

Introduction to Biblical Greek

Session 1

Voeltz Ch. 1 & 2

Luther: “In the measure that we love the Gospel, so let us place a strong emphasis on the languages. For it was not without reason that God wrote the Scriptures in two languages, the Old Testament in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek. The language which God did not despise but rather chose above all others for His Word is the language which we also should honor above all others. It is a sin and shame that we do not learn this language of our Book, especially since God has now provided us people and books, and gives us all kinds of things which both help us with this task and at the same time stimulates us to do this.”

[Quoted in Fritz Rienecker’s forward to *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*]



But that doesn't mean we can't have fun!

Koiné Greek

- In contrast to Attic (classical) Greek
- Before Alexander the Great (reign 336 – 323 B.C.), the Greek language was an assortment of localized dialects. Alexander wanted a Greek language common to all peoples.
- It was called 'koiné' or common (from the word fellowship).

Koiné Greek (cont.)

- By the time the New Testament was written (mid to late 1st century A.D.) Koiné Greek had become the common language in Israel.
- LXX (Septuagint) ~ 150 BC, similar to Koiné

Alphabet

- Names of letters
- Pronunciation - We will use the Erasmian pronunciation with a Norwegian accent!
- Vowels: α ε η ι ο υ ω

Diphthongs

- AKA “gliding vowel”, a combination of two vowel sounds within one syllable
- Aside: diphthong itself is a compound word from ancient Greek: διφθογγος = δις (twice) + φθογγος (sound)
- Always end with ι or υ̇
- γγ sounds like νγ

Diphthong Miscellany

- Unusual diphthongs
 - η sounds like η
 - ω sounds like ω

Breathing Marks

- Words that begin with a vowel will have a breathing mark

- The smooth breathing mark:

ᾠ

introduces no new sound

- The rough breathing mark:

ᾠ

is pronounced as an “h”

Punctuation

- Period and comma are the same as the English version
- Colon and semicolon are a dot at the mid-line
- The question mark is the English semicolon

Accents

- Today they all sound the same, the originally were probably indicators of pitch
- Acute: Ᾱ
- Grave: ἄ
- Circumflex: ᾶ

Elision

- When certain words, commonly prepositions, end in a vowel and appear before a word starting with a vowel, the final letter of the first word is elided
- δι' instead of διὰ

Letter Formation

- Do not dot the Iota!
- Nu should have a point and Upsilon should be rounded

Syllables

- A Greek word has as many syllables as it has vowels; generally it doesn't matter where you divide the syllables.
- λο / γος
- δου / λος
- α / δελ / φος or αδ / ελφ / ος

Names

- Βαραββας (Barabbas)
- Αραβια (Arabia)
- Ρεβεκα (Rebecca)
- Αννα (Anna)
- Κανα (Cana)
- Ναιν (Nain)
- Αβελ (Abel)

Resources

- *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, Fritz Rienecker
- Software
 - Olive Garden (<https://www.olivetree.com/>)
 - Logos
- Online
 - Greek Font: <https://www.inthebeginning.org/ntgreek/spionic.html>
 - Voelz: <https://archive.org/details/fundamentalgreek0002voel/mode/2up>
 - Online Greek Bible: <https://www.greekbible.com/>
 - Bible Gateway:
<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=john+1%3A1&version=SBLGNT>

Homework

- Study Chapter 1 (no exercises, but do reading in Section G)
- Read Chapter 2 (no exercises, but do reading in Section D)
- Memorize Greek alphabet
- Practice writing Greek letters