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ZONDERVAN LANGUAGE BASICS

FOURTH EDITION

BASICS *of* BIBLICAL GREEK GRAMMAR

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Appendix

Chapters 1–4

Before every major section of the grammar I will give you an overview of what is to come. A more detailed multimedia overview is given on the website. If you do not understand everything I say here, don't worry; it will all come clear in time.

Chapter 1

We start by looking at a brief history of the Greek language and especially its relationship to English.

Chapter 2

Before we start to learn Greek, it is best to review a few helpful study habits.

Chapter 3

We will learn the twenty-four letters of the Greek alphabet and how to pronounce and write them, along with their transliterations. You will also learn about diphthongs and breathing marks.

Chapter 4

Now that you know the individual letters of the alphabet, it is time to string them together into syllables and words, and to separate them with punctuation marks. We will also jump into the wonderful world of vocabulary acquisition, and skim over the topic of Greek accents.

Chapter 1

The Greek Language

The Greek language has a long and rich history stretching all the way from the fourteenth century BC to the present. The earliest form of the language is Mycenaean Greek that used a script called "Linear B." The form of Greek used by writers from Homer (8th century BC) through Plato (4th century BC) is called "Classical Greek." It was a marvelous form of the language, capable of exact expression and subtle nuances. Its alphabet was derived from the Phoenicians as was that of Hebrew. Classical Greek existed in many dialects, of which three were primary: Doric, Aeolic, and Ionic. Attic was a branch of Ionic.

Athens was conquered in the fourth century BC by King Philip of Macedonia. Alexander the Great, Philip's son, was tutored by the Greek philosopher Aristotle. Alexander set out to conquer the world and spread Greek culture and language. Because he spoke Attic Greek, it was this dialect that was spread. It was also the dialect spoken by the famous Athenian writers. This was the beginning of the Hellenistic Age.

As the Greek language spread across the world and met other languages, it was altered (which is true of any language). The dialects also interacted with each other. Eventually this adaptation resulted in what today we call Koine Greek (or more inexactly, "biblical Greek"). "Koine" means "common" (from the phrase κοινὴ διάλεκτος, the "commmon language") and describes the common, everyday form of the language used by everyday people. It was not a polished literary form of the language, and in fact some writers of this era purposefully imitated the older style of Greek (which is like someone today writing in Elizabethan English).

Because Koine was a simplified form of Classical Greek, many of the subtleties of Classical Greek were lost. For example, in Classical Greek ἄλλος meant "other" of the same kind, while ἕτερος meant "other" of a different kind. If you had an apple and you asked for ἄλλος, you would receive another apple. But if you asked for ἕτερος, you would be given perhaps an orange. But in the Koine, ἄλλος and ἕτερος were interchangeable. It is this common Koine Greek that is used in the Septuagint, the New Testament, the Apostolic Fathers, the New Testament Apocrypha, Josephus, Plutarch, and to some degree Philo.

The Koine period lasted until the fourth century, which saw the rise of Byzantium, whose name was changed to Constantinople and eventually Istanbul. Byzantium Greek describes the language until 1453 when Constantinople was conquered by the Ottoman Turks, and from that date until now we call the language Modern Greek.

For a long time Koine Greek confused scholars because it was significantly different from Classical Greek. Some hypothesized that it was a combination of Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic. Others attempted to explain it as a "Holy Ghost language," meaning that God created a special language just for the Bible. But discoveries of Greek papyri found in Egypt over the past one hundred years have shown that this language was the language of the everyday people, used in the writings of wills, private letters, receipts, shopping lists, etc.

There are two lessons we can learn from this. As Paul says, "In the fullness of time God sent his Son" (Gal 4:4), and part of that fullness was a universal language. No matter where Paul traveled, he could be understood.

But there is another lesson here that is a little closer to the pastor's heart. God used the common language to communicate the gospel. The gospel does not belong to the erudite alone, to the scholars and the clergy; it belongs to all people. It now becomes your task to learn this marvelous language so that you can more effectively make known the grace of God to all people.

By the way. I often hear that we should learn Latin because it is the basis of English. Not true. English is a Germanic language, and Latin is a Romance language.

Languages can be grouped into families. There is a hypothetical base language we call "Proto-Indo-European." It developed into four language groups.

- Romance languages (Latin, French, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian, Spanish, and others)
- Germanic languages (English, German, Danish, Dutch, Norwegian, Swedish, and others). Technically the base language for this group is called "Proto-Germanic."
- Greek languages (Linear B, Classical, Koine, Byzantine, Modern Greek)
- Indo-Iranian (Iranian, Sanskrit)

There was a lot of borrowing between Romance and Germanic languages (think where the countries are located), and both of these language groups borrowed from Greek. English especially was heavily influenced by other languages. This can be illustrated by words they have in common.

- From Greek (didactic, apostle, theology)
- From Latin (aquarium, name, volcano)
- From French (closet, resume, prestige)

On the other hand, Hebrew and Aramaic come from another family called the Semitic languages, and there was little borrowing between them and the Proto-Indo-European languages. Almost every Aramaic word would sound strange to you (and English to them).

So why learn Greek rather than Latin? I learned Latin and read Caesar's *Gallic Wars*; it was interesting. I learned Greek and read the Bible; it was life changing.

Chapter 2

Learning Greek

Goal

The main purpose of writing this book is to help you to understand better and to communicate more clearly the Word of God. This must be kept in mind at all times. It should motivate you, encourage you when you are frustrated, and give you perspective when you think you are going to crack. Remember the goal: a clearer, more exact, and more persuasive presentation of God's saving message.

But is knowing Greek essential in reaching this goal? If you are not fully convinced that this is so, you may have difficulty reaching the goal. In other words, is knowing Greek worth the effort? We have been blessed with a wealth of good translations, and a careful use of these goes a long way in helping the preacher understand the Word of God. It would be unfair to claim that the only way to be a good preacher is to know Greek.

