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N.T. GREEK PREPOSITIONS

18 GREEK PREPOSITIONS AND THEIR USE IN THE GREEK TEXT OF THE N.T.

This information is taken from **Appendix 104 of "Bullinger's Companion Bible"**, with some modifications and simplifications on my part regarding the layout of the information.

NOTE:

THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS STRICTLY OF A GRAMMATICAL NATURE AND DOES NOT IN ANY WAY REFLECT ANY OF BULLINGER'S THEOLOGICAL IDEAS. BULLINGER HIMSELF HAD IN FACT USED PROFESSOR J.H. MOULTON'S WORK "GRAMMAR OF NEW TESTAMENT GREEK" FOR THE INFORMATION ON THIS TOPIC. THIS INFORMATION IS GRAMMATICAL AND NOT THEOLOGICAL.

For a correct understanding of the New Testament a knowledge of the Greek prepositions is not necessarily essential, as Bullinger claimed, but it is nevertheless very helpful. A simple illustration of this fact is as follows:

Those prepositions that govern two or three cases have DIFFERENT MEANINGS for each of the cases that they govern. That is why you can look up these prepositions in a Greek-English Lexicon and find a range of meanings for each preposition. This is a different concept from what we are used to in the English language ... that the same preposition can at times express almost contradictory statements simply by changing the case of the following noun from the accusative to the genitive or to the dative case.

Thus, when we find one of these prepositions used in a specific verse of the New Testament, this does NOT give us the latitude to choose which of the particular meanings of that preposition we can then apply to the verse in question. We cannot shop for the meaning that suits us.

THE INTENDED MEANING in that particular verse is made clear by THE CASE OF THE NOUN that follows the preposition. To be sure of what the verse in question is actually saying, we must examine the case of the noun which is governed by that preposition.

The cases which these prepositions govern are: the accusative (direct object) case, the genitive (possessive) case, and the dative (indirect object) case.

I have retained the alphabetical order in which Bullinger presented these prepositions in his Appendix 104.

THERE ARE 18 PREPOSITIONS IN TOTAL. BELOW IS A BRIEF PRESENTATION FOR EACH OF THESE WORDS, IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER:

NUMBER 1 = ANA

A) Ana governs only one case, the Accusative.

B) It denotes: up, upon. It is formed from ano (as kata (#10 below) is from kato, with which ana stands in direct antithesis).

C) In relation to vertical lines it denotes the top. With numerals it is used as a distributive (Matt. 20:9,10; Luke 9:3; John 2:6) and also adverbially (Rev. 21:21).

NUMBER 2 = ANTI

A) Anti governs only one case, the Genitive.

B) It denotes: over against, or opposite. Hence it is used as: instead of or in the place of (e.g. Matt. 2:22; Luke 11:11); and denotes equivalence (e.g. Matt. 20:28; Heb 12:16; 1Pe 3:9), while "huper" (#17 below) denotes: in the interest of, or on behalf of (Luke 6:28; John 17:19).

NUMBER 3 = AMPHI

A) Amphi is used only in composition in the New Testament and is rare in Classical Greek.

B) It denotes: about, or around.

C) Used of a solid, it denotes both sides.

NUMBER 4 = APO

A) Apo governs only one case, the Genitive.

B) It denotes: motion from the surface of an object, as a line drawn from the circumference.

C) It thus stands in contrast with "ek" (#7 below), which denotes a line drawn from the center; while "para" (#12 below) denotes a line drawn as a tangent.

D) Hence, it is used of motion away from a place (e.g. Matt. 3:16; Matt. 8:1; Acts 15:38), marking the distance which separates the two places, or the interval of time between two events (e.g. Matt. 19:4; Acts 20:18). It also marks the origin or source whence anything comes, such as birth, descent, residence (e.g. Matt. 2:1; Matt. 15:1; Matt. 21:11; Acts 10:23; Acts 17:13), or of information (e.g. Matt. 7:16).

E) Apo may consequently be used of deliverance or passing away from any state or condition (e.g. Matt. 1:21; Matt 14:2; Mark 5:34; Acts 13:8; Acts 14:15; Heb 6:1).

F) It would thus differ from "hupo" (#18 below), which would imply a cause immediate and active while "apo" would imply a cause virtually passive, and more remote.

NUMBER 5 = DIA

A) Dia governs two cases, the Genitive and the Accusative.

