

Appendix C. Greek Prepositions

Why Prepositions Are Important:

There are seventeen prepositions in the Greek language, and each can perform several functions. It is very important to understand the uses of prepositions, for nearly every verse in the New Testament contains them, and the meaning of a verse can be drastically affected by the meaning of a preposition. For example, note the difference in meaning between the translations, “I have sinned *against* heaven” and “I have sinned *for* heaven” (Luke 15:18). The difference is explained by the uses of the preposition *eis*; the preposition *eis* can mean “for” (e.g., Rom. 15:26) or “against” (e.g., Luke 12:10). In this case, what *eis* means is very obvious: it is the *eis* of disadvantage (“against”) rather than advantage (“for”). However, many times the context is not as clear, and translators then go by their theology, their particular understanding of the scope of Scripture, in their choice of how the preposition is to be translated. Usually, the translators of the Bible do a good job of translating the prepositions, but occasionally a Christian might question the translation of a preposition, and at those times it is beneficial for each of us to know the various meanings of the prepositions so that we know the possible ways a verse can be translated.

General Information:

- Prepositions stand in relation to nouns and verbs—they further define and explain how a verb’s action is related to a noun.
 - E.g., “Jesus came *into* the house” (Matt. 9:23). The preposition *into* relates how the action of the verb *came* is related to the noun *house*. Jesus did not come “beside” the house, “upon” the house, “through” the house, or “away from” the house, but *into* the house.
- To properly understand how a preposition modifies a noun, it is important to know the *case* of the noun being modified.
 - Some prepositions only take *one case*, meaning all nouns modified by such prepositions are always in that one and same case.
 - E.g., *ek*, meaning “out,” takes the genitive, so all nouns being modified by *ek* will be in the genitive case: in the phrase “out of Egypt” (Heb. 3:16) the noun *Egypt* is in the genitive case.
 - However, some prepositions take *multiple cases*, and the meaning of the preposition will depend on the case of the noun.
 - E.g., the preposition *dia* can modify nouns in the genitive or accusative case. If the noun is in the genitive it will most likely be translated *through* (e.g., Acts 20:3), but if in the accusative it will be translated *because of*, *for the sake of* (e.g., John 2:24).
 - You cannot mix the uses from case to case. E.g., if *dia* modifies a noun in the genitive, you cannot translate the preposition to read “because of.”

Procedure for Researching a Preposition:

1. Using an interlinear, Bible software, or concordance, find out what the Greek preposition is in the verse you are studying.

2. Find out what noun it modifies. (E.g., in the phrase, “Jesus went into the house,” the preposition *into* is modifying the noun *house*).
3. Find out the case of the noun being modified. (E.g., *house* is in the accusative case).
4. Using the list below, find the possible uses of the preposition for that case.
5. Determine from the context and scope of scripture which usage is most likely.

What follows is a list of all the Greek prepositions used in the New Testament along with their grammatical functions and examples of how they may be translated.²¹

Ana (#303 ἀνά): *Ana* only takes one case, the accusative. When *ana* modifies a noun, the noun will be in the accusative case and the preposition will be understood in one of these four ways:

1. Distributed: *in the midst of, among*.
E.g., “his enemy came and sowed weeds *among* the wheat” (Matt. 13:25).
2. Spatial (used as a prefix to verbs): *up*
E.g., “David did not *ascend* into the heavens” (Acts 2:34).
3. Sequential: *in sequence, in turn*
E.g., “let there be only two or at most three, and each *in turn*” (1 Cor. 14:27).
4. Distributive with numbers: *each, a piece*
E.g., “*each* one of the gates was a single pearl” (Rev. 21:21).

Anti (#473 ἀντί): *Anti* only takes the genitive case. When *anti* modifies a noun, the noun will be in the genitive case and the preposition will be understood in one of these three ways:

1. Substitution: *on behalf of, in place of*
E.g., “you will find a coin; take that and give it to them *for* you and me” (Matt. 17:27).
2. Exchange: *for, as, in the place of*
E.g., “See that no one repays anyone evil *for* evil” (1 Thess. 5:15).
3. Causal: *because of, for the purpose of*
E.g., “you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, *because* you did not believe my words” (Luke 1:20; Eph. 5:31).

