

NEW TESTAMENT GREEK FOR BEGINNERS

BY

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PREFACE

This textbook is intended primarily for students who are beginning the study of the Greek Testament either without any previous acquaintance with the Greek language or with an acquaintance so imperfect that a renewed course of elementary instruction is needed. Owing to the exigencies of the present educational situation, many who desire to use the Greek Testament are unable to approach the subject through a study of classical Attic prose. The situation is undoubtedly to be regretted, but its existence should not be ignored. It is unfortunate that so many students of the New Testament have no acquaintance with classical Greek, but it would be still more unfortunate if such students, on account of their lack of acquaintance with classical Greek, should be discouraged from making themselves acquainted at least with the easier language of the New Testament.

The New Testament usage will here be presented without any reference to Attic prose. But a previous acquaintance with Attic prose, even though it be only a smattering, will prove to be an immense assistance in the mastery of the course. By students who possess such acquaintance the lessons can be covered much more rapidly than by mere beginners.

The book is an instruction book, and not a descriptive grammar. Since it is an instruction book, everything in it is made subservient to the imparting of a reading acquaintance with the language. In a descriptive grammar, for example, the rules may be formulated with a lapidary succinctness which would here be out of place. The effort is made here to enter upon those explanations which the fifteen years' experience of the author in teaching New Testament Greek has shown to be essential. In a descrip-

tive grammar, moreover, the illustrations would have to be limited to what can actually be found in the New Testament, but in the present book they are reduced so far as possible to an ideally simple form, which does not always appear in the New Testament books. In this way the vocabulary at every point can be confined to what the student has actually studied, and confusing footnotes can be avoided. It is highly important that only one grammatical point should be considered at a time. An introduction of illustrations taken from the New Testament would often so overlay the explanation with new words and with subsidiary usages unfamiliar to the student that the specific grammatical point under discussion would be altogether obscured. Of course, however, the effort has been made not to introduce into the illustrations any usages except those which are common in the New Testament idiom.

The character of the book as an instruction book has also determined the choice and order of the material. The treatment has been limited to a few essential points, and no attempt has been made to exhibit the real richness and flexibility of the New Testament language, which can be discovered only through reading. This limitation may in places give rise to criticism, as for example in connection with the treatment of participles. The author is well aware of the fundamentally non-temporal character of the tenses in the participle, and also of the great variety in the shades of thought which the participle can express. But after all it is highly important for the beginner to understand clearly the distinction between the present and the aorist participle, and that distinction can be made clear at the beginning only through the proper use of our temporal mode of thought. Only when what is simple and usual has been firmly impressed upon the student's mind by patient repetition can the finer and more difficult points be safely touched.

The treatment of the participle, moreover, has been thrust as far forward as possible in the book, in order that ample time may be allowed for practising the usages which it involves. Experience shows that in learning to read New Testament Greek, the participle is almost the crux of the whole matter.

Special attention has been given to the exercises. Until the very last few lessons (and then only in the Greek-English exercises) the sentences have not for the most part been taken from the New Testament, since the book is intended as an instruction book in Greek and not as a stimulus to memory of the English Bible. At a later stage in the study of New Testament Greek, the student's memory of the English Bible is not an unmixed evil, for repeated reading of already familiar passages will often fix the meaning of a word in the mind far better than it could ever be fixed by the mere learning of a vocabulary. But in the early stages, such assistance will do far more harm than good. In the exercises, the effort has been made to exhibit definitely the forms and grammatical usages which have just been discussed in the same lesson, and also to keep constantly before the mind, in ever new relationships, the most important usages that have been discussed before.

The vocabularies have been limited to words which are very common in the New Testament or which require special explanation. Everywhere the effort has been made to introduce the words in the illustrations and exercises. The learning of lists of words, unless the words so learned are actually used, is a waste of time.

