

3. In this passage there is one imperative mood and three participles. The imperative is found in the main verb which is the aorist active imperative of **μαθητεύω** (*mathēteúō*), “to make disciples.” However, the mandate also includes the aorist active participle of the verb “to go,” **πορεύομαι** (*poreúomai*).
4. The action of the aorist participle precedes the action of the main verb, *mathēteúō*, “to make disciples.” Therefore, the eleven disciples are ordered to first go into all nations and second, to make disciples.
5. The other two verbs are *not* associated with the main verb “to make disciples,” because they are not participles of *attendant circumstance*. These two verbs are the present active participles of **βαπτίζω** (*baptízō*), “to baptize” and of **διδάσκω** (*didáskō*), “to teach.”
6. To fully understand this passage it is important that we address the issue of *attendant circumstance* participles. Again, the verb “to go” is one of these while the verbs “to baptize” and “to teach” are *not*. The importance of this can be seen by defining the attendant circumstance participle and then applying this information to our passage. In the reference we are about to note, I will insert from Matthew 28:19-20 the verbs that correspond to the definition provided:

Attendant Circumstance

- a. Definition: The attendant circumstance participle [**poreúomai**: “to go”] is used to communicate an action that, in some sense, is coordinate with the finite verb [**mathēteúō**: to make disciples]. It is dependent *semantically* because it cannot exist without the main verb. It is translated as a finite verb connected to the main verb by *and* [**καί**]. The participle then, in effect, “piggy-backs” on the mood of the main verb [**imperative**]. This usage is relatively common, but widely misunderstood.
- b. Clarification: First, we are treating this participle as a *dependent* verbal participle because it never stands alone. That is, an attendant circumstance [**poreúomai**: “to go”] will always be related to a finite verb [**mathēteúō**: to make disciples]. (p. 640)
- d. Structure and Semantics

(1) Structure: In the New Testament, certain structural patterns emerge regarding the attendant circumstance participle [*poreúomai*: “to go”]. These are not absolute. We might, however, say that they follow a “90% rule.” That is to say, *all five of the following features occur in at least 90% of the instances of attendant circumstance*. The conclusion from this is that if these five features are not present, to label a participle as attendant circumstance needs strong corroborative evidence. The five features are:

- The tense of the participle is usually *orist*. [True]
- The tense of the main verb is usually *orist*. [True]
- The mood of the main verb is usually *imperative* [True] or *indicative*.
- The participle will *precede the main verb*—both in word order and time of event. [True]
- Attendant circumstance participles occur frequently in narrative literature [True], infrequently elsewhere. (pp. 641–42)

Some of the features are more central than others. Specifically, (1) all or almost all attendant circumstance participles are *orist*; (2) almost all attendant circumstance participles come before the verb; (4) in narrative literature, in almost all of the *orist* participle + *orist imperative* constructions, the participle is attendant circumstance.

These first two features do not *necessitate* that a participle be attendant circumstance. But the fourth feature is stated to mean just this.

2) Semantics

Two things should be noted about the semantics of this participle. First, the attendant circumstance participle [*poreúomai*: “to go”] has something of an *ingressive* force to it. That is, it is often used to introduce a new action or a shift in the narrative. (p. 642)

Second, ... *a greater emphasis is placed on the action of the main verb* [*mathēteúō*: to make disciples] *than on the participle* [*poreúomai*: “to go”]. That is, the participle [*poreúomai*: “to go”] is something of a prerequisite before the action of the main verb [*mathēteúō*: to make disciples] can occur.¹ (pp. 642–43)

¹ Daniel B. Wallace, “The Participle” in *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 640–43.

7. We learn in the Lord's statement to the disciples that He utilizes an attendant circumstance participle to begin His instructions. They cannot "make disciples" [*mathēteúō*] of all nations unless they first "go" [*poreúomai*].
8. The main verb is to "make disciples" which would be better translated "through preaching the gospel make followers." This verb is in the imperative mood and is therefore a command. The attendant circumstance participle of *poreúomai* "piggy-backs" on the mood of the main verb and is therefore an imperative as well.
9. So far we have two commands: (1) go and (2) recruit followers through the gospel. But what of the other two participles in the context? If they too were attendant, then we would have clear mandates to "baptize" and to "teach" in addition to "going" and "witnessing."
10. In Dr. Wallace's grammar, he addresses our passage as an illustration of the attendant circumstance participle and in so doing resolves the issue:

e. Illustrations

Matthew 28:19-20: Go [*πορεύομαι, poreúomai*], therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching ...

Several observations are in order. First, notice that the first participle, *poreúomai*, fits the structural pattern for the attendant circumstance participle: aorist participle preceding an aorist main verb (in this case, imperative).

Second, ... in Matthew, in particular, every other instance of the aorist participle of *poreúomai* followed by an aorist main verb (either indicative or imperative) is clearly attendant circumstance (Matthew 2:8; 9:13; 11:4; 17:27; 21:6; 22:15; 25:16; 26:14; 27:66; 28:7).

Third, we must first read this commission in its historical context, not from the perspective of a late twentieth-century reader. These apostles of the soon-to-be inaugurated church did not move from Jerusalem until after the martyrdom of Stephen. The reason for this reticence was due, in part at least, to their Jewish background. As Jews, they were ethnocentric in their evangelism (bringing prospective proselytes to Jerusalem); now as Christians, they were to be *ectocentric*, bringing the gospel to those who were non-Jews. In many ways, the book of Acts is a detailed account of how these apostles accomplished the command of Matt 28:19-20.

Finally, the other two participles (*baptízō* and *didáskō*) should not be taken as attendant circumstance. First, they do not fit the normal pattern for attendant circumstance participles (they are present tense and follow the main verb). And second, they obviously make good sense as participles of *means*; i.e., the means by which the disciples were to make disciples was to baptize and then to teach.²

11. The editors of the *NET Bible* cite Dr. Wallace's analysis in their "translator's notes" to Matthew 28:19 along with an important additional comment:

As for the two participles that follow the main verb (*baptízō*, "baptizing"; and *didáskō*, "teaching"), these do not fit the normal pattern for attendant circumstance participles, since they are present participles following the main verb. However, some interpreters do see them as carrying additional imperative force in context. Others regard them as means, manner, or even result.³

12. The first point from all this is that in the Great Commission the Lord clearly gives the apostles two commands: (1) go to all people, not just Jews, and (2) make them disciples, or followers, by means of the gospel.
13. Secondly, it is also clear that the two participles "to baptize" and "to teach" are secondary components to the commandments "to go" and to "make disciples." Why? Because unless a person responds to the gospel, baptism is unnecessary and teaching is impossible.
14. Therefore, the issue before the apostles was to go out indiscriminately to whoever would give them a hearing with the objective of recruiting followers of Jesus. This could only be accomplished by witnessing to them proclaiming Jesus as the Jewish Messiah and risen Savior. In other words, the first step in *making* a follower is to present the gospel.
15. Once a person believes, then he *becomes* a follower, either by *means* of certain resources, in a *manner* that utilizes certain procedures, or as a *result* of the consequences of these things.

² Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics*, 645.

³ *NET Bible* (Dallas: Biblical Studies Press, 2001), 1867tn18.