

# **NOUN CLAUSES IN THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT: A STATISTICAL STUDY**

JAMES L. BOYER

*This second in a series of studies dealing with subordinate clauses in the Greek NT will look at noun clauses which are introduced by conjunctions. They will be classified as to the function they fill in the sentence and statistical counts will be given for each group. The structure of the noun clauses will be explored, summarizing the conjunctions used and the moods employed with each. Alternative forms of noun clauses will be examined.*

\* \* \*

## **INTRODUCTION**

SUBORDINATE clauses in the Greek NT structurally are of two main groups, those introduced by relative words and those introduced by conjunctions. We have previously looked at the relative clauses<sup>1</sup> and found that 473 or 28% of them functioned as noun clauses. In this article we begin our study of clauses introduced by subordinating conjunctions. Of these, 1220 function as noun clauses, the largest category of all the subordinate clauses.

Several designations are used for this type of clause. Simplest is the term "Noun Clause", the one that will be used in this paper. It indicates a clause which functions in the sentence as a noun, and can be used almost anywhere a noun can; usually as subject or object of the verb. Other designations are "Nominal" or "Substantival", with no distinction in meaning.

## **CLASSIFICATION ACCORDING TO NOUN FUNCTION**

This classification of noun clauses is based on what functional part of the sentence is filled by the clause. Noun clauses are used in

<sup>1</sup> See my article, "Relative Clauses in the Greek New Testament: A Statistical Study" *GTJ* 9 (1988) 233-56.

three primary ways; they are either subject, or object, or epexegetic, with sub-classifications based on the structure of each. It should be noted that in this matter they conform to a pattern similar to that found in the use of the verbal noun-substitute, the infinitive.<sup>2</sup>

#### Noun Clause as Subject of Sentence

In these sentences the clausal subject always stands after the verb in Greek, as it usually does also in English, except that there is in Greek no equivalent to the English "it" which stands before as a sign of the delayed subject. This English structure is a most natural one to translate these Greek sentences. Example: I Cor 4:3 ἐμοὶ δὲ εἰς ἐλάχιστόν ἐστιν, ἵνα ὑφ' ὑμῶν ἀνακριθῶ, "But to me it is a very small thing that I should be examined by you."

#### Subject of Copulative Verb, Εἰμί

A relatively small number of these are found. Sometimes the verb is expressed (6 examples), more commonly it is left to be supplied (14 times). In two instances<sup>3</sup> the clause seems to function as subjective complement rather than subject, but it is difficult to tell which is which.

Few as they are, a couple patterns appear. In seven instances<sup>4</sup> the sentence opens with οὐκ ὅτι without a verb, and the sense seems to be a dis-avowal of something: "It is not that," "I do not mean that," "The situation is not such that."

Another recurring pattern involves the predicate adjective δῆλον, with the verb ἐστίν to be supplied. Twice δῆλον is expressed,<sup>5</sup> once it is found in the variant readings.<sup>6</sup> In another passage, to assume that δῆλον ἐστίν should be supplied furnishes, in the judgement of some commentators<sup>7</sup> and of the present writer, a preferable explanation to a very difficult problem of interpretation.

<sup>2</sup> See my article, "Classification of Infinitives: A Statistical Study" *GTJ* 6 (1985) 4-6.

<sup>3</sup> John 4:34; 2 Cor 11:10. Lists of all these classifications, together with much other coded information, has been placed in a Supplemental Manual of Information. It is available to those interested through their local library by interlibrary loan from the Morgan Library, Grace Theological Seminary, 200 Seminary Dr., Winona Lake, IN 46590. Similar manuals are available for the other grammatical studies published in this journal by the same author.

<sup>4</sup> John 7:22; 2 Cor 1:24; 3:5; Phil 3:12; 4:11,17; 2 Thess 3:9. The NASB in the first and last of these translates "because", elsewhere they use simply, "Not that. . .".

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor 15:27; Gal 3.11.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Tim 6:7. Cf. the critical apparatus.

<sup>7</sup> 1 John 3:20. Cf. Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1894) 477-80.

### Subject of Impersonal Verbs

Only eight instances occur.<sup>8</sup> Example: John 11.50 συμφέρει ὑμῖν ἵνα εἷς ἄνθρωπος ἀποθάνῃ ὑπὲρ τοῦ λαοῦ, "it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people."<sup>9</sup> Again, the noun clause takes the place of the impersonal "it" used in English with such verbs, except that it stands after the verb. In five of these the verb is one which elsewhere uses an infinitive subject.

