

'ΕΠΙ IN REVELATION OF JOHN

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The purpose of this article is to analyse the use of the preposition ἐπί in Revelation of John, and to try, on the ground of this analysis, to find the rule the author of Rev adopts in using it.

The first step in this direction was to locate the preposition ἐπί in Rev and to group these ἐπί according to the case it governs: genitive, dative or accusative. The synopsis of these places is given in the Appendix to this article. In the text edited by K. Aland and others¹ we find it 59 times with genitive, 11 times with dative, and 74 times with accusative. These numbers are slightly different in the text edited by R.V.G. Tasker,² they are 57, 13 and 74, but not the sum total: the preposition ἐπί occurs in Rev 144 times as an independent word, that is, not as part of a compound.

The phrases in which ἐπί occurs can be classified according to the verb used (its direct object included), and the object governed by the preposition itself. For example the phrase καθῆμαι ἐπί takes in Rev the following objects: θρόνος, ἵππος, νεφέλη, γῆ, ὕδωρ, θηρῶν then we find the phrase γράφω τὸ ὄνομα ἐπί with the objects φῆφος, στυλός, μέτωπον, βιβλίων, ἱμάτιον, ὄραμα and so on.

The preposition ἐπί in its local meaning will be termed static if it is followed either by genitive or by dative, and kinetic if followed by accusative. In the text edited by Aland there are 70 static ἐπί and 74 kinetic ones. These same numbers are found in the text edited by R.V.G. Tasker where of the 70 static ἐπί there are 57 with genitive and 13 with dative. With static the subject is supposed to rest upon something, while with the kinetic one the movement is implied. In this article we shall try to find whether the distinction between the static and kinetic force of ἐπί is upheld by the author of Rev, and if this be the case, what is its relevance to the understanding of the place considered.

Here it is interesting to quote from the book by M. Zerwick.³ We find under the heading ἐπί, in section 123, page 43: „Confer etiam... in Apc promiscuitatem omnium trium casuum, cum magna tamen praevalentia accusativi, in una eademque frequentissima formula 'in throno sedere'." On the other hand in the annotation to the section 2 in the grammar by Blass and Debrunner⁴ page 2 we read: „Unter den

nt. Schriftstellern selbst treten gewisse Unterschiede hervor, die mit der Verschiedenheit ihres Bildungsstandes nichts zu tun haben; so vermischen einige, besonders Lukas, ἐπὶ und ἐν, während der Verfasser der Apokalypse diese Präpositionen zu sondern weiss." This would be a point for John against the educated Luke, and it seems to contradict in an indirect way the quoted statement of Zerwick. – But the author of Rev is notorious for his disregard of conventionally accepted grammar. We read in Blass-Debrunner section 136: „Die Apokalypse zeigt im Gegensatz zum übrigen NT, auch zu den übrigen Joahannesschriften, eine Menge der auffälligsten Solöziemen." Are these offences against the grammar a consequence of the presumed low level of education, or perhaps they are there by some design of the author? The proposed analysis of the use of ἐπὶ could be a clue in the search for a solution of this problem.

In the following section of this article we shall analyse several verbal phrases containing the preposition ἐπὶ. In addition to the text edited by Aland, the translation given in the New English Bible⁵ is used as an auxiliary. The commentaries given in the sections that follow contain free quotations from this translation without referring to it.

1. The phrase καθήμεν ἐπὶ with the object θρόνος. Other objects after this phrase will be considered in section 2. The verb καθήμεν has the meaning either take the sitting position or sit still. The first meaning implies movement, the second rest. Which meaning is thought must be inferred from the context.

We find καθήμεν ἐπὶ with the object θρόνος in genitive, dative, and accusative as follows:

- a) *The throne of God*
Genitive 4,9.10; 5,1.7.13; 6,16; 7,15.
Dative 7,10; 19,4; 21,5.
Accusative 4,2.
- b) *The thrones of twenty-four Elders*
Accusative 4,4; 11,16.
- c) *The thrones in the Thousand Years*
Accusative 20,4;
- d) *The great white Throne*
Accusative 20,11.

In the verses 20,4 and 20,11 the noun θρόνος is substituted by αὐτός. We see from this list that in the considered phrase the number of kinetic ἐπὶ to the number of the static ones stands as five to ten; there is no prevalence of accusative.

