

New Testament Greek:
15. Lesson 11: Imperfect Active Indicative

Date: 080106G

Duration: 1:18:45

So far in our study of Greek, we have been learned only one tense of the verb, that being the present tense.

Last week, we rounded out the present tense by going into what is called the voice of the verb.

Let's see if I succeeded in communicating the important things.

The three voices are active, middle and passive.

An active verb in Greek is defined as a verb that ends in “- ω” in its lexicon form, first person singular, present tense.

Now, not according to Machen, but according to what I taught last week, what voices can an active verb use? (active or passive)

Some verbs use forms identical to the passive forms of active verbs to express active meanings, and never occur in the “- ω” form.

What are these verbs called? (deponent)

What is the voice of a deponent verb when it is used to express an active idea? (middle)

What is the special characteristic of deponent verbs, which explains why they use passive forms to express active ideas? (the action is of a nature that the result directly affects the subject)

How can you distinguish whether a deponent verb is expressing an active idea, middle voice, or a passive idea, passive voice? (for the passive, it will be followed by ὑπό with a genitive case noun identifying the performer of the action received by the subject; otherwise, assume the meaning is active)

When an active verb, one for which the lexicon form ends in “- ω,” is using passive endings, what is the meaning (passive only)

So, just remove from your mind any idea of a middle form with the normally active verbs.

If a normally active verb has a form ending in “- ομαι” that is to be understood in an active sense, that form should be understood as a deponent verb that just coincidentally uses the same stem, of which ἄρχω — ἄρχομαι are the prime example.

ἄρχω is an active verb meaning “I rule,” and in the passive form, it means “I am being ruled,” usually followed by ὑπό with the genitive of whoever or whatever is ruling.

ἄρχομαι is a deponent verb meaning “I begin” and by its nature is unlikely to occur in the passive form (although, a third person use, such as “it is being begun,” might be conceivable).

If you understand the active, middle, and passive voices this way, I do not think you will have any problems — or, at least not as many problems as if you try to force some kind of middle voice on a normally active verb.

Today, we break out of the present tense limitations, and learn the most common form of past tense in the Greek: the imperfect.

There really is not that much new to learn today. Just forms, and a few rules pertaining to compound verbs.

Remember, compound verbs are verbs that combine a preposition and a stem to form a verb.

Both active and deponent compound verbs occur in the Greek.

Some verb stems rarely appear in verbs that are not compound.

But, what the lesson heading does not mention is that it is adding a lot of vocabulary, not all related to the topic of today's lesson.

I want to go through the vocabulary today, because there are some things in there that Machen just slips in, that you might miss.

One of the things you have to be alert for with Machen's grammar is that he sometimes just slips things in that are fairly important, as a footnote, or in parentheses, and students often miss them.

I have given you a sorted list, like I did once before.

Verbs first, and we will start with simple ones first:

Only αἶρω and ἐσθίω, really. Common, active verbs, clearly of the kind that would take a direct object, that is, transitive.

There's no point mentioning βαίνω, if it doesn't even occur in the New Testament in that form. It's only there so we understand the root meaning when it appears in compound verbs.

How many verbs do we have now that are defined as go?

ἔρχομαι, πορεύομαι, and now βαίνω.

This really isn't a problem for Greek to English, since all we need to know is how to translate them. But, for English to Greek, it might be pretty much up to you which one to use. Actually, if you want to keep it simple, just use ἔρχομαι, and you're safe.

In fact, I noticed in Lesson 10, the English to Greek exercises just didn't give any occasion to use πορεύομαι. The one time go is used at all, it is a compound, go out, in number 17.

So, just keep πορεύομαι in mind for translating Greek to English.

And, βαίνω only occurs in compound forms.

Okay, now the compound verbs in today's vocabulary:

ἀναβαίνω — now, here is the shocking thing: in parenthesis, after the definition of ἀναβαίνω, it tells us that ἀνα- means up! What if you missed it? Be sure to add it to your list of prepositions.

ἀποθνήσκω, if you notice carefully, has the “θ-ν” combination that relates it to the noun θάνατος, death, and may be understood as the spirit going out, ἀπό, in death.

ἀποκτείνω is an example where the root just does not occur other than as part of this compound verb. There is no verb κτείνω.