However, allow me a little parable and the point will become clear. You need to overhaul your car engine. What tools will you select? I would surmise that with a screw driver, hammer, a pair of pliers, and perhaps a crow bar, you could make some progress. But look at the chances you are taking. Without a socket wrench you could ruin many of the bolts. Without a torque wrench you cannot get the head seated properly. The point is, without the proper tools you run the risk of doing a minimal job, and perhaps actually hurting the engine.

The same is true with preaching, teaching, and preparing Bible studies. Without the proper tools you are limited in your ability to deal with the text. When Jesus says of communion, "Drink ye all of it" (Matt 26:27; KJV), what does the "all" refer to? All the drink, or all the people?[1] When Paul writes to the Ephesians, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Eph 2:8), what does "this" refer to?[2] When Paul asks, "Do all speak in other tongues?" (1 Cor 12:30), is he implying that the answer is "Yes"?[3]

But there is more. Almost all the best commentaries and biblical studies require a knowledge of Greek. Without it, you will not have access to the lifelong

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[1] The people.

[2] The whole process of salvation, which includes our faith.

[3] He is stating that the answer is "No."

labors of scholars who should be read. I have seen a rather interesting pattern develop. The only people I have heard say that Greek is not important are those who do not themselves know Greek. Strange. Can you imagine someone who knows nothing about tennis say that it is unnecessary to take tennis lessons?

The point of all this is to emphasize that you must think through why you want to learn Greek, and then you must keep your goal in sight at all times. John Wesley, perhaps one of the most effective ministers ever to mount a horse, was able to quote Scripture in Greek better than in English. How far do you want your ministry to go? The tools you collect, Greek being one of them, will to a significant degree determine your success from a human point of view. Set your goals high and keep them in sight.

Memorization

In order to learn any language, memorization is vital. For Greek you will have to memorize vocabulary words, endings, and various other things. In Greek the only way to determine, for example, whether a noun is singular or plural, or if a word is the subject or object of the verb, is by the ending of the word. So if you have not memorized the endings, you will be in big trouble.

Along with grammar is the importance of memorizing vocabulary. There is little joy in translating if you have to look up every other word in the lexicon. Rote memory is more difficult for some than others, so here are some suggestions.

1. Make flash cards for vocabulary words and word endings. You can put them in your pocket and take them anywhere. Use them while waiting in lines, during work breaks, before classes, etc. They will become your lifesaver. 3 x 5 index cards cut in thirds are a nice size. You can also purchase my premade cards, *Basics of Biblical Greek Vocabulary Cards* (Zondervan), or you can purchase a vocabulary app for your phone (see BillMounce.com/apps).
2. Use FlashWorks, my computer flash-card software that can be downloaded for free (see page xxv). You can tell it which words you have difficulty remembering, and it can quiz you just on those.
3. When memorizing words, use mnemonic devices. For example, the Greek word for "face" is transliterated as *prosōpon*, so it could be remembered by the phrase, "pour soap on my face." It seems that the sillier these devices are the better, so don't be ashamed. At BillMounce.com you can see all my mnemonic devices and contribute yours. I encourage you to become involved in this community.
4. You must pronounce Greek consistently and write it neatly. If your pronunciation varies, it is difficult to remember the words.

5. Say the words and endings out loud. The more senses involved in the learning process the better. So pronounce the words, listen to them, and write them out so you can see them.

Exercises

The greatest motivation for learning Greek comes during the homework assignments. Because most of the exercises are drawn from the New Testament, you are constantly reminded why you are learning the language. I have tried to point out in the footnotes whenever a knowledge of Greek helps you exegetically or devotionally to better understand the verse's meaning.

Be sure to treat the exercises as tests. Learn the chapter, do as many of the exercises as you can, then work back through the chapter and do the exercises again. The more you treat the exercises as a test, the better you will learn the material and the better you will do on actual tests. There are sample quizzes for every chapter in the free online class at BillMounce.com.

Time and Consistency

Very few people can "pick up" a language. For most of us it takes time, lots of it. Plan for that; remind yourself what you are trying to do, and spend the necessary time. But along with the amount of time is the matter of consistency. You cannot cram for tests; Greek will not stick, and in the long run you will forget it. Spend time every day; getting to know the language of the New Testament deserves at least that. Remember, "Those who cram, perish."

Partners

Few people can learn a language on their own. For sake of illustration, let me quote the story of John Brown as told by the great Greek grammarian A. T. Robertson.

> At the age of sixteen John Brown, of Haddington, startled a bookseller by asking for a copy of the Greek Testament. He was barefooted and clad in ragged homespun clothes. He was a shepherd boy from the hills of Scotland. "What would *you* do with that book?" a professor scornfully asked. "I'll try to read it," the lad replied, and proceeded to read off a passage in the Gospel of John. He went off in triumph with the coveted prize, but the story spread that he was a wizard and had learned Greek by the black art. He was actually arraigned for witchcraft, but in 1746 the elders and deacons at Abernethy gave him a vote of acquittal, although the minister would not sign it. His letter of defence, Sir W. Robertson Nicoll says (*The British Weekly*, Oct. 3, 1918),

"deserves to be reckoned among the memorable letters of the world." John Brown became a divinity student and finally professor of divinity. In the chapel at Mansfield College, Oxford, Brown's figure ranks with those of Doddridge, Fry, Chalmers, Vinet, Schleiermacher. He had taught himself Greek while herding his sheep, and he did it without a grammar. Surely young John Brown of Haddington should forever put to shame those theological students and busy pastors who neglect the Greek Testament, though teacher, grammar, lexicon are at their disposal.[4]

This story points out how unusual it is for someone to learn Greek without the communal help of the class. Find a partner, someone who will test and quiz you, encourage and support you, and vice versa.

Discipline

Discipline is the bottom line. There are no magical solutions to learning Greek. It is achievable if you want it. It comes at a cost, but the rewards are tremendous. So get ready for the journey of your life as we travel through the pages of the Greek Testament. Enjoy the excitement of discovery and look forward to the day when it will all bloom into fruition.

