

# Grammarian's Corner

## Participles, Part IV

The two previous “Grammarian’s Corner” installments dealt with participles in the attributive position and discussed issues related to their (purported) equivalence to relative clauses. With this GC, we turn to participles in predicate position.

Participles in the predicate position, as noted in the April, 2006 GC, do not occur directly after an article and are the equivalent of predicate adjectives when the verb “to be” provides the main verb of the sentence:<sup>1</sup>

1. ὁ ἀνὴρ ἦν ἀγαθός.
2. ὁ ἀνὴρ ἦν λέγων.

We noted there that, as sentence 1 can be translated “The man was good,” so sentence 2 can be translated “The man was speaking.” Thus, the adjective characteristics of participles are displayed. We also noted, however, that participles, unlike simple adjectives, contain a verbal component, as well.<sup>2</sup> We can now say that this feature displays itself most clearly when a predicate position participle occurs in the company of a verb other than the verb “to be.” Consider the following example:

3. βλέπω τὸν ἄνδρα ἐρχόμενον.

In this sentence, the participle describes the man who is the object of the main verb, but the participle’s verbal component, i.e., the action it conveys, is also part of the object of the main verb of seeing. It means, in essence, “I see the man, and I see him in the act of coming.” Thus, it can be translated rather simply as: “I see the man coming.” This is, in fact, called a “supplementary participle,”<sup>3</sup> and it illustrates well both the adjectival and verbal characteristics of this type of form. Clear New Testament examples are:

4. Mark 1:16: ...εἶδεν Σίμωνα καὶ Ἀνδρέαν τὸν ἀδελφὸν Σίμωνος ἀμφιβάλλοντας ἐν τῇ θαλάσσει. (“...he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon **throwing a two-man net** in the lake.”)
5. Matthew 24:30: ...καὶ ὄψονται τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐπιτῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ (“...and they will see the son of man **coming** on the clouds of heaven....”)

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<sup>1</sup> See “Grammarian’s Corner,” *Concordia Journal* (2006) 32:211-212.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

<sup>3</sup> James W. Voelz, *Fundamental Greek Grammar*, 2nd edition (St. Louis: Concordia, 1993), 279.

6. Matthew 21:15 (mss. C K W D *f*<sup>1</sup>, *f*<sup>13</sup> 565, 579, 892, *ℳ*): ἰδόντες δὲ οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς τὰ θαυμασιά...καὶ τοὺς παῖδας **κράζοντας** ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ.... (“And the chief priests and scribes, upon seeing the wonders and the children **crying** out in the temple....”)<sup>4</sup>

Supplementary participles normally occur after a main verb of sense perception, especially one of seeing and hearing, and they refer to and modify the object of a finite verb, so they are normally in the accusative case.<sup>5</sup>

A similar construction occurs in the nominative case, under certain circumstances, referring to and modifying the subject of the main verb. Consider example 7:

7. Ὁ μαθητῆς περιάγει **κηρύσσων**.

This means, “The disciple is going around, and he is preaching, as well.” This can be translated, “The disciple is going around preaching,” i.e., it can be rendered in a way very similar to a supplementary participle. This is called a participle of “attendant circumstance.”<sup>6</sup> Clear New Testament examples are:

8. Matthew 3:1: ἐν δὲ ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις παραγίνεται Ἰωαννης ὁ βαπτιστῆς **κηρύσσων** ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ τῆς Ἰουδαίας. (“And in those days John the Baptist appears/appeared **preaching** in the desert of Judea.”)
9. John 20:11: Μαρία δὲ εἰστήκει πρὸς τῷ μνημείῳ ἕξω **κλαίουσα**. (“Mary was standing facing the tomb outside **weeping**.”)
10. John 20:6: ἔρχεται οὖν καὶ Σίμων Πέτρος **ἀκολουθῶν** αὐτῷ... (“Then also Simon Peter comes **following** him....”)

Attendant circumstance participles normally occur under the following set conditions: the main verb is a verb of motion/anti-motion,<sup>7</sup> the participle is in the nominative, it is in the predicate position, and it occurs in its physical positioning after the main verb. It can be observed that in each instance above (sentences 8-10), all four conditions are met.

In the next installment of GC, we will consider more—and in many ways more common—participles in predicate position.

James W. Voelz

<sup>4</sup> Notes that in the July 2006 “Grammarians’ Corner” (312-313) we used the same passage but followed the reading of the “better” mss (such as *⋈* and B) by including the article τοὺς before the participle. That reading puts the participle in the attributive position.

<sup>5</sup> Note that we have chosen only present tense participles as illustrations. Tense issues with participles will be handled in future installments.

<sup>6</sup> Voelz, *Fundamental Greek Grammar*, 135-136.

<sup>7</sup> By “anti-motion” I mean concepts such as sitting, standing, remaining, etc. Sentence 9 is a good example.