In 4,2 the throne of God is mentioned for the first time in connection with καθήμεν ἐπὶ. The vision begins to take form and therefore the idea of movement: the phrase considered contain a kinetic ἐπὶ. „There in heaven stood a throne, and on the throne took the seat One, and the appearance of the sitting One was like the gleam of jasper and cornelian." The first καθήμενος in 4,2 has a kinetic force brought by the preceding kinetic ἐπὶ, while the immediately following καθήμενος in 4,3 obviously static.

In the following ten places in Rev listed above, God is described as sitting on this throne and static ἐντ is used. When God once has taken his seat upon his throne he never leaves it. The event of taking the seat on the throne must have happened, since this throne is God's creation, as everything else.

It is a different case with the thrones of the twenty-four elders. In 4,4 by the use of kinetic ἐντ it is expressed that they have taken the seats on their thrones. In 11,16 we have again a kinetic ἐντ expressing that the elders have occupied their thrones anew. This was necessary, because the elders leave their thrones when they worship God as described in verse 4,10.

In verses 20,4 and 20,11 the occupation of the respective thrones is mentioned for the first time, and the use of kinetic ἐντ in both cases is consistent with the logic of its use in the former instances.

In the text of NT ed. by Aland, of ten static ἐντ with the object θρόνος there are seven with genitive and three with dative; in NT ed. by Tasker this stands at five to five. The question arises, can we infer from the text any difference in these two uses of the static ἐντ ?

If we look at the places where the static ἐντ is used in the phrase consider, then it seems that dative is reserved for words of worship and for the most solemn occasions. In verse 7,10 the jubilant multitude robed in white shouted: „Victory to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” – In verse 19,4 at solemn occasion after the fall of Babylon the Great, dative is used where the worship of God is described. – In verse 21,5 dative after ἐντ precedes the final pronouncement of God, and here the throne of God is mentioned for the last time in Rev.

Static ἐντ with genitive is used in the considered phrase in seven places. Of these are 4,9,10; 5,1,7 descriptions by the author of Rev, then 5,13 the words of „created things in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea,” further 6,16 are the words of kings and the magnates and others who hid themselves in caves, and lastly 7,15 are the words of one of the elders.

If we adopt the rule that the dative in ἐντ τῷ θρόνῳ is reserved in the quoted places for worship and most solemn occasion, then the use of dative in 5,13 in NT ed. by Tasker could be defended, but not in 4,9 where in the next verse 4,10 it is followed by ἐντ with genitive in an almost identical context.

The probability that there is an intended difference in the meaning of these static ἐντ in Rev, whether genitive or dative follows, perhaps can be enhanced by a quotation from the grammar by Smyth.⁶ We read there in the Note to the section 1689, page 378: „In expressions of simple superposition ἐντ with gen. denotes familiar relations and natural positions; whereas ἐντ with dative gives clear and emphatic outlines to statements of the definite place of an object or action, is used in detailed pictures, and marks the object in the dative as distinct from the subject of verbal action. ἐντ with gen. is colourless and phraseological, and often makes, with the verb or the subject, a compound picture... The distinction between the two cases is often the result of feeling; and certain phrases become stereotyped, now with the gen. now with the dat.” The least we can say in considering the use of

genitive and dative of $\theta\rho\acute{o}\nu\omicron\varsigma$ after the phrase $\kappa\acute{\alpha}\theta\eta\mu\alpha\iota \acute{\epsilon}\pi\acute{\iota}$ is that the author of Rev does not break the rule proposed in the grammar by Smyth.

2. The phrase $\kappa\acute{\alpha}\theta\eta\mu\alpha\iota \acute{\epsilon}\pi\acute{\iota}$ governs in addition to $\theta\rho\acute{o}\nu\omicron\varsigma$ other objects too. We find in this use the following nouns (in some instances substituted by $\alpha\acute{\upsilon}\tau\omicron\varsigma$):

$\dot{\iota}\lambda\pi\omicron\varsigma$	genitive 19,18.19.21; dative 19,14; accusative 6,2.4.5; 19,11;
$\nu\epsilon\varphi\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\eta$	genitive 14,15.16; accusative 14,14;
$\gamma\tilde{\eta}$	genitive 14,6;
$\ddot{\upsilon}\delta\omega\rho$	genitive 17,1;
$\theta\eta\rho\acute{\iota}\omicron\nu$	accusative 17,3.