Here is a great Greek coin. After the next chapter you will be able tell what it says.

[4] *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 4th ed. (Broadman, 1934), xix.

Chapter 3

The Alphabet and Pronunciation

Overview

I will start each chapter with an overview of what you will be learning. This will give you a feel for what is to come, and should also be an encouragement when you see that there is not too much information in each chapter.

In this chapter you will learn:

- to write and pronounce the alphabet (consonants, vowels, diphthongs);
- that "breathing marks" are on every word beginning with a vowel.

Footnotes in the grammar are not necessary to learn, although they are often interesting. The footnotes in the workbook, however, are important.

The Greek Alphabet

3.1 The Greek alphabet has twenty-four letters.[1] At first it is only important to learn the English name, small letters, and pronunciation. The transliterations[2] will help. In our texts today, capitals are used only for proper names, the first word in a quotation, and the first word in the paragraph.[3]

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[1] There were several more, but they dropped out of use before the Classical period. In some cases their influence can still be felt, especially in verbs.

[2] A transliteration is the equivalent of a letter in another language. For example, the Greek "beta" (β) is transliterated with the English "b." This does not mean that a similar combination of letters in one language has the same meaning as the same combination in another. κατ does not mean "cat." But the Greek "β" and the English "b" have the same sound, and therefore it is said that the English "b" is the transliteration of the Greek "beta."

[3] Originally the Bible was written in all capital letters without punctuation, accent marks, or spaces between the words. John 1:1 began, ΕΝΑΡΧΗΗΝΟΛΟΓΟΣ. Capital letters, or "majuscules," were used until the sixth century A.D. ("Uncials" are a form of capital letters.) "Cursive" script is like our handwriting where the letters are joined together and is also called "minuscule." Cursive script was created before the time of Christ but became popular in the ninth century A.D. In Greek texts today, John 1:1 begins, Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος.

3.2 Currently, there is a debate on how Greek was pronounced. I use what I call "standard" pronunciation (technically called "Erasmian"). The advantage is that this is how most students pronounce Greek, and it has a different sound for almost every letter, making teaching easier.

However, there are many who prefer the Modern Greek pronunciation, which I have included in the chart in #3.3 and throughout the online class on BillMounce.com.

There are also a myriad of other pronunciation schemes somewhere between standard and modern. As always in these types of situations, ask your teacher.

3.3 Notice the many similarities among the Greek and English letters, not only in shape and sound but also in their respective order in the alphabet. The Greek alphabet can be broken down into sections. It will parallel the English for a while, differ, and then begin to parallel again. Try to find these natural divisions.

The following chart shows the name of the letter (in English and Greek), the English transliteration (in italics), the Greek letter written as a capital and as a small letter, and its pronunciation (Erasmian and Modern, which is blank when Modern pronunciation is the same as Erasmian).

Name		*Representations*			*Erasmian*	*Modern*
Alpha	ἄλφα	*a*	Α	α	a as in father[4]	
Beta	βῆτα	*b*	Β	β	b as in Bible	b as in vase
Gamma	γάμμα	*g*	Γ	γ	g as in gone	g as in yes or loch[5]
Delta	δέλτα	*d*	Δ	δ	d as in dog	d as in the
Epsilon	ἒ ψιλόν	*e*	Ε	ε	e as in met	
Zeta	ζῆτα	*z*	Ζ	ζ	z as in daze	
Eta	ἦτα	*ē*	Η	η	e as in obey	ee as in feet
Theta	θῆτα	*th*	Θ	θ	th as in thing	
Iota	ἰῶτα	*i*	Ι	ι	i as in intrigue[6]	i as in "intrigue"

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[4] Technically, the α can be long or short, but the difference in time required to distinguish the two is so miniscule that for now just concentrate on saying the α as the "a" in "father."

In standard pronunciation, the sound of the short α was not different from the sound of the long α; the short α does not go to the sound of the "a" in "hat." There is much discussion on this type of issue among scholars.

[5] In Modern Greek, γ is pronounced "y" when followed by ε, η, ι, or υ. It is pronounced "ch" when followed by α, ο, or ω.

[6] The ι can be either long ("intrigue") or short ("intrigue"). Listen to how your teacher pronounces the words and you will pick up the differences.

Kappa	κάππα	*k*	K	κ	k as in kitchen	
Lambda	λάμβδα	*l*	Λ	λ	l as in law	
Mu	μῦ	*m*	M	μ	m as in mother	
Nu	νῦ	*n*	N	ν	n as in new	
Xi	ξεῖ	*x*	Ξ	ξ	x as in axiom	
Omicron	ὂ μικρόν	*o*	O	ο	o as in not[7]	o as in note
Pi	πεῖ	*p*	Π	π	p as in peach	
Rho	ῥῶ	*r*	P	ρ	r as in rod	with a slight trill
Sigma	σίγμα	*s*	Σ	σ/ς	s as in study	
Tau	ταῦ	*t*	T	τ	t as in talk	
Upsilon	ὗ ψιλόν	*u/y*[8]	Y	υ	u as ü[9]	υ as in "intrigue"
Phi	φεῖ	*ph*	Φ	φ	ph as in phone	
Chi	χεῖ	*ch*	X	χ	ch as in loch[10]	
Psi	ψεῖ	*ps*	Ψ	ψ	ps as in lips	
Omega	ὦ μέγα	*ō*	Ω	ω	o as in tone	

3.4 Writing the Letters

1. Notice how α β δ ε ι κ ο ς τ and υ look like their English counterparts.
2. In Greek there are four letters that are transliterated by two letters.
   - θ is th
   - φ is ph
   - χ is ch
   - ψ is ps
3. It is important that you do not confuse the following.
   - η with the English "n"
   - ν with "v"

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[7] The ο is pronounced by some with a long "o" sound as in the word "obey." Others pronounce it with a short "o" sound as in the word "not." In modern Greek it is long, as is ω. Standard pronunciation uses a short ο sound in order to differentiate the ο from the ω.

