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· A language belonging to the Indo-European family of languages, Hebrew is from the Semitic, another family of languages. **Greek** is the language in which the Christian Scriptures were originally written, aside from Matthew's Gospel, which was written first in Hebrew, and in which also appeared the first complete translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, namely, the **Greek Septuagint**.

· It is an inflectional language, achieving variety in expression by means of stems, prefixes, and endings.

.. Koine

· From about **300 B.C.E.** to about **500 C.E.**, was the age of Koine, or common **Greek**, a mixture of differing **Greek** dialects of which **Attic** was the most influential. **Koine** became the international language.

· It had a very distinct advantage over the other languages of the day, in that it was almost universally known. **Koine** means common language, or dialect common to all.

· How widespread the use of **Koine** was can be seen from the fact that the decrees of the imperial governor's and of the Roman senate were translated into **Koine** to be distributed throughout the Roman Empire.

- Accordingly, the charge posted above Jesus Christ's head at the time of his impalement was written not only in official Latin and in Hebrew but also in **Greek**, Koine.
- Also, they posted above his head the charge against him, in writing. This is Jesus the King of the Jews. (**Matthew 27:37**)
- Pilate wrote a title also and put it on the torture stake. It was written. Jesus the Nazarene the King of the Jews. (**John 19:19**)
- Therefore many of the Jews read this title, because the place where Jesus was impaled was near the city, and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, in **Greek**. (**John 19:20**)
- Regarding the use of **Greek** in the land of Israel, one scholar comments:
 - Although the main body of the Jewish people rejected Hellenism and its ways, intercourse with the Greek peoples and the use of the Greek language was by no means eschewed. The Palestinian teachers regarded the Greek translation of the Scriptures with favor, as an instrument for carrying the truth to the Gentiles. [**Hellenism**, by N. Bentwich, 1919, p. 115]
 - Of course, the primary reason for the **Greek Septuagint** was to benefit the Jews, especially those of the Dispersion, who no longer spoke the pure Hebrew but were familiar with Greek.
 - Old Hebrew terms involving Jewish worship came to be replaced by terms **Greek** in origin. The word *sy-na-go-ge'*, meaning a meeting together, is an example of the adoption of Greek words by the Jews.

·· **Koine Used By Inspired Christian Writers**

- Since the writers of the inspired Christian Scriptures were concerned with getting their message across with understanding to all the people, it was not the classical **Greek** but the Koine that they used. All these writers themselves were Jews.
- Though they were Semitic, they were not interested in the spread of Semitism, but in the truth of pure Christianity, and by means of the **Greek** language they could reach more people. They could better carry out their commission to make disciples of people of all the nations.

- Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. (**Matthew 28:19**)
- Teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you. And, look! I am with you all the days until the conclusion of the system of things. (**Matthew 28:20**)
- Also, the **Koine** was a fine instrument by which they could well express the subtle intricacies of thought that they desired to present.
- The inspired Christian writers gave to **Koine** power, dignity, and warmth by reason of their exalted message. **Greek** words took on a richer, fuller, and more spiritual meaning in the contexts of the inspired Scriptures.

.. Alphabet

- All present-day European alphabets stem either directly or indirectly from the **Greek** alphabet. However, the **Greeks** did not invent their alphabet, they borrowed it from the Semites. This is apparent from the fact that the **Greek** alphabetic letters, of about the **Seventh Century B.C.E.** resembled the Hebrew characters, of about the **Eighth Century B.C.E.**
- They also had the same general order, with a few exceptions. Additionally, the pronunciation of the names of some of the letters is very similar, for example: *al'pha* (Greek) and *'a'leph* (Hebrew), *be'ta* (Greek) and *behth* (Hebrew), *del'ta* (Greek) and *da'leth* (Hebrew), and many others. Koine had 24 letters.
- In adapting the Semitic alphabet to the **Greek** language, the **Greeks** made a valuable addition to it in that they took the surplus letters for which they had no corresponding consonants, *'a'leph*, *he'*, *chehth*, *'a'yin*, *waw*, and *yohdh*, and employed these to represent the vowel sounds *a*, *e* (short), *E* (long), *o*, *y*, and *i*.

.. Vocabulary

- The **Greek** vocabulary is quite abundant and exact. The **Greek** writer has at his disposal sufficient words to enable him to make fine differentiation and to convey just the shade of meaning that he desires. To illustrate, the **Greek** makes a distinction between ordinary knowledge, *gno'sis*.