The author desires to express appreciation of the pioneer work which has been done in this country by Professor John Homer Huddilston, Ph.D., in his *Essentials of New Testament Greek*, First Edition, 1895, and also of the larger English book of Rev. H. P. V. Nunn, M.A., entitled *The*

Elements of New Testament Greek, First Edition, 1913. The two books by John Williams White, *The Beginner's Greek Book*, 1895, and *The First Greek Book*; 1896, have also been consulted with profit, especially as regards the form of presentation. Among reference works, the new grammar of J. H. Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, edited by Wilbert Francis Howard, especially Part ii of Vol. II, on *Accidence*, 1920, and the work by E. D. Burton on *Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek*, 1906, have been found particularly useful. Acknowledgment is also to be made to Blass-Debrunner, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch*, 1913, and to the convenient summary of classical usage in Goodwin's *Greek Grammar*. And both the *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* of Grimm-Thayer and Moulton and Geden's *Concordance to the Greek Testament* have been found absolutely indispensable throughout. The advanced student will find much useful material in the large work of A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 1914.

The author is deeply grateful to Professor Edward Capps, Ph.D., LL.D., of Princeton University, who, in the most gracious possible way, has examined the proof of the book throughout, and (of course without becoming at all responsible for any faults or errors) has rendered invaluable assistance at many points. Much encouragement and help have also been received from the wise counsel and unfailing kindness of the Rev. Professor William Park Armstrong, D.D., of Princeton Theological Seminary.

INTRODUCTION

During the classical period, the Greek language was divided into a number of dialects, of which there were three great families—the Doric, the Aeolic, and the Ionic. In the fifth century before Christ, one branch of the Ionic family, the Attic, attained the supremacy, especially as the language of prose literature. The Attic dialect was the language of Athens in her glory—the language of Thucydides, of Plato, of Demosthenes, and of most of the other great prose writers of Greece.

Various causes contributed to make the Attic dialect dominant in the Greek-speaking world. First and foremost must be put the genius of the Athenian writers. But the political and commercial importance of Athens was also not without its effect. Hosts of strangers came into contact with Athens through government, war and trade, and the Athenian colonies also extended the influence of the mother city. The Athenian Empire, indeed, soon fell to pieces. Athens was conquered first by Sparta in the Peloponnesian war, and then, in the middle of the fourth century before Christ, along with the other Greek cities, came under the domination of the king of Macedonia, Philip. But the influence of the Attic dialect survived the loss of political power; the language of Athens became also the language of her conquerors.

Macedonia was not originally a Greek kingdom, but it adopted the dominant civilization of the day, which was the civilization of Athens. The tutor of Philip's son, Alexander the Great, was Aristotle, the Greek philosopher; and that fact is only one indication of the conditions of the time. With astonishing rapidity Alexander made himself master of the whole eastern world, and the triumphs of the Mace-

donian arms were also triumphs of the Greek language in its Attic form. The empire of Alexander, indeed, at once fell to pieces after his death in 323 B.C.; but the kingdoms into which it was divided were, at least so far as the court and the governing classes were concerned, Greek kingdoms. Thus the Macedonian conquest meant nothing less than the Hellenization of the East, or at any rate it meant an enormous acceleration of the Hellenizing process which had already begun.

When the Romans, in the last two centuries before Christ, conquered the eastern part of the Mediterranean world, they made no attempt to suppress the Greek language. On the contrary, the conquerors to a very considerable extent were conquered by those whom they conquered. Rome herself had already come under Greek influence, and now she made use of the Greek language in administering at least the eastern part of her vast empire. The language of the Roman Empire was not so much Latin as it was Greek.

Thus in the first century after Christ Greek had become a world language. The ancient languages of the various countries did indeed continue to exist, and many districts were bilingual—the original local languages existing side by side with the Greek. But at least in the great cities throughout the Empire—certainly in the East—the Greek language was everywhere understood. Even in Rome itself there was a large Greek-speaking population. It is not surprising that Paul's letter to the Roman Church is written not in Latin but in Greek.

