

## Single Prepositions with Multiple Objects in Matthew 3:11 and John 3:5:

### An Exegetical Argument Running Amok?

For many New Testament professors teaching Greek, one of the joys of ministry is to show students how the understanding of Greek enhances one's ability to correctly interpret the New Testament in a way that a study of translations of the Greek text falls short. At the same time one must caution budding Greek scholars not to press the Greek beyond what exegetical information it can yield. The latter seems to be the case with arguments that keep working their way into quality published New Testament literature by experienced scholars relating to the exegetical significance of single prepositions with multiple objects when multiple prepositions could have been used. In short the claim is sometimes made that when a New Testament writer uses one preposition with multiple objects of that preposition which are connected by *καί* a conceptual unity is so closely made it must refer to one event or act. This argument at least in part traces back to the article by Murray J. Harris in the Appendix of the Dictionary of New Testament Theology (DNTT), which states:

Generally speaking, a preposition tends to be repeated before a series of nouns joined by *kai* more frequently in biblically Gk. (under Semitic influence) than in nonbiblical Gk. . . . Sometimes therefore, the non-use of a second or third prep. in NT Gk. may be theologically significant, indicating that the writer regarded the terms that he placed in one regimen as belonging naturally together or as a unit in concept or reality. *Ex hydatos kai pneumatos* (Jn. 3:5) shows that for the writer (or speaker) "water" and "Spirit" together form a single means of that regeneration which is a prerequisite for entrance into the kingdom of God (= birth *anōthen*, Jn. 3:3, 7). No contrast is intended between an external element of "water" and an inward renewal achieved by the Spirit. Conceptually the two are one. Similarly the phrase *en pneumati hagio kai pyri* points not two baptisms (viz., the righteous with the Holy Spirit, the wicked with fire), but to a single baptism in Spirit-and-fire, that may be interpreted either as the messianic purification and judgement that would be effected by the Spirit (cf. Is 4:4; 30:28) and experienced by all, or as the outpouring of the Spirit on believers at Pentecost that would refine and inflame them.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Murray J. Harris, "Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament," *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (4 vols.; Ed. Colin Brown; Zondervan Grand Rapids, 1986) 3: 1178. In Harris' more recent

While the above description has been qualified with statements like *generally, tends, sometimes* or *may*, the impression is given that one can and should take this as a valid exegetical argument, and commentators have done just that.<sup>2</sup> For example, citing DNTT (and J. Dunn) Carson in commenting on Matthew 3:11 states, “There are good reasons, however, for taking ‘fire’ as a purifying agent along with the Holy Spirit. The people John is addressing are being baptized by him; presumably they have repented. *More important* [emphasis mine] the single preposition ἐν (“with”) is not repeated before fire: the one preposition governs both the Holy Spirit and fire that this normally suggests a unified concept. Spirit-fire or the like.”<sup>3</sup> Likewise, Turner in his commentary on Matthew also cites the single preposition as part of

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work on Greek prepositions, he makes the same points. Murray J. Harris, *Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 43-44. There is a similar statement with more examples in the older grammar by Winer-Lünemann. It states there “When two or more substantives dependent on the same preposition immediately follow one another joined together by a copula, the preposition is most naturally repeated, if the substantives in question denote things which are to be conceived as distinct and independent, . . . but not repeated, if the substantives fall under a single category, or (if proper names under one common class.” George Winer and , *A Grammar of the Idiom of the New Testament* (Revised by G. Lünemann and Edited by J. Henry Thayer; Warren Draper Publishers , Andover, 1869) 419-420.

<sup>2</sup> In Harris’ in another place writes, “The repetition of a preposition with each noun connected by καί occurs so frequently in certain NT books as to be a feature of Biblical Greek attributable to Semitic influence. Of course in itself a repeated preposition need not betray Semitic practice, for any Greek writer may repeat a preposition with several substantives in one regimen in order to highlight the distinction between them.” Murray J. Harris, *Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament*, 37.

