

## Philippians 4:15-16---The Argument From The Greek

In order to establish the contention that Phil. 4:15-16 illustrates that Philippi served as a sponsoring church, an appeal is made to the Greek in the text in an attempt to link Phi. 4:15-16 with Acts 18:5 and 2 Cor. 11:8-9. The purpose is to show that Paul was out of Macedonia and in Corinth when the funds from Philippi reached him. If this point cannot be established the linkage with the other passages is gone and so is the argument. Three main arguments were made from the Greek.

### Argument 1---The adverb "when" (Greek, *hote*) means "after" in vs. 15

Let's look at the evidence.

Two of the translations I have (NASV and Goodspeed) have "after," and Barclay says, "when I left." However, the following translations all have "when": ASV, KJV, KJV-2, RSV, NIV, TEV, The Amplified Bible, The New English Bible, Phillips, Williams, Knox.

The KJV translated *hote* with "after" three times: Matt. 27:31 (but the parallel text, Mk. 15:20, has "when"); Jo. 13:12; Tit. 3:4. The KJV-2 changes all three to "when."

It would seem that if Paul had meant and wanted to say "after" he could have done so: "*meta with the accusative, (means) after.*" J. Gresham Machen, *New Testament Greek For Beginners*, p. 41. See also Dana and Mantey, pp. 107-108; *The Analytical Greek Lexicon*, p. 265; Thayer, p. 404; Arndt and Gingrich, p. 511.

That translating "hote" with "after" is unwarranted can be seen more clearly as we examine the next two arguments.

### Argument 2---The aorist tense of "I departed" (Greek, *exerchomai*) shows that Paul had already left Macedonia because the aorist signifies an act in the past

**already completed. Thus Paul had already departed Macedonia when the funds from Philippi arrived.**

The significance of the aorist tense is explained by Dana and Mantey: "*The fundamental significance of the aorist is to denote action simply as occurring, without reference to its progress...The aorist signifies nothing as to completeness, but simply presents the action or event without regard to its duration,*" p. 193.

They add that, "*while the aorist views an action as a single whole, it may contemplate it from different angles*" and then give the following as one of those possible angles: "*It may regard the action in its entirety, which we call the constative aorist...It takes an occurrence and, regardless of its extent of duration, gathers it into a single whole...Because of the fact that the constative aorist indicates nothing relative to duration, this matter may be implied or expressed from various viewpoints in the context. We may have a constative aorist referring to a momentary action (Acts 5:5), a fact or action extended over a period of time (Eph. 2:4), or a succession of acts or events (2 Cor. 11:25)...*", pp. 195-196

We have two examples in this very context of verbs in the aorist tense which refer to successive actions over a period of time: *ekoinonesen* ("had fellowship," vs. 15) and *epempsate* ("ye sent," vs. 16). Thus the argument from the aorist tense proves absolutely nothing about Paul being completely out of Macedonia when he received the funds from Philippi.

**Argument 3---The Greek preposition *apo* (English, "from") shows that Paul had not receive the funds while he was coming out of Macedonia but after he had left. If it had been while he was still in, but coming out of, Macedonia the preposition *ek* would have been used.**

In this argument great stress is put upon the distinction to be made between ek and apo and the chart in Dana and Mantey, p. 113, is used to illustrate the difference. Let's examine more closely what is said about the preposition apo.

*"Basic mng. separation from someone or someth.,...In the NT it has encroached on the domain of Att. ek, hupo, para, and the gen. of separation..." Arndt and Gingrich, p. 85*

*"Apo may include the idea expressed in ek, but its usual significance is from the edge of, while ek has the idea from within," Dana and Mantey, p. 101*

*"The primary meaning of apo is 'off;'...The primary meaning of ek is 'out of,'...Since apo and ek are both frequently to be translated by 'from' they often approximate closely in meaning. The distinction is largely seen in this, that apo suggests a starting point from without, ek from within; this meaning is often involved in apo, but apo does not give prominence to the 'within-ness,' as ek usually does." Vine, pp. 1270-1271.*

Thus "apo" does not have to be limited to the meaning of a starting point without. It may include and approximate very closely the idea expressed in ek. And remember what Dana and Mantey said about the significance of prepositions: *"learn what it means relatively in each context...The best way to determine the meanings of a preposition is to study it in its various contexts..." pp. 98-99.* So, one is on solid ground in maintaining that it is at least possible that apo, in this context, includes the idea expressed in ek.

However, someone may insist upon maintaining that ek would have been used if Paul was saying he was in, but in the process of coming out of, Macedonia when he received the funds. And, that since ek wasn't used he must have already been gone from Macedonia. We would point such an individual to the verb exerchomai. *"It means 'to come out, or go out or forth (ek, out)', Vine, p. 195.* Thus the ek that the objector says is missing is in the prefix of the verb. In the verb,

then, Paul affirms that he departed "out of, from within" Macedonia, for this is the significance of ex or ek.

### **Conclusion**

Appeals to the Greek certainly do not help the case of the sponsoring church advocates and their misuse of Phil. 4:15-16. The Greek bears out what is stated in the context: It was while Paul was in Macedonia that the brethren in Philippi, acting alone and without assistance of other churches, had fellowship with Paul when they sent the funds to him in Thessalonica.

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