B) WITH THE GENITIVE it has the general sense of: through, as though dividing a surface into two by an intersecting line. It includes the idea of proceeding from and passing out (e.g. Mark 11:16; 1Cor. 3:15; 1Tim. 2:15; 1Pet. 3:20). Compare diameter.

In a temporal sense; after an interval (e.g. Matt. 26:61; Mark 2:1; Gal. 2:1).

From the ideas of space and time *dia*, with the Genitive, denotes any cause by means of which an action passes to its accomplishment (e.g. Matt. 1:22; John 1:3; Acts 3:18; 1Cor 16:3; 2Cor. 9:13); hence, it denotes the passing through whatever is interposed between the beginning and the end of such action.

C) WITH THE ACCUSATIVE it has the sense of: on account of, or because of (e.g. Matt. 27:18; Mark 2:27; Re 4:11), indicating both the exciting cause (e.g. Acts 12:20; Rom. 4:25; 1Cor. 11:10), the impulsive cause (e.g. John 12:9; Rom. 4:23; Rom. 15:15; Heb 2:9), or the prospective cause (e.g. Rom. 6:19; Rom. 8:11; Rom. 14:15; Heb 5:3).

NUMBER 6 = EIS

A) Eis governs only one case, the Accusative.

B) Euclid uses eis when a line is drawn to meet another line, at a certain point.

C) Hence, it denotes: motion to or unto an object, with the purpose of reaching or touching it (e.g. Matt. 2:11; Matt. 3:10; Luke 8:14; Acts 16:10).

D) From this comes the idea of the object toward which such motion is directed (e.g. Matt. 18:20,30; 1Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27), and for, or with respect to which such action or movement is made.

E) In contrast with eis, "pros" (#15 below) may mark one object as the means of reaching an ulterior object which is denoted by eis (e.g. John 6:35; Rom. 5:1; Eph. 4:12). It is the opposite of "ek" (#7 below).

NUMBER 7 = EK

A) Ek governs only one case, the Genitive.

B) It denotes: motion from the interior. See under apo (#4 above).

C) It is used of time, place, and origin.

D) It means out from, as distinguished from apo (#4 above), which means off, or away from.

E) Ek marks the more immediate origin, while apo marks the more remote origin; of expressing the intermediate meanings.

NUMBER 8 = EN

A) En governs only one case, the Dative.

B) It denotes: being or remaining within, with the primary idea of rest and continuance.

C) It has regard to place and space (e.g. Matt. 10:16; Luke 5:16), or sphere of action (e.g. Matt. 14:2; Rom. 1:5,8; Rom. 6:4).

D) It is also used for the efficient cause as emanating from within, and hence has sometimes the force of by, denoting the instrument, with, passing on to union and fellowship; en denoting inclusion, and sun (#16 below) denoting conjunction.

E) En denotes also continuance in time (e.g. Matt. 2:1; Matt. 27:40; John 11:10).

F) With the plural it means among.

NUMBER 9 = EPI

A) Epi governs three cases, the Genitive, the Dative, and the Accusative.

B) It denotes superposition.

C) WITH THE GENITIVE it denotes: upon, as proceeding or springing from, and answers to the question "Where?" (e.g. Matt 9:2; Matt. 10:27; Mark 8:4; Luke 22:30; John 6:21).

With the idea of locality it conveys the sense, in the presence of (e.g. Matt. 28:14; Mark 13:9; Acts 24:19; 1Cor. 6:1).

With the idea of time, it looks backward and upward, (e.g. "in the days of", Matt. 1:11; Heb. 1:2).

With the idea of place, it denotes dignity and power (e.g. Matt. 23:2; Acts 12:21; Rom. 9:5; Rev. 2:26).

D) WITH THE DATIVE it implies: actual superposition, as one thing resting upon another, as upon a foundation or basis which may be actual (e.g. Mark 6:25,28,39) or moral (e.g. Matt. 18:13; Mark 3:5). Both senses occur in 1Thess. 3:7.

Hence it is used of the moving principle or motive suggesting the purpose or object (e.g. Eph. 2:10), and sometimes including the result (e.g. 2Tim. 2:14).

E) WITH THE ACCUSATIVE it implies: the downward pressure on that upon which a thing rests; active motion being suggested (e.g. 2Cor. 3:15; 1Tim. 5:5).

Hence, it denotes any extended motion downward (e.g. Matt. 13:2; Matt 18:12; Matt. 19:28; Matt. 27:45) from heaven to earth (Mark 4:20; Acts 11:15; 2Cor. 12:9).