### Subject of Passive Verbs

There are 37 of these. In every case the clause would be the object of the verb if it were in the active voice, but becomes subject in the passive transform. Interestingly, in 21 instances the clause is a direct or indirect quotation from OT scriptures; 18 of them using γέγραπται, "it is written that. . ." An example not involving the quoting of scripture is Mark 2:1: ἠκούσθη ὅτι ἐν οἴκῳ ἐστίν. "It was heard that he was at home."

### Noun Clause as Object of Verbs

Again the use of a clause as a substitute for a noun parallels the use of the infinitive, with the same type of verbs and many of the same individual verbs showing both constructions. Our classification of the object clauses will therefore parallel our classification of object infinitives.

### Object of Verbs Taking an Objective Complement

Many verbs are of such a nature that they take another verbal idea to complete their meaning. Such verbs I have dealt with at length in another place<sup>10</sup> and will only briefly touch them here. They commonly use an infinitive as complement, but there are 42 examples in the NT where a noun clause serves as complement. Example: 1 Cor 14:1 ζηλοῦτε δὲ τὰ πνευματικᾶ, μᾶλλον δὲ ἵνα προφητεύητε. "yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy."

These verbs include those expressing (1) wish or desire (θέλω\* has a noun clause complement 8 times with the verb expressed, 3 times where it is understood from the context); (2) an activity to the end that something may or may not be done (βοθλεύω\*, συμβουλεύω\*, συμβούλιον λαβεῖν, συμβούλιον διδόναι 7, ποιέω 7\*, ἐτοιμάζω 3, ἀγγαρεύω 2, and βάλλω, διατίθεμαι, τίθημι, ζηλώω\*, ζητέω\*, one

<sup>8</sup> Matt 5:29, 30; 18:6; Mark 4:38; Luke 10:40; 17:2; John 11:50; 16:7.

<sup>9</sup> Unless otherwise stated, NT translations will be given from NASB.

<sup>10</sup> See my article, "Infinitives" *GTJ* 6, 7.

each); (3) to permit, allow (ἀφίημι\*, δίδωμι one each); (4) ability, sufficiency (ἀρκέω, ἔχω\*, εὕρισκω, one each); (5) need or obligation (δίδωμι\* one); and (6) emotion (ἀγαλλιάω, one<sup>11</sup>). Those marked with an asterisk (\*) are used elsewhere in the NT with the objective complement supplied by an infinitive. It is significant that the NASB uses an infinitive to translate 22 of these 42 noun clauses in the NT.

### Object in Direct Discourse

Direct discourse usually stands as a complete unit without needing to be introduced by a subordinate conjunction, therefore the majority of them lie outside the scope of this study. However, in the Greek NT there is a tendency to introduce direct discourse by using the same conjunction as is used for indirect, ὅτι. This ὅτι *recitativum* as it is called by grammarians<sup>12</sup> cannot be translated and is the equivalent of our English quotation mark. The category is included to call attention to this phenomenon. There are 171 instances so designated, although there is sometimes ambiguity as to whether such a quote is direct or indirect. An example of this ambiguity is Mark 3:21: ἔλεγον γὰρ ὅτι ἐξέστη "for they were saying, 'He has lost his senses.'" It could be understood, "they were saying that he had lost his senses."

### Object in Indirect Discourse

By far the largest category of noun clauses is their use in indirect discourse, 750 instances. The clause stands as object of a verb of mental perception or communication and expresses the content or substance of the thought or of the communication. Again, the classification of this group is patterned after that used with infinitives in indirect discourse.<sup>13</sup>

*Verbs of Recognizing, Knowing, Understanding.* This sub-class alone accounts for almost half (372) of the whole group. Example: 1 John 5.2 ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκουμεν ὅτι ἀγαπῶμεν τὰ τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ "By this we know that we love the children of God."

