

Matthew 2.1-12

Level 2

For guidance on how to use these readings, [see here](#); for conventions, abbreviations and definitions, check [here](#). Answers to the Questions are at the end of these pages. The purpose of the Questions is not to test you, but to call your attention to significant features of the passage and so help you to improve your reading skills. If you can't answer some, don't worry: look at the answers and you'll learn! Boldface in the text indicates a direct quotation from the Old Testament. Proper names that you can easily guess by transliterating have not been glossed.

Here is the story of the Magi with glosses and helps but no simplification of the text, as in the Level 1 version of this text. If you have worked through most of an introductory textbook, you should be able to manage it. If you worked through the Level 1 version, you can give it a try: even if not everything is transparent to you, you should be able to get a lot and there is value in stretching yourself, as long as you don't beat yourself up about what you haven't learnt yet.

The passage opens with a construction that you will not have encountered if you are in the earlier stages of learning Koine, although it occurs frequently in the GNT: the genitive absolute, a special kind of participial phrase. The Level 1 practice passage simplifies this for you, by converting the participial phrase into an independent clause with a subject + finite verb. However it's good to begin to get familiar with the genitive absolute, even if you need help to grasp it, since you'll encounter it quite often in the GNT.

In a genitive absolute construction, a participial phrase is expressed in the genitive. The use of the genitive (where it would not otherwise be expected) signals that the implied subject of the verb (the agent of the action it names) differs from the subject of the finite verb in the main clause.

Compare to English: Walking down the stairs, the grandfather clock chimed. This is what writing textbooks used to call a 'dangling participle': who or what is walking down the stairs? Strictly speaking, the subject of the main clause (the grandfather clock) should be the implied subject of the participle: so the grandfather clock chimes as it is walking down the stairs (?). In Greek, this confusion isn't possible. If you converted that same sentence to Greek, 'walking down the stairs' would be in the genitive and that genitive would signal to the reader that the verb in the following main clause has a different agent: [*someone*] was walking down the stairs as *the clock* chimed.

Putting the participial phrase in the genitive signals that it is not connected grammatically to the rest of the sentence. That's important: those genitives are to a reader like flashing lights on the road to a driver: they tell you to slow down and watch for what's coming.

To translate into English, this often means you need to modify the genitive phrase into a subordinate clause, adding an appropriate conjunction and supplying a subject and finite verb, or by converting the participial phrase into an independent clause, again supplying a subject and finite verb, and linking this clause to the other with a coordinating conjunction.

To do this, start by translating the words in the genitive construction as they are, then ask what kind of semantic relationship makes sense in this context (cause? time?) and

what subject you need to supply that is only implied in the participle (this will normally be a noun in the genitive near the participle).

Target Passage 1

Τοῦ δὲ Ἰησοῦ γεννηθέντος
γεννάω Helps 1

>

ἔν Βηθλεὲμ τῆς Ἰουδαίας
ἐν ἡμέραις Ἡρώδου τοῦ βασιλέως,
ἰδοὺ μάγοι ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν
παρεγένοντο εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα
λέγοντες

Ποῦ ἔστιν ὁ τεχθεὶς βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων;
εἶδομεν γὰρ αὐτοῦ τὸν ἀστέρα ἐν τῇ ἀνατολῇ
καὶ ἦλθομεν προσκυνῆσαι αὐτῷ.

Helps

1. Look carefully at the first segment of the Target Passage (“Τοῦ . . . βασιλέως). Τοῦ δὲ Ἰησοῦ γεννηθέντος consists of a genitive participle made into a substantive by clapping a definite article in front of it, followed by two prepositional phrases. Ἰησοῦ is modifying Τοῦ γεννηθέντος, telling us who was born. The kernel of the independent clause that follows consists of μάγοι παρεγένοντο. The subject of the finite verb is μάγοι, not Jesus—we know this, not from word order, but the personal ending of the verb. The participial phrase is in the genitive and has a subject that differs from that of the finite verb in the following clause, so this is a genitive absolute construction.
2. παρεγένοντο: this is the aorist form of this verb. It differs from the imperfect only in that the imperfect has an iota instead of an epsilon: παρεγίνοντο.

