

# The Greek Language

The Greek language has a long and rich history stretching all the way from the thirteenth century B.C. to the present. The earliest form of the language is called “Linear B” (13th century B.C.). The form of Greek used by writers from Homer (8th century B.C.) through Plato (4th century B.C.) 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 Phoenician’s as was that of Hebrew. Classical Greek existed in many dialects of which three were primary: Doric, Aeolic, and Ionic (of which Attic was a branch).

Athens was conquered in the fourth century B.C. by King Philip of Macedonia. Alexander the Great, Philip’s son, who was tutored by the Greek philosopher Aristotle, set out to conquer the world and spread Greek culture and language. Because Alexander 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. “Koine” (κοινή) means “common” and describes the common, everyday form of the language, used by everyday people. It was not considered 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 King James English). Koine was a simplified form of classical Greek and unfortunately 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. Some of these subtleties come through in Scripture but not often. It is this common Koine Greek that is used in the Septuagint, the New Testament, and the writings of the Apostolic Fathers.

For a long time Koine Greek confused many scholars. 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 studies 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 perhaps 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; it belongs to all people. It now becomes our task to learn this marvelous language to help us make the grace of God known to all people.

# Learning Greek

Before we start learning the language, we need to talk about how to learn. If you have developed any bad study habits they are going to be magnified as you set out to learn Greek. Let's talk about a few of the essentials.

## 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 will have difficulty reaching the goal. In other words, is the language worth the effort? We have been blessed with a wealth of good and varied translations. A careful and critical use of these goes a long way in helping the preacher understand the Word of God better. 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, preparing personal Bible studies, and learning Greek. 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?<sup>1</sup> When Paul writes to the Ephesians that it is "by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not of yourselves; it is a gift from God" (Eph 2:8), what does "it" refer to?<sup>2</sup> When Paul asks, "Do all speak in tongues" (1 Cor 12:30), is he implying that the answer is "Yes"?<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The people.

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 life-long labors of scholars who should be heard. 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 ever to take tennis lessons? Sounds ridiculous, doesn't it?

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, is said to have been 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 Greek (or any language, as far as that goes) 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 very little joy in translating if you have to look up every other word in the lexicon. Rote memory will be 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 life saver. 3 x 5 index cards cut in thirds are a nice size.
2. Use the computer flash card system that is included with this text. You can tell it which words you have difficulty in 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 "prosopon," 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.
4. You must pronounce Greek consistently and write it neatly. If your pronunciation varies it is difficult to remember the words.

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<sup>2</sup> The whole process of salvation, which includes our faith.

<sup>3</sup> He is stating that the answer is "No."

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. We have tried to point out in the footnotes whenever a knowledge of the Greek helps you exegetically or devotionally to better understand the verse's meaning.

We will also be introducing you to intermediate grammar through the footnotes to the exercises. Whereas the footnotes in the grammar are not essential, they are very important in the exercises.

Be sure to treat the exercises as tests. Learn the chapter, do as many of the exercises as you can, work back through the chapter, and then 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.

## 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.<sup>4</sup>

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 New Testament. Enjoy the excitement of discovery and await the day when it will all bloom into fruition.

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<sup>4</sup> *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Broadman, 1934) 4th edition, xix.

# The Alphabet and Pronunciation

## Overview

We 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 we will learn:

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

## The Greek Alphabet

- 3.1** Footnotes in this volume are not necessary to learn (although they are often interesting), except in the vocabulary section where they may be significant. (The footnotes in the Workbook tend to be more important.)
- 3.2** The Greek alphabet has twenty-four letters.<sup>1</sup> At first it is only important to learn the English name, small letters, and pronunciation. The transliterations<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> There is some disagreement as to the correct pronunciation of a few of the letters; these are marked in the footnotes. We have

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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 sounds and often similar functions, and therefore it is said that the English “b” is the transliteration of the Greek “beta.”

