INTERMEDIATE GREEK GRAMMAR

SYNTAX FOR STUDENTS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

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Introduction

Why This Book?

I.1. We love Greek. We want our students to love Greek or, falling short of that, to be committed to using it (and Hebrew) in life and ministry. Loving a language and teaching it, however, are insufficient reasons to write a new intermediate Greek grammar. After we started this project, we became aware that Andreas Köstenberger, Benjamin Merkle, and Robert Plummer were working on *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek* (B&H, 2016) and perhaps doing so for reasons similar to ours. The last substantial intermediate grammar, Dan Wallace's *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics* (Zondervan), was published in 1996, preceded in 1994 by Richard Young's *Intermediate New Testament Greek* (Broadman & Holman) and followed in 1998 by Black's much shorter offering, *It's Still Greek to Me* (Baker). All of these were preceded by Stanley Porter's grammar, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament* (Sheffield, 1992), which is closest in perspective to what we have attempted to write. And while we acknowledge again our incalculable debt to all of them and the many others who have paved our way, much has shifted or changed in the world of NT Greek studies since the 1990s. The vastly increased availability of Accordance, BibleWorks, and Logos software along with modern linguistic developments and advances in specific areas of Greek grammar have necessitated some reassessments of our approach to grammar.[1] One specific area yet to be integrated sufficiently into grammars is verbal aspect theory (the exception being Porter's work mentioned above). These advances make

1. For some of these advances, see Constantine R. Campbell, *Advances in the Study of Greek: New Insights for Reading the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015).

the time ripe for an intermediate-level grammar that integrates them. We have written this grammar to be an accessible textbook for students and professors alike but also to be useful to pastors and anyone involved in teaching the NT. In short, it is intended for all who need an intermediate-level Greek grammar that incorporates insights from some of the most recent developments in the study of NT Greek.

I.2. What are the distinctive features of this grammar? First, as already mentioned, without trying to be comprehensive we have attempted to incorporate some of the most recent linguistic insights into the study of Koine Greek. We have particularly endeavored to make accessible to students advances in the areas of verbal aspect theory, the voice system, conjunctions, as well as linguistic and discourse studies. In a number of areas, we think that we are unique in the way we have categorized or "labeled" grammatical constructions. Second, we have attempted to keep grammatical categories and labels to a minimum, focusing on the most important or the most common usages. Third, we have tried to illustrate the different grammatical points with examples taken from across the entire spectrum of NT texts. That is, where possible, we have culled illustrations of each grammatical feature from the Gospels, Acts, the Pauline Letters, the General Epistles, and Revelation to expose the student to different literary genres and the Greek styles of various authors. We have also made a point of locating fresh examples, whenever possible, that have not been used by other grammars, though some conventional examples are just too good to pass up. Fourth, we have intentionally avoided writing an exegetical grammar; however, we often include discussion of illustrative texts to demonstrate the exegetical value of the application of Greek grammar. A final feature is the use of larger chunks of text for practice. Rather than following the custom of many grammars in choosing verse-length examples isolated from their contexts, in most instances we have chosen to include larger stretches of NT text. These come at the end of the discussion of each major grammatical point, or sometimes at the end of the chapter, and are labeled "For Practice." Our hope is that students will be encouraged to move beyond looking at isolated grammatical features to considering their function within a larger context.

Though we would be thrilled if all Bible students shared our passion for reading Scripture in the original languages, we count it a blessing to live in an age of multiple translations. We affirm that God's words should be made available to all people in every possible language. (We acknowledge that not everyone is called to study Hebrew and Greek and that among the great cloud of witnesses are multitudes who are not.) As any of us who have ever tried to learn a foreign language know, translation involves varying degrees of interpretation. There is no one-to-one correspondence between any two

languages, and it is not always possible to bring out the fullest, most nuanced meaning of a particular text in translation. Therefore, in this grammar we do not rely on translation to bring out all the subtleties of the grammatical features that are illustrated with Greek examples. Our English translation may or may not fully capture the grammar being illustrated; that is, the goal of exegesis is not to produce an ideal translation. Rather, the focus should be on grammatical analysis and on knowing the importance of grammatical analysis for interpreting the biblical text.

The following reflect some of the broader and most basic commitments of this grammar. We have tried to keep these commitments firmly in mind as we have written each section. One important insight that has emerged from the application of linguistics to Greek grammar is the realization that Greek should be treated like any other language. Many mistreatments of NT Greek come down to a misunderstanding of how language actually works. The point is, we do not write and speak in our own language the way we often treat NT Greek.

Minimalistic Grammar

I.3. A very common approach, which gives unwarranted attention to individual grammatical units and their meanings, is what could be called a *maximalist* approach to grammar, or the "exegetical nuggets" approach.[2] The goal of maximalist NT grammar and exegesis is to uncover the most meaning possible in each grammatical form or construction. This is often accompanied by the multiplication of categories, labels, and rules for their usage. The focus is on individual words and grammatical forms, often at the expense of sensitivity to the broader context in which they occur. Such individual elements of NT Greek are thought to be "rich" in meaning. This can be seen, for example, in approaches that read theological significance out of verb tenses. So we are told that the perfect tense (ἐγήγερται) in 1 Cor. 15:4 is theologically significant because it portrays Christ's resurrection as a reality based on a past action that continues into the present. This theological insight may be valid (in fact, we would insist that it is!), but it is not dependent on a single linguistic unit, the perfect tense-form (nor are we convinced that this is a correct understanding of the perfect tense-form itself). Rather, such insight comes from the broader context of Paul's discussion of the resurrection in 1 Cor. 15. Or how often

2. Moisés Silva, *God, Language, and Scripture: Reading the Bible in the Light of General Linguistics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 144.

