0 | Introduction to NTGreek In Session
Preliminaries

Overview

0.0 Introduction

As might be expected, learning to say and write the Greek alphabet is the first step learning the Greek language. Mastering the sight and sounds of the alphabet will lay the cornerstone for learning the sight and sounds of NTGreek words in all subsequent lessons. However, before introducing the Greek alphabet, a few preliminary comments are necessary.
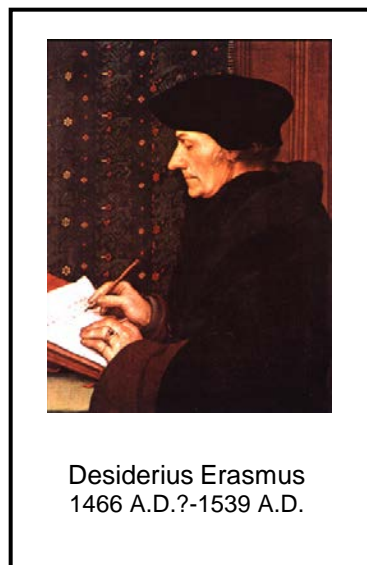
0.1 Phonemic System

The Greek letter sounds for this course are designed to provide a practical and consistent system of pronunciation. No authoritative source exists in determining how Greek was pronounced during New Testament times. However, as an aid to vocabulary memorization, the Erasmian standardized system of pronunciation has been adopted that is widely used in universities, Bible colleges, seminaries, and in numerous modern NTGreek grammars.

Three major approaches are available for learning the pronunciation of NTGreek. It would seem natural to learn the standardized pronunciation used today in Greece. However, unless Greek is spoken on a daily basis, a serious draw back

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exists. Several different phonemes have identical sounds, and some phonemes have multiple sounds, causing confusion between how a word is spoken and actually written. This is no different in English where the letter "c" may sound very different in different words, such as the "c" in "cat", "circle", or "cube", or the difference in meaning between the two words, "cubical" and "cubicle", being pronounced identically. The native speaker knows the difference because they are absorbed in the language. Furthermore, the pronunciation used in Modern Greek has evolved over the years. Therefore, Modern Greek is not necessarily a proper reflection how Greek was spoken during the New Testament Era, as English spoken today is to Elizabethan English.

A second approach to pronunciation is to learn "reconstructed New Testament Greek". Scholars have reconstructed what is believed to be the actual pronunciation of Greek during the New Testament Era based upon linguistic guidelines. Even so, with the variety of Greek dialects spoken during that era because of geographical isolation, there was divergence primarily with certain vowels sounds. This is also true how English is spoken differently today in Australia, Great Britain, and the United States.

The final pronunciation approach is the Erasmian system. **Desiderius Erasmus** was a Renaissance Latin and Greek scholar who developed a system for non-native speakers to learn Greek. His system diverged from how Greek was spoken during his day in that he assigned different phonemes to the vowels and consonants, differentiating them when spoken. His method greatly enhanced a copyist to duplicate accurately the Greek New Testament. In addition, his approach allowed non-natives to learn rapidly to read the Greek New Testament.

Desiderius Erasmus
1466 A.D.?-1539 A.D.

Erasmus' pronunciation gained a foothold in 1588 A.D. when two British professors at Cambridge began to use his method in their Greek classes. The classes were such a success that the approach spread rapidly to other schools, including Bible colleges, universities, and seminaries, both in Great Britain and eventually the United States. Erasmus' pronunciation method proliferated when many New Testament Greek professors also used his pronunciation in their grammars. It was not until the middle of 1800 A.D., however, that the terms, "Erasmic Greek" or "Erasmian Greek" became commonplace and denoted the pronunciation method set forth by Erasmus.

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Erasmian Greek is not how Modern Greek is pronounced, nor how Greek was pronounced during the New Testament Era; it is somewhere in between the two. It is a practical method for non-native Greek speakers to learn quickly a consistent system of pronunciation. Even if a non-native attempts to learn Modern Greek pronunciation, they will never be able to reproduce the phonemic sounds as a native without living in the country and speaking the language for many years.

The Erasmian approach is a viable alternative to Modern Greek pronunciation for several reasons. First, the beginner quickly learns to differentiate between the seven vowel and seventeen consonant sounds, as well as the binary diphthong vowel sounds. This leads to rapid learning of Greek vocabulary, and eventual reading of the Greek New Testament. Second, most institutions outside of Greece teach New Testament Greek using the Erasmian pronunciation method. Unless one plans to move to Greece and speak the language, Modern Greek pronunciation in the end is disadvantageous for those who plan to read only the Greek New Testament and communicate to those who learned Erasmian Greek—who are in the majority. Finally, after learning New Testament Greek vocabulary using the Erasmian pronunciation, one can attempt to learn Modern Greek pronunciation, thereby not being initially confused with identical Modern Greek phonemic sounds.

