CHAPTER 1
The Alphabet – Chs. 1-2 were adapted for Modern Greek by Dr. Perry Phillips

24 Letters, the Gateway into the Language

This is the way Greek letters are pronounced in Modern Greek.

Small/Capital

\( \alpha / \text{A} \) \text{Alpha} sounds like “a” in father.
\( \beta / \text{B} \) \text{Beta} sounds like “v” in violet.
\( \gamma / \text{Gamma} \) \text{Gamma} sounds like “y” in yet.
\( \delta / \text{Delta} \) \text{Delta} sounds like “th” in then.
\( \epsilon / \text{Epsilon} \) \text{Epsilon} sounds like “e” in met.
\( \zeta / \text{Zeta} \) \text{Zeta} sounds like “z” in daze.
\( \eta / \text{Eta} \) \text{Eta} sounds like “ee” in meet.
\( \theta / \text{Theta} \) \text{Theta} sounds like “th” in think. (In this grammar, "th" pronounced like then will be shown as th. "th” pronounced like think will be shown as th.)
\( \iota / \text{I} \) \text{Iota} short sounds like the “ee” in meet.
\( \kappa / \text{Kappa} \) \text{Kappa} sounds like “k” in kitchen.
\( \lambda / \text{Lambda} \) \text{Lambda} sounds like “l” in law.
\( \mu / \text{Mu} \) \text{Mu} sounds like “m” in mother.
\( \nu / \text{Nu} \) \text{Nu} sounds like “n” in new.
\( \xi / \text{Xi} \) \text{Xsi} sounds like “x” in axe.
\( \omicron / \text{Omicron} \) \text{Omicron} sounds like “o” in obey.
\( \pi / \text{Pi} \) \text{Pi} sounds like “p” in peach.
\( \rho / \text{Rho} \) \text{Rho} sounds like “r” in three. (Form the “r” in the front of the mouth as in the word three, not as in the word rod.)
\( \sigma / \text{Sigma} \) \text{Sigma} sounds like “s” in set.
Sigma looks like \( \varsigma \) when it comes at the end of a word (final sigma)—\( \varsigma \phi \varsigma \) (wise).
\( \tau / \text{Tau} \) \text{Tau} sounds like “t” in talk.
\( \upsilon / \text{Upsilon} \) \text{Upsilon} sounds like “ee” in meet.
\( \varphi / \text{Phi} \) \text{Phi} sounds like “ph” in phone.
\( \chi / \text{Chi} \) \text{Chi} sounds like “ch” in Bach. (In this grammar, "ch” always indicates that it be pronounced like ch in Bach since there is no ch sound as in "cheese" in Greek.)
\( \psi / \text{Psi} \) \text{Psi} sounds like “ps” in lips.
\( \omega / \text{Omega} \) \text{Omega} sounds like “o” in obey.
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We will focus on the lower-case letters, miniscules, although the early uncial (uppercase) manuscripts were written without punctuation or spaces between the words in all uppercase letters, majuscules (major writings). Be able to recognize the upper-case letters. Capital letters are used in proper names, to begin direct quotations, and at the beginning of paragraphs. You may want to use the Mastering New Testament Greek disk to work on the pronunciation of these letters and to drill yourself.

Easy English look alikes: α, β, ε, ι, κ, ο, ς, τ, υ

Double consonants: θ (#), ξ (xs), φ (ph), χ (ch), ψ (ps)

Easy to confuse letters:
- η—eta (with n)
- ν—nu (with v)
- ρ—rho (with p)
- χ—chi (with x)
- ο—omega (with w)

Here are some English-like examples to use for sounding things out. Pronounce the following, accenting the capitalized syllables:

- ἀνθρωπος—pronounced “AN-thro-pos” (anthropology)
- θεος—pronounced “the-OS” (theology)
- προφητης—pronounced “pro-FEE-tees” (prophet)
- Χριστος—pronounced “Chree-STOS” (Christ)
- καρδια—pronounced “kar-THEE-a” (heart; cf. cardiac)
- αμην—pronounced “a-MEE-N” (amen)

Vowels: α, ε, η, ι, ο, υ, ω

*There is no "long" or "short" version of these vowels in Modern Greek. See the pronunciation guide above.*

Nasal gamma: The “g” sound of a gamma changes to a “n” sound when put before: γ, κ, χ, ξ. ἄγγελος is pronounced: “ANgelos.” This is called a “nasal gamma.”

Final sigma: Sigma is always written σ unless it comes at the end of a word, when it is written ζ. This form is called a final sigma. It is pronounced the same. Thus σοφός (wise) shows the two forms of the sigma (note the final sigma form).