<sup>3</sup> D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” in *The Expositors Bible Commentary* (Ed. Frank E. Gaebelin; 12 vols.; Zondervan, Grand Rapids) 8:105. I note that in verse 12 Carson interprets the wheat and chaff as believers and unbelievers

his argument that one baptism is intended instead of two, and that baptism of fire is a “purifying baptism.” He writes, “Although some scholars (e.g., Bruner 1987; 78-79; Luz 1989; 171; Ridderbos 1987:55) see two baptisms here, one in the Spirit indicating salvation and the other in fire indicating judgment, it is preferable to see only one purifying baptism. The grammar of the passage supports this, since the verb ‘will baptize’ occurs once and the preposition *ἐν* occurs once with ‘Holy Spirit and fire’ as a compound object.”<sup>4</sup>

In John 3:5 DNTT is cited by Belleville to make the following statement: In v 5, *ὕδωρ* and *πνεῦμα* are governed by a single preposition (*ἐκ*) and conjoined by *καὶ*, indicating that the phrase is to be viewed as a conceptual unity, viz, “water-spirit.” We are dealing there with a water-spirit source that is

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respectively with the fire and verse 12 referring to hell. While many English translations start a new sentence at verse 12 the Greek text starts with a relative pronoun which has to be attached grammatically to the previous clause *αὐτὸς ὑμᾶς βαπτίσει ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ πυρὶ*<sup>12</sup> *οὗ τὸ πτύον ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ διακαθαριεῖ τὴν ἄλωνα αὐτοῦ καὶ συναξει τὸν σῖτον αὐτοῦ εἰς τὴν ἀποθήκην, τὸ δὲ ἄχυρον κατακαύσει πυρὶ ἀσβέστῳ (Matt 3:11-12).*

<sup>4</sup> Turner then goes back and forth between one baptism with two aspects or a hendiadys in which the two objects communicate a single meaning, listing OT texts that associate the eschatological outpouring of the Spirit with cleansing water and refining fire. He summarizes, “So it is best to conclude that the one eschatological outpouring of the Spirit through which Jesus will purify and judge.” This he says is pictured with the following illustration of wheat and chaff. I would note that Turner’s full discussion is a little confusing and inconsistent if one keeps reading the commentary on the wheat and chaff analogy, which he appears to take as believers (wheat) and unbelievers (chaff). Is the baptism of fire a purifying judgment of believers or a judgment of unbelievers in hell? David Turner, *Matthew* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Baker, Grand Rapids 2008) 115-116.

the origin of man's second γένεσις (v. 3)."<sup>5</sup> More recently Köstenburger sees John 3:5 as referring to "one spiritual birth" based in part on the same argument. He writes, "Rather than referring to water and spirit baptism, two kinds of birth or a variety of other things, the phrase probably denotes one spiritual birth (Carson 1991:194). This is suggested by the fact that 'born of water and spirit' in 3:5 further develops 'born again/from above' in 3:3, *by the use of one preposition (ἐξ, ex) to govern both phrases in 3:, [italics mine] and by antecedent OT (prophetic) theology.*"<sup>6</sup>

Regardless of one's position on both of these passages, the one preposition with multiple object argument is seen to be having an influence on interpretation in ruling out certain views and arguing for others. The purpose of this paper then is to question the value of the argument based on linguistic norms and flexibility of both Semitic and Koine syntax, and more importantly New Testament usage itself. In short, it appears the presence of a single preposition with multiple objects as requiring a close conceptual unity that would not be present if two prepositions were used should not be used as an exegetical argument giving much, if any, weight in interpretive decisions in the New Testament<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Linda Belleville, "Born of Water and Spirit:" John 3:5, *Trinity Journal* 1 (Fall 1980) 135. Carson citing Belleville concurs that the single preposition in John 3:5 favors the single birth view. D. A. Carson. *Exegetical Fallacies* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Baker, Grand Rapids, 1996) 42.

<sup>6</sup> Andreas J. Köstenburger, *John* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Baker, Grand Rapids 2008) 123-124.

<sup>7</sup> Harris does give the caution that one must make allowance for an author's stylistic variation. He writes, "the exegete should not assume . . . that the use or nonuse of the preposition in successive phrases or parallel passages always marks a change of meaning. A writer may merely wish to avoid repetition or vary his style." Murray J. Harris, *Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament*, 40.

