. For instance, the future participle has almost completely disappeared, remaining only in its use as a complement to a principal verb in order to express purpose, and this mainly in the book of Acts.¹¹ Also worth noting is the fact that by NT times, the negative particle used with a participle is almost always μή.¹²

⁸ See Evert van Emde Boas et al., *The Cambridge Grammar of Classical Greek* (Cambridge, UK; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 608; Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 614–15.

⁹ Robertson however holds that participles were initially adjectives and that some either never became participles (despite being so in form) or simply became substantives—here he gives as examples ἄρχων, ἡγούμενος, ὑπάρχοντα. See Robertson, *Grammar of the GNT*, 1110–11.

¹⁰ Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 616.

¹¹ See Friedrich Blass, Albert Debrunner, and Robert W. Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1961), §§ 351, 411.

¹² Blass, Debrunner, and Funk, § 430.

Nomenclature for the various uses of participles varies a lot. The classification that follows bears in mind only the usages found in the NT, hence is not exhaustive. I have tried to put together the descriptions as found in the major Greek grammar books.

1. Adjectival participles

a. Attributive participle

As an attribute, the participle functions as a modifier, i.e., it accompanies a substantive and is equivalent to a relative clause.¹³ As an attribute, its function is to identify the referent of the head noun by describing an attribute or characteristic of the referent. In majority of cases, the attributive participle bears an article or is in any of the three attributive positions in relation to a noun, i.e., 1) article-participle-noun, 2) article-noun-article-participle or 3) noun-article-participle.¹⁴

Usually, when the noun on which the participle depends is indetermined, the attributive participle nevertheless has the article (and this somehow determines the noun, as a relative clause would do). At times, however, no article accompanies the participle and it is only the context that will reveal that it has been used attributively (with an indefinite noun, which usually has no article) rather than as a predicate or adverbial participle or supplementary participle.

Examples

1. πορεύθητι ἐπὶ τὴν ῥύμην τὴν καλουμένην Εὐθείαν – Go to the street called Straight (Acts 9,11)
2. ὡς δὲ ἀπῆλθεν ὁ ἄγγελος ὁ λαλῶν αὐτῷ – When the angel who had been speaking to him left (Acts 10,7)
3. ἐλαλοῦμεν ταῖς συνελθούσαις γυναῖξιν – we spoke to the women who had gathered (Acts 16,13)
4. Εἰστήκεισαν δὲ πάντες οἱ γνωστοὶ αὐτῷ ἀπὸ μακρόθεν καὶ γυναῖκες αἱ συνακολουθοῦσαι αὐτῷ ἀπὸ τῆς Γαλιλαίας ὁρῶσαι ταῦτα – But all his acquaintances stood at a distance and (some) women who had accompanied him from Galilee (also stood) observing these things (Lk 23,49) *the verse is seen as two phrases because the participle ὁρῶσαι is feminine hence refers only to the women.*

¹³ Blass, Debrunner, and Funk, § 412.

¹⁴ According to Emde Boas, the third type is the least frequent, see Emde Boas et al., *The Cambridge Grammar of Classical Greek*, 331.

Accordingly, we assume εἰστήκεισαν to be the verb in the second phrase, omitted by ellipsis

5. ὅμοιοί εἰσιν παιδίοις τοῖς ἐν ἀγορᾷ καθημένοις – they are like children who are sitting in the marketplace (Lk 7,32)
6. καὶ ἔδωκεν ἄν σοι ὕδωρ ζῶν – And he would give you living water (Jn 4,10)

b. Predicate participle

In this case, the participle functions as an adjective in either of the two predicate positions, i.e., 1) participle-article-noun and 2) article-noun-participle. Like a predicate adjective, the predicate participle has no article, and, rather than identify the referent of a head noun, it says something about the condition the referent is in. Predicate participles are not very common.

Note that at first glance, since the participle has no article, one may think that it is either an adverbial or supplementary participle. What helps identify it as predicate is the absence of a verb on which it may depend. One could also think that it is a periphrastic construction. This latter case is indeed strengthened by the presence of the verb εἰμί. However, many times the context will help clarify matters.

Examples

1. ἐγὼ γὰρ εἰμι πρεσβύτης καὶ ἡ γυνή μου προβεβηκυῖα ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις αὐτῆς – for I am old and my wife is advanced in her days (Lk 1,18) *note the parallelism πρεσβύτης - προβεβηκυῖα: this helps us determine that we have a predicate participle here.*
2. εὐλογημένη σὺ ἐν γυναῖξιν – you are blessed among women (Lk 1,42)

c. Substantive participle

In this case, the participle is used as the head of a noun phrase, i.e., as though it were a substantivized adjective. Accordingly, it can have the same syntactic functions as any noun, e.g., subject, direct object, indirect object, apposition, etc.¹⁵ It is quite easy to identify, since it is basically a participle with an article and no accompanying noun.

