

New Testament Greek
8. First Declension, Paradigms and Exercises

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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.

Well, we didn't get to Lesson 5 last time, so that is where we will go today. Several new endings, and one new accent rule, which is an exception to the general rule of noun accent, but consistent! The first declension is called the "alpha" declension, but it includes nouns ending in both alpha and eta.

All nouns of the first declension ending in alpha or eta are feminine in gender. It sort of suggests that there may be nouns of the first declension that do not end in alpha or eta doesn't it? Well, that is exactly right, and we will come to them in Lesson 7. But, just so you don't have to wonder, the word προφήτης, ὁ, a prophet, and μαθητής, ὁ, a witness, are both masculine, as well as others. They are still part of the first declension, because their characteristic vowel, except in the genitive singular, is alpha or eta. Anyway, we will go over them when we come to them.

But, for this lesson, all the first declension nouns are feminine. That really is of no importance until we come to where the gender of the noun has to match the gender of the article or adjective; for now, we just need to learn the declensions and their accents.

Let's go through the vocabulary, and see if any of the words sound familiar, or related to English words.

βασιλεία, ἡ basilica is the seat of a ruler.

γραφὴ, ἡ, graph, graphic, autograph, phonograph, or other words containing "-graph."

δόξα, ἡ "doxology," combining δόξα and λόγος, means "a word of glory." (certain abstract nouns require no indefinite article)

εἰρήνη, ἡ, the name Irene means "peace." (abstract)

ἐκκλησία, ἡ, assembly, called out, or church.

ζωή, ἡ, zoo, zoology. (abstract)

ἡμέρα, ἡ ephemeral (literally "upon a day"), fleeting

καρδία, ἡ cardiac and other words.

παραβολή, ἡ directly transliterated into the English "parable."

φωνή, ἡ microphone, phonograph, telephone, etc.

ψυχὴ, ἡ psychology, psychiatry, psychic, and so on. (abstract)

ὥρα, ἡ source of "hour."

That is twelve out of fourteen words in the vocabulary that directly relate to current English words. Do any of you know of English words or terms related to ἀλήθεια, ἡ, ἐντολή, ἡ?

Again, the paragraph dealing with what are the stem and ending is irrelevant. The stem is what does not change from one form to another. There are several distinct forms in the first declension.

Words ending in alpha, such as ὥρα, where the last character of the stem is either epsilon, iota, or rho. They follow one pattern.

Words ending in alpha where the accent is on the antepenult, thus, the final alpha is short: a consistent rule covers all those words.

Words ending in alpha, where the final character of the stem is not epsilon, iota, or rho. These follow a slightly different pattern.

Finally, words ending in eta are a fourth variation and pattern.

As the paradigm of ὥρα reveals, based on the accent used in forms of that paradigm, the alpha is always long. Of course, when it is part of the diphthong αἰ, with no following character, that's still short, so the nominative plural, if accented on the penult, must take the circumflex.

Also, the paradigm of ὥρα reveals that first declension exception to the general rule of noun accent: in the first declension, genitive plural always takes a circumflex on the omega of the ultima.

Otherwise, the accent is always an acute on first declension nouns, if they are accented on either the penult or antepenult.

A circumflex is on the nominative plural, because the αἰ diphthong with no other character following is always short; and then, the special rule for the genitive plural of all first declension nouns.

Other than the exception of the genitive plural, this is all consistent with the second declension rules.

The paradigm of ἀλήθεια is a case where the final alpha is short, as revealed by the accent on the antepenult of the lexicon form. A special rule says that in these words, the alpha in the accusative singular is also short. Thus, if the lexicon form has the acute on the antepenult, the accusative singular will also be accented on the antepenult. But, the alpha of the accusative plural of nouns of the first declension is always long, as §53 states.

The paradigm of δόξα shows the change of alpha to eta in nouns of the first declension, ending in alpha, where the last character of the stem is not epsilon, iota, or rho.

The paradigm of γραφή shows that eta in the nominative singular is retained in the singular but reverts to alpha in the plural.

This calls attention to the fact that the endings of the plural cases of all nouns of the first declension are the same characters; so you can easily memorize those.

The same paradigm, with the lexicon form accented on the ultima, shows the same rule is followed as in the second declension, of the accenting pattern of acute, circumflex, circumflex, acute.

The exercises are essentially the same kind of thing as the previous chapter, only mixing in the new vocabulary.

So, let's first work through the paradigms in class. Then, you really should do those again for homework, just for extra practice.

[Paradigms]

- Note on ἐκκλησία and καρδία: There is no way to tell whether a solitary iota as the final vowel of the stem is short or long.

The accent is the same regardless, except in nominative plural.

In such cases, I frankly do not know of any resource that just tells you whether the solitary iota is short or long.

There is an analytical lexicon where you can look up a word, but it still doesn't tell you whether the iota is long or short.

All you can do is observe how the nominative plural is accented; that, in turn, reveals whether the iota is long or short.

If the iota is long, the accent is a circumflex; if the iota is short, it's an acute.

This is a point where it isn't absolutely necessary to know what is the accent ahead of time to identify a word.

You'll know the nominative plural of ἐκκλησία or καρδία because it will end with αι, regardless of how it is accented.

As it turns out, it appears that, when a stem of a first declension noun ends in solitary iota, it is short. At least in any examples that I have been able to find so far, this is the case.

The only foolproof way to know is to find a textual example.

- Note on nouns that retain the α throughout the singular:

The genitive singular is identical to the accusative plural.

The usage is not difficult to determine from context when these forms are found in the text of the New Testament.

Now we'll work through the exercises together, as far as we can.

You can do the ones we don't get done in class for homework.

The next chapter is going to be another gigantic volume of material to cover, so we will want to take at least two weeks on it.

Go ahead and read chapter six, and do your best to understand it.

Then, when we go over it in class, you will be a step ahead.