<sup>3</sup> Originally the Bible was written in all capital letters with no punctuation, accent marks, or spaces between the words. For example, John 1:1 began, ΕΝΑΡΧΗΗΝΟ ΛΟΓΟΣ. Capital letters, or “majuscules,” were used until the later centuries A.D. when cursive script was adopted. Cursive script is like our handwriting where the letters are joined together. In Greek texts today, John 1:1 begins, Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος.

chosen the standard pronunciations that will help you learn the language the easiest.

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 letter written as a capital and as a small letter, and its pronunciation.

Alpha	ἄλφα	<i>a</i>	A	α	a as in <u>f</u> ather
Beta	βῆτα	<i>b</i>	B	β	b as in <u>B</u> ible
Gamma	γάμμα	<i>g</i>	Γ	γ	g as in <u>g</u> one
Delta	δέλτα	<i>d</i>	Δ	δ	d as in <u>d</u> og
Epsilon	ἒ ψιλόν	<i>e</i>	E	ε	e as in <u>m</u> et
Zeta	ζῆτα	<i>z</i>	Z	ζ	z as in <u>d</u> aze <sup>4</sup>
Eta	ἦτα	<i>ē</i>	H	η	e as in <u>o</u> bey
Theta	θῆτα	<i>th</i>	Θ	θ	th as in <u>t</u> hing
Iota	ἰῶτα	<i>i</i>	I	ι	i as in <u>i</u> ntrigue <sup>5</sup>
Kappa	κάππα	<i>k</i>	K	κ	k as in <u>k</u> itchen
Lambda	λάμβδα	<i>l</i>	Λ	λ	l as in <u>l</u> aw
Mu	μῦ	<i>m</i>	M	μ	m as in <u>m</u> other
Nu	νῦ	<i>n</i>	N	ν	n as in <u>n</u> ew
Xi	ξῖ	<i>x</i>	Ξ	ξ	x as in <u>a</u> xiom <sup>6</sup>
Omicron	ὀ μικρόν	<i>o</i>	O	ο	o as in <u>n</u> ot <sup>7</sup>
Pi	πί	<i>p</i>	Π	π	p as in <u>p</u> each
Rho	ῥῶ	<i>r</i>	P	ρ	r as in <u>r</u> od <sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Some pronounce the zeta as the “dz” combination. This helps to differentiate it from the sigma. Wenham (19) says that it is pronounced “dz” unless it is the first letter in the word, in which case it is pronounced “z.”

<sup>5</sup> The iota can be either long (“intrigue”) or short (“intrigue”). Listen to how your teacher pronounces the words and you will pick up the differences.

<sup>6</sup> Some prefer a simple “x” sound for the xi and not the double “xs” as in the word “axiom.” We feel that the “xs” combination helps to differentiate xi from chi.

<sup>7</sup> The omicron is pronounced by some with a long “o” sound as in the word “obey.” It is pronounced by others with a short “o” sound as in the word “lot.” There is a question as to what the actual pronunciation of this letter was in the Koine period. In modern Greek it is long as in omega. We have chosen to use a short pronunciation in order to differentiate the omicron from the omega.

<sup>8</sup> Some prefer the “rh” sound.



Sigma	σίγμα	<i>s</i>	Σ	σ/ς	<i>s</i> as in <u>study</u>
Tau	ταῦ	<i>t</i>	Τ	τ	<i>t</i> as in <u>talk</u>
Upsilon	ῦ ψιλόν	<i>u/y</i>	Υ	υ	<i>u</i> as the German <u>ü</u> <sup>9</sup>
Phi	φῖ	<i>ph</i>	Φ	φ	<i>ph</i> as in <u>phone</u>
Chi	χῖ	<i>ch</i>	Χ	χ	<i>ch</i> as in <u>loch</u> <sup>10</sup>
Psi	ψῖ	<i>ps</i>	Ψ	ψ	<i>ps</i> as in <u>lips</u>
Omega	ὦ μέγα	<i>ō</i>	Ω	ω	<i>o</i> as in <u>tone</u>

### 3.3 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 five letters that are transliterated by two letters. θ is th; ξ is xs; φ is ph; χ is ch; ψ is ps. These are called **double consonants**.
3. It is important that you do not confuse the η (eta) with the English “n,” the ν (nu) with the “v,” the ρ (rho) with the “p,” the χ (chi) with the “x,” or the ω (omega) with the “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, ω.

