

Greek Lesson #3

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1 Ἐν ἀρχῇ/ἡν ὀλογοῦμαι καὶ ὀλογοῦμαι ἡν πρόφ' τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἄλλοι
ἡν ὀλογοῦμαι. 2 οὐκ ἔστιν ἀρχὴ/πρόφ' τοῦ θεοῦ.

- **Goal: To Introduce Conjugation of Greek Verbs**
- **Topics Covered in this Lesson:**
 1. Introduction to Verbs and Verbals
 2. Tense
 3. Aspect
 4. Voice
 5. Mood
 6. Person
 7. Number
 8. Conjugation of the Present Progressive Active Indicative Forms of **εἶμι** (to be)
 9. Conjugation of the Past Progressive Active Indicative (a.k.a. Imperfect) Forms of **εἶμι** (to be)
 10. Conjugation of Present Progressive Active Indicative Form of **ἔγω**

1. Verbs and Verbals

Verbs are words that convey the idea of *being* or *action* in the sentence.

- I *am* a student.
- The students *passed* all their courses.

a. Transitive and intransitive verbs: Verbs are classified in several ways. First, some verbs require an **object** to complete their meaning: “She gave ____.” Gave what? “She gave a penny to the temple treasury.” These verbs are called **transitive**. **Intransitive** verbs do not require objects: “The tower collapsed.” In English, you cannot tell the difference between a transitive and intransitive verb by its form; you have to see how the verb is functioning within the sentence. In fact, some verbs can be either transitive or intransitive: “The wrecking crew collapsed the tower with dynamite.” Many confuse the intransitive verbs “lie” and “sit” with the similar transitive verbs “lay” and “set.”

b. Finite and non-finite verbs: Verbs are also classified as either **finite** or **non-finite**. A **finite** verb expresses an action or state of being and can stand by itself as the main verb of a sentence.

- The truck demolished the restaurant.
- The leaves were yellow and sickly.

Non-finite verbs (think “unfinished”) cannot, by themselves, be main verbs:

- The broken glass...
- The wheezing gentleman...

Notice that “broken” and “wheezing” are action words (verbs), but they are also acting as adjectives, modifying “glass” and “gentleman,” respectively. Another, more useful term for non-finite verb is **verbal**. In English, verbals occur in three forms: infinitives, participles, and gerunds. Greek has infinitives and participles, but no gerunds. “Broken” is a passive participle—the glass was broken *by somebody else*; “wheezing” is an active participle—the gentleman was doing the wheezing *himself*.

c. Linking Verbs: A linking verb connects a **subject** and its **complement**. Sometimes called copulas, linking verbs are often forms of the verb *to be*, but are sometimes verbs related to the five senses (*look, sound, smell, feel, taste*) and sometimes verbs that somehow reflect a state of being (*appear, seem, become, grow, turn, prove, remain*). A linking verb is followed by either a noun complement or an adjective complement—both will be in the nominative case because they are being equated with or modify the subject:

- Those people are all Christians.
- Their children are brilliant.
- This room smells musty.
- I feel great.
- A victory today seems unlikely.
- His face turned purple.
- She became older.
- The dogs ran wild.
- The milk has gone sour.
- The crowd grew ugly.

A common error with linking verbs in English arises when you pick up the phone and someone asks for you. The correct response is “This is he [she],” not “This is him [her].” It sounds stuffy, but the predicate following the linking verb should be in the nominative (subject) form.

2. Tense

Tense derives from Latin *tempus*, meaning time. Strictly speaking, there are only three possible tenses: *past, present, and future*. Most grammars, however, have traditionally combined the idea of *time* with *aspect* (see below), and speak, e.g., of the “aorist tense.” As we will learn, this is misleading, especially with non-finite verbs (participles and infinitives), which do not really have *tense*—they do not explicitly convey the *time* of the action, but rather only its *aspect*.

3. Aspect

a. The word “aspect” has its roots in the Latin verb *specere*, meaning ‘to look at’. Aspect is concerned with how we view the action of a verb. When the action of a verb is *ongoing*, the verb’s aspect is **progressive**. Note that this ongoing action is independent of time—an action could have been ongoing in the *past*, might be ongoing in the *present*, or could be ongoing in the *future*. If a verb’s action is viewed as *completed*, the aspect is **perfective** (or **perfect**). When a verb’s action is viewed as a whole, without any further specification, the aspect is **aorist** (“undefined”).