[8] When υ occurs as a single vowel (i.e., not preceded by a vowel), it is transliterated as a "y." ὑπέρ becomes *hyper*. But when it is preceded by a vowel, it is transliterated as a "u." αὐτός becomes *autos*.

[9] Other suggestions are the u in "universe" and the oo in "book."

[10] Pronounced with a decided Scottish accent.

- ρ with "p"
- χ with "x"
- ω with "w"

4. There are two sigmas in Greek. ς occurs only at the end of the word and σ occurs elsewhere: ἀπόστολος.

5. The vowels in Greek are α, ε, η, ι, ο, υ, and ω.

3.5 Pronouncing the Letters

1. You will learn the alphabet best by pronouncing the letters out loud as you write them, over and over. Be sure to listen to the summary lecture on BillMounce.com for practice in lesson 3.

2. The name of a consonant is formed with the help of a vowel, but the sound of the consonant does not include that vowel. For example, μ is the letter "mu," but when μ appears in the word, there is no "u" sound.

3. The following letters sound just like their English counterparts: α β γ δ ε ι κ λ μ ν ο π ρ σ/ς τ.

4. Gamma (γ) usually has a hard "g" sound, as in "get." However, when it is immediately followed by γ, κ, χ, or ξ, it is pronounced as a "n."

   For example, the word ἄγγελος is pronounced "angelos" (from which we get our word "angel"). The gamma pronounced like a "n" is called a **gamma nasal.**[11]

5. α and ι can be either long or short. ε and ο are always short while η and ω are always long.

   "Long" and "short" refer to the relative length of time it requires to pronounce the vowel. The difference in sound between a long and short ι is clear to the English ear. However, it is much harder to pronounce and hear the difference between a long and short α.

3.6 Diphthongs

1. A **diphthong** is two vowels that produce one sound. The second vowel is always an ι or an υ. They are pronounced as follows.[12]

diphthong	*standard*	*modern*	*example*
αι	as in aisle	as in hen	αιρω
ει	as in eight	as in meet	ει

[11] Most gamma nasals are formed from the γγ combination.

[12] ωυ is used in Classical Greek, but occurs in the New Testament only in the name Μωϋσῆς where there is always a diaeresis over the υ, indicating that it is not a diphthong.

diphthong	*standard*	*modern*	*example*
οι	as in oil	as in meet	οικια
αυ	as in sauerkraut	as af or av	αυτος
ου	as in soup		ουδε
υι	as in suite		υιος
ευ	as in feud	as eff or ev	ευθυς
ηυ	as in feud[13]	as eff or ev	ηυξανεν

υι and ηυ are less common than the others.

2. An **improper diphthong** is made up of a vowel and an **iota subscript**. An iota subscript is a small ι written under the vowels α, η, or ω (ᾳ, ῃ, ῳ) and normally is the last letter in a word. This ι has no effect on the pronunciation but is essential for translation, so pay close attention to it.

   ᾳ ωρᾳ

   ῃ γραφῃ

   ῳ λογῳ

3. In some words you will find two vowels that normally form a diphthong, but in the case of these words do not. To show that these two vowels are pronounced as two separate sounds, a **diaeresis** (¨) is placed over the second vowel.

   For example, αι normally forms a diphthong, but in the case of Ἡσαΐας, the diaeresis indicates that αι forms two separate sounds: Ἡ σα ΐ ας. Cf. naïve in English.

3.7 Breathing Marks

Greek has two breathing marks. Every word beginning with a vowel or ρ has a breathing mark.

- The **rough** breathing is a ' placed over the initial vowel and adds an "h" sound to the word. The word ὑπερ is pronounced "huper." Every word that begins with a ρ or υ takes a rough breathing.
- The **smooth** breathing is a ' and is not pronounced. The word ἀποστολος is pronounced "apostolos."

There are some special situations.

- If a word begins with a capital single vowel, the breathing is placed before the vowel (e.g., Ἰσαακ).

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[13] Some suggest that the pronunciation of ηυ is the same as saying "hey you" if you run the words together.

- If a word begins with a diphthong, the breathing mark is placed over the second vowel of the diphthong (αἰτεω, Αἰγυπτος). The example words in 3.6 are properly written as: αἰρω, εἰ, οἰκια, αὐτος, οὐδε, υἱος, εὐθυς, and ηὐξανεν.

Summary

1. It is essential that you learn the Greek alphabet right away. You cannot learn anything else until you do.
2. Learn the English name, how to write the small letter, and how to pronounce the letter.
3. The vowels in Greek are α, ε, η, ι, ο, υ, and ω.
4. Every word beginning with a vowel must have either a rough or smooth breathing mark. If the word begins with a diphthong, the breathing mark is over the second vowel. If the word begins with a single vowel and is capitalized, the breathing mark goes before the first vowel.
5. A diphthong consists of two vowels pronounced as a single sound. The second vowel is always an ι or υ.
6. An improper diphthong is a diphthong with an iota subscript under the first vowel. The iota subscript does not affect pronunciation but is important in translation.

Many signs in modern Greece are written in both Greek and English. Can you spell the Greek words?

Chapter 4

Punctuation and Syllabification

Exegetical Insight

When the New Testament was first written, there were no punctuation marks. In fact, the words were run together one after another without any separation. Punctuation and versification entered the text of manuscripts at a much later period.

Obviously this has created some difficulties for contemporary scholars since the way a verse is punctuated can have a significant effect on the interpretation of the verse. One outstanding example is Romans 9:5. If a major stop is placed after κατὰ σάρκα ("according to the flesh"), then the final section of the verse is a statement about God the Father (the NEB has "May God, supreme above all, be blessed for ever! Amen"). However, if a minor stop is placed at that point, the final words of the sentence speak of Christ (the NIV has "Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen").

Does it make any difference? Most scholars believe it does. If the latter punctuation brings out what Paul intended, then we have in this verse a clear-cut statement affirming the deity of Jesus Christ. He is, in fact, God. The way a translation handles an ambiguous verse such as this at times reveals the theological leanings of the translator.