If Erasmian Greek pronunciation is so good to learn Greek, why did not Greece eventually adopt it? Whereas Erasmian Greek is a wonderful learning tool, it is caustic to the ear when compared to Modern Greek lyrical sounds. If one compares the seemingly musical sounds of Modern Greek, Erasmian Greek sounds barbaric—even intolerable to the native speaker! However, most non-native students are not interested investing the time to achieve these lyrical sounds; they are more interested in being able to read the Greek New Testament, and as rapidly as possible.

With the foregoing rationale set forth for using the Erasmian Greek pronunciation, let us move on to another matter: the Greek font used in this course.

0.2 The Greek Font

The Greek SPIonic font has been chosen for this grammar for several reasons. First, the SPIonic font is compatible for both the Macintosh© and Windows© platforms, utilizing the same character and keyboard maps. The font is also designed to follow the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* encoding scheme. Second, it is a public domain font, meaning that the font may be downloaded and used without copyright restrictions. Finally, the SPIonic font is an easy to read

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typeface similarly found in modern printed texts of the Greek New Testament, a Greek typeface dating from the middle ages.

Unless the SPIonic font has been downloaded and installed in the font folder of your computer, the Greek characters will not be displayed or print properly. If the font in the right-hand column below appears similar as the graphic image in the left-hand column, the SPIonic font is already installed in your font folder. No further action is necessary to view and print the course materials.

Graphic SPIonic Font	SPIonic Font
Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος	Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος

0.2.1 SPIonic Keyboard Layout

For further information about the SPIonic language font keyboard layout, go here.

0.3 Course Deployment

All course lessons are offered in Adobe Acrobat format. The Adobe Acrobat Reader© software is free and allows all major computer platforms to view and print the lesson materials.

All materials for this New Testament Greek course are distributed on the World Wide Web from InTheBeginning.org's web site and are copyrighted by the author. However, they may be freely distributed without prior permission if the two following conditions are met:

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   1. The course materials in the lessons are not altered in any manner, including the copyright at the bottom of the page.

   2. The transmission and distribution of all course materials are done without cost. Please note that all NTGreek MP3 sound files, as well as all animated gif files are also copyrighted by the author and may not be used in any application that involves cost to the user.

0.4 Course Numerical Structure

Traditional method of outlining is not used for this course. Instead, a logical numerical system divides the individual lessons into sections. This simple method makes it easy to locate specific places in the course material for cross-reference purposes.

Traditional	Numerical
I.	1.0
A.	1.0.1
B.	1.0.2
1.	1.0.2.1
2.	1.0.2.2
a.	1.0.2.21
b.	1.0.2.22
II.	1.1
A.	1.1.1
1.	1.1.1.1
2.	1.1.1.2
B.	1.1.2
III.	1.2
IV.	1.3

If this numerical system of outlining seems strange, do not be concerned; as with most things, you will become acquainted with the system after some use, and it will become easy to follow.

0.5 Contact The Author

If you should find a typo or what you may think is a mistake in a lesson, please do not hesitate to leave a message. I welcome all suggestions and comments. Also, I find it encouraging hearing how you are progressing through the lessons.

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0.6 Preferred Internet Browser

All lesson materials are best viewed by Google Chrome. Unlike several other internet web browsers (IE immediately comes to mind), the Google Chrome web browser for the most part is W3C CSS compliant. Please do not contact me to report a problem unless you are using Google Chrome as your web browser.

0.7 Notification Service

I encourage you to join the *NTGreek In Session Notification Service*. You will be notified by email ASAP when NTGreek In Session has been updated. Once joined, you may update your email address or unsubscribe at any time. By joining this service, you will NEVER receive any advertisements to purchase something. Many voluntary opt-in services are thinly veiled scams to fill up your email box with flyers to buy something and/or sell your email address to associate vendors for profit. I think that tactic is wholly wrong. The sole purpose for this service is to notify you when NTGreek In Session has been updated. It is that simple.

0.8 Donations

All monetary investments to the further development of these lessons are deeply appreciated. Besides the time to update the web pages, hundreds of hours are required to prepare each lesson and all supporting study aids. All donations are processed on a secure server where your personal information and payment is protected. There is no such thing as a donation that is too small. Act today to donate and make a difference for tomorrow!