Questions Target Passage 1

1. What tense, mood and voice is γεννηθέντος?
2. What is the relation of τοῦ βασιλέως to Ἡρώδου? What case is Ἡρώδου and why?
3. What tense, mood and voice is λέγοντες?
4. What tense is εἶδομεν?
5. αὐτοῦ τὸν ἀστέρα: what case is αὐτοῦ and how is it related to the rest of the sentence?
6. What tense is ἦλθομεν and from what verb does it come?
7. What mood is προσκυνῆσαι?
8. What two words is the καὶ in the last line joining?

Target Passage 2

ἀκούσας δὲ ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἡρώδης
ἐταράχθη,

ἀκούσας: aor part act

καὶ πᾶσα Ἱεροσόλυμα μετ’ αὐτοῦ,
καὶ συναγαγὼν πάντας τοὺς ἀρχιερεῖς
καὶ γραμματεῖς τοῦ λαοῦ

ἐπυνθάνετο

παρ' αὐτῶν
ποῦ ὁ Χριστὸς γεννᾶται.

Questions Target Passage 2

1. There are three finite verbs in this passage. What are they?
2. How many participles are there in this passage. What are they?
3. What in the form of ἐταράχθη signals that it's a passive?
4. How would you translate παρ' αὐτῶν?
5. What tense and voice is γεννᾶται?

Target Passage 3

οἱ δὲ εἶπαν αὐτῷ

Ἐν Βηθλεὲμ τῆς Ἰουδαίας·

Ἰουδαία:

Judaea. Helps 1

—οὕτως γὰρ γέγραπται

διὰ τοῦ προφήτου—

Helps 2

Καὶ σὺ Βηθλεέμ,

γῆ Ἰούδα,

οὐδαμῶς ἐλαχίστη εἶ

ἐλαχίστη: least

ἐν τοῖς ἡγεμόσιν Ἰούδα·

ἐκ σοῦ γὰρ

ἐξελεύσεται ἡγούμενος,

ὅστις ποιμανεῖ τὸν λαόν μου

τὸν Ἰσραήλ.

Helps 3

Ἰούδα: Judah

οὐδαμῶς: by no means

ἡγεμών: leader, ruler

ἡγέομαι: lead, rule

ποιμαίνω: guide, shepherd

Helps

1. Note this form, Ἰουδαία, and the later Ἰούδα. They look very similar, but the first takes case endings while the second is invariable.
2. Koine does not have a dash but editors of the Nestle family of editions occasionally use them for clarity's sake. Here I have inserted them to signal that the enclosed text is a parenthetical remark.
3. Boldface indicates text quoted from the LXX. The policy of the 1904 Nestle is to boldface the entire quotation. Other editions of the GNT will boldface only those words that are found in modern editions of the LXX. Very often, NT writers quote the text from memory or are used to a different version from what modern editors think is the best and these differences result in a text, some of which is in bold and some not. Just so you know for future!

Questions Target Passage 3

1. What is the subject of εἶπαν?
2. What needs to be supplied between γῆ and Ἰούδα?

3. What person, number, tense, mood and voice is εἶ and what is the lexical form of this verb?
4. ἐξελεύσεται: what is the root verb in this form and what preposition has been added on front of it? What tense and voice is it and how do you know?
5. What function does ὅστις have here?
6. What is the relation of Ἰσραήλ to λαόν?

Target Passage 4

Τότε Ἡρώδης

λάθρα καλέσας τοὺς μάγους

ἠκρίβωσεν

παρ' αὐτῶν

τὸν χρόνον

τοῦ φαινομένου ἀστέρος,

καὶ

πέμψας αὐτοὺς εἰς Βηθλεέμ.

εἶπεν

Πορευθέντες

ἐξετάσατε ἀκριβῶς

περὶ τοῦ παιδίου·

ἐπὶ δὲ εὗρητε,

ἀπαγγείλατέ μοι,

ὅπως καγὼ

έλθῶν

προσκυνήσω αὐτῷ.

Questions Target Passage 4

1. In the section Τότε . . . ἀστέρος, how many finite verbs are there and how many participles?
2. What is the relation of φαινομένου to ἀστέρος? How would you translate it?
3. What tenses are πέμψας and εἶπεν and what is the temporal relation of the actions they denote?
4. What is the subject of εἶπεν?
5. In the section Πορευθέντες . . . παιδίου, how many finite verbs are there and how many participles? What tenses are they and what is their temporal relation?
6. In the last section (ἐπὶ δὲ . . . αὐτῷ), identify the finite verbs and participles. What tenses and moods are they?