The verses 6,2.4.5 contain kinetic $\acute{\epsilon}\pi\acute{\iota}$. In these verses the visions take form, the horses are coming and the riders mount on them. Here the movement, the getting on the horses, is suggested. – Still better this initial movement and the following relative rest, sitting on the horse, are brought out in chapter 19. In verse 19,11 (kinetic $\acute{\epsilon}\pi\acute{\iota}$) Faithfull-and-True mounts on his white horse. This is taking place at the opening stage of the vision. Later in 19,19.21 he is riding his horse, as are his nemies too (19,18) and this is expressed in these verses by static $\acute{\epsilon}\pi\acute{\iota}$ followed by genitive.

The dative in 19,14 is a speciality, it points out the majesty of the armies of heaven that follow Faithfull-and-True.

In the verse 14,14 again a vision is beginning to form. One like Son of Man is taking his seat on a white cloud (kinetic $\acute{\epsilon}\pi\acute{\iota}$). In the following verses 14,15.16 (both with static $\acute{\epsilon}\pi\acute{\iota}$ followed by genitive) he is sitting on the cloud. This gives us the impression that he has come from somewhere and got on the white cloud for a special purpose.

In 17,1 the great whore is described as „enthroned above the ocean”. That is her permanent abode and therefore a static $\acute{\epsilon}\pi\acute{\iota}$. But for her judgement she mounted upon the scarlet beast, and this movement is brought out by kinetic $\acute{\epsilon}\pi\acute{\iota}$ in 17,3.

In the verse 14,6 we find the only instance in Rev where the inhabitants on earth are described by phrase $\kappa\acute{\alpha}\theta\eta\mu\alpha\iota \acute{\epsilon}\pi\acute{\iota}$ with genitive, the standard expression for this concept is $\kappa\alpha\tau\omicron\iota\kappa\acute{\epsilon}\omega \acute{\epsilon}\pi\acute{\iota}$ with genitive as we have in the remaining nine places 3,10; 6,10; 8,13; 11,10.10; 13,8.14.14; 17,8. The number of a verse is repeated if the phrase considered is repeated in it.

On the ground of examples given above we can conclude that the author of Rev uses the phrase $\kappa\acute{\alpha}\theta\eta\mu\alpha\iota \acute{\epsilon}\pi\acute{\iota}$ with consideration distinguishing between the static $\acute{\epsilon}\pi\acute{\iota}$ and the kinetic one. This is brought out very clearly with the throne of God, the white horse of Faithfull-and-Trued, and the white cloud. Kinetic $\acute{\epsilon}\pi\acute{\iota}$ is used in the opening stages of respective visions suggesting that the act of sitting on something had its beginning. This taking the seat can be thought either as if it had taken place in the past, and in the vision itself. God has taken the seat on his throne

and is seen sitting on it, as expressed by kinetic ἐπέ and repeating the verb καθήματα in 4,2. On the other hand in chapter 6 the horses are appearing; the living creatures use present imperative, not aorist, when calling them to come. Then the riders are mounting on them. This vision is full of movement. — The distinction between the static ἐπέ with the genitive and the static one with the dative is probable; the dative seems to be reserved for emphatic statements.

3. In this section we propose to consider the phrase γράψω το ὄνομα ἐπέ

It comes with various objects in following cases

genitive 14,1.

accusative 2,17; 3,12; 17,5.8; 19,16.16.

We shall begin here our analysis with kinetic ἐπέ. In 2,17 the victorious is promised „the hidden manna and a white stone, and on the stone a new name will be written.” Kinetic ἐπέ emphasizes the act of writing this name on the stone and so the name will be „known to none but him who receives the stone”.

The name of God will be written upon the victorious after he is made a pillar in the temple of God (3,12). Here (as in the former instance the stone) the pillar is blank and then the name will be written on it.