But the Greek language had to pay a price for this enormous extension of its influence. In its career of conquest it experienced important changes. The ancient Greek dialects other than Attic, although they disappeared almost completely before the beginning of the Christian era, may

have exerted considerable influence upon the Greek of the new unified world. Less important, no doubt, than the influence of the Greek dialects, and far less important than might have been expected, was the influence of foreign languages. But influences of a more subtle and less tangible kind were mightily at work. Language is a reflection of the intellectual and spiritual habits of the people who use it. Attic prose, for example, reflects the spiritual life of a small city-state, which was unified by an intense patriotism and a glorious literary tradition. But after the time of Alexander, the Attic speech was no longer the language of a small group of citizens living in the closest spiritual association; on the contrary it had become the medium of exchange for peoples of the most diverse character. It is not surprising, then, that the language of the new cosmopolitan age was very different from the original Attic dialect upon which it was founded.

This new world language which prevailed after Alexander has been called not inappropriately "the Koiné." The word "Koiné" means "common"; it is not a bad designation, therefore, for a language which was a common medium of exchange for diverse peoples. The Koiné, then, is the Greek world language that prevailed from about 300 B.C. to the close of ancient history at about A.D. 500.

The New Testament was written within this Koiné period. Linguistically considered, it is united in a very close way with the Greek translation of the Old Testament called the "Septuagint," which was made at Alexandria in the centuries just preceding the Christian era, and with certain Christian writings of the early part of the second century after Christ, which are ordinarily associated under the name "Apostolic Fathers." Within this triple group, it is true, the language of the New Testament is easily supreme. But so far as the bare instrument of expression

is concerned the writings of the group belong together. Where, then, within the development of the Koiné is this whole group to be placed?

It has always been observed that the language of the New Testament differs strikingly from the great Attic prose writers such as Thucydides or Plato or Demosthenes. That fact is not surprising. It can easily be explained by the lapse of centuries and by the important changes which the creation of the new cosmopolitanism involved. But another fact is more surprising. It is discovered, namely, that the language of the New Testament differs not merely from that of the Attic prose writers of four centuries before, but also from that of the Greek writers of the very period within which the New Testament was written. The Greek of the New Testament is very different, for example, from the Greek of Plutarch.

This difference used sometimes to be explained by the hypothesis that the New Testament was written in a Jewish-Greek dialect—a form of Greek very strongly influenced by the Semitic languages, Hebrew and Aramaic. But in recent years another explanation has been coming increasingly into vogue. This other explanation has been given an important impetus by the discovery, in Egypt, of the “non-literary papyri.” For the most part the Koiné had until recently been known to scholars almost exclusively through literature. But within the past twenty or thirty years there have been discovered in Egypt, where the dry air has preserved even the fragile writing-material of antiquity, great numbers of documents such as wills, receipts, petitions and private letters. These documents are not “literature.” Many of them were intended merely to be read once and then thrown away. They exhibit, therefore, not the polished language of books but the actual spoken language of everyday life. And on account of their important

divergence from the language of such writers as Plutarch they have revealed with new clearness the interesting fact that in the Koiné period there was a wide gap between the language of literature and the language of every day. The literary men of the period imitated the great Attic models with more or less exactitude; they maintained an artificial literary tradition. The obscure writers of the non-literary papyri, on the other hand, imitated nothing, but simply expressed themselves, without affectation, in the language of the street.

But it is discovered that the language of the New Testament, at various points where it differs from the literature even of the Koiné period, agrees with the non-literary papyri. That discovery has suggested a new hypothesis to account for the apparent peculiarity of the language of the New Testament. It is now supposed that the impression of peculiarity which has been made upon the minds of modern readers by New Testament Greek is due merely to the fact that until recently our knowledge of the spoken as distinguished from the literary language of the Koiné period has been so limited. In reality, it is said, the New Testament is written simply in the popular form of the Koiné which was spoken in the cities throughout the whole of the Greek-speaking world.

