

ORDER AND RELATIVE TIME IN THE PARTICIPLES OF THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

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One of the unresolved issues growing (indirectly) out of Stanley Porter's important and groundbreaking study of verbal aspect in the NT is whether the order of adverbial (circumstantial) participles, in relation to their primary verbs, generally signals relative time.¹ In other words, if an adverbial participle is *pre-positioned* (before its primary verb in the sentence), does that tend to indicate that its action is antecedent to that of the primary verb? And, if an adverbial participle is *post-positioned* (after its primary verb in the sentence), does that tend to indicate that its action is contemporaneous with or subsequent to that of the primary verb? This is Porter's hypothesis.²

This is a relatively small matter, but if it is generally reliable it will help translators and interpreters with their work. Consequently, it needed to be thoroughly tested. In 2007, I engaged Porter in some discussion, based on my analysis of participles in Mark and Luke.³ Our exchange left the matter unsettled, and I ultimately decided to wait until I had analyzed the participles in the rest of the NT before publishing on the subject again. I have now completed that task and am satisfied that there are too many exceptions to Porter's hypothesis for it to become a rule of thumb.

I. PRELIMINARY MATTERS

Has NT interpretation already gone beyond this issue? Discourse analysis has in many ways branched out from the traditional categories, and this has included some attention to the order of participles in the sentence. Steven Runge, for example, in his chapter on "circumstantial frames" deals with adverbial participles and

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¹ In its basic concept I support verbal aspect theory. I prefer *circumstantial* to *adverbial* but use the latter because it seems to be more common among more recent grammarians. I do not include *complementary/supplementary* participles in this category; genitives absolute are included.

² Stanley E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament* (2d ed.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) 188: "If a participle occurs before the ... verb on which it depends ..., the participle tends to refer to antecedent ... action. If a participle occurs after the ... verb on which it depends, it tends to refer to concurrent ... or subsequent ... action." In idem, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament, with Reference to Tense and Mood* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989) 381, he suggests that this syntactical pattern "appears to be used to make relative statements about when the process is seen to have occurred."

³ Robert E. Picirilli, "Time and Order in the Circumstantial Participles of Mark and Luke," *BBR* 17 (2007) 234–59; Stanley E. Porter, "Time and Order in Participles in Mark and Luke: A Response to Robert Picirilli," *BBR* 17 (2007) 261–67. I will assume, here, the background information (including the classification of participles) provided there.

order. He begins by saying that “there is a meaningful distinction to be made between adverbial participles that precede the verb of the main clause and those that follow the main clause.”⁴ In the ensuing discussion, he proposes that a pre-positioned participle represents a conscious choice of the author not to use a finite verb and so to express action that plays a “supporting” role. Such a participle presents “background” information that “is less important than that of the primary verb.”⁵ As for post-positioned participles, Runge proposes that they “elaborate the action of the main verb, often providing more specific explanation of what is meant by the main action. In most cases, they practically spell out what the main action looks like”; but again the action they express “is less salient than the finite verbs” and “supporting” of them, placing the action “under the umbrella of the main verbs, typically adding more detail or elaboration.”⁶

In this, Runge is following Stephen Levinsohn, whose emphasis is that pre-positioned adverbial participles present information that is “backgrounded” and “of secondary importance vis-à-vis that of the nuclear clause,” so much so that they are “encoded specifically to *signal* that the information concerned is of secondary importance.”⁷ He adds that when a sentence begins with such a participle, it does not signal discontinuity: in other words, “continuity of situation and other relevant factors between the contiguous nuclear clauses is implied.”⁸ As for post-positioned adverbial participles, Levinsohn does not assert quite as much as Runge, indicating that they “may be concerned with some aspect of the nuclear event” or “may describe ‘a circumstance as merely accompanying the leading verb’ (Greenlee 1986:57),” and that “the relative importance of the information conveyed in the two clauses [the participle and the primary verb] has to be deduced from the context.”⁹

This approach signals important insights. Both authors helpfully analyze many examples from the NT. Does this mean, then, that questions about the relative time of the participles need be pursued no longer? To think so would be to make a category mistake. The interpretive implications that discourse analysis is setting forth are entirely different from those involved in the relative time of the participles. Especially for translation purposes, and therefore for interpretation, one will still have to decide whether the action of an adverbial participle is antecedent to, contemporaneous with, or subsequent to that of its primary verb. Answering this question will not affect the matter of saliency with which Levinsohn and Runge are concerned. The one implication for my study is that they have succeeded in showing that there may well be reasons other than temporal ones for the writer’s deci-

⁴ Steven E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010) 249.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.* 262–63.

