CHAPTER 27 Comparatives, Conjunctions, Adverbs, and Clause Types

Mastering New Testament Greek Textbook

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CHAPTER 27
Comparatives, Conjunctions, Adverbs, and Clause Types

You will be able to—

1. recognize and translate comparatives;
2. recognize, classify, and translate conjunctions, adverbs and particles;
3. recognize, classify, and translate purpose, result, and other types of clauses;
4. gain more practice in translating and working with Greek;
5. translate John 1:1–10; and
6. master ten more high-frequency vocabulary words.

Introduction to Comparative and Superlative Adjectives

In this chapter we will examine four syntactic odds and ends. Comparative adjectives (e.g., greater) usually compare two items. Superlative adjectives (e.g., greatest) are used when comparing more than two items. The issue is more the number of items being compared than the inflection on the Greek form. A comparative may be used as a regular adjective or as a superlative. Likewise a superlative may be used as a normal adjective or comparative. Both may be used as a elative which is an intensification of the regular adjectival usage [the very big balloon] (Wallace, The Basics of New Testament Syntax, 132ff).

Comparative Adjectives

Greek uses either the endings -ιων or -τερος, -α, -ον, or the particle ἦ (than) to indicate a comparative.

For example:

μέγας (great) μείζων (greater)
μικρός (small) μικρότερος (smaller)
ἀγαθός (good) κρείσσον (better)

These are then declined like adjectives (μείζον, μείζονος, μείζονι...).

Wallace notes a regular adjective may be used as a comparative:

1) Comparative: Mat. 18:8 καλόν σοί ἐστιν εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν ζωὴν κυλλόν

it is better to enter into life crippled.
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2) Superlative: Mt 22:38 ἀυτὴ ἐστὶν ἡ μεγάλη καὶ πρώτη ἐντολή

this is the **greatest** and first commandment

A comparative may function as a:

1) Regular adjective: Mat 12:6 λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι τοῦ ἱεροῦ μεῖζον ἐστιν ὅδε

I tell you, [something] **greater** than the temple is here

2) Superlative: Luk 9:48 ὁ μικρότερος πᾶσιν ὑμῖν ... ἐστιν μέγας

the least among you ... is **greatest**

3) Elative (sense of the adj. is intensified): Acts 13:31 ὃς ὤφθη ἐπὶ ἡμέρας πλείους

who appeared for **very** many days

### Superlative Adjectives

The superlative is rare in the New Testament. It is formed by suffixing either -τατος, -η, -ον or -ιστος, -η, -ον. There may be a change in the stem as seen in the following example. The most frequent is πρῶτος (first) and ἔσχατος (last). The superlative form may function as a regular adjective or as a comparative or elative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Comparative</th>
<th>Superlative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>μικρός (little)</td>
<td>ἐλάσσων (less)</td>
<td>ἐλάχιστος (least)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>μέγας (great)</td>
<td>μεῖζων (greater)</td>
<td>μειζότερος (greatest)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>νέος (new)</td>
<td>νεώτερος (newer)</td>
<td>νεώτατος (newest)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other superlatives are:

- υψιστος, -η, -ον (highest)
- πρῶτος, -η, -ον (first)
- πλεῖστος, -η, -ον (most)
- ἔσχατος, -η, -ον (last)

Superlative as an elative: Mk 4:1 συνάγεται πρὸς αὐτὸν ὅχλος πλεῖστος

a **very great** crowd gathered before him. (adj. sense instensified: very)

Superlative as comparative:

Mat 21:28 ἄνθρωπος εἶχεν τέκνα δύο. καὶ προσελθὲν τῷ πρῶτῳ εἶπεν

a man had two sons. He came to the **first** and said...
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(vid. Wallace, The Basics of New Testament Syntax, 132ff, for a more complete discussion)

Conjunctions

Conjunctions connect words, phrases, clauses, or sentences. Dana and Mantey’s classifications according to broader areas of meaning are helpful (Manual Grammar, 257).

**Temporal**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ἕχρι</td>
<td>until</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐπεὶ</td>
<td>when</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐπείδη</td>
<td>when</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐως</td>
<td>until</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Causal**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek</th>
<th>English</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>γὰρ</td>
<td>for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>διότι</td>
<td>because</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐπεὶ</td>
<td>since</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Purpose**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek</th>
<th>English</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ἵνα</td>
<td>in order that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ὅπως</td>
<td>in order that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ὡς</td>
<td>in order that</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Result**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ὡςτε</td>
<td>so that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἵνα</td>
<td>(may also sometimes mean) so that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ὡς</td>
<td>so as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ὅτι</td>
<td>so that</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Continuative**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>δὲ</td>
<td>and, now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἵνα</td>
<td>that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>καὶ</td>
<td>and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Adversative**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ἀλλὰ</td>
<td>but</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>δὲ</td>
<td>but</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Particles

Perschbacher (New Testament Greek Syntax, 171–84) identifies particles as small indeclinable words that are not prepositions, conjunctions, adverbs, or interjections. The following is a list of some of most frequently used particles:

- ἀμήν so be it, truly, amen
- ἄν (untranslated; occurs with the various moods and often with relative pronouns)
- ἀρά therefore, then
- γέ indeed (emphasizes the word it goes with)
- ἵδε look! notice, behold
- ἵδού look! notice, behold
- μέν indeed (often with the relative pronoun), on the one hand
- ναί yes, indeed

Adverbs

There are many ways in Greek by which the verb may be modified in an adverbial sense of time, manner or place. In English, an adverb is often designated by the addition of the –ly ending (he went quickly). We can often convert adjectives into adverbs by adding the –ly ending (he was an articulate [adj.] speaker; he spoke articulately [adv.]).