Apo (#575 ἀπό): *Apo* only takes the genitive case. When *apo* modifies a noun, the noun will be in the genitive case and the preposition will be understood in one of these five ways:

1. Separation: *away from* a person or place
E.g., “cut off *from* Christ” (Rom. 9:3).
2. Source: *from, out from*

²¹ Grammatical functions adapted from: Daniel B. Wallace, *Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, pp. 364-89; Verses adapted from: Arndt, William F., and Gingrich, F. Wilbur, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1979); Dana and Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 1927) pp. 99-112; A.T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Broadman Press, Nashville, TN, fourth edition, 1934) pp. 571-635.

E.g., “there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews *from* every nation” (Acts 2:5).

3. Causal: *because of, on account of*

E.g., “he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but *on account of* the crowd he could not” (Luke 19:3).

4. Partitive (in place of partitive genitive): *of, from*

E.g., “a man *from* the crowd cried out” (Luke 9:38).

5. Agency/Means (very rare): *from*

E.g., “The merchants... who became rich *from* her will stand at a distance” (Rev. 18:15; cp. John 7:28 for agency).

Dia (#1223 δία): *Dia* can modify a noun in either the genitive or the accusative case.

With Genitive:

1. Agency: *by, through*

E.g., “the Lord had spoken *by* the prophet” (Matt. 1:22).

2. Means: *through, by means of*

E.g., “Though I have many things to write to you, I don't want to do so *with* paper and ink” (2 John 1:12).

3. Spatial: *through*

E.g., “he decided to return *through* Macedonia” (Acts 20:3).

4. Temporal: *throughout, during*

E.g., “they were *continually* [lit. ‘through everything’] in the temple” (Luke 24:53).

With Accusative:

1. Causal: *because of, on account of, for the sake of*

E.g., “They built a fire and welcomed us all *because* it was raining and cold” (Acts 28:2).

2. Spatial (very rare): *through*

E.g., “Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee” (Luke 17:11).

Eis (#1519 εἰς): *Eis* only takes the accusative case. When *eis* modifies a noun, the noun will be in the accusative case and the preposition will be understood in one of the following ten ways:

1. Spatial: *into, towards, in*

E.g., “he stood up and went *to* his home” (Matt. 9:7).

2. Temporal: *for, throughout*

E.g., “the one who endures *to* the end will be saved” (Matt. 10:22).

3. Degree: *up to, completely*

E.g., “wrath has overtaken them *completely*” (1 Thess. 2:16).

4. Purpose: *in order that, to, for*

E.g., “let down your nets *for* a catch” (Luke 5:4; cp. Col. 1:29).

5. Result: *so that, with the result that*

E.g., “you felt a godly grief, *so that* you suffered no loss through us.” Cp. NIV: “you became sorrowful as God intended *and so* were not harmed in any way by us” (2 Cor. 7:9).

6. Reference/Respect: *with respect to, with reference to*
E.g., “It is fit neither *for* the soil nor *for* the manure pile” (Luke 14:35; cp. 2 Tim. 4:11).
7. Advantage: *for*
E.g., “make a contribution *for* the poor” (Rom. 15:26; cp. Col. 1:25).
8. Disadvantage: *against*
E.g., “Father, I have sinned *against* heaven” (Luke 15:18; cp. Luke 12:10).
9. Instrumental (very rare): *by, with*
E.g., “You received the law as transmitted *by* angels” (Acts 7:53; cp. Mark 5:34).
10. Used in place of *en: in*
E.g., “And *in* the house the disciples asked him again about this matter” (Mark 10:10; cp. Luke 9:61). [Note: *eis* here does not mean “into” but is used like *en*, meaning simply “in”].