In the verse 17,5 the great whore is openly shown what she is, her name written upon her forehead: Mystery, Babylon, the Great. Till then one could have this or that opinion of her, but now her true nature is revealed as she faces her final judgment. For this purpose her name was written upon her forehead. blank till then.

Kinetic ἐπέ in 17,8 gives the idea that the book of life was originally blank too. This book has existed since the beginning of the world and since then the names have been written into it; the number of names entered grows continually and so does the number of those whose names have not been inscribed into it.

In 19,16 we see the rider on the white horse prepared for the battle. For this occasion, on his cloak and on his thigh the name was written: The King of kings and the Lord of lords. We have here the considered phrase followed by two kinetic ἐπέ

Now we are left with the only instance of a static ἐπέ in the considered phrase, it is the verse 14,1. The Lamb has taken his stand on the Mount Zion „and with him were a hundred and forty-four thousand who had his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads.” Here the adoption of a static ἐπέ shows that the 144.000 have had these names written on their foreheads since the very beginning of their existence; in fact „they had been ransomed as the firstfruits of humanity for God and the Lamb” (14,5).

The static ἐπέ in 14,1 corroborates the explanation of the kinetic ones given in this section. Kinetic ἐπέ emphasizes the act of writing the name, the static one the fact that the 144.000 have always had the name written on their fore — heads.

4. Now we shall consider the phrase δέδομι χάραγμα ἐπέ (13,16) and λαμβάνω (τὸ) χάραγμα ἐπέ (14,9; 20,4).

In 13,16 we are told how the second beast causes everyone to be branded with a mark on his right hand or upon the forehead, and no one was allowed to buy or sell unless he bore this beast's mark. Here the first ἐπέ in „on his right hand” is static, and the second one in „upon the forehead” is kinetic. The circumstances in the

reign of the beast were oppressive: the second beast wielded all the authority of the first beast in its presence and worked miracles to delude the inhabitants of the earth to worship the first beast, and could cause all would not worship the image of the first beast to be put to death (13,11...15). To all this came the humiliating procedure of branding the people with the beast's mark. Without this mark one was practically excluded from the public life and reduced to the status of an outlaw and beggar. In these circumstances the mass of people succumbed to the intimidation and economic pressure and docilely carried the brand on their right hands; as the static ἐντ in 13,16 implies it was a common place sight. The forehead was usually clear from the brand. But the cowardly sycophants went further than the mass, they offered their foreheads to be branded; kinetic ἐντ lays the emphasis on the act of taking the mark.

In the words of the third angel (14,9), „whoever worships the beast and its image and receives its mark on his forehead or upon the hand, he shall drink the wine of God's wrath". Here the first ἐντ „on his forehead" is static showing that this person has been carrying the mark already for a long time; no one remembers him without it, he is dastardly kind of a traitor. The second ἐντ „upon the hand", a kinetic one, emphasizes the act of branding, and here we see the example of a person, which evaded the branding for some time but yielded to the pressure in the end. By this distinction the interval of crime of treason is determined: on the one extreme are those who have always carried the mark on their foreheads, on the other extreme those who have taken it upon their hand only recently. We see from the words of the angel that these who failed in the last moment, will be meted the same punishment as those with the mark on their foreheads. This kind of treason is one and indivisible; it cannot be graded.

In the verse 20,4 both ἐντ are kinetic. In the vision, together with „the souls of those who had been beheaded for the sake of God's word and their testimony to Jesus", are „those who had not worshipped the beast and its image, and had not received its mark on their forehead and on their hand". These who have proved faithful to the end despite of all tribulations, are ranked with those who had lost their lives for the sake of God's word and their testimony to Jesus. This shows that „not to receive the beast's mark" was a constant and prolonged struggle involving grave risks. The two kinetic ἐντ emphasize the action of not receiving the mark and the fact that these people never took it.

5. The phrase ἐστῆκα ἐντ we are going to consider now, governs either a genitive or an accusative:

genitive 8,3; 10,5,5; 10,8,8;

accusative 3,20; 7,1; 11,11; 12,18; 14,1; 15,2.