have we heard the aorist tense, or the genitive case, or prepositions "milked" for theological purposes? We think here of the weight that has sometimes been given to the debate between the "objective" and "subjective" genitive in the expression πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. It is not that it is unimportant whether we think in terms of faith placed in Jesus Christ or of Jesus' own faithfulness; it is just that our decision in many cases is primarily theological rather than grammatical and should not be based solely on isolated elements such as tenses, cases, or prepositions. Once more, our focus should be on the larger context as the bearer of theology. Any major theological points worth affirming and arguing for will certainly not be nuanced in small grammatical subtleties or fine distinctions between case uses. Rather, they will be clear from their entire contexts.[3] At the heart of this is the failure to recognize how language actually works. According to Rodney Decker, too much grammatical analysis is characterized by the efforts of preachers or teachers

> to find nuggets that support an emphasis that they want to make in the text, . . . even in some commentaries that attempt to focus only on the Greek text. We do not understand our own language in this way even though a grammarian can dissect such texts and assign appropriate taxonomical labels to the individual elements. Grammatical study of ancient texts in "dead" languages (i.e., those no longer spoken by a community of native speakers) is of value. It helps us understand what is being said and enables us to grasp the alternative possibilities in a written text. More often it facilitates *eliminating* invalid possibilities of meaning. But when all is said and done, all the grammatical and syntactical data are important only in that they enable us to grasp the meaning of the statements in their context.[4]

A maximalist approach to Greek grammar is often an outgrowth of a view of Scripture as the inspired Word of God. Certainly if the NT is God's Word, each grammatical expression must be semantically weighty and bursting with import! As Moisés Silva describes this perspective, "Surely an inspired text must be full of meaning: we can hardly think that so much as a single word in the Bible is insignificant or dispensable."[5] We agree with Silva that this overlooks that God has spoken to his people in normal language. As authors,

3. Ibid., 115: "But we can feel confident that no reasonable writer would seek to express a major point by leaning on a subtle grammatical distinction—especially if it is a point not otherwise clear from the whole context (and if it *is* clear from the context, then the grammatical subtlety plays at best a secondary role in exegesis)."

4. Rodney J. Decker, *Mark 1–8: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014), xxii–xxiii.

5. Silva, *God, Language, and Scripture*, 13.

we are committed to the authority and inspiration of Scripture. However, this does not necessitate taking the Greek language in an unnatural or artificial way. Inspiration does not somehow transform the language into something more than it was before. Therefore, we are committed to a minimalistic view of grammar, where maximal meaning is not attributed to the individual linguistic units but is found in their broader context.[6] Also, we have kept categories and labels to a minimum. This does not mean that grammar is unimportant or that precise grammatical analysis should be avoided, but we must understand the role it plays in contributing meaning to the overall context. There is danger in reading far more from the grammar than is justified. A minimalist approach also has an andragogical benefit: it relieves the student from the burden of learning an unwieldy list of case or tense labels. It greatly streamlines the choices and the categories for which students are responsible, thereby freeing them up to focus on entire texts instead of isolated details.

Realistic View of Language

I.4. In a similar vein is the assessment of the overall character of the Greek language, especially as it relates to other languages. Many maintain a superior status for Greek. In their grammar Dana and Mantey claim that in comparison with others, "the Greek language, with scarcely an exception, proves to be the most accurate, euphonious, and expressive."[7] More recently, Chrys Caragounis has concluded that in its history and development Greek is "unique" and "unparalleled."[8] He also states that in the Classical (Attic) period

> the Greek language reaches its highest degree of perfection: the verb attains 1,124 forms, expressing 1,602 ideas; the noun signals fifteen meaning-units, the great variety of subordinate conjunctions, along with the infinitive and participle, facilitate an almost infinite diversity of hypotactical clauses, the wealth of particles makes possible the expression of the finest of nuances, and the sentence becomes the paragon of complete thought expressed in balanced grammatical relations.[9]

However, such an assessment surely overestimates Greek as a language and its place within the development of language. Moreover, it can easily lead to

6. Decker, *Mark 1–8*, xxii.
7. Dana and Mantey 268.
8. Chrys Caragounis, *The Development of Greek and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 21.
9. Ibid., 33.

the grammatical maximalism referred to above. In our view, Greek should be treated just like any other language. This means that it is not more precise, more expressive, more wonderfully accurate and intricate than any other language, as if it were the only language in which God could have possibly revealed his Second Testament. Greek is no better or worse than any other language. All languages have their unique features, but a general principle of linguistics is that what can be said in one language can be approximated (since we have said that there is no one-for-one correspondence) in any other. No one language is or was more suitable to communicate God's revelation of himself to his people than any other. Greek has strengths and limitations, just like any other language.

Descriptive Grammar

I.5. Almost the opposite of the previous observation is found in many older grammars, such as BDF, that compared the Koine Greek of the NT to earlier Classical Greek. NT Greek grammar was judged by how well it measured up to Classical Greek standards. The general consensus was that the Greek of the NT was poorer or deficient, or that its users were less competent, or the like. Even today one still hears or reads statements such as, "the writers were careless in their use of Greek," or claims that this or that construction is "sloppy," "bad," or "improper" Greek. Instead, throughout the pages of this grammar we have avoided making judgments as to the correctness or incorrectness of the grammar used by NT authors. It is our conviction that the job of grammar is to be descriptive of how language is actually used, not to be prescriptive and make judgments about how it "ought to be" used. Languages change and evolve, so it is illegitimate to hold up one period of the Greek language's use as superior to another and then to judge a given usage to be "poor" or "incorrect." The "correct" grammar is that upon which language users agree. A corollary of this approach to grammar is that the study of language should be primarily *synchronic* (describing the use of language at a given point in time) rather than *diachronic* (describing the historical development of a language through time).[10] Therefore, although we occasionally make some diachronic observations, our study of Greek grammar has as its primary goal the (synchronic) description of usage at the time of the writing under consideration, the Koine Greek used in the NT, though the focus

10. Stanley E. Porter, "Studying Ancient Language from a Modern Linguistic Perspective: Essential Terms and Terminology," *Filologia Neotestamentaria* 2 (1989): 153–54; Silva, *God, Language, and Scripture*, 41–44.

will be on the Greek of the NT. For example, an overreliance on diachronic (historical) study was partly responsible for the use by some grammarians of an eight-case system for Greek nouns. Based on a descriptive and synchronic approach to grammar, we will side with those who advocate a five-case approach (see chap. 1, on the cases).