Ek (#1537 ἐκ): *Ek* only takes the genitive case. When *ek* modifies a noun, the noun will be in the genitive case and the preposition will be understood in one of these six ways:

1. Source: *out of, from*
E.g., “she was found to be with child *from* the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 1:18; Luke 3:8).
2. Separation: *away from, from*
E.g., “*Out of* Egypt I called my son” (Matt. 2:15).
3. Temporal: *from*
E.g., “he saw a man blind *from* birth” (John 9:1; Acts 15:21).
4. Causal: *because of*
E.g., “And if by grace, then is it no more *of* works” (Rom. 11:6; cp. Mark 9:15).
5. Partitive (in place of partitive genitive): *of, from*
E.g., “they will put *some of* you to death” (Luke 21:16; cp. 2 John 1:4).
6. Means: *by, from*
E.g., “supporting them *from* their possessions” (Luke 8:3; cp. 16:9).

En (#1722 ἐν): *En* only takes the dative case. When *en* modifies a noun, the noun will be in the dative case and the preposition will be understood in one of these ten ways:

1. Sphere: *in*
E.g., “I hope that we are made manifest also *in* your consciences” (2 Cor. 5:11).
2. Spatial: *in*
E.g., “there was a woman *in* the city who was a sinner” (Luke 7:37).
3. Temporal: *in, while, during*
E.g., “*in* the days of Herod the king” (Matt. 2:1; cp. Matt. 11:22).
4. Association: *with*
E.g., “the Father is *in* me and I am *in* the Father” (John 10:38; cp. John 14:20).
5. Causal: *because of*
E.g., “And they glorified God *in* me” (Gal. 1:24). ESV: “And they glorified God *because of* me.” (Cp. Acts 7:29; Heb. 10:10).
6. Instrumental: *by, with*
E.g., “[Will not the King] consider whether he is able *with* ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand” (Luke 14:31).
7. Agency/Mean: *by means of*

E.g., “the Pharisees said, ‘He casts out demons *by* the prince of demons’” (Matt. 9:34).

8. Thing possessed: *with, which possesses*

E.g., “there was in their synagogue a man *with* an unclean spirit” (Mark 1:23; cp. Eph. 6:2).

9. Standard/Dative of Rule: *according to the standard of*

E.g., “as to the righteousness which is *in* the Law, [I was] found blameless” (Phil. 3:6; cp. 2 Tim. 3:16).

10. Used in place of *eis* with verbs of motion

E.g., “to turn... the disobedient *to* the wisdom of the just” (Luke 1:17; 9:46).

Epi (#1909 ἐπί): The preposition *epi* can modify nouns in the genitive, dative, or accusative case.

With Genitive:

1. Spatial (with places, things): *on, upon, at, near*

E.g., “he was alone *on* land” (Mark 6:47; John 21:1).

2. Spatial (with persons): *before, in the presence of*

E.g., “you will stand *before* governors and kings for my sake” (Mark 13:9).

3. Temporal: *in the time of, during*

E.g., “This happened *during* the reign of Claudius” (Acts 11:28; cp. 1 Pet. 1:20).

With Dative:

1. Spatial: *on, upon, against, at, near*

E.g., “recognize that He is near, right *at* the door” (Mark 13:29).

2. Temporal: *at, at the time at, during*

E.g., “he has appeared once for all *at* the end of the ages” (Heb. 9:26).

3. Causal: *on the basis of*

E.g., “Man must not live *on* bread alone but *on* every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4; Acts 4:21).

With Accusative:

1. Spatial: *on, upon, to, up to, against*

E.g., “Jesus was in the stern, sleeping *on* a cushion” (Mark 4:38).

2. Temporal: *for, over a period of*

E.g., “the sky was shut up *for* three years and six months” (Luke 4:25; cp. Acts 3:1).

3. Purpose: *for*

E.g., “when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming *for* baptism, he said to them...” (Matt. 3:7).

Kata (#2596 κατά): The preposition *kata* can modify nouns in either the genitive or accusative case.

With Genitive:

1. Spatial: *down from, throughout*

E.g., “the whole herd rushed *down* the steep bank into the sea and drowned” (Matt. 8:32).

2. Opposition: *against*

E.g., “whoever speaks *against* the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven” (Matt. 12:32; Mark 14:55).

