

LEARN NEW TESTAMENT GREEK

3rd Edition,
with Accents

John H. Dobson


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Symbols

- | | | | |
|-----|---|---|--|
| — | continuing action | ⋮ | repeated action |
| ↪ | completed action | • | single action, or action without specific reference to continuance |
| | time line | | |
| ⋮ | continued or repeated action in past time | ↪ | completed action or single action in past time |
| ↪ → | action in past time, with a result that continues in present time; e.g. I have written. | | |
| ⋮ → | past action, that had a result in past time; e.g. I had written. | | |

Abbreviations

- | | |
|------|---|
| GNB | Good News Bible |
| LXX | Septuagint (Greek Translation of Hebrew Scriptures) |
| NEB | New English Bible |
| NIV | New International Version |
| NJB | New Jerusalem Bible |
| NRSV | New Revised Standard Version |
| NLT | New Living Translation |
| REB | Revised English Bible |
| JBP | J B Phillips |

PREFACE

The enormous world-wide sales of the second edition of *Learn New Testament Greek* have shown that it is a book that students and tutors are delighted to use. Translations into Portuguese, Korean, Czech, French and Indonesian, and planned translations into Chinese and Urdu illustrate its universal appeal. So why is a third edition needed?

Since I worked on the second edition, I have had 12 years more experience of teaching, and my book *Learn Biblical Hebrew* has been published. In this third edition I have included teaching material that I find brings insight and delight to those who learn. My growing knowledge of Hebrew has enabled me to appreciate the literary skill of the NT writers in a new way. I have also discovered that often a word or passage in the New Testament that is perplexing becomes clear when it is translated back into Hebrew. In this third edition I have tried to share some of the new things I am learning.

I have also found that in the UK and the USA people are pleased to have help in comparing and assessing Bible translations. So I have included some Bible translation assessment exercises. These exercises will at the same time assist tutors using the book for distance learning. They will be able to test progress not only by setting NT texts for translation but also by asking for comments on the variety of translations of a particular passage offered in the exercises.

The greatest delight of my own students comes from reading and understanding biblical passages. I have increased the amount of reading material – especially the amount from the Gospel of St John.

The tape which was available with the first and second editions covered only lessons 2–14. Now with an audio CD-ROM we can include material from lessons 1–21.

Many tutors have asked that the text should be clearer to read and be accented. This edition has an accented text and is easier to read. In the appendix there is a short section with guidelines and suggestions for those who teach. I am always glad to answer questions about teaching methods and to listen to suggestions for improving the book. Please let me know if you find any errors.

To those of you who want to understand better the Hebraic background to the New Testament I commend the companion volume *Learn Biblical Hebrew* – see page 385 for more information.

Enjoy your learning and teaching,

John H Dobson

Publisher’s note: Previous printings of *Learn New Testament Greek* included a CD-ROM containing audio files to enhance the learning experience. This paperback edition no longer includes a CD-ROM. The audio files are now available online at <http://bakeracademic.com/LearnGreek/esources>. References to the CD remain in the book. Readers are advised to substitute “website” whenever they see “audio CD-ROM” in the book.

INTRODUCTION

The New Testament is a remarkable collection of writings. No book has had a more profound influence on the world's history.

If you wish to study the New Testament, it helps greatly if you are able to read it in the original language. With this course it is possible to *Learn New Testament Greek* quickly, even if you have never attempted to learn a language before. In the first hour you will begin to read and reflect on some New Testament text. After seventeen short lessons you will begin to read longer passages. By the end of the course you will have been helped to read about fifty passages from the New Testament. You will also have a grasp of the structure of the Greek language and its grammar, an ability to use commentaries that refer to the Greek text, and a growing skill as a translator. Because a lot of Greek will be fixed in your long-term memory you will be able to read much of the New Testament without constant reference to a dictionary.