Semantics versus Pragmatics

I.6. One important principle that this grammar has tried to keep in mind is the distinction between semantics and pragmatics. That is, there is a difference between the semantics (meaning) of a given grammatical unit and its pragmatic function in various contexts. For example, a participle is a specific grammatical form with specific meaning, but it can function in a variety of ways in a sentence: as adjective, substantive, adverb, or main verb. This distinction can be seen especially in the discussion on verbal aspect. Each aspect has a distinct meaning (semantics) but can function in a variety of temporal and "kind-of-action" contexts (pragmatics).

Realistic View of Software

I.7. Biblical language software (e.g., Logos, BibleWorks, and Accordance) is a boon to just about everyone, from serious scholars to interested laypeople. Word and grammar searches can now be conducted in seconds, saving us valuable time and energy. Statistics for a given grammatical feature are easier to compile accurately and effortlessly. Corpus studies can be executed with greater facility and thoroughness.[11] We have relied heavily on such software in writing this grammar. From our perspective, though, the greatest software in the world still lacks the ability to ensure that people use it sensibly. Access to Hebrew and Greek versions (with every word parsed) and almost countless translations does not guarantee that one understands these texts.

We find ourselves at a pivotal point in history; at least in the West, theological education is in decline in terms of both duration and scope. There is a growing trend among seminaries either to discontinue courses in the biblical languages altogether or to replace them with courses on how to use Bible software. We believe that students need to develop a solid working knowledge of and feel for the biblical languages if they are to have any chance of using

11. Matthew Brook O'Donnell, *Corpus Linguistics and the Greek of the New Testament* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2005).

the tools well. We seem to be facing the opposite but equivalent problem to what was on Martin Luther's mind when he penned his famous (at least among teachers of the biblical languages) letter on education to councilmen in Germany. In the sixteenth century the access problem was the reverse of ours: Greek and Hebrew manuscripts were available to very few, and the reformers were just beginning to displace Latin in favor of Hebrew and Greek. Nearly half a millennium later, biblical manuscripts are almost universally accessible, the two standard Greek texts by Nestle-Aland and the UBS are in their 28th and 5th editions respectively,[12] standard lexical tools continue to be updated, biblical language computer programs continue to increase and develop, and Greek grammars are now plentiful. Yet the study of Greek has fallen on hard times in current theological education. With Martin Luther, we believe there is a spiritual battle underway.

> For the devil smelled a rat, and perceived that if the languages were revived a hole would be knocked in his kingdom which he could not easily stop up again. Since he found he could not prevent their revival, he now aims to keep them on such slender rations that they will of themselves decline and pass away. . . . Although the gospel came and still comes to us through the Holy Spirit alone, we cannot deny that it came through the medium of languages, was spread abroad by that means, and must be preserved by the same means. . . . In proportion then as we value the gospel, let us zealously hold to the languages. . . . And let us be sure of this: we will not long preserve the gospel without the languages. . . . The Holy Spirit is no fool. He does not busy himself with inconsequential or useless matters. He regarded the languages as so useful and necessary to Christianity that he ofttimes brought them down with him from heaven. This alone should be a sufficient motive for us to pursue them with diligence and reverence and not to despise them. . . . When our faith is . . . held up to ridicule, where does the fault lie? It lies in our ignorance of the languages; and there is no other way out than to learn the languages. . . . Since it becomes Christians then to make good use of the Holy Scriptures as their one and only book and it is a sin and a shame not to know our own book or to understand the speech and words of our God, it is a still greater sin and loss that we do not study languages, especially in these days when God is giving us men and books and every facility and inducement to this study, and desires his Bible to be an open book. . . . The preacher or teacher can expound the Bible from beginning to end as he pleases, accurately or

12. Although the two standard editions differ in format (the UBS edition presents only a small selection of the textual variants presented in the Nestle-Aland edition), they represent the same edited Greek text. The SBLGNT, edited by Michael W. Holmes, represents an alternative edition of the Greek text that differs from the Nestle-Aland / United Bible Societies text in more than 540 variation units.

> inaccurately, if there is no one there to judge whether he is doing it right or wrong. But in order to judge, one must have a knowledge of the languages; it cannot be done any other way.[13]

We believe Martin Luther's words need to be heard again in our seminaries, colleges, and Christian universities today!

13. Martin Luther, "To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools," in *The Christian in Society II*, vol. 45 of *Luther's Works*, ed. Walther I. Brandt (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1962), 358–65.