With Accusative:

1. Standard: *in accordance with, corresponding to*
E.g., “purification *according to* the Law of Moses” (Luke 2:22; cp. 1 Cor. 15:3).
2. Spatial: *along, through* (extension); *toward, up to* (direction)
E.g., “in the synagogues or *throughout* the city” (Acts 24:12; cp. Acts 16:7).
3. Temporal: *at, during*
E.g., “*At* the appointed time I will return” (Rom. 9:9; Heb. 1:10).
4. Distributive (dividing a whole into parts):
E.g., “one *by one* they said to him, ‘Surely not I?’” (Mark 14:19; cp. Rom. 12:5).
5. Purpose: *for the purpose of*
E.g., “there were six stone water jars there *for* the Jewish rites of purification” (John 2:6).
6. Reference/Respect: *with respect to, with reference to*
E.g., “Not that I speak *in respect of* want”-KJV (Phil. 4:11).

Meta (#3326 μετά): The preposition *meta* can modify nouns in either the genitive or accusative case.

With Genitive:

1. Association/Accompaniment: *with, in company with*
E.g., “a servant girl came up to him and said, “You also were *with* Jesus the Galilean” (Matt. 26:69).
2. Spatial: *with, among*
E.g., “He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place *with* the unbelievers (Luke 12:46; cp. Luke 24:5).
3. Manner (Attendant Circumstance): *with*
E.g., “. . . and then you will begin *with* shame to take the lowest place” (Luke 14:9; cp. Eph. 6:7).

With Accusative:

1. Temporal: *after, behind*
E.g., “Now *after* a long time. . .” (Matt. 25:19; cp. Acts 15:36).
2. Spatial (very rare): *after, behind*
E.g., “*Behind* the second veil there was a tabernacle” (Heb. 9:3).

Para (#3844 παρά): The preposition *para* can modify nouns in the genitive, dative, or accusative case.

With Genitive: *from the side of*:

1. Source/Spatial: *from*
E.g., “I will send to you *from* the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father” (John 15:26; cp. Luke 2:1).
2. Agency: *from, by*
E.g., “This came about *from* the Lord”-NASB (Matt. 21:42; cp. John 1:6).

With Dative: suggesting *proximity* or nearness.

1. Spatial: *near, beside*
E.g., “[Jesus] took a little child and had him stand beside him” (Luke 9:47).

2. Sphere: *in the sight of, before* (someone)

E.g., “the hearers of the law are not righteous *before* God, but the doers of the law” (Rom. 2:13; cp. 1 Cor. 3:19).

3. Association: *with* (someone/something)

E.g., “Peter stayed in Joppa for some time *with* a tanner named Simon (Acts 9:43).

With Accusative:

1. Spatial: *by, alongside of, near, on*

E.g., “Jesus was walking *beside* the Sea of Galilee” (Matt. 4:18).

2. Comparison: *in comparison to, more than*

E.g., “One person esteems one day as better *than* another” (Rom. 14:5).

3. Opposition: *against, contrary to*

E.g., “watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles *contrary* to the doctrine that you have been taught” (Rom. 16:17; Gal. 1:8).

4. Causal (very rare): *because of*

E.g., “...it would not *for that reason* cease to be part of the body” (1 Cor. 12:15).

Peri (#4012 περί): The preposition *peri* can modify nouns in either the genitive or accusative case.

With Genitive:

1. Reference: *concerning, about*

E.g., “all were questioning in their hearts *concerning* John, whether he might be the Christ” (Luke 3:15; Cp. Luke 19:37).

2. Advantage/Representation: *on behalf of, for*

E.g., “Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God *for* him” (Acts 12:5; cp. Heb. 13:18).

With Accusative:

1. Spatial: *around, near*

E.g., “suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed *around* me” (Acts 22:6; cp. Luke 13:8).

2. Temporal: *about, near*

E.g., “*About* the third hour he went out...” (Matt. 20:3; cp. Mark 6:48).

3. Reference/Respect: *with regard to, with reference to*

E.g., “Show yourself *in all respects* to be a model of good works” (Tit. 2:7; cp. 1 Tim. 6:21).

Pro (#4253 πρό): *Pro* only takes the genitive case. When *pro* modifies a noun, the noun will be in the genitive case and the preposition will be understood in one of these three ways:

1. Spatial: *before, in front of, at*

E.g., “Peter was standing *in front of* the gate (Acts 12:14; cp. James 5:9).