Robert H. Mounce

Overview

In this chapter you will learn:

- four Greek punctuation marks and three accents;
- how to break a Greek word into parts so you can pronounce it ("syllabification");
- your first twenty-six vocabulary words.

Greek Punctuation and Diacritical Marks

4.1 Punctuation

Character	*Looks like the English*	*Greek meaning*
θεός,	comma	comma
θεός.	period	period
θεός·		semicolon
θεός;	semicolon	question mark[1]

4.2 **Apostrophe.** When certain prepositions[2] and conjunctions end with a vowel and the next word begins with a vowel, the final vowel of the first word may drop out. This is called **elision.** It is marked by an apostrophe, which is placed where the vowel was dropped.

ἀπὸ ἐμοῦ → ἀπ᾽ ἐμοῦ

This is similar to the English contraction (e.g., "can't").

4.3 **Accents.** Almost every Greek word has an accent mark. It is placed over a vowel and shows which syllable receives the stress.

We believe that originally the accent was a pitch accent: the voice rose, dropped, or rose and dropped on the accented syllable. Most teachers are satisfied with students simply placing stress on the accented syllable.[3]

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[1] The form of a Greek question is not necessarily different from a statement; the punctuation and context are your main clues.

[2] Prepositions will be discussed in chapter 8. They are words such as "in" and "over" that describe the relationship between two items.

[3] In English we use "stress" accents. This means that when we come to the syllable that receives the accent, we put a little more stress on the pronunciation of that syllable. But in Classical Greek, we believe the accent was pitch, not stress. By the time of Koine Greek, the accent may have been stress. However, in Modern Greek the accent is pitch; some scholars argue that the accent has always been pitch.

There is an interesting story about a cannibal tribe that killed the first two missionary couples who came to them. The missionaries had tried to learn their language, but could not. The third brave couple started experiencing the same problems with the language as had the two previous couples until the wife, who had been a music major in college, recognized that the tribe had a developed set of pitch accents that were essential in understanding the language. When they recognized that the accents were pitch and not stress, they were able to learn the language and finally translate the Bible into that musically minded language. Luckily for us, while Greek accents were originally pitch, they are not that important in learning the language, and we will not be killed if we make a mistake.

- The **acute** accent shows that the pitch originally went up a little on the accented syllable (θάνατος).
- The **grave** accent shows that the voice originally dropped a little on the accented syllable (διὰ πύλης).

  When citing a single word that in the text has a grave, it is customary to change the grave to an acute. For example, if the sentence has διὰ πύλης and you want to reference the first word, you would write διά.
- The **circumflex** accent shows that the voice rose and then dropped a little on the accented syllable (γλῶσσα).

Notice how the shape of the accent gives a clue as to the direction of the pitch.

The question then becomes, when do you use which accent? Opinions vary from viewing the rules of accent placement as essential to being unnecessary. Since the original manuscripts did not have accents, and since in my opinion they unnecessarily burden the beginning student, I skip the rules of accent placement. If your teacher wants you to learn them, they are listed in the Advanced Information section of this chapter.

However, this does not mean that accents can be ignored. Far from it. Accents serve us very well in three areas.

- *Pronunciation.* If all the students in the class accent any syllable they wish, it will be difficult to talk to each other. Consistently placing stress on the accented syllable creates a desirable and necessary uniformity.
- *Memorization.* If you do not force yourself to say a word the same way every time, vocabulary memorization becomes difficult. Imagine trying to memorize the word κοινωνία if you could not decide which syllable to accent. Try pronouncing *"koi no ni a"* four times, each time accenting a different syllable. See why consistency is desirable?
- *Identification.* There are a few words that are identical except for their accents. τίς can mean "who?" and τις can mean "someone." There are also a few verbal forms where knowing the accent is helpful. I will point out these words and forms as you meet them. However, just remember that accents were not part of the original text and are open to interpretation.

Syllabification

4.4 **How to Divide Words.** In order to pronounce a Greek word, you must break it down into syllables. This is called **syllabification**, and there are two ways you can learn it.

The first is to recognize that Greek words syllabify in basically the same manner as English words do. Therefore, if you "go with your feelings" (and you are a native English speaker), you will syllabify Greek words almost automatically. If you practice reading 1 John 1 in the exercises of this chapter, syllabification should not be a problem. I have read it for you on the website class.

It is essential that you master the process of syllabification, otherwise you will not be able to move on to the next chapter.

4.5 **Rules.** The second way is to learn the basic syllabification rules. Here they are.

1. *There is one vowel (or diphthong) per syllable.*

   ἀ κη κό α μεν μαρ τυ ροῦ μεν

   Therefore, there are as many syllables as there are vowels/diphthongs.

2. *A single consonant by itself (not a cluster[4]) goes with the following vowel.*

   ἑ ω ρά κα μεν ἐ θε α σά με θα

   If the consonant is the final letter in the word, it goes with the preceding vowel.

3. *Two consecutive vowels that do not form a diphthong are divided.*

   ἐ θε α σά με θα Ἰ σα ΐ ας

4. *A consonant cluster that cannot be pronounced[5] is divided, and the first consonant goes with the preceding vowel.*

   ἔμ προ σθεν ἀρ χῆς

---

[4] A consonant cluster is two or more consonants in a row.

[5] One way to check whether a consonant cluster can be pronounced together is to see whether those consonants ever begin a word. For example, you know that the cluster στ can be pronounced together because there is a word σταυρόω. Although the lexicon may not show all the possible clusters, it will show you many of them.

5. *A consonant cluster that can be pronounced together goes with the following vowel.*

   Χρι στός γρα φή

   This includes a consonant cluster formed with μ or ν as the second letter, which is not natural for an English speaker.

   ἐ πί γνω σις ἔ θνε σιν

6. *Double consonants*[6] *are divided.*

   ἀ παγ γέλ λο μεν παρ ρη σί α

7. *Compound words*[7] *are divided where joined.*

   ἀντι χριστός ἐκ βάλλω

Summary

1. A period above the line is a Greek semicolon, and an English semicolon is a Greek question mark. Periods and commas look the same.
2. There are three accents. You do not have to know why they occur where they do, but place stress on the accented syllable.
3. English syllabification basically follows Greek syllabification. Listen to your teacher pronounce the words and it should become automatic.

