



Lesson 1

Copyright © Rodney J. Decker 1998. All rights reserved.

Some Preliminaries

- These lessons do not replace your textbook (Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek*). They are rather a supplement to it and a guide for studying it. (I will refer to it simply as “Mounce” in this course.)
- The materials that you view with Adobe Acrobat Reader may be printed out, but even if you do, I would encourage you to refer frequently to the screen version so that you have the benefit of the **color coding**—it serves the same purpose here as my pointing to specific “**pieces**” on the whiteboard or overhead. (You are welcome to print these pages on a color printer, but I suspect that you will soon find that it takes a lot of ink cartridges, and that gets expensive.)
- Before you begin this lesson, you should have already read Mounce pp. *x–xvii* and 1–6. Although you will not be quizzed on those pages, they will help orient you to the study of Greek and to the approach used by our textbook.

Chapters 3–4, The Alphabet & Pronunciation

This is where it all begins! Until you learn the alphabet well, we can't do much else. As you study chapter 3, pay particular attention to these points. Supplement the textbook and this material with the on-line resources listed on the web page for this lesson so that you have some audio guidance.

◆ Each letter sounds like the first sound in its name.

- **α** sounds like the **a** in **a**lpha
- **λ** sounds like the **l** in **l**ambda
- **φ** sounds like the **ph** in **ph**i

◆ **Vowels:** α ε ι ο υ η ω

Hint: to help remember the Greek vowels, relate them to English vowels (of course that only helps if you know what they are!):

a e i o u + η and ω

◆ **γ** [gamma] sounds like the English letter 'g,' but **γγ** sounds like 'ng.'

◆ “Breathing marks”: 2 kinds:

smooth breathing: ’ **á**

rough breathing: ‘ **á**

- smooth = no change in pronunciation
 - rough = put an English **h** sound in front of the regular sound
 - A breathing mark is written on all words that begin with a vowel or a **ρ** (rho). The combination **ῥ** is pronounced **rh**, not **hr**; that is, the *h* sound comes after the vowel instead of before it.
 - When you write/type Greek (e.g., on quizzes or exams), there *must* be a breathing mark on every Greek word that begins with a vowel or a rho. If there is not, it is wrong. (A word to the wise...!)
- ◆ An **ι** (iota) at the beginning of a word is pronounced with an English **y** sound: **Ἰησους** = **Yā**-sous. (This is common in Greek names, especially those names that originated as Hebrew/Aramaic words.)

◆ Diphthongs:

2 vowels, 1 sound

	An English equivalent	A Greek Example
αι	aisle	αἶρω
ει	eight	εἶ
οι	oil	οἶκια
αυ	sauerkraut	αὐτος
ου	soup	οὐδε
υι	suite	υἱος
ευ, ηυ	feud	εὐθυσ ἠύξαμεν

◆ Improper diphthongs:

Here the letter iota is written *below* the preceding letter. This does not always happen. That is, just because an iota occurs in a word, it does not necessarily get subscripted. It usually happens when various endings are added to a word, and then only if the preceding vowel is a long vowel. α ἦ ῶ

◆ Greek Punctuation

Comma, period: same as English: θεος, θεος.

Semicolon = raised dot: θεος·

Question mark = (English) semicolon: θεος;

◆ Accents

- acuté
- gravè
- circumflêx̂

See examples in workbook, p. 6, ## 1–2, 8

◆ Accent rules are *complicated!*

You need to know:

- Names of the accents (**quiz material!**)
- **Stress** the accented syllable when you pronounce a Greek word.

You do **not** need:

- to know all the rules
- to write the accents in handwritten/typed Greek text

As you should be able to tell, I do not place a lot of emphasis on the accents. That is contrary to what some other Greek profs do. If you were learning to write Greek or to speak Greek and not just to read it, then it would be more important. Just be aware that this is one area in which this course will not train you—but then any first year course must pick and choose what it will and will not include. (At least I have warned you as to what I'm omitting!) There will be a few instances (most of them next semester) in which the accent *will* make a difference in the word, and in those cases I will tell you what you must learn.

For those who want to go further in this area (and that's not at all a bad idea!), then pay particular attention to Mounce, 14–15 (#3) and the advanced information on 20 (§4.4). The next helpful step beyond that is to study D. A. Carson's *Greek Accents: A Student's Manual* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985).

Greek Pronunciation Drill

Prepared by Dr. William W. Combs (used by permission)

Each of the Greek “words” below sounds like a (fairly) common English word. These are *not* real Greek words. They serve a helpful purpose at this stage in the game, however. If you sound them out and they come out sounding familiar, you've probably got the correct

pronunciation—or at least something that resembles it close enough for our purposes. The third column consists of my own notes/hints (not Dr. Combs' material). (Don't take them all too seriously.)

1	βετ	
2	βιτ	
3	βοτ	≠ "boat"
4	βητ	Do you fish?
5	βωτ	
6	βυτ	
7	γετ	
8	μετ	

9	λετ	You should drink this!
10	πετ	
11	νετ	
12	σετ	
13	δετ	
14	βαρ	
15	μιλκ	
16	βενδ	
17	λιζ	
18	δεθ	

19	μην	
20	βεδ	Where you may want to be.
21	θιν	
22	ινκ	
23	ζινκ	
24	βλανδ	Think "food" not "hair."
25	γην	
26	ληζι	OK, so it's not exact, but it's close.
27	νημλι	
28	λικ	

29	φλυκ	
30	πικ	
31	φυδ	Not "Elmer"
32	ληξ	
33	πηστ	
34	στεπ	
35	μωλ	
36	ρωστ	beef (or turkey)
37	λυτ	
38	βρηξ	

39	βηστ	You do <i>not</i> sleep on this one.
40	σλιπ	
41	θιμβολ	
42	σκιλετ	
43	χωτ	
44	κοτ	
45	γητ	
46	μωτελ	
47	σκητ	
48	στων	

49	ΦΩΝΕΤΙΞ	<p>Be careful of the diphthongs below. Some sound the same.</p>
50	φαιλ	
51	φauλ	
52	φουλ	
53	φευλ	
54	φειλ	
55	φοιλ	
56	φηλ	
57	φολ	
58	φιλ	

59	φελ	Running can produce pain here.
60	σαιδ	
61	μειζ	
62	καιτ	
63	ζου	
64	λαυδ	
65	βοι	
66	συιτ	
67	τανν	
68	σταρ	

69	κρειτ	
70	αις	cold
71	αυτς	3 per inning
72	σουν	
73	μωστ	
74	γωλς	
75	γρικ	I have doubts about the pronunciation of this one!
76	τεμπτ	
77	καρδ	

78	γρυπ	
79	συλπ	
80	θιμ	
81	βεισικ	