The principles and methods used in *Learn New Testament Greek* ensure that you will make rapid progress with your studies. New information is introduced in small bits, which makes it easy to take in. It is frequently repeated, which makes it easy to remember. You learn words and forms before grammatical descriptions, which is the natural sequence – a child learns ‘mouse’ and ‘mice’ before it learns that ‘mouse’ is a noun and that ‘mice’ is plural. But because you can work through the course quickly, you can also learn the main grammatical forms and terms quickly, and you will learn how to parse Greek words.

In *Learn New Testament Greek* you will not be asked to memorize long lists of words or grammatical forms. You will rather learn the principles and pointers which enable you to recognize the meaning and function of words which are new to you. This will equip you to tackle even unfamiliar passages of the New Testament with confidence.

Learning New Testament Greek

You can use these lessons for study on your own or with a teacher. Most of the Greek sentences and passages are printed with an English translation on the right-hand side of the page. This means that you can start without

any fear of making serious mistakes. We now know that looking at short sentences and phrases in a new language with a translation beside them is an excellent way to start learning a language. You are not cheating when you look at the translation, you are helping yourself learn. And, when you read the Greek with the translation covered, you can uncover it stage by stage to check whether you have understood it.

If you have a CD-player you will find the *Learn New Testament Greek* audio CD a useful aid. You can hear Greek sentences and passages from the first 21 lessons read aloud. Follow the text as you listen: your ears and eyes will work together to fix ideas in your mind.

Use the audio CD to get a general idea of the lessons you are going to study. Use it to review lessons you have done.

Instructions and suggestions

1. When you begin a new lesson, first read through it quickly, looking at the English and the Greek. Then work through it carefully, reading and translating the passages given.
2. The 'Translate' section has a line down the middle. Cover the right-hand column, using a plain piece of card or paper.
3. When you have read a line or a group of lines in Greek, move your piece of card a little way down the page and check that you have understood what the Greek means. If you made a mistake, mark that line and learn from it.

If you do not know and cannot guess the meaning of a word, do not spend a long time looking at it. Use the check-column to find out what it means. Underline it or highlight it.

4. If you find that something in a lesson is not quite clear:
 - (a) See if the English translation can help you to understand it
 - (b) Continue to the end of the lesson
 - (c) Do the next two or three lessons, because what you start to learn in any lesson is confirmed in the lessons that follow
 - (d) Review earlier lessons in case there is something you have missed
 - (e) Do not feel that you need to learn things the first time you see them. When you learned your own language you did not learn the word for 'Mummy' the first time you heard it. In Greek when you first see

ἐγένετο – ‘it came into being’, be content with that. You will learn related forms later on and they will be easier because you have seen ἐγένετο.

5. Work at your own speed, but go as fast as you can. At the end of each short section, pause for a moment of relaxation: take a few deep breaths, stretch your body, stand up, then start the next section refreshed. If you do two lessons a day, six days a week, you will complete the course in one month. If you do only one lesson a week, you will still finish in a year. Before you start each new session of study, read through the list of contents up to that point. It is a way to review rapidly the major forms you have learned.
6. From lesson 17 onwards you will need a copy of the Greek New Testament (see lesson 52.3 for more details).
7. If you are learning Greek because you wish to read the New Testament, you need not worry about how you pronounce it. The Greek language has changed as time has passed, and there is no single way that can be called the ‘right’ way to pronounce Greek words. Lessons 1 and 2 give guidelines, but they are not rules. Listen carefully to the audio CD. If your teacher has a different way of pronouncing Greek, listen carefully to your teacher.
8. Words are best learned by being seen in meaningful contexts. Words are flexible symbols. Their meanings vary according to the context in which they are used. So read and re-read the text of the lesson, but above all re-read the New Testament verses and passages.
9. Grammatical terms: when you go through the course for the first time, do not spend time and effort trying to learn them. To do so might hinder your efforts to learn Greek. Leave them for more careful study when you have read more of the New Testament. They will make more sense when you review them later on.
10. In these lessons everything that needs to be learned is written on the pages. So as soon as you have understood a lesson, you can use it to help others to learn; since all you have to do is to lead them through the pages and to help them to smile. Smiles stimulate study!
11. Enjoy your studies and take pleasure in your progress.