Compared with pros (#15 below): pros marks the motion, the direction to be taken, while epi, with the Accusative, marks the point to be reached.

This downward pressure may be that of the mind, or feeling (e.g. Matt. 25:21; Matt. 27:43; Heb. 6:1; 1Pet. 1:13).

For the difference between eis (#6 above) and epi with the Accusative see Rom 9:21 which states: "one vessel unto (eis) honour", and verse 23, which reads: "riches of glory on (epi) the vessels of mercy".

NUMBER 10 = KATA

A) Kata governs two cases, the Genitive and the Accusative.

B) It denotes two motions: vertical and horizontal.

C) WITH THE GENITIVE it denotes: vertical motion, the opposite of ana, (#1), above, descent, or detraction from a higher place or plane (e.g. Matt. 8:32; Mark 5:13); and direction to, or against (e.g. Mark 9:40; John 18:29; Acts 25:27; 2Cor. 13:8).

D) WITH THE ACCUSATIVE it denotes: horizontal motion, along which the action proceeds (e.g. Luke 8:39; Luke 10:33; Acts 5:15; Acts 8:26; Php. 3:14). Sometimes it includes the purpose or intention (e.g.

2Tim. 1:1; 2Tim. 4:3; Tit. 1:1). In this connection "eis", (#6 above, 2Tim. 4:14) marks the more immediate purpose; "pros", (#15 below, Eph. 4:12; Phm. 5) the ultimate purpose; and "kata" (#10) the destination to be reached. It has regard to the duration of the motion (e.g. Matt. 27:15; Heb. 3:8) and the accordance, conformity or proportion of the two things which such motion thus connects (e.g. Matt. 16:27; Matt. 23:3; Matt. 25:15; Luke 2:22).

NUMBER 11 = META

A) Meta governs two cases, the Genitive and the Accusative.

B) It denotes association and companionship with. It thus differs from sun (#16 below), which denotes proximity to, and hence conjunction or coherence. Compare Eph. 6:23 (meta) with Eph. 4:31 (sun); and 1Thess. 3:13 (meta) with Col. 3:3 (sun).

C) META WITH THE GENITIVE denotes: among, amid (e.g. Matt. 26:58; Mark 1:13; Rev. 21:3), or in company with (e.g. Matt. 9:15; John 11:31; 2Thess. 1:7; Rev. 14:13).

It refers specially to the mental disposition with which an action is performed (e.g. Matt. 12:30; Mark 3:5; Luke 1:39; Luke 9:49; John 8:28; 2Cor. 7:15).

D) META WITH THE ACCUSATIVE means: after, always in connection with time (e.g. Matt. 17:1; Matt. 26:32; John 13:7; Heb. 4:7; Heb. 7:28).

NUMBER 12 = PARA

A) Para governs three cases, the Genitive, the Dative, and the Accusative.

B) The uniform meaning is: beside, or alongside of. See apo, (#4 above).

C) WITH THE GENITIVE it denotes: from beside, implying the source from which anything proceeds (e.g. Matt. 2:4; Matt. 21:42; Luke 2:1; Luke 6:19; Acts 26:10; Php. 4:18).

As distinguished from hupo (#18 below) it denotes the general sense of motion, while hupo marks the special sense or efficient cause of such motion.

As distinguished from apo (#4 above) it marks the motion from a person (e.g. Matt. 2:16), while apo may imply motion from a place (e.g. Matt. 2:1).

D) WITH THE DATIVE it denotes: rest beside and at a person, place, or thing, expressing rest and position there (e.g. John 19:25; Acts 9:43), laid up with, or in store with (e.g. Matt. 6:1; Luke 1:30), or proximity to (e.g. Matt. 22:25; Col. 4:16).

Hence it implies in the power of (e.g. Matt. 19:26; Luke 1:37), in the judgment of (e.g. Rom. 2:12; 2Pet. 2:11).

E) WITH THE ACCUSATIVE it denotes: motion to a place, so as to be alongside it (e.g. Matt. 15:29; Mark 4:1).

Hence, beside and beyond, and so against (e.g. Acts 18:13; Rom. 1:25,26; Rom. 4:18; 1Cor. 3:11; Gal. 1:8), and beside, i.e. more or less than (e.g. Luke 3:13; Luke 13:2; Rom. 14:5; 2Cor. 11:24). Compare pros (#15 below).

NUMBER 13 = PERI

A) Peri governs two cases, the Genitive and the Accusative.

