

New Testament Greek

4. Verb: Present Active Indicative; Which Text Is Right?

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Let's begin by reading John 1:1–5 aloud in Greek. TR Page 169.

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.

Now, please turn to page 41 in Machen 2nd Ed., 20 in 1st Ed.

We really are going to study the present active indicative this time.

Now, if you have the 1st Ed. of Machen's grammar, you can make a very neat box and connect the corners by diagonal lines over the section starting with "The primary personal endings," down through "various persons and numbers." These endings will be seen in a few verbs, but there is no need to try to connect them with the common endings that are seen most of the time.

If it is obsolete, why bring it up at all? I don't see any point in it.

Let's begin by writing and pronouncing the vocabulary words.

βλέπω, γινώσκω, γράφω, διδάσκω, λαμβάνω, λέγω, λύω, ἔχω

You need to memorize this vocabulary, to instantly recognize these words when you see them in the Greek text. Drill yourself

Now, having gone over the terms of Greek accidence, I trust we are not completely in the dark about tense, voice, and mood.

[Section 15/17 NOTE: hereafter, such notation is 2nd Ed./1st Ed.]

I need to add one thing. A command is sometimes expressed by a future indicative, as in the form, "you shall," or "thou shalt."

I mention this as a caution against assuming these forms are meant as a command. They can also be simple statements of fact, that are meant to indicate what will happen; or maybe prophetic.

This is sometimes an important consideration in translations. Don't assume "thou shalt" is a command. Look it up. If it is the future indicative, consider seriously (here is where you need the Holy Spirit!) whether it might be meant as a prediction or prophecy, rather than a command. A significant example is what we call the great commission, recorded in Acts 1. Is the statement, "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me" a command, or a foretelling? It is a future indicative, not an imperative.

This explains why many churches are obsessed with "going": if you take a future indicative as a command, that's what you get.

In the early church, being witnesses was a fact of being a disciple of Jesus, not a command that some fulfilled and some did not.

And, you can consider that your Greek nugget for the day.

[Sections 16, 17, 18, 19 of 2nd Ed.; 18, 19, 20, 21 of 1st Ed.]

Now, 2nd Ed. has some added material in §19, which is important.

One thing I mentioned briefly last week was the continuity of verbs.

But, I did not give a word for it, because I developed that outline in connection with the old Machen, and progressive was not used quite that way in that edition.

However, this actually helps clarify what I was saying.

Some verbs are to be understood as a line; others as a dot.

A line is an action that begins at some point, continues, and may or may not end within the time frame of making the statement.

Section 19 tells us the present is part of the progressive system; the tenses considered as continuing actions or states of being.

The present is continuing action that has already begun, continues in the present, ending at an unspecified time after the present.

We would say, "I am doing," or "I am saying," or "I am going."

We also might simply say, "I do," or "I say," or "I go," but in the present tense, it implies the action is continuing as I speak.

In the English, if I make the statement, "He says," it can easily be confused. Do I mean he is right now saying? Or, do I mean it

is his position or opinion, whether he is speaking right now or not. But, "He says" at least implies a continuing position.

The future is a continuing action spoken of as beginning at a future time, and continuing for an unspecified time.

But, it is not necessary to use the "-ing" form to translate a future tense, because that may be taken for granted.

The perfect is a continuing action that began in the past, continued some time, but was completed in the past.

This the "I have done," "I have said," or "I have gone" form.

It is perfect in the sense of being finished or complete in the past.

In every case, the action is a line.

The footnote, page 42 says imperfect, aorist, and pluperfect are the secondary tenses. Primary or secondary have to do with time.

The secondary (past) tense, for the progressive system, is called the imperfect, which is continuing action in the past.

Action as past that is not continuing is called the aorist. It is a point.

All we need to know now is, the present tense implies action that is taking place in the present time. If complete, it would be past.

It can be expressed with or without the “-ing” form; but we need to bear in mind, the implication is it is still going on.

[Section 20/22]

Next section, parsing, not in 1st Ed. at all. But it is a good practice. Now, Section 22/13. I'm glad 2nd Ed. put this off to now. It is easier to learn here than trying to add it to the general rules of accent.

There are exactly three options for the accent on a Greek verb:

1. Circumflex on penult: two syllables, long penult, short ultima.
2. Acute on penult: if the ultima is long, this is the only option, no matter how many syllables; if ultima and penult are both short, the penult takes the acute only if there are only two syllables.
3. All others, acute on antepenult: over two syllables, ultima short.

This really is all you have to know to accent a verb correctly.

If you want to think of it as recessive, that's up to you; but, you will always accent correctly by applying these simple rules.

If it is helpful to look at it another way, consider the following:

1. If the ultima is long, an acute on the penult is the only option in any case, regardless of length or number of syllables.
2. If the ultima is short, there are three options:
 - a. For three or more syllables, the antepenult takes an acute.
 - b. For two syllables, short penult, acute on penult.
 - c. For two syllables, long penult, circumflex on penult.

We will deal with single syllable verbs when we come to them

Notice that three syllable or longer verbs never take the circumflex, because that would require a short ultima and long penult; but, when the ultima is short, it doesn't matter whether the penult is short or long, the antepenult gets the accent, which is an acute.

Literally, the only time a verb has a circumflex is if it is two syllables long with a long penult followed by a short ultima. Otherwise, it will always end up being an acute, for one reason or another.

The exercises are not identical. 2nd Ed. adds a sixth set in section 2. Those with 1st Ed. need not be concerned at all; those with 2nd Ed., just consider number 6 as optional extra practice.

I'd suggest if you are in a family with several taking the course that you give each other additional practice by making up more for the English to Greek.

Also, I would suggest that those who are really serious should make a work sheet taking each verb in the vocabulary, conjugating it fully, paying attention to accents and breathing marks. Practice them several times until “ω, εἰς, εἰ, ὀμεν, ετε, ὀυσιν” are practically second nature to you. You should be able to go into the Greek New Testament and recognize these forms instantly.

Brief Explanation: Why We Use the Textus Receptus

Basically, there are three choices.

For most of church history, up to 1881, there was little question by anyone of the correct Greek text of the New Testament.

In 1881, a new Greek text of the New Testament was published by two scholars named Westcott and Hort.

This largely undermined confidence in not only the original texts of the New Testament, but in any translation based on them. This was a direct, frontal attack, not only on the King James Version of the New Testament, but on the whole Bible, by association.

As a result, the overwhelming majority of seminaries ceased to use the traditionally accepted Greek text, and went to the text from Westcott and Hort, which is commonly called the eclectic text.

Eclectic means selective. It is also called the critical text. That it is! Show the two published texts side by side for comparison.

Quite some time passed without any significant response to defend the previously accepted text against the attack, and it appeared that any serious student of the Word just accepted the new text as superior, more authentic, more reliable, and that was that.

But, at last, in 1982, another text was published, which at last took exception to the claims of the critical text, and showed that the overwhelming majority of manuscripts agreed with the original, traditional Greek text, which the critical text was based on only a comparatively small number of texts, chosen by Westcott and Hort, which they defended by invented theories and evidences for authenticity, and also developed their own theories trying to discount the traditional Greek text, all of which were grievously lacking in any actual evidence to support them.

Read selections from Majority Text introduction.

So, what the Majority Text has done is it has shown that variations between the Majority Text and the Textus Receptus are of very minor significance, and the critical text is a broad departure; so, we really have better reasons to trust the Textus Receptus than to accept the critical text.