1

The Cases

1.1. As an inflected language, Greek uses a system called "case" to mark a group of words, nominals (nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adjectival participles, and articles), in order to indicate their grammatical function and relationship to other words within a sentences (e.g., subject, predicate nominative, direct object, indirect object). In English we primarily follow word order to determine grammatical function. If we change the order of "The player hit the ball" to "The ball hit the player," the grammatical function (subject, object) of "player" and "ball" changes. In Greek it is the inflected endings, not word order, that indicate such things. If we follow the formal endings of the Greek case system, there are at most five cases: nominative, accusative, genitive, dative, vocative.[1]

The choice of a case ending by an author communicates a specific meaning, which is refined by how it relates to its broader context. A common approach to the cases is to create multiple labels (such as nominative of appellation, possessive genitive, instrumental dative) to name the various ways they function in representative contexts. So, for example, Wallace (72–175) provides

1. An eight-case system was argued for by several older grammarians. See Robertson 446–543; Dana and Mantey 65–68. There are still some supporters of the eight-case system for Koine Greek (i.e., nominative, genitive, ablative, dative, locative, instrumental, accusative, vocative): see Brooks and Winbery 2–3. However, based on the formal evidence that at most there are only five case endings and that advocates of the eight-case system rely too much on a historical approach to the cases (diachronic) rather than on the evidence from Koine Greek (synchronic), this view is becoming less common in grammars and will not be discussed any further.

some thirty-three labels for the genitive case and twenty-seven for the dative. Analyzing the cases in NT interpretation, then, sometimes consists of simply attaching the correct label or category to each occurrence of a Greek case (a method we call "pin the label on the grammatical construction"). The following points are meant to introduce our treatment of cases in the rest of this chapter.

1.2. It is helpful to distinguish, as Porter (81–82) does, between (a) the meaning contributed by the semantics of the case itself, (b) the meaning contributed by other syntactical features, and (c) the meaning contributed by the broader context. Thus the interpreter must consider all three of these in arriving at the meaning of a given case construction: the case (e.g., a genitive), other syntactical features (e.g., the genitive follows a noun that semantically communicates a verbal process), and the broader context (e.g., this construction occurs in a given context of one of Paul's Letters).

1.3. This grammar will follow a "minimalist" approach to the cases. That is, it focuses on the basic, more common, or exegetically significant usages of the cases rather than multiplying numerous categories with their respective labels. This is not to suggest that there are no other valid usages or categories than those listed below. But it is important to remember that "these names are *merely appellations* to distinguish the different *contextual variations* of usage, and that they do not serve to *explain the case itself*."[2] It is important to distinguish the semantics of the case forms from the pragmatic usage of the cases in different contexts. These different labels (appellations) are not the *meanings* of the cases, but reflect the different contextual realizations of the meanings of the case forms. This approach also allows for ambiguity in the case functions. Sometimes more than one potential label will "fit" when there is not enough evidence to select a specific category with confidence. In such cases the interpreter should refrain from feeling the need to pin down a given case function. The focus should be on the meaning the case contributes to the context. Many grammars often illustrate different case functions with the clearest examples they can find. The problem is that students may think that in every case they must discover "the correct label." But ambiguous examples often prove more fruitful for teaching exegesis in that they resist so easily pinning a category or label on a given case. At times NT authors may have been ambiguous as to the exact function of the case, or a single label may not capture the function of the case in a given context. At other times there is simply not enough evidence to confidently label a given case usage.

1.4. Although we hope that a "minimalist" approach to case usage will free students of the Greek NT to give their full attention to the forest rather

2. J. P. Louw, "Linguistic Theory and the Greek Case System," *Acta Classica* 9 (1966): 73.

than the trees, we acknowledge our great debt to those who have created and refined case labels. Labels help us think logically and systematically about language. There is obvious value in the discipline of considering the many ways in which one might understand, for example, τὴν πίστιν τοῦ θεοῦ (subjective genitive, objective genitive, possessive genitive, or genitive of source come to mind for τοῦ θεοῦ). Problems can and do arise, however, when we think language usage is always logical and systematic rather than intuitive—as if case endings were themselves inflected for further meaning, or as if the authors worked from a list of genitive usages. Perhaps for the majority of students of biblical Greek, labels are both intimidating and seen as ends in themselves. Our goal is to encourage students to make their goal the explanation of entire texts, not just to pick the right label for individual elements in those texts.

The Nominative Case

1.5. Defining the Greek nominative case has posed a challenge for grammars. Sometimes it is described in terms of one of its primary functions, to indicate the subject of a sentence (Dana and Mantey 68–69). Though this is one of its common uses, the description is too narrow and does not account for all of the nominatives. As frequently recognized, the Greeks themselves designated it as the "naming case" (Robertson 456). The nominative is the case that *designates, or specifies, a nominal idea*. It simply names or designates an entity rather than specifying a relationship (as with the genitive or dative).[3] The various syntactic functions explained below may be understood in this light. Furthermore, in relation to the other cases, the nominative is the unmarked case and carries the least semantic weight (but perhaps sometimes more marked than the accusative; see below), although at times it can have important functions in a discourse.

Subject

1.6. One of the most common functions of the nominative case is to designate or name the grammatical subject of a verb in any voice (S + V). The nominative subject often indicates the topic of the sentence.[4]

3. Gary A. Long, *Grammatical Concepts 101 for Biblical Greek* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006), 38.

4. Joseph E. Grimes, "Signals of Discourse Structure in Koine," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1975 Seminar Papers* (Missoula, MT: Society of Biblical Literature, 1975), 1:151–64.

Τότε παραγίνεται ὁ **Ἰησοῦς** ἀπὸ τῆς Γαλιλαίας (Matt. 3:13)	Then **Jesus** arrived from Galilee.
Πέτρος δὲ καὶ **Ἰωάννης** ἀνέβαινον εἰς τὸ ἱερὸν ἐπὶ τὴν ὥραν τῆς προσευχῆς τὴν ἐνάτην (Acts 3:1)	And **Peter** and **John** went up into the temple at the ninth hour of prayer.
νόμος δὲ παρεισῆλθεν ἵνα πλεονάσῃ τὸ **παράπτωμα**· οὗ δὲ ἐπλεόνασεν ἡ **ἁμαρτία**, ὑπερεπερίσσευσεν ἡ **χάρις** (Rom. 5:20)	But the **law** came in, in order that **trespass** might increase. But where **sin** increases, **grace** increases more.