Examples

¹⁵ Blass, Debrunner, and Funk, *BDF*, § 413; Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 619–20.

1. μακαρία ἡ πιστεύσασα ὅτι ἔσται τελείωσις τοῖς λελαλημένοις αὐτῇ παρὰ κυρίου – Blessed is she who believed that there will be a fulfilment for the things spoken to her by the Lord (Lk 1,45)
2. εἶπαν δὲ οἱ ἀκούσαντες· καὶ τίς δύναται σωθῆναι; - and those who heard said, “and who can be saved?” (Lk 18,26)
3. καὶ ἐγένετο φόβος μέγας ἐφ’ ὅλην τὴν ἐκκλησίαν καὶ ἐπὶ πάντας τοὺς ἀκούοντας ταῦτα – And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who would hear of such things (Acts 5,11)
4. ἰδοὺ ἡ χεὶρ τοῦ παραδιδόντος με μετ’ ἐμοῦ ἐπὶ τῆς τραπέζης – behold the hand of he who betrays me is with me at the table (Lk 22,21)

2. Adverbial / circumstantial

The adverbial participle functions as an additional clause in the sentence. This category of participles (together with the supplementary) emphasizes more the verbal than the adjectival nuance.

The adverbial participles, as the name indicates, point out an adverbial circumstance accompanying the action of the verb on which the participle depends. However, the particular circumstance (time, manner, etc.) is not determined by the participle but rather by the context and other adverbs and/or particles that may accompany the participle.

There are two categories of adverbial participles, depending on their subject (since they emphasize the verbal nuance, the subject is important). When the subject of the adverbial participle is identical to that of the verb it depends upon, then we have a **connected** (or **dependent** [Wallace] or **conjunctive** [*coniunctum*]) participle. When, on the other hand, the subject of the participle is not identical to that of the verb it depends on, it is added to the participle and the two stand together in the genitive case. Such participles are termed **Genitive absolute** construction (or **absolute** or **independent** participles).¹⁶

a. Connected

In this case, the participle will agree with the subject of the verb it depends upon in case, number and gender.

¹⁶ Blass, Debrunner, and Funk, *BDF*, § 417; Emde Boas et al., *The Cambridge Grammar of Classical Greek*, 623–24; Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 613–14.

Some authors prefer to call this category simply adverbial participles and limit the category of conjunctive participles to something different. According to them, the conjunctive participle is one which is used to communicate an action that in some cases is coordinate to the finite verb. It appears to be independent (in fact it can be translated as a finite verb + conjunction 'and'), and yet it is semantically dependent on the verb it is coordinated to. Typical characteristics are: the participle precedes the verb, aorist tense in the participle and verb and mood of verb is indicative or imperative.¹⁷ In our opinion, this is complicating the issue. Most such participles, for instance, can have (and usually do) the characteristics of temporal participle (indeed, the temporal participle normally precedes the verb).¹⁸

i. Temporal

The temporal participle indicates when a circumstance occurs in relation to the time of occurrence of the verb on which the participle depends. It frequently precedes the main verb. Accordingly, the participle may be *antecedent*, *contemporaneous* or *subsequent* to the time of the main verb.

The aorist participle usually indicates that the action of the participle precedes (is antecedent) that of the main verb. However, when the main verb is also in the aorist tense, there are cases when the participle is contemporaneous, usually to indicate that it is the aspectual force of the aorist that is under consideration (=a complete action) rather than the temporal force, e.g., in the redundant participle ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν "he answered saying".¹⁹ In other instances (especially in narrative texts), the aorist participle followed by a finite verb is simply used to express a sequence of actions carried out by the same subject (thus subordination is used where parataxis would be expected. In fact, good Greek prefers subordination to parataxis). This sequence of events can be translated by two coordinated finite verbs. It is this usage that Wallace classifies under a separate category which he calls "Attendant Circumstance".

¹⁷ Wallace calls it "attendant circumstance" participle, see Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 640–45.

¹⁸ It is interesting to note that Smyth defines the circumstantial participle as "denoting some attendant circumstance and qualifying the main verb like an adverbial phrase or clause" (Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, § 2046.) It is true that later on, after indicating the various types of adverbial relationships that the circumstantial participle can indicate (time, condition, etc.), he states that it can indicate "any attendant circumstance", though most of the examples he gives seem to indicate a temporal relationship. See Smyth, § 2068.

¹⁹ See Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, § 1970c; Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 614.