The verbs involved, with the number of occurrences and in the order of frequency, are: οἶδα 156\* (+ one where it is to be understood), γινώσκω 60\*, ἀκούω 3, εἶδον 28, ἐπιγινώσκω 14, βλέπω 7, ἐπίσταμαι 7, ἀγνοέω 6, μιμήσκω 6, μνημονεύω 6\*, θεωρέω 6\*, ἀναγινώσκω 5, νοέω 3\*, θεάομαι 3, φανερόω 2, καταλαμβάνω 2\*,

<sup>11</sup> Perhaps this should be listed under verbs of wishing and desiring, cf. F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. and rev. by Robert Funk (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1961) 199.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. BDF, *Grammar* 205, 246-47.

<sup>13</sup> See my article "Infinitives" *GTJ* 7-9.

and once each ἐπέχω, ἐξομολογέω, γεύομαι, γνωρίζω, γινῶσθαι εἶναι, γράφω, ὁράω, παραλαμβάνω, προεῖδον, προγινώσκω, πυνθάνομαι, σφραγίζω, σύμφημι, συνήμι, ὑπομιμνήσκω. Those marked with the asterisk (\*) also use the infinitive of indirect discourse, but the noun clause seems to be preferred with this category of verbs.

*Verbs of Thinking, Believing, Feeling, Deciding.* 102 noun clauses belong to this group. Example: Gal 1:6 θαυμάζω ὅτι οὕτως ταχέως μετατίθεσθε ἀπὸ τοῦ καλέσαντος ὑμᾶς . . . "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who. . ."

Verbs using this construction are πιστεύω 25\*, δοκέω 15\* (once where it is to be understood), πείθω 12\*, μεριμνάω 5, διαλογίζομαι 4, λογίζομαι 4\*, νομίζω 4\*, θαυμάζω 4, ζητέω 4, ἔχω 3\*, μιμνήσκω 3, σθνήμι 2, and once each, ἀγαλιάω, ἀναμιμνήσκω\*, βουλεύω, χαίρω, εἶπον, ἐμβλέπω, καταμανθάνω, κατανοέω, κρίνω, μνημονεύω, οἶομαι\*, πληροφορέω, συλλαβέω, συμβιβάζω, συντίθεμαι, ὑπολαμβάνω. The infinitive is common with these verbs.

*Verbs of Hoping, Expecting.* There are only six examples in this category, all involving the same verb, ἐλπίζω. Example: Luke 24:21 ἡμεῖς δὲ ἠελπίζομεν ὅτι αὐτός ἐστιν ὁ μέλλων λυτροῦσθαι τὸν Ἰσραήλ: "But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel." This verb also uses the infinitive.

*Verbs of Indirect Statement.* The three previous classes involved mental activity; the three following involve the communication of that mental activity. The first group expresses a simple statement of the content of that activity; in direct discourse it would be a declarative sentence. Example: John 5:36 . . . μαρτυρεῖ περὶ ἐμοῦ ὅτι ὁ πατήρ με ἀπέσταλκεν. " . . . bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me." The idiomatic expression used by Jesus, λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν ὅτι, "for I say to you" and ἀμὴν γὰρ λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι, "truly I say to you" accounts for 32 of the total 164 so classified.

The verbs used are verbs of saying, speaking, reporting, witnessing, etc.; λέγω 58, εἶπον 24, μαρτθρέω 12, εὐχαριστέω 7, ἀπαγγέλλω 6\*, διηγέομαι 5, ὁμολογέω 5\*, μαρτύρομαι 4\*, προλέγω 4, γράφω 3, ἀναγγέλλω 2, ἀποκρίνομαι 2\*, διδάσκω 2, ἐμφανίζω 2, ἐξηγέομαι 2, λαλέω 2, παρατίθημι 2, once each ἀνασεύω, ἀποδείκνυμι, ἀρνέομαι, δείκνυμι, διαμαρτύρομαι, εὐαγγελίζω, γνωρίζω, κατηγέω, κηρύσσω, μηνύω, ὁμνύω\*, προεῖπον, προφητεύω, συμβιβάζω, συμμαρτυρέω. The verb is left to be supplied, the context pointing to φημί (3 times), εἶπον once, and three times it is uncertain.

*Verbs of Indirect Question.* Of those clauses introduced by conjunctions identified in the GRAMCORD schedule as SN (Subordinating Nominal) I found no example where the indirect quote would have been a question in the direct. However there is another

group of conjunctions labelled by GRAMCORD as SG (Subordinating Interrogative) which also produce noun clauses. When this group is included there are at least 14 examples of indirect quotations which would have been questions if quoted directly.