⁷ Stephen H. Levinsohn, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek: A Coursebook on the Information Structure of New Testament Greek* (2d ed.; Dallas: SIL International, 2000) 183.

⁸ *Ibid.* 187.

⁹ *Ibid.* 184, 186. He is citing J. Harold Greenlee, *A Concise Exegetical Grammar of New Testament Greek* (5th ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986).

sion whether to place the adverbial participle before or after its primary verb. In that limited (and no doubt unintended) sense, their treatment supports my thesis.

Consequently, I have decided to visit the issue of order and relative time once more. I decided to present the evidence in the simplest manner possible, foregoing citations from other interpreters or translations or additional comments to argue in support of my claim.¹⁰ The examples will make their own case, and readers will make their own decisions about the relative time involved in the examples. Indeed, this is an issue that can be settled only by the inductive evidence—the data—of the text itself.

In consideration of length, I give examples in English, with only the participle in Greek in parentheses. I need to cite numerous examples in order to show that the tendencies are characteristic of the NT writers and not isolated or mere exceptions. Even so, there are many additional examples that I will not take space to cite. In consideration of my previous article, I will not cite examples from Mark and Luke, but many supporting examples occur there.

Before proceeding to the evidence, however, a brief treatment of traditional grammarians seems appropriate. I consulted many of them, but only a few make comments about the placement of the participle in the sentence and relative time. All of them, however, discuss relative time on its own merits, and they typically illustrate both antecedent and contemporaneous time with participles that precede or follow their primary verbs. I need not cite these.¹¹ Even so, a few of the grammarians have made observations about order, although without developing a hypothesis on the subject.

Blass, Debrunner, and Funk comment only in passing about positioning but say enough to show awareness of variety. For example, in explaining how the aorist participle, which has no inherent element of time, came to be associated with antecedent time, they observe that “the sequence normally was: the completion of the action denoted by the participle, then the action of the finite verb”; they add that this is how “the idea of relative past time became associated to a certain degree with the aorist participle” and that “the same applies to the participle coming after the verb”—using *κρατήσας* in Mark 1:31 as an example.¹²

Ernest de Witt Burton is more direct.¹³ In discussing Acts 10:44, where the participle *λαλοῦντος* is pre-positioned, he calls it a “present of simultaneous action” and then observes, “Even a subsequent action is occasionally expressed by a Present Participle, which in this case stands after the verb”—showing awareness of order.¹⁴ Furthermore, discussing aorist participles that are temporally antecedent to

¹⁰ After all, this issue has not been widely discussed, and commentators have not weighed in on it, making their comments (even when supportive of my interpretations) less significant for my purpose.

¹¹ Perhaps the silence of most, regarding order and time, was because no pattern in this caught their eye or had been suggested to them. After all, Porter's hypothesis was new in 1989.

¹² F. Blass, A. Debrunner, and Robert W. Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961) 174. Hereafter BDF.

¹³ Ernest de Witt Burton, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1898, 1955).

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 55.

their primary verbs, he notes that such a participle “usually precedes the verb, but sometimes follows it” (and uses ἀκούσαντες in Col 1:4 as an example).¹⁵ Subsequently, he comments that the participle ἀσθενήσας in Rom 4:19, “though preceding the verb, is naturally interpreted as referring to a (conceived) result of the action denoted by κατενόησεν” (the primary verb).¹⁶ Finally, he says plainly that “the position of the Participle of Attendant Circumstances with reference to the verb is not determined by any fixed rules, but by the order of the writer’s thought.” His added discussion indicates that, while some patterns are more common than others, there is no consistent pattern: a simultaneous participle, for example, may “either precede or follow the verb,” while one whose action is subsequent to that of its primary verb “almost invariably” follows.¹⁷ Burton’s view, therefore, is that while the order often matches the relative time, it is not a rule to be counted on and has many exceptions.

