

THE NARRATIVE PERFECT IN NEW TESTAMENT

BY

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The resultative perfect which appeared during the 5 and 4 century B. C. in the classical Greek literature began to take a meaning different from the aorist tense¹. The classical authors consequently use this tense in keeping its temporal nuance, which is different from the aorist².

In the Hellenistic literature the use of the resultative perfect was more common, because, as narrative tempus, it entered in the space of the aorist tense³.

On the contrary during the atticistic literature the use of the resultative perfect was much smaller. In its place they used the aorist; the authors of this period imitated the works of the classical literature⁴.

In all the works of the Hellenistic period, we see the resultative perfect used as a narrative tense. This resulted in a great deal of confusion in the use of the aorist.

1. J. Wackernagel, Vorlesungen über Syntax. Basel 1 Aufl. 1926. 2. 1928. p. 166-171. Dual in der Kaiserzeit. in Kleine Schriften. Göttingen 1953. Bd. 5 p. 887. Antonios Papanikolaou, Zur Sprache Charitons. Diss. Köln 1963. p. 51.

2. Cf. P. Chantraine, Histoire du parfait grec. Paris 1927 p. 175, G. N. Hatzidakis, Ἀκαδημαϊκὰ Ἀναγνώσματα. Τόμος 3. Μέρος Α'. Γενική Γλωσσική. Ἀθήναι 1925. p. 332.

3. J. H. Moulton (A Grammar of New Testament Greek. 3 ed. Edinburgh 1908 p. 141) writes: «While the perfect was increasingly used, as the language grew older, as a substitute for what would formerly have been a narrative aorist. A cursory reading of the papyri soon shows us how much more the vernacular tends to use this tense; and the inference might be drawn that distinction of aorist and perfect was already obsolete». - Cf. P. Chantraine, Hist. d. parf. p. 233, 239. Polybios for example: He used both tenses without defining their true meanings. See Fr. Hultsch, Die erzählenden Zeitformen bei Polybios. Ein Beitrag zur Syntax der gemeingriechischen Sprache. Leipzig 1891 p. 13-16, - 458-60. P. Chantraine, Hist. d. parf. gr. p. 251. D.C. Hesseling, Het perfect in het post-klassieke grieks; overblijfsels in de taal van heden. Amsterdam 1928.-St. B. Psaltes, Grammatik der byzantinischen Chroniken. Göttingen 1913, p. 229.

4. Cf. Zur Sprache Charitons, p. 51-53.

This misuse is also found in the non-literate Hellenistic works, but not as often¹.

This evolution of the resultative perfect in its identification, as a narrative tense with the aorist, brought about its gradual disappearance from the postclassical literature until it resulted to its complete omission from the modern Greek language².

G. N. Hatzidakis in his work — *Einleitung in die neugriechische Grammatik*. Leipzig 1892 p. 204 — wrote : «In der Koine hat auch die Ausgleichung des Perfekts mit dem Aorist stattgefunden, wodurch das erstere verloren gegangen ist»³.

The narrative perfect was formed on analogy with the resultative perfect. Therefore in my present article I will examine the forms of the perfect which have an object (in accusative).

I must note that it is not possible to decide in each example, if we have before us a narrative perfect formed on analogy with the resultative perfect in the meaning of aorist. (Compare Hultsch, p. 13 ff. on Polybios).

By the research of the use of narrative perfect in the New Testa-

1. Cf. E. Maser (*Grammatik der griechischen Papyri aus der Ptolemäerzeit*. Leipzig-Berlin 1906/1938) wrote in II I 139,2: «In der hellenistischen Zeit dringt das Perfekt immer in die Sphäre des Aoristes ein und dient als erzählendes Tempus».

See also II I 176,37. R. Helbing, *Grammatik der Septuaginta*. Laut- und Wortlehre. Göttingen 1907. p. 67.

Styl. Kapsomenakis, *Voruntersuchungen zu einer Grammatik der Papyri der nachchristlichen Zeit*. München 1938, p. 126.

L. Radermacher, *Neutestamentliche Grammatik*. Das Griechisch des NT. im Zusammenhang mit der Volkssprache. 2 Aufl. Tübingen 1925, p. 150. - G. B. Winer, *Grammatik des Neutestamentlichen Sprachidioms*, Leipzig 1855 p. 242 f.

2. The only form of the active perfect which is in use in the modern Greek language is *βέβηκα* instead of *εἴβηκα* (aorist in meaning). Instead of this perfect we use the aorist or the periphrase with the auxiliary verb *ἔχω* (*ἔχω ἀκούσει* instead of *ἀκήκοα* etc.). On the contrary the passive participle of perfect is used often today (*γραμμένος* instead of *γεγραμμένος* etc.).