Verbs introducing these questions are: ἐπερωτάω 5\*, and one each δέομαι\*, εἶπον, ἐρωτάω\*, λέγω\*, προδέχομαι, πυνθάνομαι, θαυμάζω.

*Verbs of Indirect Command or Entreaty* In these the noun clause expresses the content of the command or request. In direct discourse they would probably be in the imperative mood. Here they become potential clauses, usually with ἵνα or ὅπως and the subjunctive mood. They are appeals to the will. Example of a command: Mark 7:36 διεστείλατο αὐτοῖς ἵνα μηδενὶ λέγωσιν "He gave them orders not to tell anyone." Example of an entreaty: John 17:15 οὐκ ἐρωτῶ ἵνα ἄρῃς αὐτοῖς ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου ἀλλ' ἵνα τηρῇς αὐτοὺς ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ. "I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one."

Arbitrarily I have divided them into two groups, commands and entreaties. The basis for the division is two-fold: (1) the meaning of the verb used to introduce them; verbs speaking of commanding introduce commands, verbs speaking of asking, pleading, etc., introduce entreaties; (2) where this distinction is not explicit the context is made to decide. Obviously there are instances of uncertainty.

Verbs of commanding followed by noun object clauses are: εἶπον 6\*, ἐπιτιμάω 6, διαστέλλω 4, λέγω 3\*, βλέπω 3, γράφω 2\*, and one each, ἀκούω, ἀπαγγέλλω, διαμαρτύρομαι\*, ἐντέλλομαι\*, ἐξορκίζω, κηρύσσω\*, λαβεῖν ἐντολήν, παιδεύω\*, παραγγέλλω, ὑποδείκνυμι, and two instances where the verb is not expressed; The total is 35.

Verbs of entreaty found with this construction are: παρακαλέω 20\*, ἐρωτάω 14\*, προσεύχομαι 10\* (+ 3 where it is probably to be supplied), δέομαι 6, κάμπτω τὰ γόνατα 3, αἰτέω 1 \*, and another where the word to be supplied is uncertain; total, 57.

### Object of Verbs of Fearing, Apprehension

After some verbs which express fear or warning the cause of the apprehension is expressed by a noun clause. Example: Matt 24:4 βλέπετε μή τις ὑμᾶς πλανήσῃ "See to it that no one misleads you." 31 instances are so classified. They involve the verbs, βλέπω 11, φοβέω 10, ἐπισκοπέω 3, ὁράω 2, σκοπέω 2, προσέχω 1; twice the verb is left to be understood.

### Object of Other Verbs

Three noun clauses involving the verb ἔχω have been grouped simply as direct object of that verb. In each case a simple noun object

could easily be substituted for the noun clause. For example: Luke 9:58 ὁ δὲ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἔχει ποῦ τὴν κεφαλὴν κλίνει. "The Son of Man has nowhere [i.e., no place] to lay His head." This of course sacrifices the dramatic force of the indirect interrogative ποῦ, which points to some such meaning as "He does not have a place where an answer can be found to the question, 'Where shall I lay my head?'" The other two are similar (Matt 8:20; Luke 12:17).

*Noun Clause as Epexegetic of or in Apposition to Another Substantive*

To a noun

Very often the noun clause stands as an explanation of or in apposition to a noun, 70 instances. Example: Matt 18:14 οὕτως οὐκ ἔστιν θέλημα ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς ἵνα ἀπόληται ἐν τῶν μικρῶν τούτων. "Thus it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish." A great variety of nouns (37 by count) have such amplifying clauses. 13 of them also are used with an epexegetic infinitive, and six more are cognate with words which use this infinitive.

To an adjective

This construction is less common with adjectives, only 10 instances. Example: John 1:27 οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐγὼ ἄξιος ἵνα λύσω αὐτοῦ τὸν ἱμάντα τοῦ ὑποδύματος. "the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie," Again four of the ten also use an epexegetic infinitive.

To a pronoun

Most frequently the noun clause stands in apposition to a pronoun, usually a demonstrative (59 times), sometimes a relative (9 times) or an interrogative (8 times). But since a pronoun refers back to an antecedent, it follows that the appositional clause also represents the antecedent noun. Thus these clauses in effect have a double identity; in structure they stand in explanation of or in apposition to the pronoun, in function they represent that part of the sentence occupied by the antecedent.