Target Passage 5

ἀκούσαντες τοῦ βασιλέως

οἱ δὲ ἐπορεύθησαν·

καὶ ἰδοὺ ὁ ἀστὴρ,

ὄν εἶδον	ἐν τῇ ἀνατολῇ,	εἶδον > ὄραω, aor
ἀνατολή: East		
προῆγεν αὐτούς		> προάγω: lead, come before
ἕως ἔλθων	ἑστάθη	ἑστάθη > ἵστημι, aor ind act
ἐπάνω οὗ ἦν τὸ παιδίον.		ἐπάνω: over, above

Questions Target Passage 5

1. ἀκούσαντες: Greek participles can be translated in many ways: with an English participle or, more often, by making the verb into a finite form with an added subject and joining the resultant clause to the main clause with a conjunction. What seems logically and stylistically best to you in this context?
2. How is οἱ functioning here?
3. What case is βασιλέως and why?
4. What voice is ἐπορεύθησαν and why?
5. What is the function of ὄν? What gender, case and number is it? What is its antecedent?
6. What is the subject of προῆγεν?
7. What tense is προῆγεν?
8. ἕως ἔλθων ἑστάθη: how is each of these words functioning here?
9. οὗ ἦν τὸ παιδίον: what part of speech is οὗ? And ἦν? How does τὸ παιδίον relate to the preceding two words?

Target Passage 6

ιδόντες δὲ τὸν ἀστέρα	ιδόντες > ὄραω	
ἐχάρησαν χαρὰν μεγάλην σφόδρα.	σφόδρα: very much	Helps 1
καὶ ἐλθόντες εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν		
εἶδον τὸ παιδίον		
μετὰ Μαρίας τῆς μητρὸς αὐτοῦ,		

καὶ πεσόντες	> πίπτω
προσεκύνησαν αὐτῷ,	
καὶ ἀνοίξαντες τοὺς θησαυροὺς αὐτῶν	ἀνοίξαντες > ἀνοίγω

θησαυροὺς: treasure boxes

προσήνεγκαν αὐτῷ

δῶρα,

χρυσὸν καὶ λίβανον καὶ σμύρναν.

προσήνεγκαν > προσφέρω

δῶρον: gift

gold, frankincense and myrrh

καὶ χρηματισθέντες

κατ' ὄναρ

μὴ ἀνακάμψαι

πρὸς Ἡρώδην,

δι' ἄλλης ὁδοῦ

χρηματισθέντες > χρηματίζω: warn

ὄναρ: dream

ἀνακάμψαι > ἀνακάμπτω: return

ἀνεχώρησαν
εἰς τὴν χώραν αὐτῶν.

ἀνεχώρησαν > ἀναχωρέω: depart
χώρα: country

Helps

1. This line contains what appears to be more than one redundancy: 'they rejoiced very much with great joy'. This is a feature of Greek: piling on words of similar meaning for emphasis. The same thing happens with negatives: piling them up does not yield a positive, as in English; it just emphasises the negativity. Check some different translations to get an idea of the very different approaches there are to rendering this feature of Greek into English.

Questions Target Passage 6

1. In the first section (ιδόντες . . . αὐτοῦ) how many non-finite verbs are there and how many finite? What do you notice about the structure of this section?
2. What case is Μαρίας and why?
3. τῆς μητρὸς αὐτοῦ: what cases are these words and why?
4. In the next section (καὶ . . . σμύρναν) how many finite verbs are there and how many non-finite?
5. What case is αὐτῷ and why?
6. How are δῶρα, χρυσὸν καὶ λίβανον καὶ σμύρναν related?
7. What mood, tense and voice is χρηματισθέντες?
8. κατ' ὄναρ: how would you translate κατ'?
9. μὴ ἀνακάμψαι: what mood is the verb and how is it related to the rest of the sentence? Why is μὴ used here?
10. What tense and voice is ἀνεχώρησαν and how can you tell?