- O Timothy, guard what is laid up in trust with you, turning away from the empty speeches that violate what is holy and from the contradictions of the falsely called **knowledge**. (1 Timothy 6:20)
- And intensified **knowledge**, *e-pi'gno-sis*.
- Whose will is that all sorts of men should be saved and come to an **accurate knowledge** of truth. (1 Timothy 2:4)
- And between *al'los*.
- And I will request the Father and he will give you **another** helper to be with you forever. (John 14:16)
- Meaning another of the same kind, and *he'te-ros*, meaning another of a different kind.
- I marvel that you are being so quickly removed from the One who called you with Christ's undeserved kindness over to **another** sort of Good News. (Galatians 1:6)
- Many expressions in other languages have incorporated **Greek** words as well as basic roots that comprise **Greek** words, resulting in language that is more precise and specific in expression.

•• Nouns

- Nouns are declined according to case, gender, and number. Related words, such as pronouns and adjectives, are declined to agree with their antecedents or that which they modify.

•• Case

- Generally **Koine** is shown to have had five cases, Some scholars enlarge this to eight. In English there is usually no change in form for nouns except in the possessive case and in number.
- Pronouns, however, are subject to more changes. But in **Koine** each case usually requires a different form or ending, making the language much more complicated than English in this respect.

•• The Article

- In English there are both a definite article (the) and indefinite articles (a, an). Koine has but a single article *ho*, which is in some respects the equivalent of the definite article the in English. Whereas the English definite article the is never inflected, the **Greek** article is inflected as to case, gender, and number, just as the nouns are.
- The **Greek** article is used not only to set off substantives, as with English, but also with infinitives, adjectives, adverbs, phrases, clauses, and even whole sentences. The use of the article with an adjective is found in the **Greek** at;
 I am the fine shepherd, the fine shepherd surrenders his soul in behalf of the sheep. (**John 10:11**)
- Where the literal rendering would be; I am the shepherd the fine one. This is stronger than merely I am the fine shepherd. It is like putting fine in italics.
- An example of the article being applied to an entire clause in **Greek** is found at;
 In like manner the spirit also joins in with help for our weakness, for the problem of what we should pray for as we need to we do not know, but the spirit itself pleads for us with groanings unuttered. (**Romans 8:26**)
- Where the phrase what we should pray for as we need to is preceded by the article in the neuter gender. Literally, the phrase would read *the* for what we should pray. *Int*
- To get the thought across in English, it is helpful to add the words *problem of*. The definite article focuses matters in such a way that the problem is brought together as a distinct issue. Thus, the rendering For the problem of what we should pray for as we need to we do not know, *NW*, gives more accurately the flavor of the writers thought.

•• Verbs

- **Greek** verbs are built from verbal roots primarily by means of stems and endings, or affixes and suffixes. They are conjugated according to voice, mood, tense, person, and number.

- In **Greek** they constitute a more difficult study than nouns. Better understanding of the **Koine** in recent years, particularly with regard to verbs, has enabled translators to bring out the real flavor and meaning of the **Christian Greek Scriptures** better than was possible in the older versions. Some of the more interesting features regarding **Greek** verbs and their influence on Bible understanding are considered in the following paragraphs.

•• Voice

- English has only two voices for its verbs, namely, the active and passive voices, but **Greek** has also a distinctive middle voice. In this voice, the subject participates in the results of the action or, at times, produces the action. The middle voice stresses the interest of the agent in the action of the verb.
- The middle voice was also used with an intensive force. It served a purpose similar to italics in English. Paul said, after being told that bonds and tribulations awaited him when he got to Jerusalem, Nevertheless, I do not make my soul of any account as dear to me, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received of the Lord Jesus.
- And now, look! Bound in the spirit, I am journeying to Jerusalem, although not knowing the things that will happen to me in it. (**Acts of Apostles 20:22**)
- Except that from city to city the Holy Spirit repeatedly bears witness to me as it says that bonds and tribulations are waiting for me. (**Acts of Apostles 20:23**)
- Nevertheless, I do not make my soul of any account as dear to me, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received of the Lord Jesus, to bear thorough witness to the Good News of the undeserved kindness of God. (**Acts of Apostles 20:24**)
- Here the verb for make, *poi-ou'mai*, is in the middle voice. Paul is saying; not that he does not value his life, but that the fulfilling of his ministry is far more important. That is **his** conclusion, regardless of what others may think.
- The middle voice is used at;