See also: S. Antoniadis, *L'Évangile de Luc*. Esquisse de Grammaire et de style. Paris 1930 p. 256 - J. H. Moulton, *A Grammar* p. 142 - Blass-Debrunner, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch*. 10. Aufl. Göttingen 1959 § 340.

3. See also P. Chantraine (*Hist. d. parf. gr.* p. 251): «L' étude du parfait à l' époque hellénistique conduit à deux conclusions précises..... mais me parfait tend en général à disparaître et à se confondre avec l' aorist».

Cf. also Ernest De Witt Burton: *Syntax of the moods and tenses in New Testament Greek*. Third ed. Edinburgh 1955 p. 41-44.

ment it is shown that the Evangelists Matthew and Mark use the narrative perfect more seldom than the two Others.

In Matthew's Gospel I have found the following examples:

- 9,22 ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέ σε. (Cf. P. Chantraine, Hist. d. parf. p. 235.)
 13,46 πέπρακε πάντα ὅσα εἶχε καὶ ἠγόρασεν αὐτόν.
 24,25 Ἴδού προεῖρηκα ὑμῖν,
 25,24 ὁ τὸ ἐν τάλαντον εἰληφώς εἶπε·
 26,75 Ἰησοῦ εἰρηκότος αὐτῷ ὅτι...

I see that the expression ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέ σε is repeated in the Bible and it seems to be popular.

Besides that example I will note that the coordination of aorist and perfect is remarkable in the place 13,46. There is no temporal difference between the verbs: πέπρακε and ἠγόρασεν. The signification of the perfect πέπρακε is identified with the aorist ἠγόρασεν¹.

In Mark's Gospel I found:

- 5,19 ὅσα σοι ὁ Κύριος πεποίηκεν καὶ ἠλέησέ σε.
 5,34 θύγατερ, ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέ σε.
 7,37 καλῶς πάντα πεποίηκε·
 10,52 ὕπαγε, ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέ σε,
 13,23 Ἴδού, προεῖρηκα ὑμῖν ἅπαντα.

Mark also refers twice the expression: ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέ σε.

The coordination of both tenses is in the passage 5, 19.

In both Testaments, the best samples representing the Common (Koine) language, is showed the restriction of the use of (narrative) perfect, which later disappeared completely.

The Evangelist Luke, who is distinguished somewhat in his literate writing, refers more frequently the narrative perfect than the two authors mentioned above²). He has 17 such examples:

- 1, 3 ... παρηκολουθηκότι ἄνωθεν πᾶσιν ἀκριβῶς,
 1,22 καὶ ἀπέγνωσαν ὅτι ὀπτασίαν ἑώρακεν ἐν τῷ ναῷ.
 1,25 λέγουσι ὅτι οὕτω μοι πεποίηκεν ὁ Κύριος...

1. See similar examples in my dissertation: Zur Sprache Charitons. p. 53. - Also: Blass-Debrunner, Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch. 10. Aufl. Göttingen 1959 § 340-343. - L. Rademacher, Neutest. Gramm. p. 149-151 - J. H. Moulton, A Grammar p. 142 f. Mayser in his work (II / 139,2 Anmerk. 2) wrote: «Dass insbesondere die niedere Volkssprache den Unterschied der beiden Tempora immer weniger empfand, beweist der neutestamentliche Sprachgebrauch». - Cf. P. Chantraine. Hist. d. parf. p. 230 f.

2. See S. Antoniadis, L' Evangile de Luc. p. 257. Cf. P. Chantraine, Hist. d. parf. p. 229 f.

1,36 καὶ αὐτὴ συνειληφύϊα υἱὸν ἐν γῆρει αὐτῆς,

4,18 εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς ἀπέσταλκέ με,

(7,20?) — 7,50 — 8,48 — 9,36 — 13,2 — 14,10 — 14,12—17,10 —
17,19—18,42—22,13—24,23.

The coordination of both tenses is in: 4,18... ἔχρισέ με... ἀπέσταλκέ με,

There is also the expression ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέ σε 4 times in: 7,50
— 8,48 — 17,19 and 18,42.

The Evangelist John has the narrative perfect very often; considering the fact that his work is smaller in quantity than the work of Luke and Matthew, he uses this form in an extremely larger amount. I have found 107 such passages:

1,15 ...καὶ κέκραγε λέγων·

1,18 Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακε πώποτε·

1,32 ... λέγων ὅτι τεθέαμαι τὸ Πνεῦμα...

1,34 κἀγὼ ἑώρακα καὶ μεμαρτύρηκα ὅτι...