Examples of the aorist temporal participle

1. καὶ τοῦτο ποιήσαντες συνέκλεισαν πλῆθος ἰχθύων πολὺ - And having done this, they caught a great multitude of fish (Lk 5,6)
2. καὶ ἀναστάντες ἐξέβαλον αὐτὸν ἔξω τῆς πόλεως - And they rose up and (or having gotten up, they) threw him out of the city (Lk 4,29)

The present temporal participle will normally indicate that its action is contemporaneous with that of the main verb.

Examples

3. καὶ διερχόμενος εὐηγγελίζετο τὰς πόλεις πάσας - And as he passing through (the region) he would evangelize all the cities (Acts 8,40)
4. καὶ ἐξαλλόμενος ἔστη καὶ περιεπάτει καὶ εἰσῆλθεν σὺν αὐτοῖς εἰς τὸ ἱερόν - And jumping up he stood up and began/was walking around and entered with them into the temple. (Acts 3,8)
5. ὅσοι γὰρ κτήτορες χωρίων ἢ οἰκιῶν ὑπῆρχον, πωλοῦντες ἔφερον τὰς τιμὰς τῶν πιπρασκομένων - For those who were owners of fields or of houses would sell and bring the proceeds of the sales (Acts 4,34)

The future participle is rarely used in the NT and where it is used (as an adverbial participle), it has the same function as in classical Greek, i.e., to signify *purpose* (which, in a certain sense, is subsequent in relation to the time of the main verb).

The perfect participle is more commonly used in periphrastic constructions. Where the perfect participle is used with a temporal nuance, it almost always indicates an action that is *antecedent* to that of the main verb. The difference with the aorist participle lies in the aspect: the aorist stresses the totality of the action whereas the perfect stresses the completed state of the action (for which reason, verbs used in this way have a present meaning).

Example

6. ὁ δὲ τελώνης μακρόθεν ἑστὼς οὐκ ἤθελεν οὐδὲ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἐπάραι εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν - But the publican, standing from afar, did not want even to raise his eyes to heaven (Lk 18,13)

ii. *Manner and means*

This participle indicates the manner in which the action of the main verb is carried out and, in most cases, is placed after the main verb. In English, the two modes are

somewhat different despite the fact that both respond to the question “how?” Wallace holds that the principle of means is more frequent than that of manner.²⁰ The difference, however, seems to be lexical rather than grammatical, i.e., participles of manner refer to the “emotion” accompanying the action of the main verb, i.e., they explain the action of the main verb, whereas participles of means “define” the action of the main verb, so much so that if removed, the *point* of the main verb is also lost.

Examples

1. Είστήκεισαν δὲ πάντες οἱ γνωστοὶ αὐτῷ ἀπὸ μακρόθεν καὶ γυναῖκες αἱ συνακολουθοῦσαι αὐτῷ ἀπὸ τῆς Γαλιλαίας **ὀρῶσαι** ταῦτα – But all his acquaintances stood at a distance and (some) women who had accompanied him from Galilee (also stood) observing these things (Lk 23,49) *the verse is seen as two phrases because the participle ὀρῶσαι is feminine hence refers only to the women. Accordingly, we assume εἰστήκεισαν to be the verb in the second phrase, omitted by ellipsis. the participle ὀρῶσαι describes how they were standing. We take it to be of manner assuming that it follows the verb. If it were temporal, it would most likely have been placed before the verb. However, since the verb is absent, one could also assume that it comes before the elided verb, hence is a temporal: “and some women (...) stood there while observing these things.”*
2. καὶ σπεύσας κατέβη καὶ ὑπεδέξατο αὐτὸν **χαίρων** – And having made haste, he came down and received him gladly (Lk 19,6) *χαίρων is clearly a participle of manner since it describes how he received him (it even follows the main verb). However, σπεύσας is not very clear. Since it's placed before the main verb, it's most likely temporal, though some consider it one of manner: “how did he come down? Hurrying up!”*
3. ἕτεροι δὲ **διαχλευάζοντες** ἔλεγον ὅτι γλεύκους μεμεστωμένοι εἰσὶν – But others were saying mockingly that they were full of new wine (Acts 2,13)
4. καὶ ἦλθεν **ζητῶν** καρπὸν ἐν αὐτῇ καὶ οὐχ εὔρεν – and he came looking for fruit in it and found none (Lk 13,6) *the participle ζητῶν could also be one of purpose mainly because the lexical meaning of ζητέω already involves such an idea, and by NT times, purpose was no longer restricted to future participles.*

²⁰ Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 627.

iii. Causal

The causal participle stands for a causal clause, i.e., indicates the cause of the action of the verb on which the participle depends. Basically, responds to the question “why?”²¹