### 3.4 Pronouncing the Letters

1. You will learn the alphabet best by pronouncing the letters out loud as you write them, over and over.
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 mu 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.”

<sup>9</sup> Other suggestions are the u in “universe” and the oo in “book.”

<sup>10</sup> Pronounced with a decided Scottish accent.

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**.<sup>11</sup>

5. Alpha and iota can be either long or short. Iota may have changed its sound (cf. “intrigue”, “intrigue”); alpha may not have.<sup>12</sup> Epsilon and omicron are always short while eta and omega are always long.

“Long” and “short” refer to the relative length of time it requires to pronounce the vowel (e.g., “father” and “cat”).

6. Greek also has two **breathing marks**. Every word beginning with a vowel and all words beginning with a rho have a breathing mark.

The **rough** breathing is a <sup>ϝ</sup> placed over the first vowel and adds an “h” sound to the word. ὑπέρ is pronounced “huper.” Every word that begins with a rho or upsilon takes a rough breathing.

The **smooth** breathing is a <sup>ϵ</sup> placed over the first vowel and is not pronounced. ὑπέρ (which is not a real Greek word) would be pronounced “uper.” ἀπόστολος is pronounced “a pó sto los.”

### 3.5 Pronouncing diphthongs

1. A **diphthong** consists of two vowels that produce but one sound. The second vowel is always an ι or an υ. They are pronounced as follows.<sup>13</sup>

αι	as in <u>ai</u> slе	αἶρω
ει	as in <u>ei</u> ght	εἶ
οι	as in <u>oi</u> l	οἰκία
αυ	as in <u>sa</u> uerkraut	αὐτός
ου	as in <u>so</u> up	οὐδέ
υι	as in <u>su</u> ite	υἱός
ευ, ηυ	as in <u>fe</u> ud <sup>14</sup>	εὐθύς / ηὕξανεν

υι and ηυ are less common than the others.

<sup>11</sup> Most gamma nasals are formed from the γγ combination.

<sup>12</sup> There is much discussion on this type of issue among scholars. The long alpha (e.g., “father”) would have taken longer to say than the short alpha. (e.g., “cat”).

<sup>13</sup> The diphthong ωυ is used in Classical Greek, but occurs in the New Testament only in the name Μωϋσῆς where there is always a diaeresis indicating that it is not a diphthong.

<sup>14</sup> Some suggest that the pronunciation of ηυ is the same as saying “hey you” if you run the words together.

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

α	ὄρα
η	γραφή
ω	λόγω

3. If a word begins with a diphthong, the breathing mark is placed over the second vowel of the diphthong (αἰτέω).

If a capitalized word begins with a diphthong, the breathing mark is still over the second vowel (Αἰτέω).

If the word begins with two vowels that do not form a diphthong, the breathing mark stands in front of the capital (Ἰησοῦς).

4. In some words we find two vowels that normally form a diphthong, but in this case do not. To show that these two vowels are pronounced as two separate sounds, a **diaeresis** (¨) is placed over the second vowel (Ἡσαΐας). The αι normally forms a diphthong, but in this word the diaeresis indicates that it forms two separate sounds: Ἡ σα ι ας. Cf. naïve in English.

## 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 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 is capitalized, the breathing mark goes either before the first vowel or over the second vowel, depending on whether the two vowels form a diphthong.
5. A diphthong consists of two vowels pronounced as a single sound. The second vowel is always an iota or upsilon.
6. An improper diphthong is a diphthong with an iota subscript under the vowel. The iota subscript does not affect pronunciation but is important in translation.

## Advanced Information

In most of the chapters there is information that some teachers consider essential, but others do not. We have included that kind of information in the “Advanced Information” section of each chapter.

**3.6 Capital letters.** If you want to learn capitals, notice that there are very few unexpected forms. The unusual ones are in bold print and underlined.