Congratulations! You've completed a significant chunk of NT Greek and read a well-beloved narrative of the Gospels. The Greek of the Gospels is in general easier to follow than that of Acts or the Epistles, but it gives the reader an excellent foundation for reading the trickier texts. If you can't cope with this Greek, you'll have a lot of difficulty with the rest of the GNT so don't worry about spending as long as you like with the Gospels: you'll only be better prepared for the rest of the GNT.

Answers Target Passage 1

1. Aor part pass.
2. τοῦ βασιλέως stands in apposition to Ἡρώδου, that is, both the proper name and the noun phrase denote the same thing, so 'Herod, the king' or 'King Herod'. Ἡρώδου is genitive because it's part of a participial phrase, ἐν ἡμέραις Ἡρώδου τοῦ βασιλέως, in the days of King Herod.
3. Pres part act.
4. Aorist. This verb frequently appears in the aorist in the GNT so if you didn't recognise it, add it to your list of forms to learn.

5. It's genitive. It's a possessive adjective indicating the relationship of the child to the star: it's his star. Don't be misled by the fact that it comes first in the phrase. Because of the case markers on nouns, word order is much more flexible in Greek than in English.
6. This is aorist form of ἔρχομαι. This is another frequent aorist, so again, if you had trouble with it, take note and learn it.
7. Infinitive.
8. καὶ joins the two finite verbs, εἶδομεν and ἦλθομεν.

Answers Target Passage 2

1. ἐπαράχθη, ἐπυνθάνετο and γεννᾶται.
2. Two: ἀκούσας and συναγαγών.
3. The theta and the personal ending.
4. παρὰ + gen commonly translates as 'from'. However, the basic meaning of prepositions often don't correspond cleanly from one language to another. In this case, Herod asks __ them. The basic idea is clear enough, but in English we don't say 'ask from them'. You need to supply the preposition that would sound natural in English: he asked *of* them, or you could omit the preposition altogether: he asked them.
5. Pres Pass.

Answers Target Passage 3

1. οἱ, which refers to the Magi.
2. 'Of'. Ἰούδα is invariable and has no genitive form. Here, the meaning is clearly 'O land of Judah', even though Ἰούδα would be in the same form if it were the subject of a verb.
3. Pres Ind act 2 sing, εἰμί. If you had difficulty with it, or guessed correctly on the basis of context, revise the forms of εἰμί. You don't have to rote learn every Greek verb in all its forms, but this one you do.
4. ἐξ - ἔρχομαι. The sigma signals it's a future and the personal ending signals a middle/passive. In this case it's a deponent verb, found only in middle forms.
5. It's a relative pronoun, 'who'. ὅστις is sometimes used instead of the more common ὅς. In addition to meaning 'who', it can also mean 'whoever'.
6. Ἰσραήλ stands in apposition to λαόν: both designate the same entity and are in the same case. Ἰσραήλ is not showing any morphological marker for being accusative, but that's common with proper names.

Answers Target Passage 4

1. One finite verb (ἠκρίβωσεν) and two participial forms (καλέσας and φαινομένου). The latter is functioning as a noun, but it's still a participle in form.
2. φαινομένου is a participle functioning as a noun and forms a noun phrase with ἀστέρος: 'the appearing of the star' or 'the appearance of the star'.
3. Both are aorist, but the tense form of participles denotes aspect, rather than time. Generally, the use of the present form for a participle indicates that its action occurs at the same time as that of the related finite verb and aorist or perfect participles denote action that took place before that of the finite verb—but this is only a general rule. In this case, it would obviously be absurd if Herod first sent the Magi away and *then* told

them to inquire about the child, as if he were yelling at their backs as they went out the door. You could translate 'He sent them away and told them' or 'Before he sent them away, he told them'.

4. Herod.
5. There is one participle, Πορευθέντες and one finite verb, ἐξετάσατε, both aorist. Here again, the usual rule about the aorist participle indicating Action prior to the finite verb makes little sense: the actions of going and searching are clearly contemporaneous. Most translations make both verbs into imperatives: 'go and search'.
6. There is only one participle (ἐλθών), which is aorist. There are three finite verbs εὔρητε (aorist subjunctive), ἀπαγγείλατέ (aorist imperative), and προσκυνήσω (aorist subjunctive). εὔρητε is subjunctive because it occurs in a clause beginning with ἐπὶ ἄν and προσκυνήσω is subjunctive because it occurs in a clause beginning with ὅπως.