### *Semitic Background*

Waltke and O' Connor's state that the normative situation in Biblical Hebrew is to repeat a preposition when there are multiple objects. But they also say that it is "not rare" for one preposition to govern multiple objects, which they describe as "prepositional override."<sup>8</sup> An example of this is seen in 1 Sam 15:22 (Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices? [note that the preposition כ is not repeated here]):

הַחֶפֶץ לַיהוָה בְּעֹלוֹת וּזְבָחִים (1Sam 15:22)

Waltke and O' Connor also note that in poetry a preposition may do "double duty" in which one preposition may have an object in one line and carry over to a second object in a second line (clause) without being repeated. An example of this is found in Isaiah 48:14 (he will carry out His good pleasure against Babylon, and His arm [*will be against*] the Chaldeans [note also here that the preposition כ is not repeated]):<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Van der Merve, Naude and Kroeze, essentially says the same thing using the same examples of Waltke and O' Connor. Christo H.J. van der Merwe, Jackie A. Naude, and Jan H. Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar* (Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, 2000) 240.

<sup>9</sup> Bruce K. Waltke and M. O' Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake Indiana, 1990) 222-223. For numerous examples on the extending of the one preposition to a second object in poetic parallelism see also F. H. W. Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*. (Ed E. Kautzsch; Trans. A.E. Cowley; Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1988) 384. Joüon adds, "In a case of enumeration, when several nouns are logically governed by a preposition, this preposition is often repeated." Paul Joüon, S.J. and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew Part Three Syntax* (Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblioco, Rome, 1993) 484.

The Syriac (e.g., later form of biblical Aramaic) appears to be the same as Hebrew. Nöldeke comments: “The relation of prepositions to what is governed by them is in Syriac, as in Semitic speech generally, that of the Constr. St. to the Genitive. In both cases the governed word must immediately follow the governing; although in both cases short words may by way of exception come between.”<sup>10</sup> In other words since the governed word must immediately follow the preposition prepositions normatively are repeated to get the preposition right next to its object.

### *Examples in LXX as Compared to Hebrew*<sup>11</sup>

Seeing how the LXX rendered some multiple-preposition phrases from Greek to Hebrew sheds a little light that the Greek may have reduced the number of prepositions or just left them in. Two examples will suffice.

**Example of LXX Preposition Reduction: Exodus 9:3** behold, the hand of the LORD will come *with* a very severe pestilence on your livestock which are in the field, on the horses, on the donkeys, on the camels, on the herds, and on the flocks.]

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<sup>10</sup> Theodore Nöldeke, *Compendious Syriac Grammar* (trans. James A. Crichton; Williams & Norgate, London, 1904) 191.

<sup>11</sup> These examples were given by Joüon.

Exodus 9:3 הנה יד־יהוה הויה במקנך אשר בשדה בסוסים בחמרים בגמלים בבקר ובצאן דבר

כבד מאד:

**Exodus 9:3** ἰδοὺ χεὶρ κυρίου ἐπέσται ἐν τοῖς κτήνεσίν σου τοῖς ἐν τοῖς πεδίοις ἐν τε τοῖς ἵπποις καὶ ἐν<sup>12</sup> τοῖς ὑποζυγίοις καὶ [Preposition omitted] ταῖς καμήλοις καὶ [Preposition omitted] βουσὶν καὶ [Preposition omitted] προβάτοις θάνατος μέγας σφόδρα

**Example of LXX Keeping the Prepositions with Καί: Genesis 40:2** And Pharaoh was furious with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker.

Genesis 40:2 ויקצף פרעה על שני סריסיו על שר המשקים ועל שר האופים:

**Genesis 40:2** καὶ ὠργίσθη Φαραῶ ἐπὶ τοῖς δυσὶν εὐνούχοις αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τῷ ἀρχιουνοχῶ καὶ ἐπὶ [Preposition kept] τῷ ἀρχισιτοποιῶ

One can also refer to Turner's analysis below of the LXX in Ezekiel to see how often it has multiple prepositions (84%) versus a single when multiple objects are present. This is the highest percentage of all the literature examined including the New Testament (the next highest

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<sup>12</sup> The τε καὶ combination may be the reason this preposition is kept in Greek and not omitted as the following ones are.

is Revelation at 63%). In other words, the LXX uses multiple prepositions far more than the New Testament in spite of the Semitic background of most of the New Testament authors.