- Only behave in a manner worthy of the Good News about the Christ, in order, that, whether I come and see you or be absent, I may hear about the things which concern you, that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one soul striving side by side for the faith of the Good News. (**Philippians 1:27**)
- Only behave, or, carry on as citizens, in a manner worthy of the Good News about the Christ. The verb *po-li-teu'o-mai* is, in this text, in the middle voice, *po-li-teu'e-sthe*, carry on as citizens, that is, **participate** in the activities of citizens, sharing in declaring the Good News.
- Roman citizens generally took an active part in the affairs of the State, for Roman citizenship was highly prized, particularly in cities whose inhabitants had been given citizenship by Rome, as was the case in Philippi.
- So Paul is here telling Christians that they must not be inactive as merely being in the position of Christians, but they must participate in Christian activity. This is in harmony with his later words to them; As for us, our citizenship exists in the heavens.
- As for us, our citizenship exists in the heavens, from which place also we are eagerly waiting for a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. (**Philippians 3:20**)

.. Tenses

- Another important and distinctive characteristic of **Greek**, contributing to its exactness, is its use of verb tenses. Verbs and their tenses involve two elements, **kind** of action, the more important and **time** of action, of less importance.
- There are three principal points of viewing action in the Greek language, each with modifying characteristics: (1) action as continuous (to be doing), represented basically in the **present** tense, the primary force of which is progressive action or that which habitually or successively recurs. (2) action as perfected or completed (to have done), the principal tense here being the **perfect**. (3) action as punctiliar, or momentary (to do), represented in the **ao-rist**. There are, of course, other tenses, such as the imperfect, the past perfect, and the future.
- To illustrate the difference in the **Greek** tenses.

- My little children, I am writing you these things that you may not commit a sin. And yet, if anyone does commit a sin, we have a helper with the Father, Jesus Christ, a righteous one. (1 John 2:1)
- The apostle John says; If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, **KJ**. The **Greek** verb for sin is in the **orist** tense, hence the time of the action is punctiliar, or momentary.
- The **orist** tense here points to one act of sinning, whereas the present infinitive would denote the condition of being a sinner or the continuous or progressive action in sinning. So John does not speak of someone carrying on a practice of sinning, but of one who does commit a **sin**.
- And he said to him; All these things I will give you if you fall down and do an act of worship to me. (Matthew 4:9)
- Where the orist indicates that the Devil did not ask Jesus to do constant or continuous worship to him, but an **act** of worship.
- Everyone remaining in union with him does not practice sin, no one that practices sin has either seen him or come to know him. (1 John 3:6)
- Everyone who has been born from God does not carry on sin, because His reproductive seed remains in such one, and he cannot practice sin, because he has been born from God. (1 John 3:9)
- Is read without taking into account the fact that the verb there is in the present tense, John seems to contradict his words above noted. The **King James Version** reads; Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not, and, Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.
- These renderings fail to carry over into English the continuous action denoted by the **present** tense of the **Greek** verbs used. Some modern translations, instead of saying here, sinneth not and doth not commit sin, take note of the continuous action and render the verbs accordingly: does not **practice** sin, does not **carry on** sin, **NW**, **practices** sin, **makes a practice** of sinning, **CB**, does not **habitually** sin, does not **practice** sin, **Ph**, does not **continue** to sin, **TEV**. Jesus commanded his followers at;

- Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you. (Matthew 6:33)
- **Keep on**, then, seeking first the kingdom, indicating continuous effort, rather than merely seek ye first the kingdom. **KJ**
- In prohibitions, the **present** and **aorist** tenses are likewise distinctly different. In the **present** tense a prohibition means more than not to do a thing. It means to **stop** doing it.
- Jesus Christ, en route to Golgotha, did not merely tell the women following him;
- Jesus turned to the women and said; Daughters of Jerusalem, **stop weeping** for me. On the contrary, **weep** for yourselves and for your children. (Luke 23:28)
- Likewise to those selling doves in the temple, Jesus said; **Stop making** the house of my Father a house of merchandise!
- And he said to those selling the doves; Take these things away from here! **Stop making** the house of my Father a house of merchandise! (John 2:16)
- In the Sermon on the Mount he said; **Stop being anxious** about what you will eat, drink, or wear.
- On this account I say to you; **Stop being anxious** about your souls as to what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your bodies as to what you will wear. Does not the soul mean more than food and the body than clothing? (Matthew 6:25)
- On the other hand, in the aorist a prohibition was a command against doing something at any given time or moment. Jesus is shown as telling his hearers; So, **never be anxious**, that is, do not be anxious at any moment, about the next day.
- So, **never be anxious** about the next day, for the next day will have its own anxieties. Sufficient for each day is its own badness. (Matthew 6:34)
- Here the **aorist** is used in order to indicate that the disciples **should not be anxious at any time**.