A. T. Robertson also gives specific consideration to the positioning of participles before and after their primary verbs. Discussing aorist participles of simultaneous action, he affirms “that the order of the part. is immaterial.”¹⁸ Already he had observed that “so-called antecedent aorists [participles] do not have to precede the principal verb in position in the sentence” and adds, “This idiom is very common in the N. T. as in the older Greek.”¹⁹

II. PRE-POSITIONED PARTICIPLES

The question here is whether a pre-positioned participle can be used to indicate an activity going on *at the same time as* (contemporaneous with) the action stated by the primary verb to which it is linked. I proceed immediately to examples, grouping them in categories. In each example, it seems indisputable that the relative time of the italicized pre-positioned participle is contemporaneous with, rather than antecedent to, the primary verb to which the participle is linked.

1. *Activities taking place while the action of the primary verb occurs.* Pre-positioned participles (often, but not always present tense) frequently indicate an activity going on at the time of (and therefore contemporaneous with) the primary verb. It may be that in some of these the action in the participle *began* before the action in the primary verb, but to offer that as an objection to my thesis is to miss the point: namely, that the action in the primary verb took place *while* the action of the participle was occurring. Furthermore, there are a number of these that did *not* begin before the action of the primary verb; in the very first group of examples (from Matthew) alone, most of them (marked with asterisks) did *not* begin before their primary verbs.

¹⁵ Ibid. 64.

¹⁶ Ibid. 66.

¹⁷ Ibid. 174.

¹⁸ A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934) 861.

¹⁹ Ibid. 860. He cites Winer-Moulton in support of the last statement.

a. *Matthew.*

4:18: Jesus, *walking along* (περιπατῶν) by the sea of Galilee, saw two brothers.

*6:7: *Praying* (προσευχόμενοι), do not babble.

*6:17: But you, *fasting* (νηστεύων), anoint your head and wash your face.

*9:10: Jesus *reclining to eat* (ἀνακειμένου), tax-collectors and sinners reclining with him.

*11:16: *Calling to* (προσφωνοῦντα) the others, the children say.

12:46: Jesus still *speaking* (λαλοῦντος) to the crowd, mother and brothers stood outside.

*13:29: Lest, *gathering* (συλλέγοντες) the zizania, you root up the wheat with them.

*16:1: The Pharisees and Sadducees, *testing* (πειράζοντες) Jesus, asked him.

17:5: Jesus still *speaking* (λαλοῦντος), behold a bright cloud overshadowed them.

18:8, 9: Better to cut off one's foot or tear out one's eye than, *having* (ἔχοντα) two feet or *having* (ἔχοντα) two eyes, to be cast into Gehenna.

*25:3: The foolish ones, *taking* (λαβοῦσα) their lamps, did not take oil with them.

*26:12: She, *pouring* (βαλοῦσα) this myrrh on my body, did it for my burial.

26:47: Jesus still *speaking* (λαλοῦντος), behold Judas came.

*27:41: The chief priests, *mocking* (ἐμπαίζοντες), were saying.

Several others could be listed. Three of those above (12:46; 17:5; 26:47) actually include the particle ἔτι ("still") with the participle, further confirming the temporal relationship as conceived by Matthew.

b. *Gospel of John.*

4:51: The official *going down* (καταβαίνοντος), his servants met him.

6:18: A strong wind *blowing* (πνέοντος), the sea was being aroused.

8:30: Jesus *saying* (λαλοῦντος) these things, many believed.

9:1: *Going along* (παράγων), Jesus saw a blind man.

12:6: *Having* (ἔχων) the purse, Judas was taking away the things being put there.

14:10: The father, *abiding* (μένων) in me, does the works.

19:17: *Bearing* (βαστάζων) the cross for himself, Jesus went forth.

c. *Acts.*

1:9: The disciples *watching* (βλεπόντων), Jesus was taken up.

5:4: The property *remaining* (μένον) in Ananias' possession, it remained his.

8:40: Philip, *passing through* (διερχόμενος) the area, was preaching the gospel.

10:9: Cornelius' servants *on their way* (ὁδοιπορούντων) to and *approaching* (ἐγγιζόντων) Joppa, Peter went up to the roof to pray.

10:10: They *preparing* (παρασκευαζόντων) the meal, Peter fell into a trance.

10:44: Peter still (ἔτι) *speaking* (λαλοῦντος), the Spirit fell.

13:2: They *ministering* (λειτουργούντων) to the Lord and *fasting* (νηστεούντων), the Spirit spoke to them.

16:16: They *going* (πορευομένων) to the place of prayer, the slave-girl met them.