The use of four static ἐντ the sea and on the land was seen earlier in 10,2 when he planted his right foot on the sea, and his left on the land. So the standing on the sea and on the land is a consequence of the action already fulfilled and mentioned, namely the planting the feet on the sea and on the land. The movement, planting the feet, is followed by a

rest, the standing on the sea and on the land. The four static ἐπὶ discussed are logical and appropriate in this context.

The same pattern of ideas we find in 8,3, the movement followed by a rest, „another angel came and stood at the altar”. Here again the movement is explicitly expressed by verb ἐρχομαι and the following use of a static ἐπὶ in the phrase „stood at the altar” is in accordance with the former example, and by the same logic.

The kinetic ἐπὶ in 11,11 is obvious; the two prophets will be killed by the beast. „their corpses will lie in the street of the great city... but at the end of the three days and a half the breath of life from God came into them; and they stood up on their feet.” Here the verb considered is used in the meaning of taking the upright position, and the movement is implied.

The remaining five instances 3,20; 7,1; 12,18; 14,1 and 15,2 have one characteristic in common, they are lacking a verb of movement. These constructions can be regarded as elliptical. We have seen that the author of Rev can think of God as sitting on his throne only after his taking the seat upon it (4,2). Faithfull-and-True is riding his white horse after he has mounted it (19,11), and so we can suppose that in the considered places, although no movement is explicitly mentioned, some vague idea of coming was lingering in the mind of the author, and this was expressed by the application of kinetic ἐπὶ in these cases. In these elliptical constructions kinetic ἐπὶ is used because a kinetic verb was omitted, and this with the purpose to convey the idea of movement preceding the described standing at, or standing on, or taking the stand on something.

It seems here appropriate to quote a complementary example of elliptical constructions implying movement and rest; it is 3,10. This verse contains the verb of movement ἐρχομαι but the verb of rest is lacking and, by the logic of examples treated in the preceding paragraph, a static ἐπὶ is adopted to give an idea that „the ordeal that is to fall upon the whole world” will remain on it for some time.

6. The verb ἵδω in 17,1 is followed by two static ἐπὶ and one kinetic in the same sentence. „After this I saw four angels..., holding back the four winds so that no wind should blow on sea or on land or on any tree.” The kinetic ἐπὶ „on any tree” shows that the wind should not damage them by blowing on them. The two static ἐπὶ „on sea or on land” can be understood as elliptical constructions: no wind should blow on ships on the sea or on houses and crops on the land; no wind should blow on objects that rest on the sea or on the land.

The phrase ἐχὼ ἐπὶ in 9,4; 9,11; 14,14 is followed by genitive showing static ἐπὶ, and 20,1 is the only instance of kinetic ἐπὶ after ἐχὼ suggesting perhaps that the angel has just taken „the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand” before „coming down from heaven”, while the former three instances describe states of long duration.

7. In the following places ἐπὶ and the noun it governs stand absolutely (without a verb):

genitive 5,3; 5,13.13; 11,8; 12,1; 13,1; 18,24; 21,14.

dative 21,12.

accusative 4,4; 5,1; 9,7; 10,1; 12,3; 19,12.

The eight instances with genitive are quite normal and $\epsilon\lambda\upsilon\alpha\iota$ is the verb that can be thought as being omitted, or that can be added.

The only instance with dative in 21,12 is perhaps an emphatic statement as mentioned in section 1689 of the grammar by Smyth and quoted in this article, section 1.

In the quoted six instances of kinetic $\epsilon\pi\epsilon\iota$ a verb implying movement or change is not inconsistent with the text. In 4,4 the twenty four elders can be thought as putting on their crowns of gold; in fact 4,10 they worship God and „lay their crowns before the throne.” They are not wearing their crowns permanently. – In 5,1 the scroll can be thought as being delivered „into the right hand of the One sitting on the throne”. The scroll was not permanently in his right hand. – The locusts in 9,7 „were like horses equipped for the battle” and for this purpose their heads were crowned. – The angel in 10,1 coming down from heaven „was wrapped in cloud” and the rainbow appeared above his head. This rainbow is not always with him. – In chapter 12 „a woman robed with the sun, beneath her feet the moon, and on her head a crown of twelve stars” contrasts with „the great red dragon with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems”. The crown of twelve stars is a permanent ornament of the woman robed with the sun, and here a static $\epsilon\pi\epsilon\iota$ while „the seven diadems on dragon’s heads” were probably put on just before it appeared, and now a kinetic $\epsilon\pi\epsilon\iota$. – In 19,12 we see Faithfull-and-True, „his eyes flamed like fire, and on his head were many diadems”. By kinetic $\epsilon\pi\epsilon\iota$ it is suggested that he was adorned with these diadems for the final battle.