Examples:

1. καὶ μὴ εὐρόντες ὑπέστρεψαν εἰς Ἱερουσαλὴμ ἀναζητοῦντες αὐτόν – And because they could not find him, they turned back to Jerusalem to seek him out (Lk 2,45)
2. ἀναγαγὼν τε αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸν οἶκον παρέθηκεν τράπεζαν καὶ ἠγαλλιάσατο πανοικεῖ πεπιστευκῶς τῷ θεῷ – and having led them into his house, he set a table (food) before them and rejoiced with the whole household because he had believed in God (Acts 16,34)

iv. Conditional

A participle can be used as the protasis of a conditional clause, i.e., as the clause stating the “condition” for the realization of the action of the verb on which the participle depends. It is mostly equivalent to a third-class condition (ἐάν + subjunctive mood in any tense) whereby the condition presents itself as uncertain but nevertheless probable.

Examples

1. τί γὰρ ὠφελεῖται ἄνθρωπος κερδήσας τὸν κόσμον ὅλον ἑαυτὸν δὲ ἀπολέσας; - For how does it benefit a person if he should gain the whole world but then lose himself? (Lk 9,25)
2. ἐξ ὧν διατηροῦντες ἑαυτοὺς εὖ πράξετε – if you keep yourselves from them, you will be doing well (Acts 15,29)

v. Concessive

The idea conveyed is that the action of the main verb is or occurs *despite* that of the participle. It is usually accompanied by particles that render the concessive idea more explicit, e.g., καί (and), καίπερ (even though, although), καίτοι (and yet).

Examples

1. εἰ οὖν ὑμεῖς πονηροὶ ὑπάρχοντες οἴδατε δόματα ἀγαθὰ διδόναι τοῖς τέκνοις ὑμῶν, πόσω μᾶλλον ὁ πατήρ [ὁ] ἐξ οὐρανοῦ δώσει πνεῦμα ἅγιον τοῖς αἰτουῦσιν αὐτόν. (Lk 11,13) – If therefore you, despite being evil, know how give good things

²¹ Wallace, 631.

to your children, how much more will the Father [who is] from heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him? *Here the participle can also be attributive*

2. καὶ μηδεμίαν αἰτίαν θανάτου εὐρόντες ἠτήσαντο Πιλάτον ἀναιρεθῆναι αὐτόν – And despite not finding any cause for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to do away with him (Acts 13,28)
3. καὶ ἐδίδασκεν ἀκριβῶς τὰ περὶ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, ἐπιστάμενος μόνον τὸ βάπτισμα Ἰωάννου· - and he would teach accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he only knew of the baptism of John (Acts 18,25)
4. πάντως φονεὺς ἐστὶν ὁ ἄνθρωπος οὗτος ὃν διασωθέντα ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης ἡ δίκη ζῆν οὐκ εἴασεν – This man is indeed a murderer, he whom, though he was saved from the sea, Justice has not allowed to live. (Acts 28,4)

vi. Purpose

This is usually expressed using the future participle, though in the NT, we also find present participles with this usage. The participle will indicate the purpose of the action of the action of the main verb.

Examples

1. ἐληλύθει προσκυνήσων εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ – he had come to Jerusalem to worship (Acts 8,27)
2. ἔπεμψεν φίλους ὁ ἑκατοντάρχης λέγων αὐτῷ - the centurion sent some friends to say to him... (Lk 7,6)
3. καὶ ἦλθεν ζητῶν καρπὸν ἐν αὐτῇ καὶ οὐχ εὔρεν – and he came looking for fruit in it and found none (Lk 13,6)

Wallace distinguishes between purpose participles and result participles.²² According to him, the former indicates or emphasizes the intention or design, whereas the latter indicates the actual outcome or result of the action of the main verb, thus emphasizing what the action of the main verb actually accomplishes. In any case, the two are not really different since in many cases, participles of result “describe the result of an action that was also intended.” The result participle is usually a present participle and follows the main verb.

Examples

²² See Wallace, 635–39.

4. καὶ αὐτὸς ἐδίδασκεν ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς αὐτῶν **δοξαζόμενος** ὑπὸ πάντων – And he was teaching in their synagogues with the result that he was being glorified by all (Lk 4,15)
5. καὶ ἐγένετο νεφέλη **ἐπισκιάζουσα** αὐτοῖς – And a cloud came with the result that it covered them (Mk 9,7)

b. Absolute

As we mentioned above, the subject of the participle in this case is not identical to that of the verb it depends on, thus the participle together with its subject stands in the genitive case, hence the name *genitive absolute*. However, there are cases where the circumstantial participle either can't agree with a subject (because it is the participle of an impersonal verb, which evidently, has no subject) or its subject happens to be an infinitive. In such cases, the participle is expressed in the accusative singular neuter, hence the name accusative absolute. However, the accusative absolute is not found in the NT, hence we will only look into the genitive absolute.²³

i. *Genitive absolute*

The genitive absolute is still an adverbial use of the participle, hence, just like the connected participles, it is the context that will help in determining which adverbial relationship the participle has with the main verb, though one can safely say that the genitive absolute is mostly commonly temporal.