Lesson 1

αβγ – Learning the Letters

1.1 The Greek alphabet

The first step in learning New Testament Greek is to recognize the letters of the Greek alphabet. Several are similar to English letters, although this can sometimes be misleading (ρ looks like ‘p’ but sounds like ‘r’).

In the first column below, you will find the Greek letters with their closest English equivalents. The second column has groups of Greek letters and tells you how they are pronounced. When you have studied these carefully, try to read the groups of letters in the third column. Cover the fourth column while you read, then use it to check that you have recognized the letters correctly.

Greek letters	Read the groups of letters	Greek groups of letters	English equivalents
α – a			
β – b	αβ – ab	βα αββα	ba abba
γ – g	γαβ – gab	βαγ	bag
δ – d	βαδ – bad	δαβ γαδ δαδ	dab gad dad
ε – e	βεδ – bed	βεγ δεδ αβεδ	beg ded abed
ζ – dz or ds, as in ‘cords’	βεζ – bedz	βεζ βεδ γαζ δαζ ζεδ βαδ	bedz bed gadz dadz dzed bad
η – ē (‘ai’, as in ‘air’, or ‘ay’, as in ‘say’)	γη – gē	βη δη ηδ ηζ ηδεδ αδεδ	bē dē ēd ēdz ēded aded
θ – th	δεθ – deth	βαθ γαθ βεθ	bath gath beth
ι – i	βιδ – bid	βιγ βιζ διδ ηδιδ	big bids did ēdid
κ – k	κιθ – kith	κιδ κιζ κηκ	kid kidz kēk
λ – l	λιδ – lid	λαδ λεγ βελλ βεθελ	lad leg bell bethel
μ – m	μη – mē	μαθ μηκ καμελ	math mēk camel

v – n	μαν – man	μεν νημ θιν κιν	men nēm thin kin
ξ – x	αξ – ax	εξ μιξ νιξ νικ λαξ λαζ βιξ βιζ	ex mix nix nik lax ladz bix bidz
ο – o	οξ – ox	νοδ ναγ μοθ ον	nod nag moth on
π – p	ποπ – pop	πιπ ποξ ποζ πηδ	pīp pox podz pēd
ρ – r	ραν – ran	ριπ ριγ πη μαρκ	rip rig pē mark
σ , s – s (ς is used only at the end of words)	σιπ – sip	σαπ σκιλλ γοςπελ ριβς ναγς σαγς	sap skill gospel ribs nags sags
τ – t	σετ – set	σατ σιτς τηκ τοτ	sat sits tēk tot
υ – ‘u’ as in French ‘lune’, or ‘oo’ as in ‘book’; ‘w’ when it starts a word	βυκ – book	λυκ κυκ τυκ ρυκ υιθ υιν	look kook took rook with win
φ – ph, f	φυτ – foot	φιτ φατ φιστ φοξ	fit fat fist fox
χ – kh	χακι – khaki	χριστος χριστοφερ	khristos khristopher
ψ – ps	λυψ – lips	τιψ ταψ ταπ ριψ	tips taps tap rips
ω – ō ‘o’, as in ‘phone’	φων – rhōn	φωτω σωπ σοπ	phōtō sōp sop
‘ – h (Written over an initial vowel)	ἅτ – hat	ἶτ ἄμ ὄτ ὠπ ἰψ	hit ham hot hōp hips
’ (Written over initial vowel when there is no ‘h’ sound)	ἄτ – at	ἄμ ἶτ ὄν ἦτ ἰλλ ἱλλ ὀψ	am it on ēt ill hill hops

1.2 Greek you already know

As you begin to read Greek, you will find that you can already understand some words, because there are English words like them. Notice, for example:

ἀπόστολος – apostle	προφήτης – prophet
θρόνος – throne	Χριστός – Christ

Other words you will quickly recognize because English words are derived from them:

θεός – God	theology
λόγος – word	theology, logic
ἄνθρωπος – man	anthropology
ἀρχή – beginning	archaeology
γράφω – I write	graph, paragraph
ἐν – in	entry
φῶς – light	phosphorus.