Eight diphthongs: 2 vowels with 1 sound. Diphthongs are combination vowels. Two vowels are written but result in only one sound. These are frequent in Greek, and so be aware of them. The final letter of a diphthong will always be an ι or an υ (closed vowel). *The diphthongs in Modern Greek are the place of greatest phonetic divergence.*
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αι as in met. (αιμα, blood)
ει, οι as in meet (ειμι, I am; οινοποιητος, men)
υι as in yet (υιος, son)
αυ as in av if followed by a voiced sound, otherwise aspirated as αφ. (αυγος, egg; αυτος, he)
ευ as in ev if followed by a voiced sound, otherwise aspirated as ef. (πιστευω, I believe; ευθεως, immediately)
ηυ as in eve if followed by a voiced sound, otherwise aspirated as eef, as in reef.
ου as in boutique (Ιησους, Jesus)

Consonantal pronunciation shifts in Modern Greek: ντ / μπ

1) Initial ντ: "D" as in "Dog" for words beginning with ντ,
Medial ντ: "d" or "nd" (as in "aND" or "eND) in the middle of a word. There is no hard and fast rule as to whether ντ is voiced as "D" or as "ND." It's a matter of preference and region. The tendency, however, is to us "ND" in the middle of words.

No words in Koine Greek start with ντ, but there are words in Modern Greek that do.

Examples: λέγοντος (léghoNDos) "saying"
πάντα (páhNDah) "everything (neu., pl.)
εντροπήν (eNDropēn) "shame" (acc.)

2) Initial μπ: "B" as in "Boy" when beginning a word.
Medial μπ: Otherwise, "B" or "MB" when in the middle of a word. Again, "B" or "MB" is a matter of preference and region.

Examples: λάμπει (láBē or láMBē) "shines, illuminates" (3rd sing.)
αμπελώνη (aBelónē or aMBelónē) "vineyard" (dat.)
έμπροσθεν (eBrōsthen or eMBrósthen) "before" or "in front of"
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Iota subscripts (Improper diphthongs): There are 3 letter combinations that are formed by taking the vowels α, η, and ω and subscripting an iota under them. It doesn’t affect pronunciation but may be significant in specifying grammatical features: α, η, ω

Dieresis (Ησαΐας—Isaiah: Η-σα-ι-ας)—cancels the diphthong effect (indicates the two vowels must be kept separate). The dieresis shows that a vowel must be pronounced as a separate syllable. It will be found often on Old Testament names (Μωϋσής = Moses).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>H-σα-ι-ας</th>
<th>Isaiah (Jn. 1:23)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Μωϋσής</td>
<td>Мω-ο-σής</td>
<td>Moses (Jn. 1:45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Αχαΐα</td>
<td>А-χα-ι-α</td>
<td>Achaia (Acts 18:12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A phonetic chart is also a helpful way of grouping the letters:

Labials (lips)    ι       β       φ
Dentals (teeth)   τ       δ       θ
Velars (palate)   κ       γ       χ

Phonetic sigma addition:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labial + σ = ψ</th>
<th>Velar + σ = ξ</th>
<th>Dental + σ = σ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(π + σ = ψ)</td>
<td>(κ + σ = ξ)</td>
<td>(τ + σ = σ)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Vocabulary

In Modern Greek, monosyllabic words have no accent mark. Modern Greek uses only one accent mark (a vertical accent \( ' \)) in multisyllabic words, and that is to stress the syllable when vocalizing the word. For now, for the words in the box, read the words aloud and use the accent mark to stress that syllable. Later, we will discuss the various accent and breathing marks used in the Greek New Testament and how to vocalize them in Modern Greek.

The number following the word is the number of times the word is used in the New Testament. The word after the dash gives an English parallel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>word</th>
<th>meaning</th>
<th>usage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ἄγγελος</td>
<td>angel</td>
<td>(175)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἀμήν</td>
<td>truly, verily (129)</td>
<td>amen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἀνθρωπος</td>
<td>man, human (550)</td>
<td>anthropology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐγώ</td>
<td>I (1,175)</td>
<td>ego</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>θεός</td>
<td>God (1,317)</td>
<td>theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>καὶ</td>
<td>and, even, also (9,153)</td>
<td>cardiac</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>καρδία</td>
<td>heart (156)</td>
<td>cardiac</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>λέγω</td>
<td>I say (2,354)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>προφήτης</td>
<td>prophet (144)</td>
<td>prophet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Χριστός</td>
<td>Christ, Messiah, anointed one (529)</td>
<td>Christ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Things to Know and Do

1. Be able to chant through the alphabet, saying the name of each letter in order. Be able to do the Alpha-robes moves. See if you can say the Greek alphabet as fast as you can say the English alphabet. Can you see where the name “alphabet” comes from? Know what a final sigma looks like. What are diphthongs, and what sound does each make? (Note that there are no "long" and "short" vowels in Modern Greek.) What are the three iota subscripts? What role does the dieresis play? Know the vocabulary items (recognize and write them).


3. Do the worksheets from the workbook.