In this case, don't even try to analyze it by breaking it apart. It's just I kill, in any sense.

ἀποστέλλω should properly be translated as I send out, not I send.

As Machen says, it means being sent with a commission, so it would not apply to sending a gift, or a message, but generally only a person. In fact, it is directly related to the term apostle.

In the case of ἀποστέλλω, however, there is also a word, στέλλω, but it is not common enough to worry about. If you have a Thayer's Lexicon, you can look it up. (Ask about Thayer's.)

καταβαίνω, I go down, goes back to what Machen tells us was the original meaning of κατά, but I will go into that later, when we come to κατά as a preposition.

παραλαμβάνω, which adds the idea of along to receive or take.

συνάγω, literally I lead together, thus, I gather (together). I'm sure you can see immediately the relationship to synagogue.

Now, let's take the prepositions:

We now have learned the bulk of Greek prepositions, so I'm giving you a little chart illustrating the positional ideas, since, after all, they are called prepositions.

The underlying idea behind every preposition is a position.

But, now, let's go over the ones in today's lesson.

ἀνά — this needs to be included as a preposition. Even though it is not common, it does occur, with an accusative object, such as in up the hill. It is not the same as the adverb, ἄνω, which, in fact, means up, but in the adverb sense of where.

κατά really should be understood in its original sense of down. Its other meanings are always be understood in the down sense: against, you might think of pulling down from, so it takes the genitive case; but, in the sense of according to, it is more like down to, as in something handed down to, and which is why the Greek titles of the gospels begin with κατά.

παρά really always is related to the idea of alongside. If the object is in the genitive, it is alongside as in belonging to, or coming from, so it is translated as from; with the dative, it's alongside in the positional sense (remember, dative is also locative), so the translation is beside or in the presence of; with the object in the accusative case (transition toward), it is alongside of.

σύν really means together; with in the sense of together; again an idea of location or position, so it takes the dative case.

The only ones on the diagram that we have not had so far are περί and ὑπέρ, but I didn't think we needed to wait to hand this out.

At least you have their positional idea.

All prepositions have an idea of position, but those positional ideas are then derived into many other meanings that we will learn.

So, now we will cover what's left in the vocabulary.

One noun, ἄρτος, ὁ, a simple second declension masculine, bread.

Two adverbs: οὐκέτι, no longer, which is actually a combination of οὐ, not, and ἔτι, an adverb we haven't had yet, meaning yet or still; only here, the opposite of yet is no longer (rather than not yet, which would imply something still to come); and τότε then.

Finally, an idiom, μέν...δέ, which it is very useful to understand that it means on the one hand...on the other hand, and helps clarify the meaning of numerous passages in the Greek.

For example, Matthew 13:32 uses μέν...δέ, but μέν is translated as indeed, which is not the point at all. It means on one hand.

Now we come to the imperfect tense. The first thing we need to see is the importance of the sense of continuing action in the past.

Way back in § 19/21, we are told the present tense is part of what's called the progressive system, implying continuing action; but it serves a double purpose, also as the simple present tense in the Greek. Not so with the imperfect. The idea of ongoing action in the past is very central, so we need to very faithfully translate a verb of the imperfect tense using the “-ing” form in English.

For example, βλέπω can be translated “I see” or “I am seeing”; but, in the imperfect, it should never be translated, “I saw,” but only “I was seeing.” Keep that in mind, and you will never have any problem translating the imperfect tense.

The main thing we have to learn is how the imperfect is formed, so we can recognize it, and translated it both directions.

Now, all we are learning in this lesson is the imperfect active, so we cannot apply any of this to the deponent verbs.

So far, all the inflectional changes of spelling have been endings we add to unchanging stems.

Today we introduce spelling changes other than endings.

The characteristic change indicating past time in a verb is not in the ending, but at the beginning, and is called the augment.

If the verb begins with a consonant, the augment is the letter ε.

If the verb begins with a vowel, the augment is a lengthening of the vowel which, if it is α, it becomes an η, not a long α.

Note also, if it is an αι diphthong, the lengthened form is η, not ηι. So, the augment is the actual indicator of past time.

I suggest you just ignore § 134/127, and follow the same rule we've always followed, that the ending is what you add to the stem in every case. Don't worry about why it is what it is; just learn it.