You may also know:

Κύριε ἐλέησον Lord have mercy

When you learn Κύριος – Lord, master, owner; you will be aware that in speaking to someone, you say Κύριε.

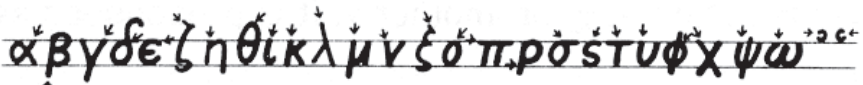
You may know ‘Jesu, joy of man’s desiring’; so when you learn Ἰησοῦς – Jesus, this will help you to be aware that someone speaking to Ἰησοῦς will say Ἰησοῦ.

If you know the tune of *Kumbaya* (‘Come by here’) you may like to use ἔρχου ‘Come!’ and ὦδε ‘here’ to sing:

Ἔρχου ὦδε Κύριε (3 times)
ὦ Ἰησοῦ Κύριε.

1.3 Writing the letters

The arrows show you the easiest place to begin when writing a Greek letter.



Notes:

1. Do not put a dot over ι .
2. Be careful to make n pointed: ν , and u round: υ .

Lesson 2

ἐν ἀρχῇ – In the beginning

2.1 The Greek alphabet – small letters

Look again at the alphabet:

α – a	η – ē	ν – n	τ – t
β – b	θ – th	ξ – x	υ – oo, w
γ – g	ι – i	ο – o	φ – ph
δ – d	κ – k	π – p	χ – kh
ε – e	λ – l	ρ – r	ψ – ps
ζ – dz	μ – m	σ, σ – s	ω – ō

2.2

When two vowels come together, they give the following sounds:

αι – i, ai	(as in mile, aisle)
ει – ei	(as in veil)
οι – oi	(as in boil)
αυ – au, ou	(as in out)
ευ – eu, yew	(as in feud)
ου – oo	(as in root)
υι – ui, wi	(as in we)
υη – yē	(as in Yale)

So αἶ is pronounced like ‘high’, εὖ is pronounced like ‘you’, and Ἰησοῦς is pronounced ‘Yē-soos’.

Note that when two vowels make a single sound at the beginning of a word, the breathing mark ’ or ‘ is written over the second vowel.

2.3

When γ occurs before κ, χ, or another γ, it is pronounced as ‘n’ rather than ‘g’.

γγ – ng	γκ – nk	γχ – nkx
---------	---------	----------

So ἄγγελος is pronounced rather like ‘angle-os’.

2.4

Read the following lines carefully. Start by reading the Greek words while you keep an eye on the English equivalent. Then cover the right-hand column and read the Greek words again. Uncover the right-hand column to check that you are correct. See that you know the sound the letters make. You will learn the meaning of the words in 2.5.

ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος	Cover this column
καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν	en arkhē ēn ho logos
καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.	kai ho logos ēn pros ton theon
οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ	kai theos ēn ho logos.
πρὸς τὸν θεόν.	hotos ēn en arkhē
	pros ton theon

Note that ι can be written underneath α, η and ω: α η ω. It is not pronounced, or is pronounced very lightly. You see it in this lesson in the word ἀρχῇ.

2.5 Words

ἀρχή – beginning	ἦν – he was, it was	καί – and
λόγος – word	ἐν – in	ὁ – the
θεός – God	πρὸς – towards, with	τόν – the
οὗτος – this, he		

2.6 Read and then translate

Cover up the right-hand column and translate the passage, uncovering the right-hand column to check each line. Do not read the notes below until you have translated the whole passage.

ἐν ἀρχῇ	In (the) beginning ¹
ἦν ὁ λόγος,	was the word,
καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν	and the word was
πρὸς τὸν θεόν	with (the) God ²
καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.	and the word was God. ³
οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ	He was in the beginning
πρὸς τὸν θεόν.	with God.