Since Greek verbs indicate person and number through their inflected endings and therefore do not require the mention of an explicit subject, "when the subject is expressed it is often used either to draw attention to the subject of discussion or to mark a shift in the topic, perhaps signaling that a new person or event is the center of focus" (Porter 295–96). Sometimes an expressed subject is needed to indicate a change of speakers in a dialogue or to reintroduce a character who has been offstage for some time (see chap. 13, on discourse considerations).

ἕτερος δὲ τῶν μαθητῶν εἶπεν αὐτῷ. . . . ὁ δὲ **Ἰησοῦς** λέγει αὐτῷ . . . (Matt. 8:21–22)	And **another** of the disciples said to him. . . . And **Jesus** said to him. . . . (*a change of speakers in a dialogue*)
Ἄγγελος δὲ κυρίου ἐλάλησεν πρὸς Φίλιππον λέγων (Acts 8:26)	And an **angel** of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying. . . . (*introduces a new subject*)
Παρακαλῶ οὖν ὑμᾶς **ἐγὼ** ὁ δέσμιος ἐν κυρίῳ ἀξίως περιπατῆσαι τῆς κλήσεως ἧς ἐκλήθητε (Eph. 4:1)	Therefore, **I**, the prisoner in the Lord, exhort you to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called.

In a discourse in which the author has already identified himself, as here (Eph. 1:1), the explicit first-person reference to the author is emphatic.

διὸ καὶ ὁ **θεὸς** αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν, καὶ ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα (Phil. 2:9)	Therefore, **God** also highly exalted him and gave him the name above every name. (*a switch to a new subject; from Christ to God*)

In Phil. 2:6–7 the subject of the finite verbs is Jesus Christ.

Οὕτως καὶ ὁ **Χριστὸς** οὐχ ἑαυτὸν ἐδόξασεν γενηθῆναι ἀρχιερέα (Heb. 5:5)

So also **Christ** did not glorify himself in order to become a high priest.

In the midst of the author's discussion of the qualifications of a high priest, the nominative indicates a shift to the topic of Jesus Christ.

Καὶ οἱ ἑπτὰ **ἄγγελοι** οἱ ἔχοντες τὰς ἑπτὰ σάλπιγγας ἡτοίμασαν αὐτοὺς ἵνα σαλπίσωσιν. (Rev. 8:6)

And the seven **angels** who have the seven trumpets prepared them, in order that they might blow them.

The nominative resumes reference to or brings back onstage the seven angels after their introduction in Rev. 8:2 was interrupted by two other angelic figures in verses 3–5.

Predicate

1.7. Another frequent usage of the nominative case is to complete a "linking verb" (S + LV + **PN**) that links it to the subject. The most common verbs are εἰμί and γίνομαι (and ὑπάρχω).

ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Πέτρος λέγει αὐτῷ· Σὺ εἶ ὁ **χριστός**. (Mark 8:29)

Answering, Peter said to him, "You are the **Christ**."

οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ **Μωϋσῆς** ὁ εἴπας τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραήλ· (Acts 7:37)

This is **Moses**, who spoke to the children of Israel.

οὐ γάρ ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ **βρῶσις** καὶ **πόσις** (Rom. 14:17)

For the kingdom of God is not **food** and **drink**.

Γίνεσθε δὲ **ποιηταὶ** λόγου καὶ μὴ **ἀκροαταὶ** μόνον (James 1:22)

Become **doers** of the word and not **hearers** only.

Οὗτοι οἱ περιβεβλημένοι τὰς στολὰς τὰς λευκὰς **τίνες** εἰσὶν καὶ πόθεν ἦλθον; (Rev. 7:13)

These who are clothed with white robes, **who** are they and from where did they come?

One problem emerges with the predicate use of the nominative: since this construction often involves two substantives in the nominative case, one the subject and the other the predicate nominative (**S + LV + PN**), and since word order cannot be the deciding factor in Greek for grammatical function, how is the reader of Greek to distinguish the subject from the predicate nominative?

The main issue is with third-person examples. With first- or second-person pronouns or verbs (e.g., ἐστέ) the decision is not difficult: "I," "we," "you" will be the subject. The following guidelines may prove useful for third-person examples. They are also arranged in order of importance (that is, 1 trumps all the others), though 2 and 3 seem to operate on the same level (in that case, 4 comes into effect).[5]

1. If only one of the words in the nominative is a pronoun, it will be the subject.[6]

αὕτη δέ ἐστιν ἡ αἰώνιος ζωή (John 17:3)	And **this** is eternal life.

2. If only one of the words in the nominative has an article, it will be the subject.[7]

Καὶ ὁ **λόγος** σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν (John 1:14)	And the **Word** became flesh and lived among us.

3. If only one of the words in the nominative is a proper name, it will be the subject.

Ἠλίας ἄνθρωπος ἦν ὁμοιοπαθὴς ἡμῖν (James 5:17)	**Elijah** was a man with the same nature as ours.

4. If both have the article or are proper names, the one that comes first will be the subject.

ἡ **ἐντολὴ** ἡ παλαιά ἐστιν ὁ λόγος ὃν ἠκούσατε. (1 John 2:7)	The old **commandment** is the word that you heard.

5. See Wallace 42–45 (Wallace calls this the "pecking order"); Porter 109. The standard work on this is Lane McGaughy, *Toward a Descriptive Analysis of EINAI as a Linking Verb in New Testament Greek*, SBL Dissertation Series 6 (Missoula, MT: Society of Biblical Literature, 1972).

6. McGaughy, *Toward a Descriptive Analysis*, 46–48, 55–61.

7. Ibid., 55–56.

With Names (Appellation)

1.8. Sometimes names or titles in Greek will occur in the nominative case, even when another case might be expected (BDF §143). Many of these have a grammatical explanation, such as being a subject or predicate nominative of a verbless clause or being in apposition to a noun in the nominative case.