In this secondary sense these clauses function like the various classes of noun clauses already described. Some (18) are explanatory of a noun present in the sentence. Example: John 15:12 Αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἐντολὴ ἣ ἐμή, ἵνα ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους, "This is My commandment, that you love one another." Sometimes the antecedent of the pronoun is left to be supplied from the context. Example: Luke 1:43 πόθεν μοι τοῦτο ἵνα ἔλθῃ ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ κυρίου μου πρὸς ἐμέ; "how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (the antecedent of τοῦτο is left to be supplied--"this event", "this that

is happening"; the noun clause supplies a description of what that event was). In five instances the demonstrative is in a phrase which by context expresses purpose and the noun clause states the content of that purpose. Example: Col 4:8 ὃν ἔπεμψα πρὸς ὑμᾶς εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο, ἵνα γνῶτε τὰ περὶ ἡμῶν καὶ . . . "For I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know about our circumstances and. . ." By these secondary identifications, there are 6 instances where these clauses might be considered also as subject of the copulative verb.

The same verbs which we have already seen may take a noun clause as object may also use an intervening pronoun, the pronoun being the object and the noun clause in apposition to it explaining its content. Example: Rom 6:6 τοῦτο γινώσκοντες ὅτι ὁ παλαιὸς ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος συνεσταυρώθη . . . , "knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him. . ." 29 of them are with verbs taking indirect discourse, and one with a verb of fearing.<sup>14</sup>

Noun clauses in apposition with relative and interrogative pronouns show a similar doubling of the construction. Example: 1 Cor 11:23 Ἐγὼ γὰρ παρέλαβον ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου, ὃ καὶ παρέδωκα ὑμῖν, ὅτι ὁ κύριος Ἰησοῦς . . . "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus. . ." The noun clause is explanatory of the relative clause introduced by οἱ which is the object of the verb παρέλαβον, but it also gives the content of that which was delivered; there are not two objects of the verb, but one. It is described by two statements, the relative clause identifies it and the noun clause gives its contents.

Another recurring pattern is the expression τί ὅτι;<sup>15</sup> The interrogative pronoun τί introduces a question and the noun clause with ὅτι states what the question consists of. The expression is much compressed; the antecedent of τί must be supplied by the sense of the context, also the verb ἐστίν is probably to be understood. The full statement would probably be "For what reason is it that. . . ?" or "Why is it that. . . ?" or simply "Why. . . ?"

## CLAUSE STRUCTURE

The conjunctions used in noun clauses and the mood of the verbs appearing in them is considered next. Remember that we are not in this study dealing with all noun clauses, but only those introduced by conjunctions. There are 1220 of these in the NT.

<sup>14</sup> In indirect discourse, with verbs of knowing: Matt 24:43; Luke 10:11; 12:39; Rom 6:6; Eph 5:5; 1 Tim 1:9; 2 Tim 1:15; 3:1; 2 Pet 1:20; 1 John 3:16, 19; with verbs of thinking: Mark 4:41; Luke 10:20 (twice); John 16:19; 1 Cor 7:26; 2 Cor 5:14; 10:7, Phil 1:6; 2 Pet 3:3; 5, 8; with verbs of saying: 1 Cor 1:12; 15:50; 1 Thess 4:15; with verbs of commanding and entreaty: John 15:17; Phil 1:9; with verbs of fearing: 2 Cor 8:20.

<sup>15</sup> Luke 2:49; John 14:22; Acts 5:4, 9; Phil 1:18; Heb 2:6 (twice).



### Ὅτι With Noun Clauses (855)

The most frequently used conjunction with noun clauses is ὅτι. Such clauses are found as subject, as object, and as epexegetic, and in almost every sub-classification of these outlined in the preceding part of this article.

### Ὅτι Introducing Direct Discourse

This group has been described above. The direct discourse is a subordinate clause within the main sentence. The ὅτι actually is not needed and most often is not used. When it is used it serves to introduce a noun clause which consists of the direct discourse. It is different, however, from other ὅτι clauses, in that the ὅτι does not govern the verb of the clause. The direct discourse has its own verb relationships; it can be in any mood, and the ὅτι has no effect whatever on it. 20% or 168 of the 855 occurrences of the conjunction ὅτι in noun clauses belong here.

