

# Genitive Absolute and Periphrastic Constructions

## Genitive Absolute\*

- A *genitive absolute* is a noun or pronoun and a participle in the genitive that are not grammatically connected to the rest of the sentence. In other words, there will be no word in the sentence that the noun, pronoun or participle modifies.  
Καὶ εὐθὺς ἔτι αὐτοῦ λαλοῦντος παραγίνεται Ἰουδᾶς (Mark 14:43)  
And immediately, *while he is speaking*, Judas comes.
- Most genitive absolutes in the New Testament are temporal. Using “while” or “after” will normally make proper sense.

When a noun or pronoun is present

ἀκούοντος αὐτοῦς . . .

While he was hearing . . .

ἀκούσαντος αὐτοῦ . . .

After he heard

When no noun or pronoun is present

ἀκούοντος . . .

While hearing

ἀκούσαντος . . .

After hearing . . .

- The genitive absolute tends to occur at the beginning of a sentence.

\* An “absolute” construction is a construction that has no grammatical relationship to the rest of the sentence. “Absolute” means “separated.” It comes from the Latin “absolutus” which means “loosed.”

## Periphrastic Constructions

- A *periphrastic construction* consists of a form of εἶμι and a participle together stating a single idea:  
μόνον δὲ ἀκούοντες ἦσαν ὅτι (Gal. 1:23)  
“*but only, they kept hearing that*” (imperfect εἶμι + present ptc.)  
ἔσται δεδεμένον ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς (Matt. 16:19)  
“*will have been bound in heaven*” (future εἶμι + perfect ptc.)
- As the chart on page 277 shows, that time is determined by εἶμι. In the above examples, ἦσαν is imperfect so Gal. 1:23 uses past tense; ἔσται is future so Matt. 16:19 is translated as future.
- Originally used to emphasize the continuous force of the participle. This emphasis is often totally lost in Koine Greek.
- Koine Greek normally uses a periphrastic construction for the *third person singular or plural*, perfect middle/passive.
- Translate the periphrastic construction just as you would the regular formation of the tense; perhaps the continuous idea will be emphasized, but that is up to the context and not the verbal form.