Vocabulary

One of the frustrating parts of learning a language is memorization, especially memorizing vocabulary. And yet, memorizing vocabulary is one of the essential elements if you are going to enjoy the language. If you have to look up every other word, the language loses its charm. Because you are learning Koine Greek, there are a set number of words, and statistically there are a few significant facts.

There are 5,423 different words in the New Testament. They occur a total of 138,148 times (or what I call "word occurrences").[8] But there are only 313 words (5.78% of the total number) that occur 50 times or more. For special reasons I will also ask you to learn six more words that occur less than fifty times.

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[6] A double consonant is when the same consonant occurs twice in a row.

[7] Compound words are words made up of two distinct words. Of course, right now you cannot tell what is a compound word because you do not know any of the words.

[8] All frequency numbers come from *Accordance* and the 28th edition of the Nestle-Aland Greek text (excluding book titles).

These 319 words account for 114,069 word occurrences, or 80.57% of the total word count, four out of five.[9] For example, καί (the word for "and") occurs 9,162 times. Learn that one word and you know 6.6% of the total word count.

The point is that if you learn these 319 words well, you can read the bulk of the New Testament. I think it is counterproductive at this point to learn more, unless you really like doing things like that. Your time is better spent reading the Bible or learning grammar. And 319 words are not very many. Most introductory textbooks for other languages have about 2,000 words.

For encouragement, I have included in parentheses how many times each vocabulary word occurs, and at the end of every chapter I will tell you what percent of the 138,148 word occurrences you now know.

With most vocabulary words, I show how the Greek word made it into English ("cognates"). Seeing the similarities between languages can be helpful. Most of the cognates and their definitions are drawn from Ernest Klein's masterful study, *Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*, with good suggestions from Bruce Metzger's *Lexical Aids*. But remember: never define a Greek word on the basis of its English cognate! English was not a language until much later, so it had no impact on the meaning of Greek.

Notice that I list more information for each word than just the word and its meaning. For example, for ἄγγελος I have ἄγγελος, –ου, ὁ and *ἀγγελο. For now, ignore this additional information; you will learn what it means in subsequent chapters.

The definitions I give (called "glosses") are, at best, rough approximations of the meaning of the Greek word. In any two languages, there are rarely, if ever, equivalent words. The multiple glosses are an attempt to replicate the range of a Greek word's meaning.

I use a semicolon to divide the different meanings. For example, for ἄνθρωπος I list "*man; person, human being; people, mankind.*"

- *"Man"*: a male
- *"Person, human being"*: an individual human being of either gender
- *"People, mankind"*: a group of people

ἄγγελος, –ου, ὁ	*ἀγγελο (175) *angel; messenger*
ἀμήν	*verily, truly, amen, so let it be* (128)
ἄνθρωπος, –ου, ὁ	*ἀνθρωπο (550)[10] *man; person, human being; people, mankind*

[9] There are a few special forms of words in the vocabulary that do not have a frequency listed after them; these words are not included in this frequency counting.

[10] *Anthropology*, the study of humans.

ἀπόστολος, –ου, ὁ	*ἀποστολο (81) *apostle; envoy, messenger*
Γαλιλαία, –ας, ἡ	*γαλιλαια (61) *Galilee*
γραφή, –ῆς, ἡ	*γραφη (50)[11] *writing; Scripture*
δόξα, –ης, ἡ	*δοξα (166)[12] *glory, majesty, fame*
ἐγώ	*I* (1,800)[13]
ἔσχατος, –η, –ον	*ἐσχατο (52)[14] *last*
ζωή, –ῆς, ἡ	*ζωη (135)[15] *life*
θεός, –οῦ, ὁ	*θεο (1,317)[16] *God, god*
καί	*and; even, also; namely* (9,162)[17]
καρδία, –ας, ἡ	*καρδια (156)[18] *heart; inner self*
κόσμος, –ου, ὁ	*κοσμο (186)[19] *world, universe; mankind*
λόγος, –ου, ὁ	*λογο (330)[20] *word, Word; statement, message*

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[11] An *autograph* is a writing of one's own (αὐτός) name.

[12] The *doxology* is a "word" (λόγος, see below) of "praise."

[13] *Ego*, the "I" or "self" of a person. The frequency count is for all forms of ἐγώ in the singular.

[14] *Eschatology* is the study of last things.

[15] *Zoology* is the study of animal life.

[16] *Theology* is the study of God.

[17] *Triskaidekaphobia* is the fear (φόβος) of the number 13. 3 is τρεῖς, and (καί) 10 is δέκα.

[18] *Cardiology* is the study of the heart. The κ came over into English as a "c."

[19] *Cosmology* is the philosophical study of the universe.

[20] This word has a wide range of meaning. It can refer to what is spoken, or it can be used philosophically/theologically for the "Word" (John 1:1–18). As you can see from the examples above, λόγος (or the feminine λογία) is often used in compounds to denote the "study" of something.

πνεῦμα, –ατος, τό — *πνευματ (379)[21]
spirit, Spirit; wind, breath; inner life
By "Spirit" I mean the Holy Spirit. In Greek there are no silent consonants so the π is always pronounced; unlike in English where the "p" is not pronounced in words like "pneumatic."

προφήτης, –ου, ὁ — *προφητη (144)
prophet

σάββατον, –ου, τό — *σαββατο (68)
Sabbath; week
σάββατον often occurs in the plural, but can be translated as a singular.

φωνή, –ῆς, ἡ — *φωνη (139)[22]
sound, noise; voice

Χριστός, –οῦ, ὁ — *χριστο (529)
Christ, Messiah; Anointed One
In the Old Testament and the earlier parts of the New Testament, "χριστός" is a title; but as you move through Acts, it becomes so closely associated with Jesus that it also became a personal name and is generally capitalized (Χριστός).