### Ὅτι with the Indicative Mood

Ὅτι almost always governs a verb in the indicative mood. Of the remaining 687 places where ὅτι introduces a noun clause there are only three exceptions<sup>16</sup> and even these are only apparent exceptions, not real (see next paragraph). There are 34 places where the ὅτι clause has no verb expressed, it is left to be supplied from the sense or the context. In each instance the verb supplied would be indicative.

### Ὅτι with the Subjunctive Mood

There are three instances where the verb is subjunctive in a clause introduced by ὅτι.<sup>17</sup> Each of these is an example of the "emphatic negation" construction, οὐ μή with the subjunctive,<sup>18</sup> a construction which can stand anywhere an indicative can and is the equivalent of an indicative.

### ὅτι With Noun Clauses (194)

Second in order of frequency of noun clauses are those introduced by ὅτι. Again they are included in almost all of the classes already discussed, though not as widely as ὅτι. When ὅτι is found in

<sup>16</sup> While this statement is dealing with ὅτι in noun clauses, it also is true with causal clauses (ὅτι = because), the subject of a later study.

<sup>17</sup> Matt 5:20; John 11:56; 1 Thess 4:15.

<sup>18</sup> For a discussion of this construction, its meaning and its structure, see my article, "The Classification of Subjunctives: A Statistical Study" *GTJ* 7 (1986) 6.

a noun clause it of course is not to be translated "in order that" (its most familiar translation as a final clause), but rather, simply "that", or frequently by an infinitive.

#### ἵνα with the Subjunctive Mood

The normal mood in a ἵνα clause is subjunctive and the noun clauses with ἵνα follow that rule, 187 times out of 194 or 96%.

#### ἵνα with the Future Indicative

The ambivalence between future indicative and aorist subjunctive has been examined in considerable detail elsewhere.<sup>19</sup> All examples of ἵνα with the indicative in noun clauses are futures, and interestingly all are in the book of Revelation, a book which displays a great variety of unusual grammatical features. If, as we have attempted to demonstrate in the earlier study, there is no distinction in meaning between the two constructions, then these seven future indicatives with ἵνα are simply variant forms of the subjunctive.

#### Πῶς With Noun Clauses (37)

##### Πῶς with the Indicative Mood

Πῶς in noun clauses is almost limited to indirect discourse after verbs of knowing, thinking, saying, etc. Since πῶς is an interrogative the original which is being stated indirectly is always a question, asking "How?" It normally uses the indicative mood, and 26 of the 37 NT examples are indicative.

##### Πῶς with the Subjunctive Mood

In 11 instances πῶς is followed by a subjunctive verb. The reason is quickly obvious; in every case the question being indirectly quoted was originally a deliberative question, already a subjunctive.

#### Μή and Μήποτε With Noun Clauses (34)

In final clauses μή often represents ἵνα μή, the negative of ἵνα, but in noun clauses there is no ἵνα μή. The conjunctions μή and μήποτε are most commonly (31 out of 34) found introducing the object of a verb expressing fear, warning, or apprehension, in the sense "lest, that not," with the indefinite ποτέ adding a sense of uncertainty, "lest perhaps." One of the other three (2 Cor 8:20) also secondarily belongs to the same category, although structurally it is

<sup>19</sup> See my article, "Subjunctives" *GTJ* 7 (1986) 16-19.

listed as epexegetic of a pronoun that stands as the object of such a verb.

The other two (Luke 3:15; 2 Tim 2:25) are objects in indirect discourse where the direct would be a question.

Μή, μήποτε with the subjunctive mood

The normal mood expected would be subjunctive as indicated by the potential quality of the construction; the count is 25, plus 3 where the verb is unexpressed and presumably would have been subjunctive.

Μή, μήποτε with the indicative mood

Three of the five indicatives are future and should be considered as equal to a subjunctive. Two are seemingly irregular or unusual and we look for some reason. Perhaps they are representing something actual rather than potential. Luke 11:35, σκόπει οὖν μὴ τὸ φῶς τὸ ἐν σοὶ σκωτος ἐστίν. "Then watch out that the light in you may not be darkness." may by the indicative be implying that, in the case under consideration (namely, that the eye is bad), the light in them is actually darkness. In Gal 4:11, φοβοῦμαι ὑμᾶς μή πως εἰκῇ κεκοπί-ακα εἰς ὑμᾶς, "I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain," certainly the apprehension has to do, not with what might happen, but what already has happened.

