

A Pre-Pub, (2006) Draft Selection from:

Decker, Rodney J. *Mark: A Handbook on the Greek Text*. Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament, vol. 2. Edited by Martin Culy. Waco, Tex.: Baylor Univ. Press, forthcoming (though not for several years!).

Periphrastics

A periphrastic is the combination of a linking verb and an adverbial participle (usually nominative case) which together express a single idea. This construction is used in place of a single finite verb. The linking verb is usually a form of εἶμί, though sometimes γίνομαι (e.g., Mark 1:4; 9:3, 7), ὑπάρχω, and possibly ἔχω are used.

Although periphrastic use is very common in language in general (some languages such as English use the periphrastic construction as the predominant verb form, e.g., “I was eating”), it is not nearly as common in Greek. When it is used it often (not always) has a “certain emphasis” (BDF, 179 §353 (1); see also MHT 2:451; Zerwick, §360 [who calls the instance in Acts 25:10 “a stronger and more picturesque expression”]; BDAG, s.v., εἶμί, 286.11.e, f.). In classical Greek this “emphasis” was often a matter of duration of time, but such usage is often not present in the Koine, especially when a text is heavily influenced by an Aramaic style as is the case with Mark. (Howard suggests that this may be a more likely use in John and Paul, but not elsewhere in the NT; MHT 2:451.)

Periphrastics are common in Mark—much more so than Matthew (25 versus 3). This is perhaps a reflection of Mark’s mother-tongue being Aramaic. (Matthew, though also a native speaker of Aramaic, writes more polished Greek.) The Aramaic influence in Mark is debated by various scholars, though the general consensus seems to point to some Semitic influence, if only as mediated through the LXX (i.e., the frequent use of periphrasis in Mark may be viewed as a Septuagintalism). Periphrasis is much more common in Aramaic than in Hebrew. Periphrasis begins to appear in later Hebrew, perhaps by influence from Aramaic. For Hebrew examples and discussion, see Waltke & O’Connor, 629–30, §37.7.1.c. (e.g., Esth 6:1, נִקְרְאוּ וַיִּדְּרוּ, “and they were read”); for Aramaic, see