B) It denotes: around, or about, like a completed circle. Hence concerning. It marks the object about which the action of the verb takes place.

C) WITH THE GENITIVE it means: as concerning, or as regards, but always with the primary idea, and marking the central point of the activity (e.g. Matt. 4:6; Luke 24:19,27,44).

D) WITH THE ACCUSATIVE it denotes: the extension of such activity, hence, around (e.g. Mark 9:42; Luke 13:8; Acts 28:7; Php. 2:23).

NUMBER 14 = PRO

A) Pro governs only one case, the Genitive.

B) It denotes: the position as being in site, or, before one, in place (e.g. Luke 7:27; Luke 9:52; James 5:9), time (e.g. Matt. 5:12; John 17:24; Acts 21:38), or superiority (e.g. James 5:12; 1Pet. 4:8).

NUMBER 15 = PROS

A) Pros governs three cases, the Genitive, the Dative, and the Accusative.

B) It denotes: to, or, toward, implying motion onward. Its general meaning with the three cases is the motive - as in consideration of (with the Genitive); in addition to anything - as an act (with the Dative); with a view to anything - as an end (with the Accusative).

Compared with para (#12 above), pros denotes only direction and tendency, whereas para denotes both motion and change of place of some object.

C) WITH THE GENITIVE the only occurrence is Acts 27:34.

D) WITH THE DATIVE it occurs five times: Luke 19:37; John 18:16; twice in John 20:12; Rev. 1:13.

E) WITH THE ACCUSATIVE, see for example Matt. 2:12; Matt. 3:10; Matt. 21:34; Matt 26:57; Mark 5:11; Mark 11:1; Mark 14:54; Luke 7:7; Acts 6:1; 1Thess, 3:6; etc..

NUMBER 16 = SUN

A) Sun governs only one case, the Dative.

B) Sun denotes: proximity to.

C) See under meta (#11 above), also Luke 23:11 and Rom. 6:8.

NUMBER 17 = HUPER

A) Huper governs two cases, the Genitive and the Accusative.

B) It denotes: above, and over, with respect to the upper plane of a solid. Latin equivalent is "super".

C) WITH THE GENITIVE it is used in its relative rather than its absolute sense. In the place of (e.g. John 11:50; John 18:14; Rom. 5:6; 1Tim. 2:6; Phm. 13; 1Peter 3:18). In the interests of (e.g. 2Thess. 2:1). In behalf of (e.g. Matt. 5:44; Acts 9:16). For the purpose of (e.g. John 11:4; Rom. 15:8; 2Cor. 12:19; Php. 2:13).

With the Genitive huper is connected with peri (#13 above), being the apex of the triangle, or the fixed point of the compass, whereas peri is the circle described around it. Hence huper has regard to feeling, and implies the pleading a case on behalf of another, whereas peri implies the mere description of the circumstances of the case (e.g. 1Pet. 3:18; Jude 9).

D) WITH ACCUSATIVE it denotes: beyond, in excess of measure, honour, number, or time (e.g. Matt. 10:24; 2Cor. 1:1-8; Eph. 1:22; Php. 2:9; Phm. 16).

NUMBER 18 = HUPO

A) Hupo governs two cases in the New Testament, the Genitive and the Accusative.

B) It denotes the under side of a solid, and is thus the opposite of huper (#17 above).

C) With the Genitive it describes motion from beneath; with Dative, which is not used in the New Testament, it describes position beneath; and with the Accusative it describes motion or extension underneath.

D) WITH THE GENITIVE, hupo is used to mark the efficient or instrumental agent, from under whose hand or power the action of the verb proceeds (e.g. Matt. 1:22; Matt. 2:16; Luke 14:8).

E) WITH THE ACCUSATIVE, it denotes the place whither such action extends (e.g. Matt. 8:8; Mark 4:32; James 2:3).

Hence it implies moral or legal subjection (e.g. Matt. 8:9; Rom. 6:14; Rom. 7:14; Rom. 16:20; 1Tim. 6:1).

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COMMENTS:

This concludes the list of 18 prepositions found in the Greek New Testament. In most cases the translation of these prepositions found in the text of the KJV is correct and acceptable. But there are times when a simple switch in translating a preposition with a different "option" can drastically change the thought that is conveyed.

