

The Discourse Function of ἀλλά in Non-Negative Contexts

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A Working Hypothesis

- ἀλλά involves the joining of two things for the purpose of contrasting them.
- ἀλλά involves correction or replacement.

When examining items joined by ἀλλά, one should ask two questions:

1. What items (words, phrases, clauses) are being contrasted?
2. What is the correction or replacement that is taking place?

New Testament Examples

Protoypical Example: 1Co 3.6

⁶ I planted,
Apollos watered,
but [ἀλλά] God gave the growth. (1Co 3.6, ESV)

Mt 9.18 (|| Mk 5.23 || Lu 8.41)

¹⁸ While he was saying these things to them, behold, a ruler came in and knelt before him, saying,
“My daughter has just died,
but [ἀλλά] come and lay your hand on her, and she will live.”
(Mt 9.18, ESV)

Mt 11.7-9 (|| Lu 7.24-26)

⁷ As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John:
“What did you go out into the wilderness to see?
A reed shaken by the wind?
⁸ [ἀλλά] What then did you go out to see?
A man dressed in soft clothing?
Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings’ houses.
⁹ [ἀλλά] What then did you go out to see?
A prophet?
Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. (Mt 11.7-9, ESV)

Mk 9.12-13 (|| Mt 17.11-12)

¹² And he said to them,
“Elijah • does come first to restore all things.
And how is it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things
and be treated with contempt?
¹³ But [ἀλλά] I tell you that • Elijah has come,
and they did to him
whatever they pleased,
as it is written of him.” (Mk 9.12-13, ESV)

Mk 9.21-22

²¹ And Jesus asked his father,
“How long has • this been happening to him?”
And he said,
“From childhood.
²² And it has • often cast him into fire and into water,
to destroy him.
But [ἀλλά] if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.”
(Mk 9.21-22, ESV)

Mk 11.31-32 (|| Mt 21.25-26 || Lu 20.5-7)

³¹ And they discussed it with one another, saying,
“If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say,
‘Why then did you not believe him?’
³² But [ἀλλά] shall we say, ‘From man?’—
they were afraid of the people,
for they all held that John really
was a prophet. (Mk 11.31-32, ESV)

Mk 14.27-28 (|| Mt 26.31-32)

²⁷ And Jesus said to them,
“You will all fall away, for it is written,
‘I will strike the shepherd,
and the sheep will be scattered.’
²⁸ But [ἀλλά] after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.”
(Mk 14.27-28, ESV)

Lu 6.24-27a

²⁴ “But woe to you who are rich,
for you have received your consolation.

²⁵ “Woe to you who are full now,
for you shall be hungry.

“Woe to you who laugh now,
for you shall mourn and weep.

²⁶ “Woe to you, when all people speak well of you,
for so their fathers did to the false prophets.

²⁷ “But [ἀλλά] I say to you who hear,
Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,
(Lu 6.24-27, ESV)

Lu 11.39-44

³⁹ And the Lord said to him,
“Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish,
but inside you are full of greed and wickedness.

⁴⁰ You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also?

⁴¹ But [πλην] give as alms those things that are within,
and behold, everything is clean for you.

⁴² “But [ἀλλά] woe to you Pharisees!
For you tithe the mint and rue and every herb,
and neglect justice and the love of God.

• These you ought to have done,
without neglecting the others.

⁴³ Woe to you Pharisees!
For you love the best seat in the synagogues and
greetings in the marketplaces.

⁴⁴ Woe to you!
For you are like unmarked graves,
and people walk over them without knowing it.”
(Lu 11.39-44, ESV)

Lu 16.20-21

²⁰ And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus,
covered with sores,

²¹ who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man’s table.
Moreover [ἀλλά], even the dogs came and licked his sores.

(Lu 16.20-21, ESV)

Lu 24.21-22

²¹ But we had hoped
that he was the one to redeem Israel.
Yes [ἀλλά], and besides all this, it is now the third day
since these things happened.

²² Moreover [ἀλλά γε καί], some women of our company amazed us.
They were at the tomb early in the morning, (Lu 24.21-22, ESV)

1Co 6.11

¹¹ And such were some of you.
But [ἀλλά] you were washed,
• [ἀλλά] you were sanctified,
• [ἀλλά] you were justified
in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ
and by the Spirit of our God. (1Co 6.11, ESV)

2Co 7.11

¹¹ For see what earnestness • this godly grief has produced in you,
but also [ἀλλά] what eagerness to clear yourselves,
[ἀλλά] what indignation,
[ἀλλά] what fear,
[ἀλλά] what longing,
[ἀλλά] what zeal,
[ἀλλά] what punishment!

At every point you have proved yourselves • innocent in the matter.
(2Co 7.11, ESV)

Php 3.4b-8a

^{4b} If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more:
⁵ circumcised on the eighth day,
of the people of Israel,
of the tribe of Benjamin,
a Hebrew of Hebrews;
as to the law, a Pharisee;
⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church;
as to righteousness under the law, • blameless.

⁷ But [ἀλλά] whatever gain I had, • I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

⁸ Indeed [ἀλλά μενούγγε καί], I count everything as loss
because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.
(Php 3.4b-8a, ESV)