

The PPI form of the Greek verb EGEIRO *My Question and Three Scholarly Replies*

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REGARDING: The Present Passive Indicative form of the Greek verb EGEIRO (egeirontai) as used in 1 Cor 15:15-16

GREETINGS IN CHRIST, BROTHERS! I need your Greek expertise. Here is my question:

A preterist friend of mine, who is a graduate of Whitefield Theological Seminary (headed up by Dr. Kenneth Talbot in Florida), has suggested a different approach to the resurrection in 1 Cor. 15. The two verses he focuses on are verses 15 and 16 (NAS95), which say --

Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not [BEING] raised. For if the dead are not [BEING] raised, not even Christ has been raised... [1 Cor. 15:15-16 NAS95]

Notice the bracketed ALL CAPS word "BEING" that he inserts here in both verses to render the (3 pl Pres Pass Ind) form of EGEIRO as a present on-going process. Both verses have exactly the same form of EGEIRO (egeirontai).

He uses this inserted "being" rendering to teach that the resurrection (event) is actually an ON-GOING PROCESS of a "collective body" (the church) being raised out of the dead "collective body" of Judaism throughout the "church age" until the Parousia (1 Cor. 15:23).

I don't buy this "process" idea of the resurrection. I have several Greek grammars, but I have been unable to find any lengthy discussion on the PPI verbs to help nail down why this guy's "process" rendering ("are being raised") appears to be incorrect.

It seems to me that it has the sense of "are not [TO BE] raised" (a future event), rather than "are not [BEING] raised" (a present ongoing process).

This dear brother claims that Machen (sections 112 & 113) teaches this "being raised" (process idea), but after reading those sections of *Machen*, it does NOT seem to me that he supports this rendering "**in a majority of cases,**" nor in specific contexts where **the future occurrence** of the event is implied or expressed, as we have here in 1 Cor 15:52 --

*...in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and **the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.** [1 Cor 15:52 NAS95]*

I have already checked *Werner's* 3-vol grammar, *Wallace's* "Beyond the Basics," *Robertson, Mounce, Machen, Dana & Mantey, Davis, Summers, Paine, Greenlee, Story,* and *Chapman & Shogren*. I also have BDAG, Louw & Nida, and the TDNT set.

Are you aware of any other grammars, lexicons, or textual commentaries which might deal specifically with this "being" (ongoing process) rendering of the PPI form of the verb EGEIRO? Which textual commentary on 1 Cor. 15 would you recommend?

Or you might simply give me a quick idea of what I should do to point out the probable fallacy of this "are [being] raised" PROCESS idea? Your help would be much appreciated.

Dr. Richard Gould – Houghton College, NY on the PPI verb EGEIRO in 1 Cor. 15

I can give you no definitive resolution to your question about the present passive indicative in 1 Cor. 15.15 & 16. Here are some comments, however:

1. Your friend is certainly correct that "are being raised" is a possible translation. *Machen*, although he does seem to encourage such a rendering, also expresses caution about always translating it as progressive. Machen's main point seems to be that there is **a distinction in Greek between present activity and a present state**, whereas the English expression "are raised" can be ambiguous (without a context). Does your friend insist on translating all "ppi's" with the "being"?
2. I am inclined to agree with you that adding "being" here with "raise" probably does an injustice to the text, but with a verb like "save" the addition is helpful in letting us see that salvation is a process consisting of several stages from conversion through sanctification to glorification. I am not sure just what the stages would be for being raised. Would such a view lend support for the Roman Catholic notion of purgatory or limbo?
3. Are "the dead" a fixed group or a group which keeps increasing? Does the process refer to an individual believer or to the changing inclusive group? I am inclined to see the "ppi" referring to a general timeless truth rather than an ongoing process (that is only partially completed).
4. I tried checking several commentaries but did not find much that seemed to address your concern. *Meyer* (one of the standard 19th century commentators who often goes into a lot of detail) was silent on this passage. The one commentary that did specifically address this issue was Vol. 32 in *The Anchor Bible* (by William F. Orr and James A. Walther). Their conclusion seems to favor your friend, but they do allow for the possibility of your view or of my view:

"The present here is taken to be linear. It is possible, of course, that it has a futuristic turn; such an interpretation would involve an intensive

analysis of Paul's eschatology (some of which must be examined later in this chapter). It may also have aoristic force (since there is no present aorist form in first-century Greek); this implies 'the dead [as a matter of principle] are not being raised .' The fact that Christ has been raised, however, seems to push Paul into stating what is (as a present experience) going on." [*Anchor Bible*, pp. 324-5]

5. William Douglas Chamberlain's *An Exegetical Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, (pp. 70-72) has quite an extended section on the possible ways of understanding a present tense. [boldface mine, ees]

Dr. Reggie Kidd Reformed Theological Seminary, Florida on the PPI verb EGEIRO in 1 Cor. 15

Certainly, the progressive is a perfectly normal use of the PPI. It's just that descriptive, iterative, and gnomic are also perfectly normal uses ... **context dictates** ... and, for better or worse, all of us find our theology pushing us towards certain ways of construing a particular context.

In this case, if you happen to know on other grounds that resurrection is taking place, the progressive present makes sense. Apparently that's what's happening in your friend's reading. Seems to me, and I suspect, to most exegetes, that the question under discussion is whether resurrection is **ever** to be expected. In a word, Paul is expecting the Corinthians to see that Christ's particular resurrection implies a general resurrection. At this point in Paul's argument, Christ's resurrection is dated, and the general resurrection is not. **The dating of the general resurrection, it seems to me, is what comes into view at 15:51ff.** [boldface mine, ees]

Analysis of the PPI verb EGEIRO usage in 1 Cor. 15:15-16

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Paul uses the word ἐγείρω 20 times in 16 verses in 1 Corinthians. Of these instances, 19 occur in chapter 15. The 20 occurrences of this word in 1 Corinthians are classified as follows:

6:14	ἠγειρεν	3 Sing. Aorist Act. Ind.
15:4	ἐγήγερται	3 Sing. Perfect Pass. Ind.

