

χαλκόν, ὁ δὲ ἄρχων οὐκ ἤθελε λαβεῖν μήποτε εἴπω τις ὅτι δώροις πεισθεῖς μέλλει ἀδίκως κρίνειν. 12. ὁ δὲ δωδέκατος ὁ παραδοὺς τὸν Χριστὸν τέθνηκε· δεῖ οὖν ἡμᾶς τοὺς λοιποὺς ἔνδεκα ἐκλέξασθαι ἓνα μάρτυρα τῆς ἀναστάσεως.

Matt. 14.15-21; 18.21-22; 20.3-7; Luke 10.17; John 21.11;
Acts 2.41; 27.37; I Cor. 15.5; 16.8; Rev. 13.18

45 Semitisms¹

There are a number of secondary Semitisms in the NT when the Greek is possible but unidiomatic and probably influenced by a Semitic construction. Such are the redundant ἀναστάς and ἤρξατο and ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν (sometimes even used to begin speech, Matt. 28.5). RV meticulously translates these, but the NEB sometimes omits as inessential.

Major Semitisms (often found in OT quotations) are not only bad Greek but are apt to cause difficulty in translation, so the more common are given below:

1. A special form of the infinitive known as the infin. absolute was used in Hebrew to add emphasis to the verb. Attempts are made to reproduce this by:

(a) dative of a noun cognate with the verb:

Ἐπιθυμία ἐπεθύμησα τοῦτο τὸ πασχα φαγεῖν μεθ' ὑμῶν
πρὸ τοῦ με παθεῖν.

With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer. (Bad English, bad Greek—I have earnestly desired, Diglot.) Luke 22.15

¹ The term covers both Hebrew and Aramaic, which had many similarities. The only longer passages in the NT consistently showing distinctively Hebrew idiom are Luke 1-2 and parts of Revelation.

(b) participle along with the verb:

εὐλογῶν εὐλογήσω σε καὶ πληθύνων πληθυνῶ σε.
I will indeed bless you and multiply you. (Diglot)

Heb. 6.13 (Gen. 22.17)

(c) cognate accusative of noun along with verb:

καὶ ἐφοβήθησαν φόβον μέγαν.
And they feared exceedingly.

Mark 4.41

2. impersonal use of ἐγένετο:

(a) parataxis, when the main verb stands without any connecting link (cf. p. 41):

Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις ἦλθεν Ἰησοῦς ἀπὸ
Ναζαρεθ.

And it came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth. Mark 1.9

(b) with acc. (more rarely dat.) and infin. clause:

Ἐγένετο δὲ ἐν σαββάτῳ διαπορεύεσθαι αὐτὸν διὰ σπορίμων.

Now it came to pass on a sabbath that he was going through the cornfields. Luke 6.1

(c) linked with main verb by redundant, untranslatable καί:

Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν μιᾷ τῶν ἡμερῶν καὶ αὐτὸς ἦν διδάσκων.
And it came to pass on one of those days that he was teaching. Luke 5.17

3. use of προστίθεμαι for repetition or proceeding to take action:

καὶ προσέθετο ἕτερον πέμψαι δούλον.
And again he sent another servant. Luke 20.11¹

4. addition of a demonstrative pronoun after a relative. This was a necessary addition to the Semitic relative which was indeclinable, so that the demonstrative defined case, number and gender, but is untranslatable in English:

οὗ οὐκ εἰμι ἱκανὸς λύσαι τὸν ἰμάντα τῶν ὑποδημάτων
αὐτοῦ.
Luke 3.16

the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose

¹ Matthew and Mark in their parallel passages write πάλιν ἀπέστειλεν.