1,42 — 1,46 — 2,9 — 2,10 — 3,11 — 3,11 — 3,18 — 3,26 — 3,32 —
3,35—(4,38?)—4,42—4,45 — 5,33 — 5,36 — 5,37 — 5,42 — 5,45 — 6,13 —
6,19 — 6,32 — 6,36 — 6,39 — 6,46 — 6,65 — 6,69 — 7,15 — (7,19?) — 7,
22 — 8,31 — 8,33 — 8,38 — 8,40 — 8,52 — 8,55 — 8,57 — 9,29 — 9,37
— 10,29 — 11,27 — 11,34 — (12,7?) — 12,18 — 12,29 — 12,37 — 12,40
— 13,2—(13,3?)—13,12—(13,15?)—14,7—14,9 — 14,25 — 15,3 — 15,10 —
15,11 — 15,15 — 15,18 — 15,24 — 16,1 — 16,4 — 16,6 — 16,25 — 16,27
— 16,33 — 17,2 — 17,4 — 17,6 — 17,7 — 17,8 — 17,9 — 17,11 — 17,12
— 17,14 — 17,22 — 17,24 — 17,24 — 18,9 — 18,11 — 18,18 — 18,21 —
19,35 — 20,18 — 20,21 — 20,25 — 20,29.

The coordination of both tenses also exists in John's Gospel:

3,32 καὶ ὁ ἑώρακε καὶ ἤκουσε¹,

4,45 πάντα ἑώρακότες, ἃ ἐποίησεν ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις ἐν τῇ ἑορτῇ·

20,18 ἔρχεται Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ ἀπαγγέλλουσα ὅτι ἑώρακε τὸν Κύριον, καὶ ταῦτα εἶπεν αὐτῇ².

We therefore see that Evangelist John uses the narrative perfect very frequently. He is followed by Luke, Mark and Matthew.

In the Acts of the Apostles I found the narrative more repeatedly than in Luke, Mark and Matthew. There are 28 such passages:

5,28 καὶ τοῦ πεπληρώκατε τὴν Ἱερουσαλήμ τῆς διδασχῆς ὑμῶν,

6,11 ... ὅτι ἀκηκόαμεν αὐτοῦ λαλοῦντος ῥήματα βλάσφημα,

1. Cf. Zur Sprache Charitons, p. 53 A Cf. P. Chantraine, Hist. d. parf. p. p. 229, 237 f.

2. Compare also the passage: 1,32 καὶ ἐμαρτύρησεν Ἰωάννης λέγων ὅτι τεθέαμαι τὸ πνεῦμα ὡς περιστέρην ἐξ οὐρανοῦ, καὶ ἔμεινεν ἐπ' αὐτόν.

8.24 ... ὡν εἰρήκατε.

9,17 ὁ Κύριος ἀπέσταλκέ με,

10,20 — 13,2 — 13,32 — 13,33 — 13,34 — 13,47 — 14,23 — 15,5 — 15,27 — 16,10 — 16,15 — 16,34 — 16,36 — 17,28 — 19,18 — 21,20 — 21,28 — 21,29 — 22,15 — 22,29 — 25,11 — 25,12 — 25,25 — 27,13.

Another example of the coordination of th both tenses in 21,28 ἔτι καὶ Ἑλλήνας εἰσήγαγεν εἰς τὸ ἱερὸν καὶ κεκοινώνηκε τὸν ἅγιον τόπον τοῦτον· and in 22,15 ὅτι ἔση μάρτυς αὐτῷ πρὸς πάντας ἀνθρώπους ὡν ἐώρακας καὶ ἤκουσας.

In the Epistles of Apostle Paul, the use of narrative perfect is also remarkable, but not in the same degree as John and the Acts of the Apostles.

Rom. 4,1 τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν Ἀβραὰμ τὸν πατέρα ἡμῶν εὕρηκέναι....

5,2 δι' οὗ καὶ τὴν προσαγωγὴν ἐσχήκαμεν τῇ πίστει...

9,29 — 13,8 — 15,19 — 15,21¹.

Cor. A. 2,8 ἦν οὐδεὶς τῶν ἀρχόντων τοῦ αἰῶνος τοῦτον ἔγνωκεν.

5,3 ἤδη κέκρικα ὡς παρὰ τὸν οὕτω τοῦτο κατεργασάμενον,

7,15 — 9,1 — 13,11.

Cor. B. 1,9 ... τὸ ἀπόκριμα τοῦ θανάτου ἐσχήκαμεν,

1,10 εἰς ὃν ἠλπικαμεν ὅτι...

2,5 — 2,13 — 7,3 — 7,5 — 7,14 — 11,5 — 11,25² — 12,17 — 13,2.

Gal. 2,7... ὅτι πεπίστευμαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς ἀκροβυστίας...