15:12	ἐγήγηρται	3 Sing. Perfect Pass. Ind.
15:13	ἐγήγηρται	3 Sing. Perfect Pass. Ind.
15:14	ἐγήγηρται	3 Sing. Perfect Pass. Ind.
15:15	ἠγειρεν	3 Sing. Aorist Act. Ind.
15:15	ἠγειρεν	3 Sing. Aorist Act. Ind.
15:15	ἐγείρονται	3 Pl. Present Pass. Ind.
15:16	ἐγείρονται	3 Pl. Present Pass. Ind.
15:16	ἐγήγηρται	3 Sing. Perfect Pass. Ind.
15:17	ἐγήγηρται	3 Sing. Perfect Pass. Ind.
15:20	ἐγήγηρται	3 Sing. Perfect Pass. Ind.
15:29	ἐγείρονται	3 Pl. Present Pass. Ind.
15:32	ἐγείρονται	3 Pl. Present Pass. Ind.
15:35	ἐγείρονται	3 Pl. Present Pass. Ind.
15:42	ἐγείρεται	3 Sing. Present Pass. Ind.
15:43	ἐγείρεται	3 Sing. Present Pass. Ind.
15:43	ἐγείρεται	3 Sing. Present Pass. Ind.
15:44	ἐγείρεται	3 Sing. Present Pass. Ind.
15:52	ἐγερθήσονται	3 Pl. Future Pass. Ind.

There can be no question that Paul is *not* referring to the resurrection of Christ as a process, since he uses either the Aorist or Perfect when referring to Christ's resurrection. However, when referring to the resurrection of the dead, he uses the Present passive form, except in one instance, 15:52, where he uses the Future passive indicative. Since **the Future tense does not admit of a progressive aspect**, and since there is no reason to think that Paul is referring to some different resurrection than what he has been discussing, it seems contradictory for Paul to imply a progressive aspect in the other instances and then deny this in verse 52. If Paul had meant to indicate a progressive aspect of the resurrection, he could have used a periphrastic future to express a progressive aspect in the future. (For a brief discussion of this, see Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 648.)

The use of the Future tense in verse 52 indicates that the resurrection is **an event** that will occur, **not a progression**. It is clear that the various aspects of any tense are not indicated morphologically. For example, Daniel Wallace lists several aspectual nuances for the Present tense, such as, the Progressive Present, in which the action is an on-going process; the Iterative Present, in which the action repeatedly happens; the Gnomic Present, in which the statement indicates a timeless fact; and the Futuristic Present, in which the action is an event in the future. The aspects of these different uses of the Present tense cannot be determined by the form of the verb, since all of them are Present tense verbs. Rather, other factors must be considered in order to decide in which way a particular Present tense verb is being used.

Consequently, the simple fact that the verb ἐγείρω occurs in the Present tense is not sufficient to prove that it has a progressive nuance. Other factors must enter into the consideration of the use of the verb in its context in order to show that this is the case.

For example, 1 Cor. 3:11 says, θεμέλιον γαρ αλλον οὔδει δύναται θει'ναι παρα τον κείμενον, ο ἔστιν Ἰησοῦς Χριστῶ. "For another foundation no one is able to lay besides the one existing, which is Jesus Christ." The verb δύναται is a *Present Passive indicative*, but this fact certainly does not indicate that the laying of Jesus Christ as the foundation is a process. Rather, it is **a timeless fact**. In 1 Cor. 12:8 Paul says, ὡ μὲν γαρ δια του' πνεύματος διδοται λόγος σοφίας", "For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit . . ." Here the word διδομαι is a Present Passive indicative. However, the giving of a spiritual gift to a believer is not a process. Rather, **it is an event**. In 1 Cor. 15:42-44 the word σπείρω is used four times, in each instance it is a *Present Passive indicative*. Yet it is absurd to think that Paul is saying "it is in the process of being sown a perishable body," or "it is in the process of being sown in dishonor." Since each occurrence of σπείρω in these verses is used in parallel with the Present Passive indicative use of ἐγείρω, this implies that the raising is not a process, but an event. "It is sown . . . it is raised." It seems patently absurd to say, "It is in the process of being sown . . . it is in the process of being raised." Additionally, it seems equally absurd to say, "It is sown . . . it is in the process of being raised." Such a change in aspect disrupts the parallelism by which Paul is endeavoring to make this contrast between these two events.

These examples show that simply because a word appears in the Present tense does not prove that it indicates progressive action. In order to prove this point, one must have other evidence, such as lexical information, contextual information, and grammatical information. Each of these categories affect the form of the verb to **indicate its aspect** in a given instance. For example, some actions cannot be progressive simply because of the kind of actions they indicate. Death is not a progressive action. Death is a point, and event. When we talk about someone dying, we are using this term analogically. What we mean is that someone's health is declining so that they are approaching the point of death. But death itself is an event that occurs in a moment. **The kind of action indicated by the verb will affect its aspect**. Contextual information is also important and will affect the kind of aspect that a verb indicates. Theologically and philosophically speaking, existence for God is not a process. When we say "God exists" we cannot mean that God is involved in some process. God exists in an eternal, unchanging present moment. So, even though we use a present tense verb, it cannot indicate a process when used of God. Grammatically, a present tense verb can be used to indicate a past completed act, such as when it is used in a Periphrastic Perfect construction. Here the present tense form of the verb "to be" cannot indicate a progressive action because of the grammatical construction. [boldface mine, ees]