Ἐγένετο ἄνθρωπος ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ, ὄνομα αὐτῷ **Ἰωάννης**· (John 1:6)	There came a man, sent from God; his name [was] **John.**

It is possible to understand this as an example of an elided verb: "His name was John."

ὑμεῖς φωνεῖτέ με Ὁ **διδάσκαλος** καὶ Ὁ **κύριος** (John 13:13)	You call me **teacher** and **Lord.**

It is possible to treat this example as a direct quotation of what they called him: "Teacher and Lord."

καὶ ἀπὸ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ**, ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός, ὁ πρωτότοκος** τῶν νεκρῶν καὶ **ὁ ἄρχων** τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς (Rev. 1:5)	And from Jesus Christ, **the faithful witness, the firstborn** from the dead, and **the ruler** of the kings of the earth. (*three titles in the nominative in apposition to the genitive* Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ)
καὶ ἐν τῇ Ἑλληνικῇ ὄνομα ἔχει **Ἀπολλύων**. (Rev. 9:11)	And in Greek he has the name **Apollyon.**

Here we might expect the accusative case. This could also be understood as the predicate nominative of a verbless parenthetical clause: "He has a name—[it is] Apollyon."

Independent

1.9. A word in the nominative case can sometimes form its own clause. This is consistent with its meaning: to designate or specify a nominal idea. The usage is common in titles or salutations of letters, for example, and may sometimes explain its use with names above.

χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ **εἰρήνη** ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν. (Col. 1:2)	**Grace** to you and **peace** from God our Father.

αὐτῷ ἡ **δόξα** ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ εἰς πάσας τὰς γενεάς (Eph. 3:21)

To him [be] the **glory** in the church in Christ Jesus unto all generations.

Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἣν ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ θεός (Rev. 1:1)

The **revelation** of Jesus Christ, which God gave to him.

Absolute, or "Hanging"

1.10. Here the nominative is grammatically unrelated to the clause to which it is linked, though it is connected conceptually. This use of the nominative often occurs with a participle or a relative clause, which then gets picked up by a pronoun in another case in the following main clause (Zerwick 10). This is also known as a "left dislocation," whereby an entity is detached from and placed outside and in front of the main clause (see chap. 13, on discourse considerations). The "dislocated" nominative then is usually resumed in the main clause with a pronoun.[8] Such a construction often draws attention to the element in the nominative or serves to introduce or shift to a new topic (Porter 86).

πᾶν **ῥῆμα** ἀργὸν ὃ λαλήσουσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι, ἀποδώσουσιν περὶ *αὐτοῦ* λόγον ἐν ἡμέρᾳ κρίσεως· (Matt. 12:36)

Every useless **word** that people speak, they will give an account concerning *it* in the day of judgment.

Here the nominative ῥῆμα is picked up with the genitive pronoun αὐτοῦ in the main clause.

ὅσοι δὲ ἔλαβον αὐτόν, ἔδωκεν *αὐτοῖς* ἐξουσίαν τέκνα θεοῦ γενέσθαι (John 1:12)

But **as many as** received him, *to them* he gave the right to become children of God.

ὁ γὰρ **Μωϋσῆς** οὗτος, ὃς ἐξήγαγεν ἡμᾶς ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου, οὐκ οἴδαμεν τί ἐγένετο *αὐτῷ*. (Acts 7:40)

For this **Moses**, who led us out of Egypt, we do not know what happened *to him*.

8. Steven E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 289.

καὶ ὁ **νικῶν** καὶ ὁ **τηρῶν** ἄχρι τέλους τὰ ἔργα μου, δώσω *αὐτῷ* ἐξουσίαν ἐπὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν (Rev. 2:26)

And the **one who overcomes** and **who keeps** my works until the end, I will give *to him/her* authority over the nations.

Apposition

1.11. As with all the other cases, a substantive in the nominative case can stand in apposition to another nominative substantive. Both substantives sit side by side, "residing in the same syntactic slot in the clause," and *refer* to the same entity.[9]

Ἰωσὴφ δὲ ὁ **ἀνὴρ** αὐτῆς, δίκαιος ὢν καὶ μὴ θέλων αὐτὴν δειγματίσαι, ἐβουλήθη λάθρᾳ ἀπολῦσαι αὐτήν. (Matt. 1:19)

But Joseph, her **husband**, being righteous and not wanting to expose her publicly, decided to divorce her in secret.

Παῦλος **ἀπόστολος** Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ καὶ Τιμόθεος ὁ **ἀδελφὸς** (2 Cor. 1:1)

Paul, an **apostle** of Christ Jesus through the will of God, and Timothy, the **brother**.

Οὗτος γὰρ ὁ Μελχισέδεκ, **βασιλεὺς** Σαλήμ, **ἱερεὺς** τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου (Heb. 7:1)

For this Melchizedek, **king** of Salem, **priest** of the most high God. . . .

καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ μέτωπον αὐτῆς ὄνομα γεγραμμένον, **μυστήριον**, **Βαβυλὼν** ἡ μεγάλη, ἡ **μήτηρ** τῶν πορνῶν καὶ τῶν βδελυγμάτων τῆς γῆς. (Rev. 17:5)

And upon her forehead was a name written: **Mystery**, **Babylon** the great, the **mother** of harlots and of the abominations of the earth.

The Vocative Case

1.12. The vocative case is utilized when someone (e.g., the reader) or something is addressed directly. There is some debate as to whether the vocative should be considered a separate case from the nominative, since it has separate forms

9. Long, *Grammatical Concepts*, 42.

only in the singular.[10] Its function was being taken over by the nominative case.[11] The presence of the vocative seems to be emphatic, since it directly brings the addressees into the discourse. It is often used to draw attention to upcoming material and to indicate breaks in the discourse.

ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς στραφεὶς καὶ ἰδὼν αὐτὴν εἶπεν· Θάρσει, **θύγατερ**· (Matt. 9:22)	And Jesus turned, and seeing her, he said: "Take heart, **daughter**."
Ὦ ἀνόητοι **Γαλάται**, τίς ὑμᾶς ἐβάσκανεν; (Gal. 3:1)	O foolish **Galatians**, who has bewitched you?

This is a rare occurrence (17× in the NT) of Ὦ before the vocative.[12]

μὴ πλανᾶσθε, **ἀδελφοί** μου ἀγαπητοί. (James 1:16)	Do not be deceived, my beloved **brothers and sisters**.
Τεκνία μου, ταῦτα γράφω ὑμῖν ἵνα μὴ ἁμάρτητε. (1 John 2:1)	My **little children**, I write these things to you in order that you may not sin.

For Practice

1.13. Analyze the nominatives (in bold) in the following texts, paying attention to the function of each as well as to how you determine the function.

> [9]Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις ἦλθεν **Ἰησοῦς** ἀπὸ Ναζαρὲτ τῆς Γαλιλαίας καὶ ἐβαπτίσθη εἰς τὸν Ἰορδάνην ὑπὸ Ἰωάννου. [10]καὶ εὐθὺς ἀναβαίνων ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος εἶδεν σχιζομένους τοὺς οὐρανοὺς καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα ὡς περιστερὰν καταβαῖνον εἰς αὐτόν· [11]καὶ **φωνὴ** ἐγένετο ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν· **Σὺ** εἶ ὁ **υἱός** μου ὁ **ἀγαπητός**, ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα. [12]Καὶ εὐθὺς τὸ **πνεῦμα** αὐτὸν ἐκβάλλει εἰς τὴν ἔρημον. [13]καὶ ἦν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ τεσσεράκοντα ἡμέρας πειραζόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ Σατανᾶ, καὶ ἦν μετὰ τῶν θηρίων, καὶ οἱ **ἄγγελοι** διηκόνουν αὐτῷ. (Mark 1:9–13)

10. Porter 87–88. Cf. Wallace 66–67, who argues for a separate vocative case.

11. Moule 32; Turner 34.

12. See Zerwick 35–36, who notes that ὦ before the vocative was usual in Classical Greek, and that when it occurs in the Greek of the NT, "one is justified in supposing that there is some reason for its use" (36). BDF §146.1.b says that it expresses emotion, and Dana and Mantey (71) say that it carries more force.

[1]**Ἀποκάλυψις** Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἣν ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ **θεὸς** δεῖξαι τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ, ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει. . . . [4]**Ἰωάννης** ταῖς ἑπτὰ ἐκκλησίαις ταῖς ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ· **χάρις** ὑμῖν καὶ **εἰρήνη** (Rev. 1:1, 4a)

The Genitive Case

1.14. A syntactically versatile case, the genitive has a broad range of usage, including uses that we often express with the English prepositions *of* and *from*. (Please note that *of* is not the meaning of the genitive case; it is the English preposition used sufficiently variously, and often ambiguously, to represent some but not all of the case's uses in translation.) Traditional grammars refer to the genitive case as descriptive, defining, specifying, or even adjectival;[13] more linguistically orientated grammars prefer the term "restrictive."[14] The genitive is most often employed in constructions in which one substantive (in the genitive, $\mathbf{N}_{gen}$) *particularizes*, or *restricts*, another (the head noun, or substantive, N). Regardless of the genitive subcategory chosen in a given context to fine-tune one's understanding of a phrase like ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ ("the love of God"), θεοῦ restricts "love" to love associated with God. Moreover, "restriction" is definitely the preferable term to account for uses such as genitives that modify verbs or function as direct objects. We agree with Porter, then, that "*the essential semantic feature of the genitive case is restriction.*"[15] The common order is for the noun in the genitive to follow its head term, the noun it modifies. When this is reversed, more prominence is given to the word in the genitive.

Moisés Silva provides a partial analogy to the Greek genitive case from English usage.[16] Instead of the gloss "of," a better aid is a specialized construction found in English where, like Greek, two nouns are juxtaposed but, unlike typical Greek, the first one modifies the second:

spring picnic stone wall fire rescue tree removal

In each of these English examples, the first noun describes or restricts the second noun. Upon closer inspection, we can even describe the relationship between them based on our understanding of the contexts in which they are used. The first one indicates a temporal relationship, the time when the picnic

13. Porter 92; Wallace 78; Long, *Grammatical Concepts*, 52.
14. Porter 92; Louw, "Linguistic Theory," 83–84; Long, *Grammatical Concepts*, 50.
15. Porter 92, italics original.
16. Moisés Silva, *Interpreting Galatians*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 65n2.

occurs. The second exemplifies a relationship of content or makeup of the wall. In the third example the first noun describes the setting of the second, or it may carry the sense of "rescue from fire." In the fourth example the first noun is the object of the action implied in the second noun ("I remove the tree"). Greek does something similar to this, but rather than relying on word order, it indicates which noun is doing the restricting by placing it in the genitive.