Ephes. 1,12 τοὺς προηλπικότητας ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ·

Philipp. 3,13 ἐγὼ ἐμαυτὸν οὕτω λογιζομαι κατεληφέναι·

Colas. 2,1 — 2,18 (=ἐώρακα)

It should be noted that no examples of narrative perfect exist in both Epistles to Thessaloniceis.

Timoth. A. 4,3... τοῖς πιστοῖς καὶ ἐπεγνωκόσι τὴν ἀλήθειαν.

4,10... ὅτι ἠλπικαμεν ἐπὶ Θεῷ ζῶντι,

5,5 — 6,17 (=ἠλπικα)

Timoth. B. 1,12 οἶδα γὰρ ὅτι πεπίστευκα, καὶ πέπεισμαι ὅτι...

(3,10?) — 4,7 — 4,8.

Tit. 3,8 ... οἱ πεπιστευκότες τῷ Θεῷ.

Hebr. 1,4 ... κεκληρονόμηκεν ὄνομα.

1,5 ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε;

1. Another example of the coordination of both tenses in Rom. 13,12 νῦν πρόεκοψεν, ἡ δὲ ἡμέρα ἤγγικεν.

2. There is also an example of coordination of both tenses... ἔλαβον, τρεῖς ἔραβδίσθη, ἀπαξ ἐλιθάσθη, τρεῖς ἐναυάγησα, συχθημερὸν ἐν τῷ βυθῷ πεποίηκα.

1,13 — 2,14 — 4,1 — 4,3 — 5,5, — 7,6 — 7,13 — 8,6 — 8,13 — 11,5—11,28 — 12,3 — 12,5 — 13,5.

It is noteworthy that the use of the narrative perfect in the Hebrew Epistle is the duplicate of the use of Evangelist Luke.

There is also the coordination of perfect and aorist in 2,14 ἐπει οὖν τὰ παιδιά κεκοινωνήκε σαρκὸς καὶ αἵματος, καὶ αὐτὸς παραπλησίως μετέσχε τῶν αὐτῶν,

In the Epistle of Jacob I found one example:

5,15 κἀν ἁμαρτίας ἢ πεποιηκὼς ἀφεθήσεται αὐτῷ.

In Peter's Epistles:

A. 1,22 Τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν ἡγνικότες...

B. 2,6 ὑπόδειγμα μελλόντων ἀσεβεῖν τεθεικώς,

2,21 ... μὴ ἐπεγνωκέναι τὴν ὁδὸν τῆς δικαιοσύνης...

A mass of narrative perfect the Apostle John puts in his Epistle; in the 5 pages, which the first Epistle covers, he uses this form 34 times:

1,1 δ ἀκηκόαμεν, δ ἐωράκαμεν...

1,2 καὶ ἐωράκαμεν...

1,3 δ ἐωράκαμεν καὶ ἀκηκόαμεν,

1,5 — 1,10 — 2,3 — 2,4 — 2,13 — 2,14 — 3,1 — 3,6 — 3,16 — 4,3 — 4,4 — 4,9 — 4,12 — 4,13 — 4,14 — 4,16 — 4,20 — 5,9 — 5,10 — 5,15 — 5,20.

In the second Epistle:

1,1 καὶ πάντες οἱ ἐγνωκότες τὴν ἀλήθειαν,

1,4 ὅτι εὕρηκα ἐκ τῶν τέκνων σου περιπατοῦντας ἐν ἀληθείᾳ...

In the Apocalypse of John I found the following examples:

2,27 ὡς κἀγὼ εἶληφα παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς μου,

3,2 οὐ γὰρ εὕρηκά σου (τὰ) ἔργα...

3,3 — 3,8 — 5,7 — 7,14 — 8,5 — 11,17 — 14,8 — 18,3.

He has the coordination of aorist and perfect in:

3,3 εἶληφας καὶ ἤκουσας,

5,7 καὶ ἦλθε καὶ εἶληφεν ἐκ τῆς δεξιᾶς τοῦ καθήμενου...

8,5 — 11,17.

As for the result of this article I should like to state the following:

The perfect as a narrative tense entered into the field of the aorist, what is proved by the coordination of both tenses without difference of temporal meaning. That phenomenon was the reason of the omission of the active perfect from the modern Greek language.

1 Cf. Zur Sprache Charitons, p. 53 - Blass-Debr. § 343. - P. Chantraine, Hist. p. parf. p. 229 f.

Such samples of coordination are used in the New Testament, as is shown above.

The narrative perfect is used differently in the New Testament. The Evangelist Matthew and Mark write the narrative perfect sporadically.

In Luke's Gospel the use of this form takes a larger extension, but it is still more frequent in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of the Apostle Paul.

However, in the writings of the Evangelist John there exists a larger use of the narrative perfect than in the works of the others I mentioned in my article.