CONSTRUCTION AND TRANSLATION OF
THE “GENITIVE ABSOLUTE”

Defined

The Genitive Absolute construction in Greek may be recognized when one encounters a “circumstantial” participle (generally Present or Aorist) in the genitive case, occurring in a construction with a noun or pronoun also in the genitive, and operating independently from the rest of the sentence. Hence the name “Genitive Absolute,” because it is loosed or separated from the rest of the sentence.

Translating “Genitive Absolutes”

1. Identify the “genitive absolute” construction: a circumstantial participle and a noun or pronoun, both occurring in the genitive case in a “dependent” clause.

2. Translate the main (“independent”) clause of the sentence (the part not containing the “genitive absolute” construction).

3. Identify the time frame (present or past time) of the Indicative verb in the main (“independent”) clause. The time frame of the participle in the “genitive absolute” construction will be translated either as being “simultaneous” with the time frame of the Indicative verb of the main (“independent”) clause, or as occurring “prior” to the time frame of the main Indicative verb (see point 5, below).

4. Translate the noun or pronoun in the “genitive absolute” construction (“dependent” clause) as if it were in the Nominative case.

5. Translate the genitive participle as an indicative verb, preceded by the adverbial, circumstantial word “While...” if the participle is a Present tense participle, or with the word “After...” if the participle is in the Aorist tense.

Examples:

- τοῦ δὲ Ἰησοῦ γεννηθέντος ἐν Βηθλέεμ... ἰδοὺ μάγοι ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν παρεγένοντο εἰς Ἰεροσόλυμα. (Matthew 2:1)

And after Jesus was born in Bethlehem... behold wise men from the East arrived in Jerusalem.

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• ἁρωνίζοντος δὲ τοῦ νυμφίου ἐνύσταξαν πᾶσαν καὶ ἐκάθενδον. (Matt. 25:5)
   And while the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

• καὶ εἰσελθόντος αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν οἶκον οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ κατ’ ἰδίαν ἐπηράτων αὐτὸν . . . (Mark 9:28)
   And after He came into the house, His disciples asked Him privately . . .

• ἦδη δὲ αὐτοῦ καταβαινόντος οἱ δούλοι αὐτοῦ ὕπήρτησαν αὐτῷ. (John 4:51)
   And already, while he was going down, his servants met him.