Examples

²³ There is, however, a variant reading of the participle ἀρχάμενοι in the Gospel of Luke (Lk 24,47) that seems to have the accusative absolute. The current text – the reading found in the important witnesses \aleph (Sinaiticus) B (Vaticanus) C* (original text in Ephraemi rescriptus) L (Regius) and N (Petropolitanus) – reads: καὶ κηρυχθῆναι ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ μετάνοιαν εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ἀρχάμενοι ἀπὸ Ἰερουσαλὴμ – “and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached to all the nations, *beginning from Jerusalem*”. This analysis and translation are, however, a bit weird as it is not clear why a nominative plural participle within an infinitive + accusative construction. For this reason, many consider the phrase as linked to the next clause (ὁμοῦς μάρτυρες τούτων) as a nominative absolute (basically a *casus pendens*), so that we have “beginning from Jerusalem, you are witnesses of these things”. Yet, it is also argued that it is unlikely that a participle would go with a verbless clause. However, many more texts read rather ἀρχάμενον, a neuter singular participle (\aleph^{75} A (Alexandrinus) C (3rd hand of Ephraimi) K (Cyprius) W (Washingtonianus) Γ (Tischendorfianus) Δ (Sangallensis) and the Majority Text (Byzantinus)). In this reading, the translation would be: “and that *beginning from Jerusalem* repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached to all the nations”. In this case, the subject of the participle would be the infinitive, thus explaining the presence of the accusative absolute: it is the preaching that is to begin from Jerusalem.

1. Καὶ **πληρωθέντων ἐτῶν** τεσσαράκοντα ὥφθη αὐτῷ ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ τοῦ ὄρους Σινᾶ ἄγγελος ἐν φλογὶ πυρὸς βάλτου – And when forty years had passed (been fulfilled), an angel appeared to (was seen by) him in the desert of Mount Sinai in the flame of a burning bush (Acts 7,30)
2. **Πολλῆς δὲ ζητήσεως γενομένης** ἀναστὰς Πέτρος εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτούς – after much discussion had taken place, after getting up, Peter said to them... (Acts 15,7) *Here one could also argue that the genitive absolute is causal, i.e., Peter gets up to speak because much discussion had already taken place.*
3. ἀλλ' ἀποταξάμενος καὶ εἰπὼν· πάλιν ἀνακάμψω πρὸς ὑμᾶς **τοῦ θεοῦ θέλοντος**, ἀνήχθη ἀπὸ τῆς Ἐφέσου – but he set sail from Ephesus after taking leave and saying, “I will return too you again if God wills” (Acts 18,21) *in this case, even if one sees it as a temporal clause (“while God wills”), the conditional nuance still remains: Paul will return “as long as God wills it”. A causal nuance is also grammatically feasible with interesting theological implications that would need to be backed by other arguments e.g., concerning faith (Paul is certain to return “because” God wills it...)*
4. **κληθέντος δὲ αὐτοῦ** ἤρξατο κατηγορεῖν ὁ Τέρτυλλος λέγων· πολλῆς εἰρήνης τυγχάνοντες διὰ σοῦ καὶ **διορθωμάτων γινομένων** τῷ ἔθνει τούτῳ διὰ τῆς σῆς προνοίας, πάντη τε καὶ πανταχοῦ ἀποδεχόμεθα, κράτιστε Φῆλιξ, μετὰ πάσης εὐχαριστίας – After summoning him [Paul], Tertullus began to accuse him saying, “Having (or because we have) obtained much peace through you and because improvements have come about in favor of this people due to your foresight, in every way, indeed, everywhere, we acknowledge (you/it) most excellent Felix with all gratitude.” (Acts 24,2-3) *This is one of the texts in Luke-Acts that shows Luke’s mastery of the Greek language. The first genitive absolute is temporal while the second is causal.*
5. **Ἰκανοῦ δὲ χρόνου διαγενομένου** καὶ **ὄντος** ἤδη ἐπισφαλοῦς τοῦ πλοῦς διὰ τὸ καὶ τὴν νηστείαν ἤδη παρεληλυθέναι παρήνει ὁ Παῦλος... Because much time had passed and because the boat was unsafe since even the (time of the) Fast had already gone by, Paul began to urge them... (Acts 27,9) *Both genitive absolutes here are causal*
6. ὁ θεὸς τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν, ἐδόξασεν τὸν παῖδα αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦν ὃν ὑμεῖς μὲν παρεδώκατε καὶ ἠρνήσασθε κατὰ πρόσωπον Πιλάτου, **κρίναντος ἐκείνου** ἀπολύειν – The God of our fathers has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you

handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release [him] (Acts 3,13) *Here the genitive absolute is concessive*