Answers Practice Passage 5

1. Using a participle: 'On hearing the king' or 'Having heard the king'. Finite verb + coordinating conjunction: 'They heard the king and went away'. Finite verb + subordinating conjunction: 'After they had listened to the king, they went away'. The last probably sounds most natural in English.
2. As a pronoun, so 'they'.
3. βασιλέως is genitive, because ἀκούω takes a genitive object. This is counterintuitive to English speakers, but since this verb comes up frequently in the GNT, you need to remember it takes the genitive.
4. It's a passive form because the verb it's from, πορεύομαι, exists only in this passive form. Its meaning is active, though: 'go' is not a transitive verb (it can't take an object) so it can't be made passive, properly speaking. Verbs like this used to be called deponent but recently some grammarians have been shying away from using this term for Koine.
5. It's a relative pronoun, m acc sing. Its antecedent is ἀστὴρ.
6. The subject must be ὁ ἀστὴρ. First, προῆγεν is singular. Second, the Magi can't be leading themselves. Third, the object is αὐτούς. So the star is leading them. Don't get duped by the lexical meaning of a word, forcing the words around it to mean what you think they should. A star isn't normally an agent (so the subject of verb with an object) but in this story, it is. Even if you know the story, you can be misled into thinking that the personal ending on προῆγεν is plural. It's not: the nu is a movable nu that sometimes appears on the end of third person *singular* forms.
7. προῆγεν is imperfect. The eta is the augment of a vowel. ἄγω doesn't have much of a stem, so to know this is the imperfect rather than the aorist, you need to know the aorist: ἤγαγον. Because that is a second aorist, which has the same personal endings as the imperfect, only the stem signals which is which. In this case, the sheer fact that the stem is so basic (effectively just the gamma) indicates it's likely to be the imperfect, as the aorist would almost certainly have undergone more modification.
8. ἕως ἐλθών ἐστάθη: ἕως is a subordinating conjunction, so it begins a clause which must have a finite verb. The finite verb is ἐστάθη. ἐλθών is a participle. Because it's

aorist, it would commonly designate action occurring or completed before that of the main verb. In this case, the star moved until it came to a standstill above the stable.

- οὗ is an adverb, meaning 'where'. Its form is exactly the same as the relative pronoun, gen sing masc/neut. It can't be one of those because a relative pronoun has to have an antecedent and there isn't one here. ἦν is another small word that is easily confused for others: it's the imperfect of εἰμί and differs from the feminine of the relative pronoun only by its accent. τὸ παιδίον is the subject of ἦν: don't be fooled by its following the verb rather than preceding it.

Answers Target Passage 6

- There are two non-finite (ιδόντες and ἐλθόντες) and two finite (ἐχάρησαν and εἶδον). They are arranged in two parallel sets: participle + finite verb, participle + finite verb.
- It's genitive, because it is joined to μετὰ, which in this case means 'with'. Remember that μετὰ + acc means 'after', but with the gen means 'with'.
- These are all gen. τῆς μητρὸς stands in apposition to Μαρίας, so its case is dictated by μετὰ and the desired meaning of μετὰ. αὐτοῦ is different: it's a possessive adjective indicating relation: so, his mother. If the other words were the subject of a verb, they would become nominative, but αὐτοῦ would remain genitive: its case is not connected to the preposition.
- There are two participles, πεσόντες and ἀνοίξαντες, and two finite verbs, προσεκύνησαν and προσήνεγκαν.
- It's dative, because the gifts are being offered *to* the child.
- The last three stand in apposition to δῶρα, specifying what sort of gifts the Magi presented.
- It's an aorist passive participle.
- You know from the titles of the Gospels that κατὰ can mean 'according to'. However here that would scarcely sound natural. Better: in a dream.
- ἀνακάμψαι is an infinitive. Infinitives can function in different ways within a sentence, but commonly, they complete the sense of another verb. Here the infinitive follows from χρηματισθέντες: having been warned [not] to return. μὴ is the form of the negative used with any form other than the indicative.
- ἀνεχώρησαν is an aorist active. The signs are the eta in the prefix: compare the lexical form, ἀναχωρέω. The eta is functioning as the augment. Second, the sigma before the personal ending, and third, the alpha in the personal ending.