16:17: The girl, *following* (κατακολουθοῦσα) them about, was crying out.

21:10: Paul and companions *continuing* (ἐπιμενόντων) in Caesarea, the prophet Agabus came there.

22:6: Paul *traveling* (πορευομένου) to and *approaching* (ἐγγιζοντι) Damascus, a bright light shone about him.

27:27: We *being driven about* (διαφερομένων) in the Adriatic, the seamen realized they were approaching land.

d. *Paul*.

Rom 7:3: Her husband *living* (ζῶντος), if she marries another, named an adulteress.

Rom 12:20: *Doing* (ποιῶν) this, you will hear burning coals on his head.

Rom 15:24: I hope, *passing through* (διαπορευόμενος) on the way to Spain, to see you (Roman) believers.

1 Cor 4:14: Not *shaming* (ἐντρέπων) you, I write these things.

1 Cor 9:18: That, *preaching the gospel* (εὐαγγελιζόμενος), I may present the gospel without charge.

1 Cor 11:17: *Instructing* (παραγγέλλων) this, I do not praise you.

1 Cor 11:18: You *gathering* (συνερχομένων) in assembly, I hear of divisions among you.

1 Cor 12:3: No one, *speaking* (λαλῶν) by the Spirit of God, says “Jesus anathema.”

2 Cor 1:17: *Purposing* (βουλόμενος) this, I did not use levity, did I?

2 Cor 3:18: *Beholding* (κατοπτριζόμενοι) as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, we are being transformed.

Eph 3:4: You are able, *reading* (ἀναγινώσκοντες), to understand.

Eph 4:15: That, *speaking the truth* (ἀληθεύοντες) in love, we may grow.

Phil 3:18: Now *weeping* (κλαίω), I speak.

Col 2:19: The whole body, *being supplied* (ἐπιχορηγούμενον) and *being knit together* (συμβιβασόμενον), grows.

Col 2:20: Why, as *living* (ζῶντες) in the world, do you submit to man-made regulations?

1 Thess 2:8: *Yearning for* (ὀμιρούμενοι) you, we were pleased to share.

1 Thess 2:9: *Working* (ἐργαζόμενοι) night and day, we preached.

2 Thess 3:12: That, *working* (ἐργαζόμενοι) quietly, they eat their own bread.

1 Tim 4:16: *Doing this* (ποιῶν), you will save yourself.

1 Tim 5:6: The woman who lives luxuriously, *living* (ζῶσα), is dead.

1 Tim 6:8: *Having* (ἔχοντες) food and clothing, we will be content.

2 Tim 2:4: No one, *soldiering* (στρατευόμενος), is entangled with the matters of this life.

2 Tim 4:13: *Coming* (ἐρχόμενος), bring the cloak.

e. *Hebrews*.

8:10/10:16: *Giving* (διδούς) my laws into their minds, I will also write them on their hearts.

11:21: Jacob, *dying* (ἀποθνήσκων), blessed each of Joseph’s sons.

12:28: *Receiving* (παραλαμβάνοντες) an unshakable kingdom, let us show gratitude. (Indeed, this participle may be *subsequent* to the primary verb!)

13:7: *Focusing on* (ἀναθεωρούντες) the outcome of their way of life, imitate their faith.

f. *General Epistles*.

Jas 1:13: Let no one, *being tempted* (πειραζόμενος), say.

Jas 3:4: The ships, *being* (ὄντα) so great and *being driven* (ἐλαυνόμενα) by strong winds, are guided by a very small rudder.

Jude 3: *Doing* (ποιούμενος) all diligence to write you, I felt a sense of necessity.

Jude 8: These persons, *dreaming* (ἐνυπνιαζόμενοι), defile the flesh.

Jude 9: Michael, *disputing* (διακρινόμενος) with the devil, argued about the body of Moses.

Jude 20–21: *Building up* (ἐποικοδομοῦντες) yourselves ..., *praying* (προσευχόμενοι) ..., keep yourselves in the love of God.

g. *Revelation*.

4:8: The four living beings, each *having* (ἔχων) six wings, are full of eyes.

19:20: *Living* (ζῶντες), the two were cast into the lake of fire.