### *Greek Background*

Nigel Turner and A.T. Robertson address single prepositions with multiple objects in their advanced grammars.<sup>13</sup> Turner is most helpful in describing the situation in biblical and nonbiblical Greek in stating that in both cases repetition and nonrepetition is common. He writes, “Both repetition and omission of the preposition before two or more phrases connected by *καί* is found in Ptol.pap. and NT.”<sup>14</sup> In nonbiblical Greek, Turner states that Polyb. [Polybius (II-III BC)] is “fond of repeating the preposition” but “by far the greater majority of instances in the Ptol. Papyri, especially in the unofficial style of writing, the preposition is not repeated.”<sup>15</sup> Repetition occurs when each word must be emphasized separately. He cites Thucydides’ book one in which out of 25 opportunities to repeat a preposition he does so 6 times for emphasis, which makes the emphasis necessary. He then cites various books in biblical Greek showing how many opportunities the authors had in repeating the preposition and how many times they did. He gives the following chart:<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Nigel Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek – Syntax* (Ed. James Hope Moulton; 4 vols.; T and T Clark. Edinburgh, 1963) 3: 275. A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Broadman Press, Nashville, 1934) 566.

<sup>14</sup> Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek – Syntax*, 275.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*



Insert Table 1 here

Changing the data from Turner into percentages gives a good perspective of on prepositional use tendencies by author and book. One can see that Luke-Acts and Thucydides repeat prepositions much less frequently than other authors, but not that far behind are Matthew, Mark and Paul. Since one highly doubts that Thucydides was influenced by Semitisms even though the sample was small, it does give some perspective of baseline for comparative purposes pointing out what everyone agrees are some measures of Semitic influences in the New Testament.

Insert Table 2 here

Robertson also notes that when nouns are used with the same preposition in the New Testament, prepositions are more frequently repeated than in earlier Greek. He cites Winer's view (see footnote 1) that the repetition only happens when the two nouns do not easily occur in the same category. But he states that this is only true within limits since there is "more freedom" in the later Greek. In other words sometimes it is true but other times not. He cautions that "one cannot insist on any ironclad rule" as he cites examples of two prepositions with nouns in the same category (e.g., Luke 27:27; e.g., Moses and the Prophets). He gives other examples noting that conjunctive combinations (e.g., καὶ . . . καὶ; τὲ . . . καὶ), disjunctive conjunctions, and rhetorical reasons may also be influencing whether one or two prepositions are used.<sup>17</sup>

### *Observations and Analysis*

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<sup>17</sup> Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 566.

With this background as a starting point, there are several reasons not to take a single preposition with multiple objects as a good exegetical argument for conceptual unity that would not be present if two prepositions would have been used.

1. *Since prepositional phrases frequently modify the verb<sup>18</sup> and thus are adverbial in function there is always going to be some conceptual unity due to the fact that the same verb is being modified regardless of how many prepositions are used.* This verb will have the same subject and direct object if there is one. For example if one says “I will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire,” or “I will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and *with* fire”, the subject (I), verb (baptize) and direct object (you) are the same in either case. This produces a conceptual unity on one level whether or not one or two prepositions are used. But can one say with any certainty that the single preposition is putting the both objects (e.g., Holy Spirit and fire) into one category or event while conversely two prepositions would have put them into two categories or events?
2. *The very nature of natural repetition of the preposition in Semitic idiom and natural lack of repetition in Greek idiom leaves one wanting whether an author is being more influenced by his Semitic background, translation issues of the Old Testament or speech, other written sources, or just natural Koine Greek.* This is the crux of the problem with using single proportions to argue for single events or categories that would not be communicated with multiple prepositions. Yet the proof is in the pudding. One must inductively look at the New Testament itself to see that the NDTT argument cannot hold up with any measure of confidence.
3. *There is a clear case in the New Testament where when referring to the same event(s) that a single preposition is used with multiple objects alongside a multiple preposition construction with multiple objects.*

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<sup>18</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) 356.