Because of the versatility of the genitive case, there are scholars who understand it as having upward of thirty distinct uses (Wallace 72–136). Some of these seem to have more to do with the vagaries of English translation than with anything inherent in Greek (either encoded in the genitive formal ending or obvious from context); others split already-fine theological hairs. Therefore, we will limit our discussion to a manageable number of uses of the genitive that helpfully illustrate the most common or most exegetically significant uses of the case in the NT. We also encourage our readers not to assume that every use of the genitive will fit neatly into a given subcategory. In other words, it is not always clear just how a genitive restricts. Some NT genitives are rather clear as to their function in given contexts; some are too ambiguous to be labeled; others are strung together in chains for emphasis; still others are probably intended to be understood in a particular way that, because of the passage of time and our distance from the original context, will not be obvious to today's interpreter. The genitive's function is to restrict, and only context can indicate exactly how it does so. Our task is to consider interpretive options as well as their theological and practical implications, not necessarily to arrive at *the* one "correct" label. Even in the study of grammar, the journey can be the destination.

Genitive Constructions Restricting Substantives

Below are genitives in constructions in which they restrict substantives ($N + \mathbf{N}_{gen}$).

1.15. Descriptive (attributive, qualitative). As mentioned above, some grammars view the genitive case as being essentially descriptive. In such systems the term *descriptive genitive* is almost redundant; hence the category "descriptive genitive" has been used as a catchall of "last resort" for genitive uses that cannot be otherwise classified (Wallace 79). We will consider descriptive genitives to be those ($N + \mathbf{N}_{gen}$) that restrict the head noun as an adjective ("a thing of beauty," i.e., a beautiful thing) or another noun ("ant farm") might. The genitive of description "might well be considered the essential *use* of the genitive case."[17]

17. Porter 92, italics added.

ἀποδώσουσιν περὶ αὐτοῦ λόγον ἐν ἡμέρᾳ **κρίσεως**· (Matt. 12:36)	They will give an account for it on **judgment** day.
καθὼς γέγραπται ὅτι Ἕνεκεν σοῦ θανατούμεθα ὅλην τὴν ἡμέραν, ἐλογίσθημεν ὡς πρόβατα **σφαγῆς**. (Rom. 8:36)	Just as it is written, "For your sake we are put to death the whole day, we are counted as sheep **for slaughter**."
ὁ δὲ θεὸς τῆς **εἰρήνης** μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν· ἀμήν. (Rom. 15:33)	And the God **of peace** [be] with you all. Amen.

Wallace (106) calls this a genitive of product, which may be an unnecessary refinement. God does produce peace, but nothing in the genitive case itself or the context of Romans requires that we see more than a description of God here.

ἐν τῇ ἀποκαλύψει τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ μετ' ἀγγέλων **δυνάμεως** αὐτοῦ ἐν φλογὶ **πυρός** (2 Thess. 1:7–8)	At the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his **powerful** angels in **fiery** flame.
τῷ νικῶντι δώσω αὐτῷ φαγεῖν ἐκ τοῦ ξύλου τῆς **ζωῆς** (Rev. 2:7)	To the one who overcomes, I will grant to him/her to eat from the tree **of life**.

1.16. Possessive and source (relationship, origin). We will examine these functions of the genitive together because they are semantically related. The fact that we often pair possession with the preposition *of* and source with *from* in our translations obscures that relationship; moreover, it focuses our attention more on English than on Greek. The genitive may be used to indicate possession, source/origin, or relationship because in all of these instances a head noun is restricted by a genitive noun or pronoun in terms of "some sort of" dependence or derivation (Porter 93). In the phrase ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ Ἰωάννου (John 1:19), "John's testimony," we may correctly understand John as the source or origin as well as the possessor of his own testimony.

Τοῦ δὲ **Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ** ἡ γένεσις οὕτως ἦν. (Matt. 1:18)	Now the birth **of Jesus Christ** was like this.

Note that the genitives precede the head noun for emphasis.

τῶν δὲ δώδεκα **ἀποστόλων** τὰ ὀνόματά ἐστιν ταῦτα· πρῶτος Σίμων ὁ λεγόμενος Πέτρος καὶ Ἀνδρέας ὁ ἀδελφὸς **αὐτοῦ**, Ἰάκωβος ὁ τοῦ **Ζεβεδαίου** καὶ Ἰωάννης ὁ ἀδελφὸς **αὐτοῦ** (Matt. 10:2)

Now the names **of** the twelve **apostles** are these: first, Simon called Peter and Andrew **his** brother, James the [son] **of Zebedee** and John **his** brother.

Here we see four genitives that are all basically possessive; the third could also be labeled a genitive of relationship, a subcategory in which a particular relationship between the head noun and the genitive is assumed rather than stated.

Καὶ μετὰ δὲ τὸ παραδοθῆναι τὸν Ἰωάννην ἦλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν κηρύσσων τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ **θεοῦ** (Mark 1:14)

And after John was arrested, Jesus went into Galilee, preaching the good news **of God**.

How should we understand τοῦ θεοῦ? Is it possessive, source, or does it belong in the section below ("Subjective and Objective")?

καὶ ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ **Χριστοῦ** βραβευέτω ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν, εἰς ἣν καὶ ἐκλήθητε ἐν ἑνὶ σώματι· καὶ εὐχάριστοι γίνεσθε. (Col. 3:15)

And let peace **from Christ** rule in your hearts, to which you were indeed called in one body, and be thankful.

καὶ ἔπλυναν τὰς στολὰς αὐτῶν καὶ ἐλεύκαναν αὐτὰς ἐν τῷ αἵματι τοῦ **ἀρνίου**. (Rev. 7:14)

And they washed their robes and made them white in the blood **of** the **Lamb**. (*possession*)

1.17. Subjective and objective. When a genitive restricts a noun that can be construed to indicate a verbal process (often it has a cognate verb, e.g., ἀγάπη and ἀγαπάω), it may be subjective or objective. If the genitive is the agent of the verbal process, we can label it as *subjective*. If the genitive is the object or patient of the verbal process, we can label it as *objective*. In some biblical contexts both categories, and perhaps others, make good sense and we must entertain the possibility that the author was purposely ambiguous, and/or that we just don't know enough to make the correct call.