2. Temporal: *before*

E.g., “many went up from the country to Jerusalem *before* the Passover to purify themselves” (John 11:55; cp. 2 Cor. 12:2).

3. Rank/Priority: *before*

E.g., “But *above* all, my brothers, do not swear” (James 5:12; cp. 1 Pet. 4:8).

Pros (#4314 πρός): *Pros* mostly takes the accusative case, although there is one occurrence with the genitive and six occurrences with the dative.

With Accusative:

1. Purpose: *for, for the purpose of*

E.g., “[Moses] used to put a veil over his face *so that* the sons of Israel would not look intently at the end of what was fading away” (Acts 3:10; 2 Cor. 3:13).

2. Spatial: *toward, near*

E.g., “The whole town gathered *at* the door” (Mark 1:33; cp. Mark 5:11).

3. Temporal: *toward, for* (duration)

E.g., “Stay with us, for it is *toward* evening and the day is now far spent” (Luke 24:29; cp. 1 Thess. 2:17).

4. Result: *so that, with the result that*

E.g., “I refer to those whose sin does not *lead to* death” (1 John 5:16; cp. 1 Cor. 14:26).

5. Opposition: *against*

E.g., “Previously, they had been hostile *toward* each other”-HCSB (Luke 23:12; cp. Col. 3:13).

6. Association: *with, in company with* (used with stative verbs, i.e. verbs that explain states and are not used with the continuous tenses)

E.g., “And are not all his sisters *with* us?” (Matt. 13:56; cp. 1 Thess. 3:4).

With Genitive (1 occurrence):

1. Advantage: *for the advantage of*

E.g., “I encourage you to take some food, for this is *for* your preservation” (Acts 27:34).

With Dative (six occurrences).

1. Proximity: *near, at, by*

E.g., “A large herd of pigs was feeding on the *nearby* hillside (Mark 5:11; Luke 19:37; John 18:16; 20:11; 20:12; Rev. 1:13).

Sun (#4862 σύν): The preposition *sun* only takes the dative case; when *sun* modifies a noun, it will indicate either accompaniment or association.

1. Accompaniment/Association: *with, in association with*

E.g., “Lazarus was one of those reclining *with* him at the table” (John 12:2; cp. Phil. 2:22).

Huper (#5228 ὑπέρ): The preposition *huper* can modify nouns in either the genitive or accusative case.

With Genitive

1. Representation/Advantage: *on behalf of, for the sake of*

E.g., “I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made *for* everyone” (1 Tim. 2:1; Acts 21:26).

2. Reference/Respect: *concerning, with reference to*

E.g., “And Isaiah cries out *concerning* Israel...” (Rom. 9:27; cp. 2 Cor. 1:8).

3. Substitution: *in place of, instead of*

E.g., “we are convinced that one died *for* all, and therefore all died” [One died “in place of” all] (Rom. 9:3; 2 Cor. 5:14; Philem 1:13).

With Accusative:

1. Spatial (very rare): *over, above*

E.g., “*Above* the ark were the cherubim of the Glory” (Heb. 9:5).

2. Comparison: *more than, beyond*

E.g., “[Do not] be inflated with pride in favor of one person over another” (1 Cor. 4:6; cp. 1 Cor. 10:13).

Hupo (#5259 ὑπό): The preposition *hupo* can modify nouns in either the genitive or accusative case.

With Genitive:

1. (Ultimate) Agency: *by*

E.g., “This Jesus is the stone that was rejected *by* you, the builders” (Acts 4:11; cp. 2 Cor. 1:4).

2. Intermediate Agency (with active verbs): *through*

E.g., “[They were given power to kill] *by* the wild beasts of the earth” (Rev. 6:8).

3. Means (very rare): *by*

E.g., “[They] were destroyed *by* serpents (1 Cor. 10:9).

With Accusative:

1. Spatial: *under, below*

E.g., “Is a lamp brought in to be put *under* a basket, or *under* a bed, and not on a stand?” (Mark 4:21; cp. Luke 13:34).

2. Subordination: *under* (the rule of)

E.g., “For I myself am a man *under* authority, with soldiers *under* me” (Matt. 8:9; cp. Gal. 4:21).