This hypothesis undoubtedly contains a large element of truth. Undoubtedly the language of the New Testament is no artificial language of books, and no Jewish-Greek jargon, but the natural, living language of the period. But the Semitic influence should not be underestimated. The New Testament writers were nearly all Jews, and all of them were strongly influenced by the Old Testament. In particular, they were influenced, so far as language is concerned, by the Septuagint, and the Septuagint was influenced, as most ancient translations were, by the language of

the original. The Septuagint had gone far toward producing a Greek vocabulary to express the deepest things of the religion of Israel. And this vocabulary was profoundly influential in the New Testament. Moreover, the originality of the New Testament writers should not be ignored. They had come under the influence of new convictions of a transforming kind, and those new convictions had their effect in the sphere of language. Common words had to be given new and loftier meanings, and common men were lifted to a higher realm by a new and glorious experience. It is not surprising, then, that despite linguistic similarities in detail the New Testament books, even in form, are vastly different from the letters that have been discovered in Egypt. The New Testament writers have used the common, living language of the day. But they have used it in the expression of uncommon thoughts, and the language itself, in the process, has been to some extent transformed. The Epistle to the Hebrews shows that even conscious art could be made the instrument of profound sincerity, and the letters of Paul, even the shortest and simplest of them, are no mere private jottings intended to be thrown away, like the letters that have been discovered upon the rubbish heaps of Egypt, but letters addressed by an apostle to the Church of God. The cosmopolitan popular language of the Graeco-Roman world served its purpose in history well. It broke down racial and linguistic barriers. And at one point in its life it became sublime.

NEW TESTAMENT GREEK

LESSON I

The Alphabet

1. The Greek alphabet is as follows:

Capital Letters	Small Letters	Name	Pronunciation
Α	α	Alpha	a as in <i>father</i>
Β	β	Beta	b
Γ	γ	Gamma	g as in <i>got</i> ¹
Δ	δ	Delta	d
Ε	ε	Epsilon	e as in <i>get</i>
Ζ	ζ	Zeta	dz
Η	η	Eta	a as in <i>late</i>
Θ	θ	Theta	th
Ι	ι	Iota	i as in <i>pit</i> , ee as in <i>feet</i>
Κ	κ	Kappa	k
Λ	λ	Lambda	l
Μ	μ	Mu	m
Ν	ν	Nu	n
Ξ	ξ	Xi	x
Ο	ο	Omicron	o as in <i>obey</i>
Π	π	Pi	p
Ρ	ρ ²	Rho	r
Σ	σ(s) ³	Sigma	s
Τ	τ	Tau	t
Υ	υ	Upsilon	French u or German ü
Φ	φ	Phi	ph
Χ	χ	Chi	German ch in <i>Ach</i>
Ψ	ψ	Psi	ps
Ω	ω	Omega	o as in <i>note</i>

¹ Before another γ or κ or χ, γ is pronounced like ng.

² At the beginning of a word ρ is written ϱ, rh.

³ s is written at the end of a word, elsewhere σ.

2. The student is advised to learn the small letters thoroughly, in connection with the first lesson, leaving the capital letters to be picked up later, as they occur. It should be observed that sentences are begun with small letters, not with capitals. Before the formation of the letters is practised, guidance should be obtained from the teacher, since it is impracticable to copy exactly the printed form of the letters, and since bad habits of penmanship ought by all means to be avoided. For example, β and ρ should be formed without lifting the pen and by beginning at the bottom. In these matters the help of a teacher is indispensable.

3. The Greek vowels are as follows:

Short	Long
α	α
ϵ	η
\omicron	ω
ι	ι
υ	υ

It will be noted that α , ι , and υ can be either long or short. The long α and υ are pronounced very much like the corresponding short letters, except that the sound is held longer; the short ι is pronounced like *i* in *pit* and the long ι like *ee* in *feet*.

ϵ is always short, and η is the long of it; \omicron is always short, and ω is the long of it. This clear distinction in appearance between the long and short ϵ and \omicron makes the matter of *quantity* very much easier in Greek than it is in Latin.

ι and υ are called *close* vowels; and the others *open* vowels.