In 1 John 5:6 John writes: οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἐλθὼν δι' ὕδατος καὶ αἵματος, Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, οὐκ ἐν τῷ ὕδατι μόνον ἀλλ' ἐν τῷ ὕδατι καὶ ἐν τῷ αἵματι· καὶ τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν τὸ μαρτυροῦν, ὅτι τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν ἡ ἀλήθεια (This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood). Here the first reference to the one coming in “water and blood” has the single preposition δι' but in the second part of the same sentence the water and blood are governed by two prepositions (ἐν). Since water and blood in both cases must refer to the same event(s), a single or double preposition cannot be determinative whether a single event (e.g., the blood and water pouring out of Jesus' side on the cross) or multiple event (e.g., Jesus' baptism and his death) are in view. Perhaps one could say that the second case is more emphatic, but this would not change the basic outlook that the same event(s) is in view.

4. *There are cases in the New Testament where the same author refers to groups as prepositional objects linked with a single preposition and also refers to the same groups with repeated prepositions.*

For example in John 7:45 the “chief priests and Pharisees” are linked by a single preposition: ἦλθον οὖν οἱ ὑπηρέται πρὸς τοὺς ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ Φαρισαίους, καὶ εἶπον αὐτοῖς ἐκεῖνοι· διὰ τί οὐκ ἠγάγετε αὐτόν; (The officers therefore came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them, "Why did you not bring Him?"). However in John 18:3 the same two groups are referred to with multiple prepositions: ὁ οὖν Ἰούδας λαβὼν τὴν σπεῖραν καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἀρχιερέων καὶ ἐκ<sup>19</sup> τῶν Φαρισαίων ὑπηρέτας ἔρχεται ἐκεῖ μετὰ

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<sup>19</sup> The Byzantine manuscripts omit this preposition.

φανῶν καὶ λαμπάδων καὶ ὄπλων. (John 18:3 Judas then, having received the *Roman* cohort, and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons.) So in John 7:45 the chief priests and Pharisees are linked by the single preposition (*πρὸς*) while in John 18:3 the same two groups of people are linked by two prepositions (*ἐκ*) with no discernable difference in meaning of linkage or nonlinkage between the groups.

Also in Luke's reference to the divisions of the Old Testament, single or multiple prepositions can be used. In Luke 24:27 he writes: καὶ ἀρξάμενος ἀπὸ Μωϋσέως καὶ ἀπὸ πάντων<sup>20</sup> τῶν προφητῶν διερμήνευσεν αὐτοῖς ἐν πάσαις ταῖς γραφαῖς τὰ περὶ ἑαυτοῦ. Then in Luke 24:44 he writes: Εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς αὐτούς· οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι μου οὐς ἐλάλησα πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἔτι ὧν σὺν ὑμῖν, ὅτι δεῖ πληρωθῆναι πάντα τὰ γεγραμμένα ἐν τῷ νόμῳ Μωϋσέως καὶ τοῖς προφήταις καὶ ψαλμοῖς περὶ ἐμοῦ. (Luk 24:44 BGT).<sup>21</sup> Here the Mosaic law and the Prophets can be grouped by Luke with either one preposition or two.

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<sup>20</sup> Perhaps the word πάντων is influencing Luke to add the second preposition here to make it a little more emphatic.

<sup>21</sup> **Acts 28:23** Ταξάμενοι δὲ αὐτῷ ἡμέραν ἤλθον πρὸς αὐτὸν εἰς τὴν ξενίαν πλείονες οἷς ἐξετίθετο διαμαρτυρόμενος τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ, πείθων τε αὐτούς περὶ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἀπὸ τε τοῦ νόμου Μωϋσέως καὶ τῶν προφητῶν, ἀπὸ πρωῆ ἕως ἑσπέρας. (Act 28:23 BGT) In this example the use of the τε . . . καὶ combination still does not lead Luke to add the second preposition.