2. *Participles of being and having*. When the pre-positioned adverbial participle is εἶμι (or one of its compounds) or ὑπάρχω, or even ἔχω used to describe a prevailing set of circumstances (rather than simple possession), it is usually contemporaneous with the primary verb to which it is linked. (The same is true when such participles are post-positioned.) There are many of these in the NT, and I cite a relatively small number of examples to illustrate the pattern.

Matt 6:30: The grass of the field, *being* (ὄντα) today and tomorrow *being cast* (βαλλόμενον) into an oven, God clothes. (Indeed, the second of these is apparently subsequent!)

John 10:33: You, *being* (ὄν) a man, make yourself God.

John 11:49: Caiaphas, *being* (ὄν) chief priest for that year, said.

Acts 2:30: *Being* (ὑπάρχων) a prophet, he spoke.

Acts 7:55: *Being* (ὑπάρχων) full of the Holy Spirit, Stephen gazed into heaven.

Acts 17:23: The Athenians, *being ignorant* (ἀγνοοῦντες), worship an unknown God.

Acts 27:9: The voyage *being* (ὄντος) now dangerous, Paul admonished them to remain at Fair Havens.

Rom 5:8: We yet (ἔτι again) *being* (ὄντων) sinners, Christ died for us.

Rom 5:10: *Being* (ὄντες) enemies, we were reconciled to God.

1 Cor 5:3: I indeed, *being away* (ἀπών) in the body but *being present* (παρών) in the spirit, have already judged.

1 Cor 8:7: Their conscience, *being* (οἶσα) weak, is defiled.

1 Cor 12:12: The parts of the body, *being* (ὄντα) many, are one body

2 Cor 5:9: We aspire, whether *being at home* (ἐνδημοῦντες) or *being away from home* (ἐκδημοῦντες), to be pleasing to him.

2 Cor 9:8: That, *having* (ἔχοντες) all sufficiency, you may abound.

2 Cor 12:16: *Being* (ὑπάρχων) a crafty fellow, I took you with deceit.

2 Cor 13:10: *Being away* (ἀπών), I write these things.

Gal 2:14: You, *being* (ὑπάρχων) a Jew, live as a Gentile.

Eph 2:4: God, *being* (ὄν) rich in mercy, made us alive in Christ.

Phil 1:27: That, whether coming and seeing or *being absent* (ἀπών), I may hear.

1 Thess 5:8: Let us, *being* (ὄντες) of day, be sober

2 Thess 2:5: Yet *being* (ὄν) with you, I was telling you.

Phlm 8: *Having* (ἔχων) much boldness in Christ to command you, rather I exhort.

Heb 10:1: The law, *having* (ἔχων) a shadow of things to come, cannot perfect the worshippers.

Jas 3:4: The ships, *being* (ὄντα) so great, are guided by a very small rudder.

2 Pet 2:11: Angels, *being* (ὄντες) greater, do not bring judgment.

3. *Participles of concession*. Pre-positioned adverbial participles of concession often express a consideration contemporaneous with the primary verb and in spite of which the primary verb applies. (This group is not as large as some others, given that concessory participles are not as frequent in the NT.) Some of those listed

in the previous group (John 10:33; Rom 5:8, 10; 1 Cor 12:12; Gal 2:14; Phlm 8; Jas 3:4; 2 Pet 2:11) would also fit here, as do the following.

John 4:9: How is it that you, *being* (ὄν) a Jew, ask to drink from me?

Rom 9:31: Israel, *pursuing* (διώκων) a law of righteousness, did not arrive at such a law.

1 Cor 9:19: *Being* (ὄν) free from all, I enslaved myself to all.

2 Cor 10:3: *Walking* (περιπατοῦντες) in flesh, we do not make war according to flesh.

Gal 2:3: Titus, *being* (ὄν) a Greek, was not compelled to be circumcised.

Heb 5:12: You, *being obligated* (ὀφείλοντες) to be teachers, need someone to teach you.

1 Pet 2:23: *Suffering* (πάσχων), he did not threaten.

2 John 12: *Having* (ἔχων) many things to write, I did not will to do so with paper and ink.

4. *Participles of knowing.* A number of participles of verbs meaning *know* can be contemporaneous with their primary verbs when pre-positioned. One might argue against this on the grounds that in such instances the verbs are ingressive and look to a point when the person(s) involved “came to know.” But many of these (especially when the participle has imperfective/progressive or stative aspect) clearly indicate knowledge existing at the time of the action of the primary verb.