Notes:

1. ἐν ἀρχῇ – in beginning. ‘In beginning’ is not good English. We translate as ‘In the beginning’.
2. πρὸς τὸν θεόν – with the God. In English we do not usually use ‘the’ when referring to God, so we translate as ‘with God’.
3. καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος – and the word was God. Notice that the order of words is different in English.

2.7 Translation

You have read and translated John 1.1. You have noticed that ideas in Greek and in English may be expressed in different words. To translate is not to put the words of one language into another: it is to express the meaning of the words in another language.

2.8 The beautiful Hebraic poetic patterning of John 1:1–2

Hebrew poets made use of carefully crafted word patterns and repetition of key words. Sometimes they combined two patterns together. In John 1:1–2 we find terrace patterning and chiasmus. In terrace patterns the last word of one line is used as the first main word of the next line. Many commentators have noticed this in John 1:1 Note λόγος... λόγος and θεόν... θεός :

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος
καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν
καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος

But the dominant pattern in 1:1–2 is chiasmus. In a chiasmus there is a step by step forward movement to a central focus and then a balancing step by step backwards to the closure. This produces patterns like ABC C’B’A and ABCDC’B’A’.

A Ἐν ἀρχῇ
B ἦν
C ὁ λόγος
καὶ ὁ λόγος
D ἦν
E πρὸς τὸν θεόν
καὶ θεός
D’ ἦν
C’ ὁ λόγος
οὗτος
B’ ἦν
A’ ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν

A’ CLOSURE: A, plus part of the central focus

Note that in an extended chiasmus the most emphatic point is at the centre. This is a feature to be found in some of the parables of Jesus. Here in John 1:1–2 the major emphasis is on the word θεός.

The closure echoes the beginning but is extended by including part of the central focus. This kind of extension in a closure is also a feature of Hebrew poetry.

Note also the threefold use of the key words λόγος and θεός. John 1:3–10 is also a chiasmus, and we shall see a key word repeated three times in verse 3, and a key word three times in verse 10. Verse 10 repeats part of verse 3, helping to mark the closure.

Lesson 3

ἐστίν – is ἦν – was

3.1

ἐστίν means 'he is', 'she is', or 'it is'.

ἦν means 'he was', 'she was', or 'it was'.

When we translate ἐστίν and ἦν we can only tell whether to use 'he', 'she', or 'it', by reading the passage as a whole.

Compare

(a) Ἰησοῦς ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν. ἀληθὴς ἦν.

Jesus was with God. He was true.

(b) Μαρία ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν. ἀληθὴς ἦν.

Mary was with God. She was true.

(c) ὁ λόγος ἀληθὴς ἦν καὶ ἀληθὴς ἐστίν.

The word was true and it is true.

Note that the word order is often not the same in English as it is in Greek. For ἀληθὴς ἦν in (a) we do not say 'True he was', but 'He was true'. Compare θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος in 2.6. In this sentence ὁ (the) indicates that the subject is λόγος, so we translate it, 'The word was God'.

3.2 Translate

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Ἰησοῦς ἐστίν. | Jesus is. |
| 2. Ἰησοῦς ἦν. | Jesus was. |
| 3. ὁ λόγος ἦν. | The word was. |
| 4. ὁ λόγος ἐστίν. | The word is. |
| 5. θεὸς ἐστίν ὁ λόγος. | The word is God. |
| 6. ἀληθὴς ἐστίν ὁ λόγος
καὶ ἀληθὴς ἦν. | The word is true
and it was true. |
| 7. ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος,
καὶ ἐν ἀρχῇ ἀληθὴς ἦν. | In the beginning the word was,
and in the beginning it was true. |