5. *A case in the New Testament where the same author refers to linked geographical areas as prepositional objects with a single preposition and also refers to linked areas with repeated prepositions.*

In Matthew 2:16, for example, Matthew writes: Τότε Ἡρώδης ἰδὼν ὅτι ἐνεπαίχθη ὑπὸ τῶν μάγων ἐθυμώθη λίαν, καὶ ἀποστείλας ἀνεῖλεν πάντας τοὺς παῖδας **τοὺς ἐν Βηθλέεμ καὶ ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς ὄριοις αὐτῆς** ἀπὸ διετοῦς καὶ κατωτέρω, κατὰ τὸν χρόνον ὃν ἠκρίβωσεν παρὰ τῶν μάγων. . . while in Matthew 4:13 he writes: καὶ καταλιπὼν τὴν Ναζαρά ἐλθὼν κατώκησεν εἰς Καφαρναοὺμ τὴν παραθαλασσίαν **ἐν ὄριοις Ζαβουλὼν καὶ Νεφθαλίμ**. In these examples both two prepositions and one preposition are used to describe geographical areas that could be considered linked by the proximity to each other. It would be difficult to say that Zebulun and Naphtali have a special conceptual unity because of the single preposition while Bethlehem and its regions do not due to the use of two prepositions. One wonders if the **πᾶσι** may be influencing the use of the second preposition in Matthew 2:16.

6. *Cases in the New Testament where the same author refers to distinct cities as prepositional objects with a single preposition and also refers to distinct cities with repeated prepositions.*

Luke in Acts 14: 19-21 writes concerning distinct cities <sup>19</sup> Ἐπῆλθαν δὲ **ἀπὸ Ἀντιοχείας καὶ Ἰκονίου** Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ πείσαντες τοὺς ὄχλους καὶ λιθάσαντες τὸν Παῦλον ἔσυρον ἔξω τῆς πόλεως νομίζοντες αὐτὸν τεθνηκέναι. . . . <sup>21</sup> εὐαγγελισάμενοί τε τὴν πόλιν ἐκεῖνην καὶ μαθητεύσαντες ἰκανοὺς ὑπέστρεψαν **εἰς τὴν Λύστραν καὶ εἰς Ἰκόνιον καὶ εἰς Ἀντιόχειαν**. In these examples and one preposition is used in **ἀπὸ Ἀντιοχείας καὶ**

Ἰκονίου, while multiple prepositions are used in εἰς τὴν Λύστραν καὶ εἰς Ἰκόνιον καὶ εἰς Ἀντιόχειαν. In the first case, Jews are coming from Antioch and Iconium; in the second statement, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch. Later, in Acts 16:1, Paul came to Derbe and to Lystra described with two prepositions: Κατήντησεν δὲ [καὶ]<sup>22</sup> εἰς Δέρβην καὶ εἰς Λύστραν. καὶ ἰδοὺ μαθητῆς τις ἦν ἐκεῖ ὀνόματι Τιμόθεος, υἱὸς γυναικὸς Ἰουδαίας πιστῆς, πατρὸς δὲ Ἑλληνοῦ).

7. *A case in the New Testament where the two synoptic authors in a parallel account refer to the event with prepositional objects one governed with a single preposition but the other with repeated prepositions.*

In Matthew 4:25, Matthew uses one preposition (ἀπὸ) to govern a long list of areas from which people are following Jesus (καὶ ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ ὄχλοι πολλοὶ ἀπὸ τῆς Γαλιλαίας καὶ Δεκαπόλεως καὶ Ἱεροσολύμων καὶ Ἰουδαίας καὶ πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου. And great multitudes followed Him from Galilee and Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and *from*

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<sup>22</sup> Good support for the omission of the *καὶ* comes from a few good representatives of the Alexandrian text type (Ⲛ, apparently P74) and most of the Western (D, latt) and Byzantine textual traditions. Support for the text comes from other representatives of the Alexandrian textual tradition (P45, B). Internally in support of the critical text it could be an accidental omission or in support of the variant an intentional addition influenced by the double preposition in some of the Alexandrian manuscripts (e.g., a double *καὶ* construction [both . . . and]). But in any case, two prepositions are used.

beyond the Jordan.)<sup>23</sup> In the parallel passage in Mark 3:7-8, Mark uses multiple prepositions (ἀπό is used four times.) (καὶ πολὺ πλῆθος ἀπὸ τῆς Γαλιλαίας [ἠκολούθησεν], καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰουδαίας<sup>8</sup> καὶ ἀπὸ Ἱεροσολύμων καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰδουμαίας καὶ πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου καὶ περὶ Τύρον καὶ Σιδῶνα; and a great multitude from Galilee followed; and *also* from Judea, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and beyond the Jordan, and the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon.)

