

New Testament Greek

2. Punctuation, Diacritical Marks; Tools for Greek Research

Date: 070916G

Duration: 1:42:12

Let's begin by taking a few minutes to write the Greek alphabet. Do it without looking at the wall, or in your book, if you can. If you want, you can put your name on your paper and hand it in, so I can go over it and make suggestions — if you are interested. My liability in teaching Greek: I do not teach Greek year after year. Now, I want you to turn with me to John 1, page 169 in the Greek New Testament, and we're going to make a practice each time of reading aloud from John 1. This time, I will read it alone; but, after today's lesson, we'll be able to read it all together. That is because there are a few matters in today's lesson that affect how the words are pronounced.

1:1 Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, καὶ Θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. 2 οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν Θεόν. 3 πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν, ὃ γέγονεν. 4 ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν, καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων, 5 καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει, καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν.

Let's begin today's lesson with a brief overview of the book. The book is divided into chapters, but more important, sections. The sections are numbered consecutively through the book, and form a better way of identifying a location than the chapters. I have handed out a listing for the benefit of those with the 1st Ed, so you can correlate sections with the 2nd Ed. The 2nd Ed has the list in the back of the book, but, of course, the before there was a 2nd Ed, no such list could have existed. Anyway, most of the time we will go by sections, not chapters, as we will not always to cover a whole chapter in a lesson. Today's lesson is to cover all the other markings you will find in the Greek New Testament. These are punctuation, subscripts, breathing marks, and accents. Machen covers subscripts and breathing marks, then punctuation. I am covering punctuation first, because it has nothing to do with a word's spelling, but all the others are part of the spelling. So, relatively speaking, we will deal with the less important first, so we can spend more time on the more important.

1. Punctuation.

Section 7, Page 12 1st Ed, 35 2nd Ed. Nothing much to add.

2. Iota subscript (iota sub, for short)

When a long vowel forms a diphthong with an iota, the iota does not follow the other vowel, but appears below it as a subscript. So, the iota sub is at the end of the section of diphthongs. Section 4, page 34 of the 2nd Ed, page 11 in the 1st Ed. The subscript is the character iota, and is a part of the spelling. The paragraph just before section 5. Examples from John 1:1–5
In verse 1, the word ἀρχῆ is spelled alpha, rho, chi, eta, iota sub. You cannot leave off the iota sub, or it would be a different form of the word, with a different translation. With the iota sub, it can follow the preposition ἐν; without it, you would never find it following a preposition. With the iota sub, it can be a direct object; without, it is a subject. You have to know this to translate the word correctly. But, the iota sub does not affect pronunciation.

Alpha iota sub is pronounced exactly like alpha.

Eta iota sub is pronounced exactly like eta.

Omega iota sub is pronounced exactly like omega.

3. Breathing marks.

Section 5, page 34 2nd Ed, page 11, 1st Ed.

These, too, are actually part of the spelling, and must be learned, or you may end up mistranslating a word.

As an example, the first word of John 1:4 is ἐν.

Now, look near the end of verse 3, and there is another word like the first word of John 1:4.

But, there are different marks associated with the ε character.

The ἐν of John 1:4 is the preposition, “in,” but the ἐν in verse 3 is the word for the number one.

It would be disastrous if you did not know the difference.

Teach section 5

4. Accents.

Now we come to the controversial subject of accents in Greek.

Chapter II, either edition.

Notice the 2nd Ed adds a paragraph, before the first paragraph in the 1st Ed, to explain why it is important to learn accents.

It sounds like “only occasionally” would mean it is not important.

But, that is just the reason why it is important, and we need them.

Failure to differentiate words leads to guessing or speculation for the translator, possibly resulting in a wrong translation.

This is inexcusable, considering that a means is provided to keep us from having to guess at any point.

Examples from John 1:1–5

Notice in verse 1, the character omicron appears three times.

It has a rough breathing, and is pronounced (pronounce).

It is the definite article used with one class of nouns. We will learn more about that later. But it means, simply, “the.”

However, the next to the last word in verse 3, is also an omicron; but it has added an accent to the rough breathing mark. And the meaning is not “the,” but it is a relative pronoun, “which” or “that” or “who,” depending on the context.

I submit that this single example would be sufficient to justify that we should learn the accents; but, I could show you a lot more examples, which would only take time, and you would really not follow what I was saying at this point, because we are not at the point where we need to know the differences yet.

But, now is the time to learn them. (Teach accents)

Review: The value of learning New Testament Greek

- I. The stability of the language, and therefore of the Greek text.
- II. The precision of the Greek language
- III. Stability and precision of language are both insufficient.
- IV. Holy Spirit essential to understand and interpret the Word.
- V. The limits of this course.

— Tools for Greek Research —

Interlinear Greek-English New Testament

Here I cited two well-known interlinears

One has unique renderings that might raise questions

Good intentions and strong convictions do not supersede proper scholarly methods and recognized scholarship

Danger of independent work without peer review

Sound doctrine presumes accurate scholarship

Doctrine based on poor scholarship not trustworthy

Online tools, such as E-Sword

I also mentioned a well-known publication of word studies, and simply said it would be that man’s research, not yours.

Strong’s Concordance is good, but only a compilation of KJV usages

Walk through Strong’s Concordance, Young’s Concordance

J. B. Smith is the best tool I know if you do not know Greek

Indispensable for word studies, even if you do know the Greek

How to distinguish shades of meaning