<i>capital</i>	<i>small</i>	<i>comments</i>
A	α	
B	β	
<b>Γ</b>	γ	
<b>Δ</b>	δ	
E	ε	
Z	ζ	
<b>H</b>	η	
Θ	θ	
I	ι	
K	κ	
Λ	λ	
M	μ	
N	ν	
<b>Ξ</b>	ξ	Not to be confused with the capital theta (Θ).
O	ο	
Π	π	
P	ρ	Not to be confused with a capital English “P”.
Σ	σ/ς	Not to be confused with the capital epsilon (Ε).
T	τ	
Υ	υ	
Φ	φ	
X	χ	
Ψ	ψ	
<b>Ω</b>	ω	

The capitals may be familiar to some because of their use in designating fraternities and sororities.

# 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 “Christ, 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 reveals the theological leanings of the translator.

*Robert H. Mounce*

## Overview

In this chapter we will learn:

- four Greek punctuation marks and three accents;
- how to break a Greek word into parts so we can pronounce it (“syllabification”).



Two of the favorite places at the Acropolis.

## Greek Punctuation

### 4.1 Punctuation

<i>Character</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Greek</i>
θεός,	comma	comma
θεός.	period	period
θεός·	period above the line	semicolon
θεός;	semicolon	question mark <sup>1</sup>

### 4.2 Diacritical Marks

1. **Diaeresis.** This has already been explained in §3.5.
2. **Apostrophe.** When a preposition<sup>2</sup> ends with a vowel and the next word begins with a vowel, the final vowel of the first word drops out. This is called **elision**. It is marked by an apostrophe, which is placed where the vowel was dropped (e.g., ἀπὸ ἐμοῦ becomes ἀπ' ἐμοῦ). This is similar to the English contraction (e.g., “can’t”).
3. **Accents.** Almost every Greek word has an accent mark.<sup>3</sup> It is placed over a vowel and shows which syllable receives the accent. Originally the accent was a pitch accent: the voice rose, dropped, or rose and dropped on the accented syllable. Eventually it became a stress accent as we have in English.<sup>4</sup> Most teachers are satisfied with students simply placing stress on the accented syllable.

The **acute** accent shows that the pitch originally went up a little on the accented syllable (αἰτέω).

The **grave** accent shows that the voice originally dropped a little on the accented syllable (καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος).

The **circumflex** accent shows that the voice rose and then dropped a little on the accented syllable (ἀγνώς).

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

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<sup>1</sup> The form of a Greek question is not necessarily different from a statement; the punctuation and context are your main clues.

<sup>2</sup> Prepositions will be discussed in chapter 8. They are little words such as “in” and “over” that describe the relationship between two items.

<sup>3</sup> Some words appear to have two accents. There are certain words that lose their accent to the following word (“proclitic”) or the preceding word (“enclitic”), and you end up with a double accent on one word and no accent on the other.

essential to being totally unnecessary. Since the biblical manuscripts never had them originally, and since in our opinion they unnecessarily burden the beginning student, this text ignores the rules of accent placement (but see the Advanced Information section on p. 20).

However, this does not mean that accents are worthless and should 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 can become very difficult to talk to each other. Consistently placing the 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 very 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. We will point out these words and forms as we meet them. However, just remember that accents were not part of the original text and are open to interpretation.

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<sup>4</sup> 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, the accent originally was pitch, not stress. The voice rises or falls a little when the accented syllable is pronounced. Most teachers allow their students to use a stress accent when pronouncing Greek because the music pitch accent is difficult. By the time of Koine Greek, the accent may have been stress. There is an interesting story about a cannibal tribe that killed the first two missionary couples who came to them. They 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 very 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 see the significance these accents played in that language and finally translated the Bible into that musically-minded language. Luckily for us, while Greek accents were pitch, they are not that important.

## Syllabification

### 4.3 How to Divide the Words

Just as it is important to learn how to pronounce the letters correctly, it is also important to pronounce the words correctly. But in order to pronounce a Greek word you must be able to break it down into its 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,” you will syllabify Greek words almost automatically. If you practice reading 1 John 1, included in the exercises of this chapter, syllabification should not be a problem. I have read it for you on the CD-ROM included with this text. The second way is to learn some basic syllabification rules.