3. Supplementary

This type of participle is also called the *complementary* participle. Its function is to complete the idea of the verb it depends on, hence is an **obligatory constituent** of the verb.²⁴

The supplementary participle is usually further considered under three categories:²⁵

- a. As the complement of certain verbs of *direct sensory perception* (seeing, hearing), verbs expressing *certain phases of an action* (begin, continue, stop) or verbs meaning 'to endure' or 'persist'. In such cases, the participle occurs *almost exclusively in the present tense* (because the action is *being* perceived). When, however another stem is used, the aspect of that stem will have a greater force than the tense, e.g., an aorist stem will indicate the entirety of the action being perceived rather than it having occurred before the action of the main verb.
- b. As the complement of *certain verbs of knowing* (know, recognize, etc.) or that *express some emotional state* (be glad, regret, etc.) In this case, the participle occurs in any stem (present, aorist, etc.). Note that *with verbs expressing emotional state, sometimes the accompanying participle can also be considered a circumstantial participle*.
- c. As the complement of a verb denoting a *certain way of being or acting*.

The difference between the first two groups is that with the first group (a), the participle expresses an action whose realization is being perceived (seen, heard, etc.) or paused, endured, etc., whereas with the second group (b), the participle expresses the propositional content of someone's knowledge of, or emotional response to, an action.

Common to all supplementary participles is the fact that they specify that an action is actually realized or that the propositional content is true (not hypothetical).²⁶ This may help to distinguish cases in which a verb may take either a complementary participle or a complementary infinitive. Accordingly, the participle, as we have indicated, is for instances that are actually occurring or are true, whereas the infinitive is for instances

²⁴ See Emde Boas et al., *The Cambridge Grammar of Classical Greek*, 606; Blass, Debrunner, and Funk, *BDF*, § 411; Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 646.

²⁵ See Blass, Debrunner, and Funk, *BDF*, §§ 414-416; Emde Boas et al., *The Cambridge Grammar of Classical Greek*, 610-23.

²⁶ Emde Boas et al., *The Cambridge Grammar of Classical Greek*, 611.

where the action expressed may or may not occur or be true. With verbs of knowledge in particular, the participle will express intellectual knowledge ('to know that something *is* the case') whereas the infinitive will express practical knowledge ('to know *how* to do something') or an opinion (to *assume* that something is the case).²⁷ All this however is the case in classical Greek. In NT Greek, we're more likely to find complements in ὅτι rather than participles or infinitives.

With regards to the third group, when such verbs are construed with the participle, they may be considered as auxiliary verbs, with the participle expressing the main action while the main verb only somehow qualifying it.²⁸ For this reason, it is not infrequent to find the participle being translated as though it were the main verb.

Usually, when the subject of the main verb is the same as that of the participle, the latter will be in the nominative case (see examples 6-7 below). However, if the subjects are different, then the subject of the participle will normally be in the accusative and the participle itself, in agreement with its subject, will be in the accusative —just like in the infinitive-plus-accusative construction (see examples 1-4 below). As a matter of fact, just as is the case with infinitives, participles used with the verbs of perception and of knowing and showing can represent indirect discourse.²⁹ With verbs of hearing, where direct auditory perception is expressed, the genitive case is used (example 5 below)

Examples of (a):

1. ἐθεώρουν τὸν σατανᾶν ὡς ἀστραπὴν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ πεσόντα - I saw Satan **falling** like lightning from heaven (Lk 10,18)
2. ἐθεάσατο τελώνην ὀνόματι Λεβὶν καθήμενον ἐπὶ τὸ τελώνιον - He saw a publican named Levi **sitting** at the tax-booth (Lk 5,27)
3. καὶ τότε ὄψονται τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενον ἐν νεφέλῃ μετὰ δυνάμεως καὶ δόξης πολλῆς - And then they will see the son of man coming on a cloud with power and much glory (Lk 21,27)
4. τὸν τε ἄνθρωπον βλέποντες σὺν αὐτοῖς ἐστῶτα τὸν τεθεραπευμένον οὐδὲν εἶχον ἀντειπεῖν - seeing the man who had been cured standing with them, they had nothing they could say against them (Acts 4,13-14) (*note here the perfect*

²⁷ Emde Boas et al., 619–20.