8. *Lastly, there are Trinitarian references to the Father and Son with both single and multiple preposition constructions by different authors. Paul consistently uses one preposition in his salutations, while John can be seen to use two prepositions in his writings. NDTT and Mounce try to make a theological point on Paul's use of the single preposition in these constructions.*<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Turner also cites this passage to show how far the stretch of a single preposition can extend into multiple objects. Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek – Syntax*, 275.

<sup>24</sup> NIDNTT states on Paul's salutation, "The fact that 'God our Father' and 'the Lord Jesus Christ' are joined together under the bond of a single prep. (apo) in all Pauline salutations (e.g., 1 Cor. 1:3) suggests that the apostle envisaged the Father and the Son as a joint source of 'grace and people,' rather than as distinct sources or as a source and channel (respectively). They sustain a single relation (not two diverse relations) to the grace and peace that come to believers." Harris, "Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament," *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 3: 1178. Also in his first year Greek Grammar Workbook commenting on a similar construction in Galatians 1:3-4, Mounce writes, "Notice that ἀπό is not repeated before κυρίου. This is exegetically significant and present in Paul's salutations. If Paul had thought of "God" and the "Lord" as two different entities, he would have had to repeat the preposition. The fact that he doesn't shows that he views both

A good example in Paul can be seen in Rom 1:7 where Paul writes: χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. (Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; cf 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2 Gal 1:1, 3; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:2; 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2; Titus 1:4; Philem 3.)

However, John in 2 John 3 in the salutation uses two prepositions: χάρις ἔλεος εἰρήνη παρὰ θεοῦ πατρὸς καὶ παρὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐν ἀληθείᾳ καὶ ἀγάπῃ. (Grace, mercy *and* peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. John also uses two prepositions referring to the Father and Son in 1 John 1:3 (καὶ ἡ κοινωνία δὲ ἡ ἡμετέρα μετὰ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ) and 1 John 2:24 (καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐν τῷ υἱῷ καὶ ἐν τῷ πατρὶ μενεῖτε; you also will abide in the Son and in the Father). In spite of two prepositions in these constructions, John through other explicit statements sees a strong unity between the Father and Son (e.g., "I and the Father are one" [John 10:30] or, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, 'Show us the Father'?" [John 14:9]).

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as the same entity. It is probably pushing the grammar too far to say that Paul equates Jesus with God, but it does show that Paul views them working in absolute harmony with each other, both being a single agent of grace and peace to the Galatians." William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek Workbook* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.; Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2009) 148.



## *Conclusion*

While not an exhaustive study, these examples should give one pause in assigning exegetical linkage or distinction when interpreting objects of prepositions based on single or multiple preposition constructions. Anyone who has seriously tried to translate the Old Testament into English has felt the tension between being faithful to the Hebrew or Aramaic text and the very unnatural English expression that can be created by strings of multiple prepositions. The decision to leave them all or omit some is usually due to translation philosophy and how much the natural English is strained. When omission is done it is not to create a special conceptual unity to communicate the same event or category but to express a concept in natural idiom. Even if a translator or author would have a native Semitic background he would probably want to the best of his ability get the text into natural form of the receptor language whatever it was. It is hoped that the raising of this red flag would spur further research and discussion to better understand how prepositions are used in the New Testament and what they do or **do not** communicate. As A.T. Robertson cautioned, freedom rather than rule seems to govern this aspect of Greek syntax.

Table 1

	Ezek (B-text)	Mark	Matt	Luke	Acts	John	Rom 1Cor	Eph	Pastorals	Rev
Opportunities	93	26	35	55	56	15	24	16	24	38
Repetitions	78	10	11	9	16	8	14	6	4	24

Table 2

Author/Book/Reference	Percentage of Repeated Preposition with <i>καί</i> when opportunity was there
Thucydides	24%
Ezek (B-Text)	84%
Mark	39%
Matthew	31%
Luke-Acts	22%
Gospel of John	53%
Paul (Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Pastoral Epistles)	38%

Revelation	63%
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