C o n c l u s i o n. By this analysis of the use of the prepositions $\epsilon\pi\epsilon\iota$ it appears proved that the author of Revelation discerns between static and kinetic force of $\epsilon\pi\epsilon\iota$. This is specially obvious with the phrase $\kappa\alpha\theta\eta\gamma\alpha\mu\epsilon\iota\ \epsilon\pi\epsilon\iota$ which comes 29 times in Rev, and accounts for 20% uses of $\epsilon\pi\epsilon\iota$. If this differentiation in meaning of $\epsilon\pi\epsilon\iota$ is followed up with other phrases it seems that nowhere new difficulties in interpretation appear. All this points to the conclusion, that the grammar of Rev is a special one, adapted to its content, and the deviations from the conventional rules have a deeper meaning, as by contrast the strict adherence to the rule of using static and kinetic $\epsilon\pi\epsilon\iota$ brings out in full relief.

APPENDIX

In this synopsis the number of a verse is quoted so many times as many times the preposition $\epsilon\pi\epsilon\iota$ appears in it. The verses are grouped according to the case $\epsilon\pi\epsilon\iota$ governs in the text edited by K. Aland and others.

a) *Genitive* (59 places)

1,20; 2,26; 3,10.10; 4,9.10; 5,1.3.7.10.13.13.13; 6,10.16; 7,1.1.3.15; 8,3.13; 9,4.11.17; 10,22.5.5.8.8; 11,6.8.10.10; 12,1; 13,1.8.14.14.16; 14,1.6.9.14.15.16.18; 16,18; 17,1.8.9.18; 18,24; 19,18.19.21; 20,6; 21,14; 22,4.

b) *Dative* (11 places)

7,10; 9,14; 10,11; 11,10; 12,17; 18,20; 19,4.14; 21,5.12; 22,16;

c) *Accusative* (74 places)

1,7.17; 2,17.24; 3,3.12.20; 4,2.4.4; 5,1; 6,2.4.5.8.16; 7,1.1.11.15.16.17; 8,3.10.10; 9,7; 10,1; 11,11.11.16.16; 12,3.18; 13,1.7.16; 14,1.6.6.9.14.16; 15,2; 16,2.8.9.10.12.14.17.21; 17,3.5.8; 18,9.11.17.19; 19,11.12.16.16; 20,1.4.4.9.11; 21,10.16; 22,5.14.18.18.

Notes

1. The Greek New Testament; Ed. K. Aland, M. Black, B.M. Metzger and A. Wikgren, London 1966.
2. The Greek New Testament; Ed. R.V.G. Tasker, Oxford/Cambridge 1964.
3. M. Zerwick S.J.; Graecitas Biblica, Romae 1966.
4. Friedrich Blass; Grammatik des nt. Griechisch, bearb. A. Debrunner, Göttingen 1965.
5. The New English Bible, Oxford/Cambridge 1970.
6. H.W. Smyth: Greek Grammar, Cambridge Mass. U.S.A. 1968.

SAŽETAK

Pisac raščlanjuje u ovom napisu, što ga je za širu publiku napisao na engleskom jeziku, upotrebu prijedloga ἐν u knjizi Otkrivenja da bi tako otkrio njegovo značenje.

Najprije je prijedlog smjestio u okvir Otkrivenja i odredio s kojim se sve padežom taj prijedlog slaže (s genitivom, s dativom i s akuzativom) i kakvo značenje u pojedinim slučajevima poprima.

Pisac zaključuje da autor knjige Otkrivenja razlikuje statičko i kinetičko stanje prijedloga ἐν. To je osobito jasno kod izraza κἀθημα ἐν, koji se pojavljuje 29 puta u Otkrivenju.

Gramatika knjige Otkrivenja posebne je naravi. Sva odstupanja od uobičajenih pravila imaju dublje, teološko značenje.