3.3 Words

ὁ λόγος – the word	οὗτος ὁ λόγος – this word
οἱ λόγοι – the words	ἐστίν – he is, she is, it is
ὁ Μάρκος – Mark	εἰσίν – they are
ὁ Ἰησοῦς – Jesus	ἦν – he was, she was, it was
τουῦ – of the	ἦσαν – they were
τουῦ Ἰησοῦ – of Jesus	γράφει – he writes, she writes
οὗτος – this, he	γράφει τὸν λόγον – he writes the word
οὗτοι – these	γράφει τοὺς λόγους – he writes the words
ἀληθής – true, genuine, real, honest	
οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι ἀληθεῖς ἦσαν – these words were true	

3.4 Translate

1. ὁ λόγος ἀληθής ἐστίν.	The word is true.
2. οἱ λόγοι ἀληθεῖς εἰσιν.	The words are true.
3. οὗτος ὁ λόγος ἀληθής ἐστίν.	This word is true.
4. οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι ἀληθεῖς εἰσιν.	These words are true.
5. ἀληθής ἦν ὁ λόγος.	The word was true.
6. ἀληθής ἦν ὁ λόγος τουῦ Ἰησοῦ.	The word of Jesus was true.
7. γράφει τὸν λόγον.	He writes the word.
8. γράφει τοὺς λόγους.	He writes the words.
9. ὁ Μάρκος γράφει τοὺς λόγους. γράφει τοὺς λόγους τουῦ Ἰησοῦ. οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι τουῦ Ἰησοῦ ἀληθεῖς εἰσιν.	Mark writes the words. He writes the words of Jesus. These words of Jesus are true.
10. ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν. οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν.	Jesus was with God. He was in the beginning with God.
11. οὗτοι εἰσιν οἱ λόγοι τουῦ Ἰησοῦ καὶ οἱ λόγοι τουῦ Μάρκου.	These are the words of Jesus and the words of Mark.

3.5

You have begun to learn the following Greek words. Notice the English words that are like them. Many English words are derived from Greek words.

Greek word

ἡ ἀρχή – the beginning

ὁ θεός – God, the God

ὁ λόγος – the word

Ἰησοῦς – Jesus

Μάρκος – Mark

ἐν – in

ἐστίν – he is, she is, it is

εἰσίν – they are

γράφει – he writes, she writes

πρός – to, with

Compare

archetype – original model

archaeology – study of things from earlier times

theism – belief in God

theology – study of God

logic, theology, archaeology

Jesus

Mark

enter, in

is

is

graph, paragraph, graffiti

prosthetic

3.6

(a) Using the patterns

οἱ λόγοι τοῦ Ἰησοῦ – the words of Jesus

ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ – the love of God

and the words from 3.5

say in Greek:

The words of Jesus – the words of God – the word of God –

the word of Mark – the words of Mark – the love of God –

the love of Jesus – the beginning of the word.

(b) Using the patterns

ἀγαθός ἐστιν ὁ θεός – God is good

ἀληθής ἦν ὁ λόγος – the word was true

say in Greek:

God is good – the word is good – Mark is good – the word is true –

the word was true – Mark was honest – the word was good.

(c) Learn by heart from 1 Jn 1:5 ὁ θεὸς φῶς ἐστίν (God is light)

and from 1 Jn 4:16 ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν (God is love).

3.7 Progress test 1

Test the progress you have made by reading these questions and writing down which answers you think are correct. For example, in question 1 if you think that Ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν means 'Jesus is', write down: 1 (c).

Which translation is correct?

1. Ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν.

(a) The word is.

(b) Jesus was.

(c) Jesus is.

2. ὁ λόγος ἦν.

(a) The word was.

(b) The word is.

(c) God was.

3. οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ λόγος

(a) God is the word.

(b) This is the word.

(c) These are the words.

4. οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι ἀληθεῖς εἰσιν

(a) These words are true.

(b) This word is true.

(c) He writes true words.

5. γράφει τοὺς λόγους τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ὁ Μάρκος.

(a) Jesus is writing these words.

(b) He is writing the words of Jesus and of Mark.

(c) Mark is writing the words of Jesus.

Now check your answers by looking in Key to Progress Tests on page 333.