It is at times like that, that it is important for us to examine very carefully which of those translations into English is in fact dictated by the case of the following noun in the Greek text. It is at times like that, that an appeal to "The Greek Dictionary in Strong's Concordance" is simply not enough to accurately establish the correct meaning of the preposition in question. Beware of appeals like: "Since this Greek preposition CAN ALSO MEAN ... THEREFORE in this instance it really SHOULD READ ..."! While the Greek preposition can indeed "also mean ...", it should always be noted that "this preposition can also mean ..." IS COMPLETELY CONDITIONAL ON THE CASE OF THE NOUN FOLLOWING THIS PREPOSITION. An examination of the case of the following noun will in fact establish what the preposition MUST MEAN in this specific context.

You should view the information on this page as a tool towards the goal of establishing for yourself whether any change being suggested to you by anyone is in fact correct. Realize that in the

overwhelming number of cases in the New Testament the translation found in the KJV is in fact correct; the scholars who produced that translation were fully aware of the meanings these prepositions have with different cases.

It is not within the scope of this webpage to teach you how to establish the correct case with which any specific noun is being used in any specific passage of the New Testament. However, here are some simple guidelines.

There are very reasonably-priced software packages available (in certain religious bookshops, etc.) which cover the topic of Biblical Greek very thoroughly. You might consider investing in such a software package. The things you would be looking for include:

- A) It must give you the Greek alphabet so that you can learn to distinguish the different letters.
- B) It should include a reasonable Greek-English dictionary with most of the Greek words found in the New Testament.
- C) It must give you examples of the paradigms for each of the three declensions into which all nouns fall.
- D) You need to become familiar with the letters with which Greek words end in the accusative and genitive and dative cases, both singular and plural.

And then you need to get hold of what is in my opinion the world's best Bible software, the ONLINE BIBLE, which is produced by Larry Pierce. See the "Resource Center" for more details. In that Bible you can pull up two or more different versions at the same time. For the first version you would pull up the KJV (called "AV") WITH THE STRONG'S NUMBERS within the text. For the second version you would pull up the Greek language text (called "TR") ALSO WITH THE STRONG'S NUMBERS showing within the text.

THIS FEATURE, of having the Strong's numbers embedded within the texts of both, the English language and the Greek language versions of the New Testament, will enable you to quickly identify the Greek word you are looking for, because it will have the same number attached to it as the equivalent English word. You will in this way be able to pinpoint the correct Greek word, even without being able to read the Greek text.

Once you have pinpointed the correct Greek word, assuming that you cannot actually read Greek, you can then use your Greek alphabet (copied out from your software, right?) to convert the Greek word into our alphabet, one letter at a time.

One comment that may be helpful here: Greek has two letters "e" and two letters "o". To differentiate between which "e" and which "o" is in the Greek text, I would suggest that you convert the Greek "epsilon" into the letter "e" and the Greek "eta" you convert into the letter "e" with a circumflex accent over it. Likewise you convert the Greek "omicron" into the letter "o" and the Greek "omega" into the letter "o" with a circumflex accent over it. In this way you will be able to immediately distinguish "which e" and "which o" is contained in your transliteration of the Greek word.

It is not that you need to learn how to pronounce the words. It is simply that a different "o" or "e" can mean a different case. For example: "doron" (first "o" is omega and the second "o" is omicron) is the accusative singular of the word "a gift". But the word "doron" (first "o" is omega and the second "o" is also omega) is the genitive plural of this same word. So unless you resort to some kind of distinction between the two letters for "o" in the Greek alphabet, you have no way of knowing whether the word "doron" is the accusative singular or the genitive plural. This all sounds a lot more complicated than it

actually is. Even a little practice will quickly have you distinguishing between these letters.

Once you have converted the Greek word into our alphabet, then you check the ending of that word against all the paradigms you have for the three different declensions that all Greek nouns fall into. Specifically, you check your word against the endings for the accusative, genitive and dative cases, both singular and plural. In most cases this should enable you to reach a clear conclusion as to what case the noun you are examining is in. With some practice this whole process will become easier for you.

Don't let anyone talk you out of examining the facts for yourself. You don't have to be an accomplished Greek scholar to do this kind of research for yourself. It is precisely for people who have no background in Greek (and the same goes for Hebrew) that people like Larry Pierce have produced powerful computer tools which enable you to do your own research. The "accomplished and highly qualified scholars" have ALREADY done their work in accurately identifying every word in the Greek text, including providing an accurate parsing for every occurrence of every verb in the Greek text. Through the ONLINE BIBLE we can benefit from their expert knowledge of Greek, without necessarily having to be Greek scholars ourselves.

With a little practice and some determination you can establish the facts for yourself in many, many different passages of the New Testament.

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