²⁸ Emde Boas et al., 615.

²⁹ As we already mentioned shortly before, this use is not very common in the NT since such verbs tend to be construed with ὅτι clauses. However, examples may be found in the more literal works like Luke, see Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 645–46.

participle: since the man is being perceived as “standing”, what is stressed is the state [aspect of the perfect tense] rather than the tense [which would be a past action].

5. ἤκουον εἰς ἕκαστος τῆ ἰδίᾳ διαλέκτῳ λαλούντων αὐτῶν – Each one was hearing them speaking in his own language (Acts 2,6)
6. Ὡς δὲ ἐπαύσατο λαλῶν, εἶπεν πρὸς τὸν Σίμωνα... – When he finished speaking, he said to Simon... (Lk 5,4)
7. οὐκ ἐπαύοντο διδάσκοντες καὶ εὐαγγελιζόμενοι τὸν χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν – They would not stop teaching and preaching that Jesus is the Christ (Acts 5,42)

Examples of (b):

8. ἤψατό μου τις, ἐγὼ γὰρ ἔγνων δύναμιν ἐξεληλυθυῖαν ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ - Someone touched me, for I noticed power coming out of me (Lk. 8,46) *the participle ἐξεληλυθυῖαν can also be seen as used in indirect discourse, i.e., “I know that power has come out of me”*
9. ἐκ πολλῶν ἐτῶν ὄντα σε κριτὴν τῷ ἔθνει τούτῳ ἐπιστάμενος εὐθύμως τὰ περὶ ἐμαυτοῦ ἀπολογοῦμαι... – I cheerfully utter a defense regarding myself, knowing you to be a judge over this nation for many years... (Acts 24,10) *the participle ὄντα can also be seen as used in indirect discourse, i.e., “knowing that you are a judge...”*
10. ἄλογον γάρ μοι δοκεῖ πέμποντα δέσμιον μὴ καὶ τὰς κατ’ αὐτοῦ αἰτίας σημάναι – for sending a prisoner without also indicating the charges against him seemed to me unreasonable (Acts 25,27) *the participle πέμποντα used with the verb of belief—δοκεῖ μοι—can also be seen as used in indirect discourse: “it seemed to me (hence, I thought) that sending a prisoner without also indicating the charges against him was unreasonable”. The whole phrase πέμποντα... σημάναι is the subject of the impersonal verb δοκεῖ.*
11. ἀναγαγὼν τε αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸν οἶκον παρέθηκεν τράπεζαν καὶ ἠγαλλιάσατο πανοικεῖ πεπιστευκῶς τῷ θεῷ – and having led them into his house, he set a table (food) before them and rejoiced with the whole household at having believed in God (Acts 16,34)
12. ὁ λαὸς γὰρ ἅπας ἐξεκρέματο αὐτοῦ ἀκούων – for all the people were “hanging” listening to him (i.e., were spellbound at his words) (Lk 19,48). *Here we have a verb whose lexical meaning does not imply an emotional state (ἐκκρεμάννυμι = to hang from/upon), but it has been clearly used in this sense.*
13. ἐχάρησαν οὖν οἱ μαθηταὶ ἰδόντες τὸν κύριον – The disciples therefore rejoiced seeing the Lord (Jn 20,20)

14. περὶ δὲ κτημάτων καὶ γάμων αὐτοῦ καὶ τέκνων προσευχόμενος οὐκ αἰσχύνεται τῷ ἀψύχῳ προσλαλῶν – And when he prays concerning possessions and his marriage and children, he is not ashamed to speak to a lifeless being (Wis 13,17) *Note the difference with (Lk 16,3) ἐπαιτεῖν αἰσχύνομαι – I am ashamed to beg: in the former, the complement expresses an emotional attitude to the fact that something is the case, whereas in the latter the complement is a kind of desiderative verb by which the subject intends, wishes or desires that an action should not be realized (hence, I hesitate to dig).³⁰ This in fact would be the difference in classical Greek, but by NT times, the distinction had probably faded away.*

Examples of (c):