Μήποτε with the optative mood

Luke 3:15 is the only example: καὶ διαλογιζομένων πάντων ἐν ταῖς καρτίαις αὐτῶν περὶ τοῦ Ἰωάννου, μήποτε αὐτὸς εἴη ὁ χριστός "and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he might be the Christ." Again, the verb would already have been optative in the direct question and normally retains its mood when quoted indirectly.

*Ei With Noun Clauses (33)*

*Ei with the Indicative Mood*

Like πῶς, εἰ is an interrogative word. When it introduces a noun clause that clause is always an original question now being quoted. In at least two instances<sup>20</sup> there is doubt whether they should be considered as direct or indirect quotations; NASB translates them as direct quotes, with quotation marks. If they are direct then the conjunction εἰ is functioning like the ὅτι *recitativum*. If they are

<sup>20</sup> Acts 7:1; 19:2

indirect the εἰ becomes "whether," or even "if" since English permits the word "if" to be used sometimes in that sense.

Almost always the mood in the noun clause is indicative, 30 times.

#### *Εἰ with the Subjunctive Mood*

One example shows a subjunctive verb, Phil 3:12: διώκω δὲ εἰ καὶ καταλάβω . . . "if I may even lay hold. . ." (NASB margin). This admittedly is a difficult sentence to translate, but it seems clear that the question being indirectly quoted was originally a deliberative question (note the first person), thus the subjunctive simply carries through to the quote.

#### *Εἰ with the Optative Mood*

Two passages have optative verbs after εἰ in indirect questions, Acts 17: 11 and 25:20.<sup>21</sup> The potential quality is clear in both passages and the optative should be considered as belonging to the original question, not to the conjunction εἰ.

#### *Ποῦ With Noun Clauses (18)*

##### *Ποῦ with the Indicative Mood*

Ποῦ is another interrogative word pointing to an original question being indirectly quoted. When it represents a simple question the mood is indicative, 13 times.

##### *Ποῦ with the Subjunctive Mood*

The three examples all involve the verb ἔχω in a very compressed statement; Matt 8:20 (cf. also Luke 9:58; 12:17) ὁ δὲ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἔχει ποῦ τὴν κεφαλὴν κλίνει. "The Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." The original question was "Where shall I lay my head?"--a deliberative question expressed in Greek by the subjunctive mood and thus is retained in the indirect discourse. Ἐχω here may be expanded in sense to "have [the answer to the question]: "Where shall I sleep?"

#### *Ὅς With Noun Clauses (16)*

These occur with verbs of mental perception, expressing the object by using "how" instead of "that". Example: Luke 24:35 καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐξηγοῦντο . . . ὥς ἐγνώσθη αὐτοῖς ἐν τῇ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου.

<sup>21</sup> For a rather full treatment of the optative mood and its use in indirect questions, see my article, "The Classification of Optatives: A Statistical Study" *GTJ* 9 (1988) 134.

"And they began to relate. . . how He was recognized by them in the breaking of bread." The "how" is not interrogative (as if answering a question "in what manner?") but descriptive. All are indirect discourse, although five of them are listed as epexegetic since they stand in apposition to another word which is the grammatical object.

All of the 16 examples use the indicative mood.

#### Ὅπως With Noun Clauses (15)

Ὅπως like ἵνα is more often final, but like ἵνα it can serve with a noun clause.<sup>22</sup> In the NT it usually is used with verbs of asking and deciding, never with verbs of commanding.

#### Ὅπως with the Subjunctive Mood

In every instance except one the mood is subjunctive, as is normal with this conjunction and often is appropriate with verbs of asking.

#### Ὅπως with the Indicative Mood

In one example the mood is indicative, where unquestionably the content of the clause is actual, historical, and in no sense potential; Luke 24:20. The clause introduced by ὅπως is in answer to the question ποῖα; (v. 19), which itself is governed by οὐκ ἔγνωσ (v. 18).

#### Πόθι With Noun Clauses (12)

Πόθεν is an interrogative and in each instance it is an indirect quote of a question. The mood is indicative.