Proper names are easy to learn.

Ἀβραάμ, ὁ — *ἀβρααμ (73)
Abraham

Δαυίδ, ὁ — *δαυιδ (59)
David

Παῦλος, –ου, ὁ — *παυλο (158)
Paul

Πέτρος, –ου, ὁ — *πετρο (156)
Peter

Πιλᾶτος, –ου, ὁ — *πιλατο (55)
Pilate

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[21] *Pneumatology* is the study of spiritual beings.

[22] The double meaning of φωνή as "sound" and "voice," along with the double meaning of πνεῦμα as "wind" and "spirit," creates the pun in John 3:8. "The wind (πνεῦμα) blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound (φωνή), but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit (πνεῦμα)." A *phonograph* is a "writer of sounds."

Σίμων, –ωνος, ὁ *σιμων (75)
Simon

Total word count in the New Testament:	138,148
Number of words learned to date:	26
Number of word occurrences in this chapter:	16,184
Number of word occurrences to date:	16,184
Percent of total word count in the New Testament:	11.71%

Remember that 11.55% translates into knowing more than one out of every ten word occurrences. One out of ten! Encouraged?

Advanced Information

In most of the chapters there is information that some teachers consider essential, but others do not. I have included this kind of information in the Advanced Information section.

4.6 **Basic rules for accents.** If you want to know the basic rules for accents, here they are.[23]

1. The **acute** (´) can occur on any of the last three syllables.
   - ἀκηκόαμεν
   - λόγου
   - αὐτός
2. The **circumflex** (˜) can occur only on one of the last two syllables and will always be over a long vowel. η and ω are long vowels. ᾳ is always long. α , ι, and υ can be either long or short.
   - πλανῶμεν
   - ἀρχῆς
3. The **grave** (`) is formed when a word is normally accented with an acute on the final syllable. When the word is not followed by a punctuation mark, the acute becomes a grave.
   - καὶ

   In other words, if the word is accented on the final syllable, the Greeks always dropped their voices at the end of a word, but raised it when the word was at the end of a clause or sentence.

[23] If you want to learn all the rules, check out my *Morphology of Biblical Greek* (MBG).

4. Accents on nouns try to stay on the same syllable. This is called **consistent accent**. Accents on verbs try to move as far back toward the beginning of the verb as possible. This is called **recessive accent**.

4.7 Here are some more Greek words. What are some of their English cognates? You do not need to memorize the Greek words now.

word	*definition*	*word*	*definition*
ἀγάπη	love	λίθος	stone
ἀδελφός	brother	μέγας	large, great
ἅγιος	holy	μήτηρ	mother
αἷμα	blood	Μωϋσῆς	Moses
ἁμαρτία	sin	νόμος	law
γλῶσσα	tongue; language	παραβολή	parable
ἐκκλησία	church, assembly	πατήρ	father
ἔργον	work	πρεσβύτερος	elder; older
εὐαγγέλιον	good news; Gospel	πῦρ	fire
θάνατος	death	ὕδωρ	water
θρόνος	throne	Φαρισαῖος	Pharisee
Ἰησοῦς	Jesus	ψυχή	soul, life, self
Ἰσραήλ	Israel		

Chapters 5–9

Chapter 5

In chapters 5–9 I introduce you to the noun system. Chapter 5 is an overview of English noun grammar, and we get into **cases** in chapter 6.

Chapter 6

English uses word order to determine the meaning of a sentence. Consider this sentence.

"The student ate dinner."

Who ate what? Did the student eat the dinner or did the dinner eat the student? How do you know? You know the student did the eating because "student" comes *before* "ate" in word order. What was eaten? The dinner. How do you know? "Dinner" comes *after* the verb in word order.

The word that does the action of the verb (in this case, "ate") is the **subject** ("student") and is in the **subjective case**. The word that receives the action of the verb is the **direct object** ("dinner") and is in the **objective case**.

Greek does not rely on word order like this. Rather, it appends different suffixes onto the word to indicate function. The suffixes are called **case endings**. Consider this sentence.

ὁ θεὸς ἀγαπᾷ τὸν κόσμον.

ὁ θεός means "God," and the ς shows that θεός is the subject of the verb ἀγαπᾷ (which means "love"). In Greek this is the **nominative** case. The word κόσμον means "world," and the ν shows it is the direct object of the verb. In Greek this is the **accusative** case.

You can even change the order around and have the same basic meaning.

ἀγαπᾷ τὸν κόσμον ὁ θεός.

This still means, "God loves the world."

The ὁ before θεός and the τόν before κόσμον are different forms of the article, usually translated "the," as in "the world." But Greek uses ὁ where English does not, such as with proper names, ὁ θεός. In translation we ignore ὁ in this situation.

Chapter 7

English shows **possession** by adding "apostrophe s" onto the end of a word: "God's word." We can also use the "of" construction: "the word of God."

Greek shows possession by putting **genitive** case endings onto the word. ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ means "God's word," or "the word of God." The υ on θεοῦ shows it is in the genitive case. (τοῦ is another form of ὁ.)

The **indirect object** is the word that is indirectly involved in the action of the verb. Consider this sentence.

"Karin threw Brad the ball."

The direct object is "ball"; she threw the ball. But she threw the ball to Brad. Brad is the indirect object. (If "Brad" were the direct object, he would get hurt.) In English, the indirect object is in the objective case, just like the direct object. In Greek, the indirect object is in the **dative** case and uses dative case endings. The dative carries other meanings as well, such as "by," "in," and "for" along with "to."

Chapter 8

Now we meet **prepositions**, those little words that describe the relationship between items, such as "in," "under," "around," and "through." The peculiarity of Greek prepositions is that the word that follows it (its **object**) is controlled by the preposition. ἐν means "in," and the case of its object will always be dative. The prepositional phrase ἐν τῷ θεῷ means "in God."