Matt 12:25: Jesus, *knowing* (εἰδώς) their thoughts, said to them.

John 13:1: Jesus, *knowing* (εἰδώς) that his hour had come, loved them to the end.

Acts 2:30: David, being a prophet and *knowing* (εἰδώς) that God had sworn an oath to him, spoke.

Acts 24:10: *Knowing* (ἐπιστάμενος) you to have been a judge for so many years, I cheerfully make my defense.

Rom 10:3: *Being ignorant* (ἀγνοοῦντες) of God’s righteousness, they did not submit themselves to it.

2 Cor 5:11: *Knowing* (εἰδότες) the fear of the Lord, we persuade men.

Gal 4:8: Not *knowing* (εἰδότες) God at that time, you served the ones not being gods.

1 Tim 1:13: *Being ignorant* (ἀγνοῶν), I acted in unbelief.

2 Pet 3:17: *Knowing in advance* (προγινώσκοντες) these things, be on guard.

5. *Participles that in some sense restate the primary verb.* Adverbial participles often, in one way or another, express the same action (or state) as the primary verb. Obviously, when this is the case and pre-positioned, the participle is by definition contemporaneous with the primary verb. (One can identify these by asking whether two actions or just one were involved.) Some examples already given would fit here, as do the following.

Matt 11:16: *Calling to* (προσφωνοῦντα) the others, the children say.

Matt 16:1: The Pharisees and Sadducees, *testing* (πειράζοντες) Jesus, asked him.

Matt 26:51: *Striking* (πατάξας) the high priest’s servant, Peter cut off his ear.

Acts 2:13: Others, *mocking* (διαχλευάζοντες), were saying.

Acts 2:23: This man, *nailing to* [a cross] (προσπήξαντες), you killed.

Acts 9:36: Tabitha, which, *being translated* (διερμηνευομένη), is called Dorcas.

Acts 19:16: The demoniac, *gaining mastery over* (κατακυριεύσας) them, overpowered them.

Acts 19:26: This Paul, *persuading* (πέισας), turned away a large crowd.

Acts 23:3: *Violating the law* (παρανομῶν), do you command me to be struck?

Acts 27:3: Julius, *treating* Paul *humanely* (χρησόμενος), permitted [him].

Rom 12:20: *Doing* (ποιῶν) this, you will hear burning coals on his head.

1 Cor 2:1: I, *coming* (ἐλθὼν) to you, ... did not come according to excellence of word.

1 Cor 8:12: *Sinning* (ἀμαρτάνοντες) thus against the brothers, you sin against Christ.

1 Cor 9:18: That, *preaching the gospel* (εὐαγγελιζόμενος), I may present the gospel without charge.

1 Cor 11:32: *Being judged* (κρινόμενοι) by the Lord, we are disciplined.

Heb 6:13: God, *making promise* (ἐπαγγελιάμενος) to Abraham, swore.

2 Pet 1:21: *Being borne along* (φερόμενοι) by the Holy Spirit, men spoke.

2 Pet 3:12: The heavens, *being on fire* (πυρούμενοι), will be destroyed, and the elements, *burning* (καυσούμενα), will melt.

I may observe that the grammarians recognize the validity of this category. Burton, for example, defines both present and aorist participles as frequently denoting the same action as that which is expressed by their primary verbs, noting that the participle and verb usually describe that action from different points of view, such as fact versus method, outward form versus inner significance or quality, act versus purpose or result, etc.²⁰

This category will, of course, include those NT citations of the OT where the Hebraism (Infinitive Absolute) calls for the pre-positioned participle to repeat (and intensify) the verb:

Acts 7:34: *Seeing* (ιδὼν), I saw the oppression of my people.

Heb 6:14: *Blessing* (εὐλογῶν) I will bless you and *multiplying* (πληθύνων) I will multiply you.

This category will also include all the occurrences, in the NT, of the pre-positioned aorist participle of ἀποκρίνομαι, *answering*, followed by a verb of speech that gives the content of the answer, as in Matt 3:15: Jesus, *answering*, said. There are more than one hundred of these in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts. John does not use the construction, but he uses either the aorist indicative of ἀποκρίνομαι followed by a participle of a verb of speech instead (as in 1:26; 12:23), or the aorist indicative of ἀποκρίνομαι followed by a finite verb of speech (as in 1:50; 2:18). Both constructions tend to confirm the relationship between the two verb forms.