4. A *diphthong* is a combination of two vowels in a single syllable. The second letter of a diphthong is always

a close vowel. The first letter is always an open vowel except in the case of *υ*. The common diphthongs are as follows:

αι, pronounced like ai in *aisle*

ει, pronounced like *ā* in *fate* (thus *ει* and *η* are pronounced alike)

οι, pronounced like oi in *oil*

αυ, pronounced like ow in *cow*

ευ, pronounced like eu in *feud*

ου, pronounced like oo in *food*

υι, pronounced like uee in *queen*

The diphthongs *ηυ* and *ωυ* (pronounced by drawing the sounds of each letter closely together) are rare. When *ι* unites with long *α*, *η* or *ω* to form one sound, the *ι* is written under the other letter instead of after it, and is called *iota subscript*. Thus *αι*, *ηι*, *ωι*. This *iota subscript* has no effect whatever upon the pronunciation; *αι* being pronounced like long *α*, *ηι* like *η*, *ωι* like *ω*.

5. A vowel or diphthong at the beginning of a word always has a *breathing*. The breathing stands over a vowel; and in the case of a diphthong it stands over the second of the two component vowels.

The *rough* breathing (´) indicates that an h-sound is to be pronounced before the initial vowel or diphthong; the *smooth* breathing (˘) indicates that no such h-sound is to be pronounced. Thus *ἔν* is to be pronounced *en*, and *ἐν* is to be pronounced *hen*; *ὄν* is to be pronounced *oo*, and *ὠν* is to be pronounced *hoo*.

6. There are three *accents*, the *acute* (´), the *circumflex* (^), and the *grave* (`). These accents, like the breathings, stand over a vowel, and, in the case of a diphthong, over the second of the two component vowels. When a breathing and an accent stand over the same vowel, the breathing

comes first, except in the case of the circumflex accent, which stands *over* the breathing. Thus *οἴκου*, *οἶκος*. The use of the accents will be studied in Lesson II. Here it should simply be observed that the stress in pronunciation is to be placed on the syllable that has any one of the accents.

7. Punctuation

There are four marks of punctuation: the comma (,) and the period (.), both written on the line and corresponding to the comma and the period in English; the colon, which is a dot above the line (·), and takes the place of the English colon and semicolon; and the question-mark (;) which looks like an English semicolon.

8. Exercise

After learning to write the small letters of the alphabet and give the names of the letters in order, the student should practise pronouncing Greek words and sentences found anywhere in the book. Throughout the entire study, great care should be devoted to pronunciation, and the Greek sentences should always be read aloud both in the preparation of the lessons and in the work of the classroom. In this way the language will be learned not only by the eye, but also by the ear, and will be fixed much more firmly in the memory. The student should try to read the Greek sentences with expression, thinking of the meaning as he reads.

LESSON II

Accent

9. The Greek accents indicated in ancient times not stress (what we call accent), but musical pitch. But since it is impossible for us to reproduce the original pronunciation, the best we can do is to place the stress of the voice upon the syllable where the accent occurs, and give up any distinction in pronunciation between the acute, the circumflex and the grave. Having adopted this method of pronunciation, we should adhere to it rigidly; for unless some one method is adhered to, the language can never be fixed in the memory. It is also important to learn to write the accents correctly, since the accents serve to distinguish various forms from one another and are therefore a great help and not a hindrance in the learning of the language.

10. Preliminary Definitions

The last syllable of a word is called the *ultima*; the one before that, the *penult*; and the one before that, the *antepenult*.

Thus, in the word *λαμβάνομεν*, the *ultima* is *-μεν*, the *penult* is *-νο-*, and the *antepenult* is *-βα-*.

Syllables containing a long vowel or a diphthong are long. But final *αι* and *οι* (that is, *αι* and *οι* coming at the very end of a word) are considered short so far as accent is concerned.

Thus the last syllable of *ἀνθρώπους* is long because it contains the diphthong *ου*; the last syllable of *ἄνθρωποι* is short because the *οι* is here final *οι*; the last syllable of *ἀνθρώποις* is long because here the *οι* has a letter after it and so, not being final *οι*, is long like any other diphthong.

It will be remembered that *ε* and *ο* are always short, and *η* and *ω* always long. The quantity (long or short) of *α*,

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