It is essential that you master the process of syllabification, otherwise you will never be able to pronounce the words consistently, and you will have trouble memorizing them and communicating with your class mates.

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

ὄ 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<sup>5</sup>) goes with the following vowel.*

ἐ ω ρά κα μεν                      ἐ θε α σά με θα

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

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

ἐ θε α σά με θα                      Ἡ σα ῖ ας

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<sup>5</sup> A consonant cluster is two or more consonants in a row.



4. A consonant cluster that can **not** be pronounced together<sup>6</sup> is divided, and the first consonant goes with the preceding vowel.

ἐμ̣ προ σθεν                      ἄρ̣ χῆς

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.

ἐ̣ θνε σιν                              πνεῦ̣ μα

6. Double consonants<sup>7</sup> are divided.

ἄ̣ παγ γέλ̣ λο̣ μεν                      παρ̣ ρη̣ σί̣ α

7. Compound words<sup>8</sup> are divided where joined.

ἀ̣ντι̣ χριστός                              ἐκ̣ βάλλω

## Summary

1. A period above the line is a Greek semi-colon (literally, half a colon), and an English semi-colon is a Greek question mark.
2. There are three accents. You do not have to know why they occur where they do, but pay attention to them as you pronounce the word.
3. Greek syllabification basically follows English syllabification. Listen to your teacher pronounce the words and it will quickly become automatic.

## Vocabulary

One of the most frustrating parts of learning 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 we are learning

<sup>6</sup> 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 σταυρός. Although the lexicon may not show all the possible clusters, it will show you many of them.

<sup>7</sup> A “double consonant” is when the same consonant occurs twice in a row.

<sup>8</sup> 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.

biblical Greek only, we have a set number of words, and statistically there are a few significant facts.

There are 5,437 different words in the New Testament. They occur a total of 138,162 times.<sup>9</sup> But there are only 313 words (5.8% of the total number) that occur 50 times or more. In addition, for special reasons you will be asked to learn six more words that occur less than fifty times. These 319 words account for 110,425 word occurrences, or 79.92% of the total word count, almost four out of five.<sup>10</sup> For example, καί (the word for “and”) occurs 9,153 times. Learn that one word and you know 6.7% 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. We feel it is counterproductive 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 we have included in parentheses how many times each vocabulary word occurs, and at the end of every chapter we will tell you what percent of the 138,162 word occurrences you now know.

In this chapter we have listed some Greek words that have come over directly into English (“cognates”).<sup>11</sup> Seeing the similarities between languages can often be helpful. Some of the cognates are not part of many peoples’ vocabulary, but we have found that it is still helpful to know that the cognates exist. Most of the cognates and their definitions were drawn from Ernest Klein’s masterful study, *Etymological Dictionary*, 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. Think of as many cognates as you can for the following words. We will list cognates in the footnotes.

When you use FlashWorks, you will notice that it lists more information for each word. For example, for ἄγγελος it has ἄγγελος, -ου, ὁ. You will learn about this additional information in subsequent chapters.

ἄγγελος	angel, messenger (175)
ἀμήν	verily, truly, amen, so let it be (129)
ἄνθρωπος	man, mankind, person, people, humankind, human being (550) <sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> All frequency numbers come from the software program Accordance.

<sup>10</sup> There are also a few special forms of words you are given in the vocabulary. If a vocabulary word does not have its frequency listed after it, that word is not included in this frequency counting.

<sup>11</sup> As you will see, kappa came over into English as a “c.” Remember also that when upsilon is not in a diphthong, it is transliterated as “y.”