By stretching this category only a little, it might also include those instances when the pre-positioned adverbial participle expresses means by which, or manner in which, or cause for which the action of the primary verb is accomplished.²¹ It would probably be better, however, to make this a separate category. Many of the examples of participles of *knowing*, cited above, might fit here. Some others already given would also fit here, like Matt 26:12 and 27:41 (in the first group above). Among numerous others that might be cited are these:

Matt 1:19: *Being* (ὄν) righteous and not *desiring* (θέλων) to publicly expose her, Joseph decided to put Mary away privately.

²⁰ Burton, *Syntax* 55, 64. See also BDF 175.

²¹ Burton, *Syntax* 172, notes that “the participle expressing manner or means often denotes the same action as that of a principle verb, describing it from a different point of view.”

Matt 6:27: Who, *being anxious* (μεριμνῶν), is able to add to his stature?

But I forego further examples or categories, believing that the ones given are more than adequate to demonstrate that pre-positioned adverbial participles easily and frequently express, throughout the NT, actions or states that are contemporaneous with the primary verbs to which they are linked.

III. POST-POSITIONED PARTICIPLES

The NT evidence that post-positioned participles may be in a time relatively antecedent to that of their primary verbs is not as strong as for the preceding. It is, however, strong enough to be convincing.

John 4:54: This second sign again Jesus did, *coming* (ἔλθών) out of Judea.

John 6:23: They ate the bread, the Lord *giving thanks* (εὐχαριστήσαντος).

John 21:14: This was now a third time Jesus was manifested to the disciples, *being raised* (ἐγερθείς) from the dead.

Acts 4:21: The Sanhedrin released them, *finding* (εὐρίσκοντες) nothing.

Acts 10:24: Cornelius was expecting them, *calling together* (συγκαλεσάμενος) his relatives.

Acts 13:23–24: God brought a savior, Jesus, John *proclaiming before* (προκηρούξαντος).

Acts 15:40: Paul went forth, *being delivered over* (παραδοθείς) to the grace of the Lord.

Acts 16:6: Paul and his companions went through Phrygia, *being forbidden* (κωλυθέντες) by the Holy Spirit to go into Asia.

Acts 16:38: They were afraid, *bearing* (ἀκούσαντες) that Paul and Silas were Romans.

Acts 18:18: Paul sailed away to Syria, *shaving* (κειράμενος) his head in Cenchrea.

Acts 21:25: We wrote, *deciding* (κρίναντες) for them to be guarding themselves.

Acts 23:27: This man I rescued, *learning* (μαθών) that he was a Roman.

Acts 24:10: Paul answered, the governor *signaling* (νεύσαντος) to him.

Acts 26:10: Many I shut up in prisons, *receiving* (λαβών) the authority from the chief priests.

Rom 2:27: The uncircumcision by nature will judge you, *fulfilling* (τελοῦσα) the law.

1 Cor 4:7: If you received it, why do you boast as though not *receiving* (λαβών) it?

2 Cor 12:2: I know a man in Christ, fourteen years ago *being caught up* (ἀρπαγέντα) to the third heaven.

Phil 4:18: I am full, *receiving* (δεξάμενος) the things you sent.

Col 3:9–10: Do not lie to one another, *putting off* (ἀπεκδυσάμενοι) the old self ... and *putting on* (ἐνδυσάμενοι) the new.

Heb 3:1–2: Consider Jesus, *being* (ὄντα) faithful.

Heb 6:20: Jesus entered the inner sanctum behind the veil, *becoming* (γενόμενος) a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

Heb 11:13: These all died, not *receiving* (λαβόντες) the promises but *seeing* (ιδόντες) them afar and *greeting* (ἀσπασάμενοι) them and *confessing* (ὁμολογήσαντες) that they were strangers on earth.

Heb 11:30: The walls of Jericho fell, *being encircled* (κυκλωθέντα) for seven days.

Heb 11:31: Rahab the harlot did not perish, *receiving* (δεξαμένη) the spies.

1 Pet 3:18: That he might bring us to God, *being put to death* (θανατωθείς) in the flesh.

1 Pet 3:20: Going, he preached to the spirits in prison, once *being disobedient* (ἀπειθήσασίν).

1 Pet 3:22: Who is at God's right hand, *going* (πορευθείς) into heaven.

2 Pet 1:16: We made known to you his power and coming, *becoming* (γενηθέντες) eye-witnesses of his majesty.

These examples seem adequate to make the case.