Other prepositions take objects in other cases, and many prepositions take objects in more than one case. In this case, the meaning of the preposition changes. When the object of μετά is in the genitive, μετά means "with." When its object is in the accusative, it means "after." μετὰ τοῦ θεοῦ (object in the genitive) means "with God." μετὰ τὸν θεόν means "after God."

The verb "*to be*," which occurs in many forms like "I am," "you are," "they were," is not followed by an object in the accusative. It takes a **predicate nominative**. ὁ θεός ἐστιν ἀγαθός means "God is good." The verb ἐστιν is a form of the verb "to be." The word ἀγαθός is in the nominative case, not the accusative.

Chapter 9

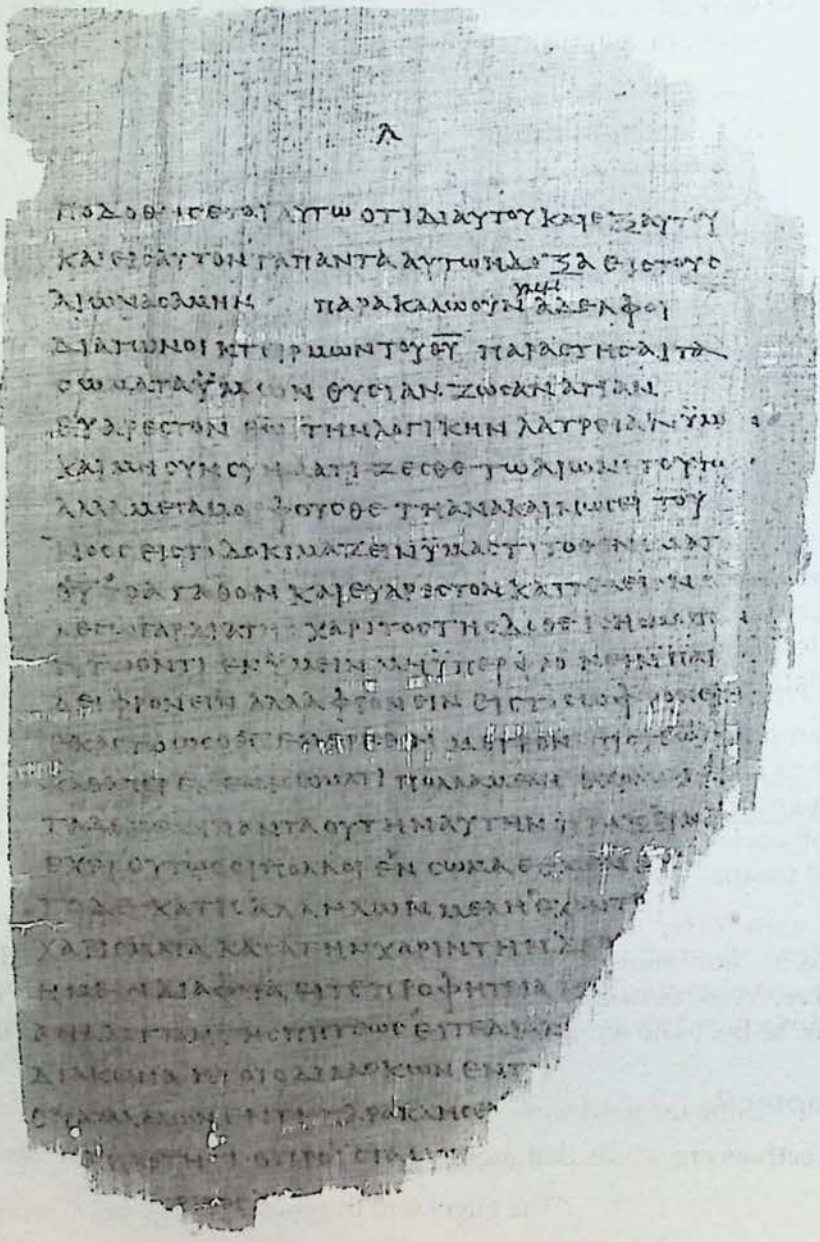
Adjectives are words that modify a noun or pronoun. Consider this sentence.

"The angel sent the good apostle."

"Good" (ἀγαθός) tells you something about the noun "apostle" (ἀπόστολος).

In Greek, all nouns have not only case but also **number** (singular or plural) and **gender** (masculine, feminine, or neuter). An adjective must be in the same case, number, and gender as the word it modifies.

In this example, "apostle" would be accusative (because it is the direct object), singular (because there is only one), and masculine: ἀπόστολον. For "good" to modify ἀπόστολον, ἀγαθός would also have to be accusative singular masculine: ἀγαθόν.



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Chapter 5

Introduction to English Nouns

Overview

In this chapter you will learn the following:

- terms used in English grammar (inflection, case, number, gender, lexical form);
- other terms such as definite article, predicate nominative, and declension;
- parts of speech (noun, adjective, preposition, subject/predicate);
- a brief introduction to verbs.

Introduction

5.1 As strange as it may seem, the first major obstacle many of you must overcome is your lack of knowledge of English grammar. For whatever reasons, many do not know enough English grammar to learn Greek grammar. I cannot teach about the Greek nominative case until you know what a case is. You must learn to crawl before walking.

For this reason I begin our discussion of Greek nouns (chapters 6–14) with a short introduction to the English grammar relevant for studying nouns. Also, at the beginning of every chapter I will introduce some of the finer points of English grammar that are relevant for that chapter.

There is a lot of information in this chapter. The purpose is not to overwhelm you but to introduce you to nouns and provide a central location for your reference. As you have questions in the later chapters, refer back to this chapter.

Inflection

5.2 Sometimes a word changes its form. This is called **inflection**.

- A word might change its form when it performs different *functions* in a sentence. For example, the personal pronoun is "she" when it

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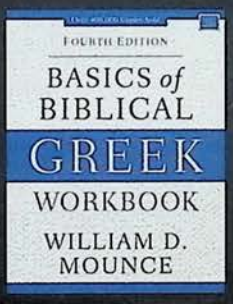

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