In Greek we are familiar with several ways the verb may be modified in time, manner and place already. One may use a participle in an adverbial manner (After leaving the store, he went home; vid. chs. 20/21 Translating Participles—adverbial sense). Secondly, the articular infinitive is also used in an adverbial manner (before Phillip called you, I saw you....; vid. ch. 22 Articular Infinitives). Thirdly, many prepositional phrases have an adverbial verb modifying function and indeed some adverbs actually became more prepositional in their function and are classed as “adverbial prepositions” (i.e. ἔξω outside). Indeed, some words are classified as both improper prepositions and adverbs and some are marked by the –θεν ending (ὁπίσω (prep. + genitive=after; ὀπίσθεν adv. “from behind”). Fourthly, as in English where an adjective can be converted into an adverb by changing the ending (articulate/articulately) so in Greek using the genitive plural form an adverb may be formed by shifting the –ων ending to an –ως (e.g. καλῶν [good] becomes καλῶς [well] (Stevens, 87f.). Finally, there are explicit adverbs which help develop the meaning of the verb in time, manner, and location.

Time: αὔριον (tomorrow), σήμερον (today), ἔχθες (yesterday), νῦν (now) and τότε (then), πώποτε (ever, at any time)
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Manner: οὕτως (thus/in this manner), ταχέως (quickly)

Location: ἄνω (above), ἄνωθεν (from above), κάτω (below), ἐκεῖ (there), ἐκεῖθεν (from there), ὧδε (here), ἐντεῦθεν (from there);
vid. Porter, Idioms, 125.

Clause Type Introduction

We have studied nouns, verbs, prepositions, and other parts of speech. After studying single words, we must move on to larger grammatical constructions. Clauses are a group of connected words that contain a verb. Clauses can function substantively (like a noun), adjectivally, or adverbially. We have already seen clauses in the four types of conditional clauses (if x then y). The following will be an initial exploration into several types of dependent clauses. For higher level analysis one will find wonderful resources in S. Porter’s Idioms of the Greek New Testament (Sheffield, 1999), S. Levinsohn’s Discourse Features of New Testament Greek (SIL, 2000) and Katharine Barnwell’s Introduction to Semantics and Translation (SIL, 1980).

1. Substantive

   I do not have what I need (functions as the object)

2. Adjective

   He bought the ball that Coach Kessler had signed.

3. Adverb

   I will come when I have finished playing with Elliott.

The various clause types follow. The four types of conditional clauses were covered in chapter 23, on the subjunctive verb.

Purpose Clauses

A purpose clause gives an explanation of the object or goal that was pursued by the main verb. They are retrospective, looking back and giving an explanation for why something has occurred. I stopped quickly to avoid running over Zach’s bike. Greek expresses purpose in at least three ways (Dana and Mantey, Manual Grammar, 283–84):

1. With an infinitive:

   Μὴ νομίσητε ὃτι ἔλθον καταλύσαι τὸν νόμον.
   Do not think that I came to destroy the law (Mat. 5:17).
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2. With ἵνα or ὅπως + subjunctive:

 sẻθεν... ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός.
He came that he might bear witness concerning the light (Jn. 1:7).

3. With εἰς or πρὸς followed by an articular infinitive:

ποιοῦσιν πρὸς τὸ θεαθῆναι τοῖς ἄνθρωποις.
They do [them] to be seen by men (Mat. 23:5).

Result Clauses

Result clauses describe the results that flow from the main verb. There are several ways in which result clauses are marked in Greek. The difference between purpose and result is often subtle in English.

1. The most common is ὥστε or ως + infinitive:

καὶ ἐὰν ἔχω πᾶσαν τὴν πίστιν ὥστε ὁρη μεθιστάναι
And if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains (1 Cor. 13:2)

2. ὥστε or ὅτι + indicative:

ὁστε τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν
So that he gave his unique Son (Jn. 3:16)

Cause Clauses

Cause clauses are prospective, looking forward to a goal with intention. They are often introduced with “because.” These types of clauses are generally introduced by conjunctions like ὅτι or ἐπεί. They can be formed by participles and infinitives as well (Porter, Idioms, 237).

For example:

Jn 14:19 ὅτι ἔγω ζῶ καὶ ὑμεῖς ζήσετε
because I live you shall also live.

Temporal Clauses

There are several ways to form clauses that indicate events taking place before, while, or after the time of the main verb (Dana and Mantey, Manual Grammar, 280–82):

1. With an indicative verb introduced by various prepositions and particles:
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When Jesus had finished these words, he departed (Mat. 19:1).

2. With the subjunctive and various prepositions or particles:

whenever ὅταν, ἐπάν
until ἐως, ἀχρι, μέχρι

ἐκεῖ μένετε ἐως ἂν ἐξέλθητε ἐκεῖθεν.
Remain there [in that place] until you leave there (Mk. 6:10).

3. With πρὶν + infinitive indicating “before”:

εἶρηκα ύμῖν πρὶν γενέσθαι.
I have told you before it comes to pass (Jn. 14:29).

4. With a participle:

καὶ ἐξελθὼν εἶδεν πολὺν ὄχλον.
And when he came forth, he saw the great crowd (Mat. 14:14).

Vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>δύο</td>
<td>two</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>δώδεκα</td>
<td>twelve</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>εἷς, μία, ἐν</td>
<td>one</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἕκατον</td>
<td>one hundred</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἑπτά</td>
<td>seven</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>μηδεῖς, μηδεμία, μηδέν</td>
<td>no, no one</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>οὐδεῖς, οὐδεμία, οὐδέν</td>
<td>no, no one</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>πέντε</td>
<td>five</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>τρεῖς, τρία</td>
<td>three</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>χιλιάς, -άδος, ἓ</td>
<td>thousand</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>