15. αὕτη δὲ ἀφ' ἧς εἰσηλθὼν οὐ διέλιπεν καταφιλοῦσά μου τοὺς πόδας – She on the other hand, from the moment I came in, has not stopped kissing my feet (Lk. 7,45). *Note that this can also be rendered as ... has kissed my feet continuously.*
16. ὁ δὲ Πέτρος ἐπέμενεν κρούων – Peter continued knocking (Acts 12,16)
17. ὡς δὲ ἐπέμενον ἐρωτῶντες αὐτόν, ἀνέκυψεν καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· ὁ ἀναμάρτητος ὑμῶν πρῶτος ἐπ' αὐτὴν βαλέτω λίθον When they continued querying him, he straightened up and said to them, “whoever is without sin among you, let him be first in casting a stone at her” (Jn 8,7)
18. καὶ ἐλθόντα εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν προέφθασεν αὐτόν ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγων· τί σοι δοκεῖ, Σίμων; - and as he [Simon] came into the house Jesus anticipated him (got before him in) saying, “what do you think, Simon?” (Matt. 17,25) *Note that (προ)φθάνω means “to be before”. The sentence can also be rendered as “as he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, ‘what do you think Simon?’”*

4. Pleonastic or idiomatic

A verb of saying (or sometimes thinking) can be used with a participle with basically the same meaning (as in ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν). In a sense, it is a subset of the participle of means, for it defines the action of the main verb. For the most part, it is probably due to a Semitic idiom.

Examples:

³⁰ With regards to such differences concerning the use of infinitives and participles, see the discussions in Robertson, *Grammar of the GNT*, 1101–2; Emde Boas et al., *The Cambridge Grammar of Classical Greek*, 611.

1. καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ ἄγγελος εἶπεν αὐτῷ - And the angel responded/said to him... (Lk 1,19)
2. Εἶπεν δὲ παραβολὴν πρὸς αὐτοὺς λέγων – He said a parable to them saying... (Lk 12,16)

5. Periphrastic constructions

This is a construction that involves using an anarthrous participle and a verb of being (εἰμί or ὑπάρχω) to form a finite verbal idea.³¹ Periphrasis basically means a “round-about” way of saying something. Accordingly, ἦν γράφων is basically the same as ἔγραφε, ‘he was writing’. The construction is common with present and perfect participles. In most cases, the participle is in the nominative case and follows the verb.

The equivalents are as in the following table:

| Finite verb (εἰμί) | Participle | Finite Tense Equivalent |
|--------------------|------------|-------------------------|
| Present | Present | Present |
| Imperfect | Present | Imperfect |
| Future | Present | Future |
| Present | Perfect | Perfect |
| Imperfect | Perfect | Pluperfect |

Examples

1. Ἰωσήφ δὲ ὁ ἐπικληθεὶς Βαρναβᾶς ἀπὸ τῶν ἀποστόλων, ὃ **ἐστιν μεθερμηνεύμενον** υἱὸς παρακλήσεως... – So, Joseph, called Barnabas by the apostles, which translates as “son of consolation” ... (Acts 4,36) *instead of μεθερμηνεύεται*
2. Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν μιᾷ τῶν ἡμερῶν καὶ αὐτὸς ἦν διδάσκων, καὶ ἦσαν καθήμενοι Φαρισαῖοι καὶ νομοδιδάσκαλοι οἱ ἦσαν ἐληλυθότες ἐκ πάσης κώμης τῆς Γαλιλαίας καὶ Ἰουδαίας καὶ Ἱερουσαλήμ – And one day he was teaching, and pharisees and scribes who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem were sitting (Lk 5,17) *instead of ἐδίδασκον, ἐκάθηγον and ἐληλύθεισαν*

³¹ Blass, Debrunner, and Funk, *BDF*, §§ 352-355; Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 647–50.

3. ὁ δὲ Κορνήλιος ἦν προσδοκῶν αὐτοὺς συγκαλεσάμενος τοὺς συγγενεῖς αὐτοῦ καὶ τοὺς ἀναγκαίους φίλους – Cornelius was waiting for them, having called together his relations and his close friends (Acts 10,24) *instead of προσεδόκα*
4. καὶ ἔσεσθε μισούμενοι ὑπὸ πάντων διὰ τὸ ὄνομά μου – and you will be hated by all on account of my name (Lk 21,17) *instead of μισηθήσονται (never used)*
5. καὶ ἰδοὺ οὐδὲν ἄξιον θανάτου ἐστὶν πεπραγμένον αὐτῷ - Indeed, nothing worthy of death has been done by him (Lk 23,15) *instead of πέπρακται.*
6. ἐπυνθάνετο τίς εἶη καὶ τί ἐστὶν πεποιηκώς – he inquired who he was and what he had done (Acts 21,33) *instead of πεποίηκε.*
7. καὶ ὁ χιλιάρχος δὲ ἐφοβήθη ἐπιγνοὺς ὅτι Ῥωμαῖός ἐστιν καὶ ὅτι αὐτὸν ἦν δεδεκώς – and the tribune feared when he realized that he [Paul] was a Roman and that he had bound him (Acts 22,29) *instead of ἐδέδετο*

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