

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:

- *του̐ δὲ Ἰησοῦ γεννήθεντος ἐν Βηθλέεμ . . . ἰδοῦ μάγοι ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν παρεγένοντο εἰς Ἱερουσόλυμα. (Matthew 2:1)*
And after Jesus was born in Bethlehem . . . behold wise men from the East arrived in Jerusalem.

- *χρονίζοντος δὲ τοῦ νυμφίου ἐνύσταξαν πᾶσαι καὶ ἐκάθευδον. (Matt. 25:5)*
And while the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.
- *καὶ εἰσελθόντος αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν οἶκον οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ κατ' ἰδίαν ἐπηρώτων αὐτόν . . . (Mark 9:28)*
And after He came into the house, His disciples asked Him privately . . .
- *ἤδη δὲ αὐτοῦ καταβαίνοντος οἱ δοῦλοι αὐτοῦ ὑπήνητησαν αὐτῷ. (John 4:51)*
And already, while he was going down, his servants met him.