So, let's try a few:

I loose is λύω; I was loosing is ἔλυον; if I take is λαμβάνω, what is the meaning of ἐλάμβανον? (I was taking)

He was loosing is ἔλυε; how would you say he was saying? (ἔλεγε)

Notice: the endings of the first and second person plural are exactly the same as in the present tense! The time of the verb is shown by the augment, not the ending.

Just adding the augment changes λύομεν, we loose, to ἐλύομεν, we were loosing.

So, what does ἐβλέπομεν mean? (we were seeing).

Now, let's try some where the stem begins with a vowel.

ἦχτε? (You(p) were having); ἦρχες? (You(s) were ruling)

ἦρον? A Greek person, no less than any of us, would need another clue — maybe a personal pronoun, or an expressed subject, to know whether it is I was taking up or they were taking up. This applies to all first singular and third plural of the imperfect.

What the book, in §136/130 doesn't tell you is what I just said: the Greek speaker or writer would have to clarify it for his audience as much as for us; so the clues we need will certainly be there.

But, here's a case where going English to Greek is actually easier!

Note the comment of §138/131 about the movable ν.

Now, that covers simple verbs. Compound verbs are different.

The augment is affixed to the stem of a verb after the prepositional prefix, as if the stem really were a verb in its own right. In some cases it is; but not always; but it's treated as if it were.

Because of the way prepositional prefixes interact with the verbs to which they are attached, we must follow certain steps.

First, remove the prepositional prefix; next, augment the remainder of the stem according to the regular rules of augment: add an ε if the stem begins with a consonant, and lengthen the vowel if it begins with a vowel; finally add the prepositional prefix back to the stem, but bear in mind changes that may be required, such as where an initial consonant is not covered by a vowel, which requires some of the final characters of prepositional prefixes to be changed: ἐκ to ἐξ, vowels dropped from ἀπό or κατά, etc.

Notice also, §141/132, the accent in compound verbs will never go back before the augment, even if rules of noun accent permit.

Finally, for today's lesson, you'll need to memorize the imperfect of the "be" verb. Never mind the whys or wherefores; just learn it. And, take §140/134 as merely informational. It just does happen. Well, how about some exercises now?

GE1. ἠκούομεν τῆς φωνῆς αὐτοῦ ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις, νῦν δὲ οὐκέτι ἀκούομεν αὐτῆς.

ἠκούομεν: s.1piai we were hearing; τῆς φωνῆς: d-og d.n gsf the voice; αὐτοῦ: psv pp3 gsm of him; ἐν: p.d in; ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις: o-p dp.d.n dpf those days; comma; νῦν... [δὲ: but]; now; [οὐκέτι...] ἀκούομεν: s.1ppai we... [; ...no longer;] ...hear; αὐτῆς: d-og pp3 gsf it

• We were hearing [the voice of him] his voice in those days, but now we no longer hear it.

EG1. The servant was saying those words against them.

the servant: s d.n nsm ὁ δοῦλος; was saying: 3siai ἔλεγε; these words: d-o dp.d.n apm τούτους τοὺς λόγους; against: p.g κατ'; them: o-p pp3 gpm αὐτῶν

• ὁ δοῦλος ἔλεγε τούτους τοὺς λόγους κατ' αὐτῶν.

GE2. ὁ δὲ μαθητὴς τοῦ κυρίου ἔλεγε παραβολὴν τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς αὐτοῦ.

ὁ... [δὲ: now] ...μαθητῆς: s d.n nsm the disciple; τοῦ κυρίου: psv d.n gsm of the Lord; ἔλεγε: 3siai was saying; παραβολὴν: d-o n asf a parable; τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς: i-o d.n dpm to the brothers; αὐτοῦ psv pp3 gsm of him

• Now, [the disciple of the Lord] the Lord's disciple was saying a parable to [the brothers of him] his brothers.

EG2. According to the word of the apostle, they were going up into the temple.

according to: p.a κατὰ; the word: o-p d.n asm τὸν λόγον; of the apostle: psv d.n gsm τοῦ ἀποστόλου; they were going up: s.3piai ἀνέβαινον; into: p.a εἰς; the temple: o-p d.n asn τὸ ἱερόν

• κατὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ ἀποστόλου ἀνέβαινον εἰς τὸ ἱερόν.