#### Πότε With Noun Clauses (4)

The interrogative πότε occurs only four times in noun clauses; each is an indirect question, in indirect discourse. Three have an indicative verb. The other, Luke 12:36 is an indirect question, but the clause does not appear to be object; rather it seems to depend on some implied verb. The mood is subjunctive; Robertson calls it an indirect deliberative question.<sup>23</sup>

#### Καθώς With Noun Clause (2)

Only two are found (Acts 15:14 and 3 John 3), objects in indirect discourse with the sense of "how", cf. ὡς and ὅπως. The mood is indicative.

<sup>22</sup> "More and more replacing the info after verbs of asking *that*" BAG 580.

<sup>23</sup> A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934) 1044.

### Other Nominal Structures

It may be helpful to conclude this consideration of subordinate conjunctive noun clauses by a brief review of other structures which are used in place of nouns. The nominal relative clauses, already mentioned, have been treated at length in the preceding article in this series.<sup>24</sup>

Another group of noun clauses not included within the scope of this paper needs to be brought to attention here; those introduced by interrogative pronouns, τίς and πόσος. Most are direct questions and main clauses, but about 116 out of a total of 540 are quoted indirectly and are thus subordinate noun clauses, though not introduced by a subordinating conjunction.

One of the commonest substitutes for a noun is a substantival participle, usually with the article, occasionally without it. Technically this is not a "clause" since it contains no finite verb. But it has a verbal sense in the participle, it identifies the "doer" of the action involved in that verbal sense, it can take direct or indirect objects like any other verb form, as well as adverbial modifiers. In English almost the only way it can be translated in most cases is by a noun or a nominal relative clause. These have been dealt with in a previous article in this series.<sup>25</sup>

Another similar structure which functions as a noun is the infinitive "clause". Again, it is not technically a clause but it relates to it much as the participle does; with "subject", verbal action, objects, and modifiers. It serves as subject of a sentence, as object, as complement. It sometimes takes the place of clauses, as in indirect discourse. In fact, almost every type of noun function seen in noun clauses has its parallel and pattern in infinitive structures. These too have been studied in depth in a previous article in this series.<sup>26</sup>

Much less frequent but characteristically Greek is the structure which places the article τό before a clause, with the effect that the clause becomes a noun. This "substantivizing" use of the article is more familiar when it is used with adjectives and participles, also with adverbs (e.g., ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν), with prepositional phrases (e.g., τὰ περὶ ἡμῶν), with genitive phrases (e.g., οἱ τοῦ Χριστοῦ), even with verbs (e.g., τὸ ἀνέβη; Eph 4:7).

The same construction occurs occasionally with whole clauses. Among the clauses included in the present study four of those intro-

<sup>24</sup> Please see footnote #1.

<sup>25</sup> See my article, "The Classification of Participles: A Statistical Study" *GTJ* 5 (1984) 165-67.

<sup>26</sup> See my article, "The Classification of Infinitives: A Statistical Study" *GTJ* 6 (1985) 4-10.

duced by πῶς have this article preceding.<sup>27</sup> Six of the noun clauses introduced by an interrogative pronoun show it.

But especially is this noun-making effect of the article worth noting in some passages where whole sentences, or even groups of words which are not even a clause, are, as it were, put in quote marks and treated as a single word by an article preceding. Examples: Rom 13:9 τὸ γὰρ οὐ μοιχεύσεις, οὐ φονεύσεις, οὐ κλέψεις, οὐκ ἐπιθυμήσεις καὶ εἴ τις ἑτέρα ἐντολή, ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τούτῳ ἀνακεφαλαιοῦται, ἐν τῷ ἀγαπᾷ τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτὸν "For this, 'You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" (cf. also, Matt 19:18; Gal 5:14). In Mark 9:23 the article τό before εἰ δύνῃ (quoted from the lips of the suppliant) calls attention to the element of doubt it reflects, as if to say "Watch out for that expression 'If you can.'" In 1 Cor 4:6 Paul takes an incomplete clause (there is no verb, but one is implied by the μή) and by putting an article before it makes it a policy-setting principal which he admonishes the Corinthians to learn, the "not-beyond-what-is-written" rule.

<sup>27</sup> Luke 22:2, 4; Acts 4:21; 1 Thess 4:1.

This material is cited with gracious permission from:

Grace Theological Seminary  
200 Seminary Dr.  
Winona Lake, IN 46590  
www.grace.edu

Please report any errors to Ted Hildebrandt at: [thildebrandt@gordon.edu](mailto:thildebrandt@gordon.edu)  
for [biblicalelearning.org](http://biblicalelearning.org)