ἀπόστολος	apostle, envoy, messenger (80)
Γαλιλαία	Galilee (61) <sup>13</sup>
γραφή	writing, Scripture (50) <sup>14</sup>
δόξα	glory, majesty, fame (166) <sup>15</sup>
ἐγώ	I (1,725) <sup>16</sup>
ἔσχατος	last (52) <sup>17</sup>
ζωή	life (135) <sup>18</sup>
θεός	God, god (1,317) <sup>19</sup>
καί	and, even, also, namely (9,153) <sup>20</sup>
καρδία	heart, inner self (156) <sup>21</sup>
κόσμος	world, universe, humankind (186) <sup>22</sup>
λόγος	word, Word, statement, message (330) <sup>23</sup>
πνεῦμα	spirit, Spirit, wind, breath, inner life (379) <sup>24</sup>
προφήτης	prophet (144)
σάββατον	Sabbath, week (68) <sup>25</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *Anthropology*, the study of humans.

<sup>13</sup> Most names are easily recognized.

<sup>14</sup> An *autograph* is a writing of one's own (αὐτός) name.

<sup>15</sup> The *doxology* is a "word" (λόγος, see below) of "praise."

<sup>16</sup> *Ego*, the "I" or "self" of a person.

<sup>17</sup> *Eschatology* is the study of last things.

<sup>18</sup> *Zoology* is the study of animal life.

<sup>19</sup> *Theology* is the study of God.

<sup>20</sup> *Triskaidekaphobia* is the fear (φόβος) of the number 13, 3 (τρεῖς) and (καί) 10 (δέκα).

<sup>21</sup> *Cardiology* is the study of the heart. Notice how the kappa came over into English as a "c."

<sup>22</sup> *Cosmology* is the philosophical study of the universe.

<sup>23</sup> This word has a wide range of meaning, both in Greek and in English. 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 examples above, λόγος (or the feminine λογία) is often used in compounds to denote the "study" of something.

<sup>24</sup> By "Spirit" we mean the Holy Spirit. Remember, in Greek there are no silent consonants, so the pi is pronounced; unlike in English where, for example, the "p" is not pronounced in the word, "pneumatic." *Pneumatology* is the study of spiritual beings.

<sup>25</sup> σάββατον often occurs in the plural, but can be translated as a singular.

φωνή	sound, noise, voice (139) <sup>26</sup>
Χριστός	Christ, Messiah, Anointed One (529) <sup>27</sup>

Proper names are especially easy to learn.

Ἀβραάμ	Abraham (73)
Δαυίδ	David (59)
Παῦλος	Paul (158)
Πέτρος	Peter (156)
Πιλάτος	Pilate (55)
Σίμων	Simon (75)

There are many other words that we could show you, but as you can see, learning vocabulary does not have to be that difficult. Learn these vocabulary words now.

Total word count in the New Testament:	138,162
Number of words learned to date:	26
Number of word occurrences in this chapter:	16,100
Number of word occurrences to date:	16,100
Percent of total word count in the New Testament:	11.65%

Remember that 11.65% translates into knowing more than one out of every ten word occurrences. One out of ten! Encouraged?

## Advanced Information

**4.4 Basic rules for accents.** If you want to know the basics about accents, here they are.

1. The **acute** ( ´ ) can occur on any of the last three syllables.
2. The **circumflex** ( ˆ ) can occur only on one of the last two syllables and will always be over a long vowel. η and ω are always long vowels. α , ι, and υ can be either long or short. α is always long.

<sup>26</sup> The double meaning of “sound” and “voice,” along with the double meaning of πνεῦμα as “wind” and “spirit,” creates the pun in John 3:8. τὸ πνεῦμα ὅπου θέλει πνεῖ, καὶ τὴν φωνὴν αὐτοῦ ἀκούεις, ἀλλ’ οὐκ οἶδας πόθεν ἔρχεται καὶ ποῦ ὑπάγει· οὕτως ἐστὶν πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος. A *phonograph* is literally a “writer of sounds.”

<sup>27</sup> In the Old Testament and the earlier parts of the New Testament “χριστός” was a title, but as you move through Acts and it becomes so closely associated with Jesus that it becomes a personal name like “Jesus” and should be capitalized (Χριστός).

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, then the acute becomes a grave. 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.
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*.

If you want to learn more about accents, check out my *Morphology of Biblical Greek*.

#### 4.5 Here are some more Greek words. What are some English cognates? You do not need to learn the Greek words now.

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