- Another example of the need to take into consideration the **Greek** tense in translating is found at;
- By faith Abraham, when he was tested, as good as offered up Isaac, and the man that had gladly received the promises attempted to offer up his only-begotten son. (**Hebrews 11:17**)
- Some translations ignore the special significance in the tense of the verb. With reference to Abraham, the **King James Version** says; He that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son.
- The **Greek** verb here translated **offered up** is in the **imperfect** tense, which may carry the thought that the action was intended or **attempted, but not realized or accomplished**. Hence, in harmony with what actually happened, the Greek verb is more appropriately rendered **attempted to offer up**.
- And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the young child, and they were going to call it by the name of its father, Zechariah. (**Luke 1:59**)
- Speaking of the time of circumcision of the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth, the imperfect tense used indicates that instead of the rendering, **They called** him Zacharias, after the name of his father, **KJ**, the passage should read **They were going to call** the young child by the name of its father, Zechariah, **NW**. This is in harmony with what actually took place, namely, that he was given the name John, according to the angel Gabriel's instructions.
- However, the angel said to him; Have no fear, Zechariah, because your supplication has been favorably heard, and your wife Elizabeth will become mother to a son to you, and you are to call his name John. (**Luke 1:13**)

• Transliteration

- This refers to the spelling of **Greek** words with letters of another alphabet. In most instances it is simply a letter-for-letter substitution,

• Accent Marks

- There are three types of accents in **Greek**, the acute, the circumflex, and the grave. In the Greek these appear over the vowel of the syllables they accentuate. However, in transliterations in this publication the accent mark comes at the end of the accented syllable and only one mark is used for all three types of Greek accents.

.. Syllables

- As an aid to pronunciation, either a dot or the accent mark is used in transliterations to separate all syllables. A **Greek** word has as many syllables as it has vowels or diphthongs. Thus *lo'gos* has two vowels and therefore two syllables. The two vowels of a diphthong are in one syllable, not two. The word *pneu'ma* has one diphthong, *eu* and one other vowel (*a*) and thus has two syllables.

- In syllable division the following rules have been observed: (1) When a single consonant occurs in the middle of a word, it is placed with the following vowel in the next syllable. Thus would be *pa-ter'*.

- (2) Sometimes a combination of consonants appears in the middle of a **Greek** word. If this same combination of consonants can be used to start a **Greek** word, it may also begin a syllable.

- For instance, would be divided *ko'smos*. The *sm* is kept with the second vowel. This is because many **Greek** words like *Smyr'na* open with those same two consonants. However, when a certain combination of consonants is found in the middle of a word and there is no **Greek** word beginning with that same combination, they are separated. Thus is transliterated herein as *bys'sos*, since *ss* does not start any **Greek** word.

.. Breathing Marks

- A vowel at the beginning of a word requires either a smooth breathing mark, or a rough breathing mark. The smooth breathing mark, may be disregarded in transliteration, the rough breathing mark, calls for an *h* to be added at the start of the word.

- If the first letter is capitalized, these breathing marks occur before the word. In that case, *Hi*. When words begin with the small letters, the breathing marks appear over the first or, in the case of most diphthongs, over the second letter. Therefore becomes *ai-on'*, while is *ha-gnos'* and is *hai-re'o-mai*.

□ becomes I, w

Additionally, the Greek letter *rho*, transliterated *r*, always requires a rough breathing mark, at the start of a word. So is *rhab-bei'*.

GREEK ALPHABET

Letter	Name	Transliteration and Pronunciation ¹
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Al'pha	a	
Be'ta	b	
Gam'ma	g, hard, as in begin	²
Del'ta	d	
E'psi-lon	East, short, as in met	
Ze'ta	z	
E'ta	East, long, as in they	
The'ta	th	
I-o'ta	i as in machine	
Kap'pa	k	
Lam'bda	l	
My	m	
Ny	n	
Xi	x	
O'mi-kron	o, short, as in lot	
Pi	p	
Rho	r	
³ Sig'ma	s	
Tau	t	
Y'psi-lon	y or u; ⁴ French u or German ü	
Phi	ph as in phase	
Khi	kh as in elkhorn	
Psi	(Psalms as in lips	
O-me'ga	o, long, as in note	

¹ Pronunciation shown here differs from modern Greek.

² Before or another , it is nasal and pronounced like North in think.

³ Used only at the end of a word when sig'ma occurs.

⁴ Y'psi-lon is u when it is part of a diphthong.