Perhaps it is worth mentioning that there are a number of verbs that in participial form can be placed before or after their primary verbs with no apparent difference in meaning or in relative time. Without belaboring the point, I give one set of examples.

John 5:6: Jesus, *seeing* (ἰδῶν) the man, said to him.

John 20:20: Then the disciples rejoiced, *seeing* (ἰδόντες) the Lord.

The same thing applies to perfect participles of οἶδα and to other verbs.

IV. CONCLUSION

Although many more examples, equally clear, could be cited, these are enough to justify this conclusion: whether adverbial participles precede or follow the verbs to which they are linked in the sentence is not generally intended to indicate their relative time. Robertson is still right to say, of the participle, that “it only gives relative time by suggestion or by the use of temporal adverbs or conjunctions”;²² and that “in many examples only exegesis can determine whether antecedent or coincident action is intended.”²³

What does this matter? For translators and interpreters, this is important. The order should not influence the interpreter's (or translator's) decisions about relative time—when it seems important to consider relative time.²⁴ The interpreter will have to make the decisions and should do so on the basis of context and coherence.

The reader may desire more information about the frequency of pre- and post-positioned adverbial participles, by tense, in the NT. Therefore, I append here a table that provides this information in detail.²⁵ What becomes evident from the statistical patterns is that different writers had different tendencies in this regard. For example, one can readily see that the Synoptic Gospels and Acts strongly tend to place aorist adverbial participles before their primary verbs: 94.1% pre-positioned as compared to 5.9% post-positioned. This is not characteristic of the rest of the NT. There are other interesting variations in the patterns of usage. The reader may compare patterns by converting the raw data into percentages of the total.

²² Robertson, *Grammar* 1101.

²³ *Ibid.* 861.

²⁴ Neither should the tense of the participle, for that matter, although the evidence in favor of that consideration is stronger than for the hypothesis about order. But that is a matter for another time.

²⁵ The numbers could vary a little, depending on different interpreters' decisions about classification.

TABLE: DISTRIBUTION OF PRE- AND POST-POSITIONED
ADVERBIAL PARTICIPLES IN THE NT

Text	Number ²⁶	Pre-positioned			Post-positioned			
		Aor	Pres	Perf	Aor	Pres	Perf	Fut
Matthew	578 (61.8%)	367	54	4	6	143	3	1
Mark	357 (63.5%)	232	44	2	11	65	3	0
Luke	611 (57.2%)	344	87	4	19	152	5	0
John	170 (35.0%)	68	24	12	9	48	9	0
Acts	884 (68.9%)	491	126	5	56	187	15	4
Romans	77 (30.2%)	20	18	0	4	25	10	0
1 Corinthians	55 (30.2%)	8	21	0	2	23	1	0
2 Corinthians	89 (45.4%)	9	26	4	5	42	3	0
Galatians	30 (36.1/5)	8	3	3	5	11	0	0
Ephesians	61 (57.0%)	7	9	3	14	23	5	0
Philippians	35 (62.5%)	4	5	2	7	14	3	0
Colossians, Philemon	56 (66.7%)	2	6	1	9	33	5	0
1, 2 Thessalo- nians	25 (29.8%)	6	7	0	2	9	1	0
1 Timothy	43 (53.1%)	4	7	0	1	29	2	0
2 Timothy, Titus	45 (51.7%)	4	2	0	4	27	8	0
Hebrews	142 (45.1%)	27	32	1	27	48	6	1
James	26 (37.1%)	6	3	0	4	12	1	0
1 Peter	65 (54.6%)	8	14	1	9	28	5	0
2 Peter	63 (71.6%)	12	16	0	5	25	5	0
2, 3 John ²⁷	8 (34.8%)	0	2	0	1	5	0	0
Jude	20 (51.3%)	3	5	0	0	11	1	0
Revelation	98 (24.8%)	0	4	0	2	74	17	0

²⁶ The percentages represent the adverbial participles as a percentage of total participles in the text.

²⁷ In my judgment, there are no adverbial participles in 1 John. Four have been suggested to me: 2:4, 9; 3:17; 5:16. The first two are examples of attributive compound participles governed by one article; the last two, although conceivably adverbial, seem more likely complementary. This serves to illustrate that different interpreters will classify some participles differently.