- b. Greek verbs in the “*present tense*” all convey a *progressive* or *imperfective* aspect. E.g. with **οπιστευων εις αυτον** = he who believes in Him (Jh 3:16), the participle **πιστευων** is a “present” (more properly, a *progressive* participle), so it means “he who *continues to believe*”; it cannot mean, e.g., “he who believes at one point in time [only].” Think of a vector [→] depicting ongoing action.
- English forms **progressive verbs** with the present participle form (ending in *-ing*) along with various auxiliaries. “She is driving. She was driving. She will be driving. She has been driving. She had been driving. She will have been driving.”
- c. Greek verbs in the “*aorist tense*” express simple action. Their aspect is strictly speaking *undefined*, so the aorist concentrates on the verbal meaning and not the aspect. It is true that this *may* convey the idea of action occurring suddenly at one point in time (and this is the aspect a writer would choose to express such a compressed, singular event). However, grammarians now reject calling this a “punctiliar” or “point tense,” because the action, viewed as an unspecified whole, *might* have occurred over time. E.g. **τesserakonta kai εξ ετεςιν οικodomηθη** [aorist] **οι ναοι** = This temple was built [aorist] [over a period of] forty and six years (Jh 2:20).
- The aorist is the “default aspect” in Greek, and shouldn’t be over-interpreted. Sometimes it can be construed as a dot showing a punctiliar event [•] or a circle enveloping an entire sequence of action [○].
- Some verbs like “strike” or “find” must be sudden, while others like “know” and “hate” must describe ongoing conditions by definition.
- d. Greek verbs in the “*perfect tense*” all express a *perfect* aspect. The perfect aspect views the action as culminating and enduring as accomplished. After verbal action is done, a continuing results flow from the completed action. E.g. the perfect passives **γεγραπται** = *it is written* (e.g. Mt 4:4) or **τετελεσται** = *it is finished* (Jh 19:30) may be translated “it *stands* written,” or “it *stands* finished.” Think of a dot and a vector [•→], where the dot is a completed action and the vector is the present and future ongoing result. Sometimes the perfect aspect emphasizes a process which has now come to full and final completion, a vector and a dot: [→•].

4. Voice

- a. Verbs are also said to be either **active** (The committee approved the new policy) or **passive** (The new policy was approved by the committee) in *voice*. In the *active voice*, the subject and verb relationship is straightforward: the subject is a be-er or a do-er and the verb moves the sentence along. In the *passive voice*, the subject of the sentence is neither a do-er or a be-er, but is acted upon by some other agent, named or unnamed.
- b. The passive is particularly useful in two situations:
- *When it is more important to draw our attention to the person or thing acted upon:* The unidentified victim was apparently struck during the early morning hours.
 - *When the actor in the situation is not important:* The aurora borealis can be observed in the early morning hours.

c. In English, the passive forms of a verb are created by combining a form of the “to be” verb with the past participle of the main verb. Note the various passive forms of “design”:

Tense/Aspect	Subject	Auxiliary Verb		Past Participle
		Singular	Plural	
Present	The car/cars	is	are	designed.
Present perfect	The car/cars	has been	have been	designed.
Past	The car/cars	was	were	designed.
Past perfect	The car/cars	had been	had been	designed.
Future	The car/cars	will be	will be	designed.
Future perfect	The car/cars	will have been	will have been	designed.
Present progressive	The car/cars	is being	are being	designed.
Past progressive	The car/cars	was being	were being	designed.

d. A sentence cast in the passive voice will not always include an *agent* of the action. For instance if a gorilla crushes a tin can, we could say “The tin can was crushed **by the gorilla.**” But a perfectly good sentence would leave out the gorilla: “The tin can was crushed.” Also, when an active sentence with an indirect object is recast in the passive, the indirect object can take on the role of subject in the passive sentence:

Active	Professor Smith gave <u>Jimmy</u> an A.
Passive	An A <u>was given</u> to Jimmy by Professor Smith.
Passive	Jimmy <u>was given</u> an A.

e. Only transitive verbs (those that take objects) can be transformed into passive constructions, because it is the object of the active verb that becomes the subject (stated or implied) of the passive verb:

I [nominative subject] **mowed** [active voice] **the lawn** [accusative direct object] → **The lawn** [now the nominative subject] **was mowed** [passive voice] **by me** [now the dative object—dative because “by” takes the dative case].

An intransitive verb, such as “I exist,” cannot be made passive—“I was existed” makes no sense. (You could say “I was brought into being” to express the thought.)

f. Greek has a third voice, called the **middle voice**, that expresses an action the subject performs in his own interest, or for himself, or even to himself. There are many cases in the NT where this nuance strongly affects interpretation. We will cover this later.

5. Mood

- a. Mood in verbs refers to one of three attitudes that a writer or speaker has to what is being written or spoken. The **indicative** mood, which describes most sentences on this page, is used to make a statement or ask a question.
- b. The **imperative** mood is used when we're feeling bossy and want to give a directive, strong suggestion, or an order:
 - Get your homework done before you watch television tonight.
 - Please include cash payment with your order form.
 - Get out of town!

Notice that there is no subject in these imperative sentences. The pronoun *you* (singular or plural, depending on context) is the *understood* subject in imperative sentences ("I'm talking to *you!*"). So virtually all imperative sentences have a second person (singular or plural) subject. The sole exception is the first person construction, which includes an objective form as subject: "Let's (or Let us) work on these things together" ("I'm talking both to *you and me!*").

- c. The **subjunctive mood** is used in dependent clauses that do the following: 1) express a wish; 2) begin with *if* and express a condition that does not exist (is "contrary to fact"); 3) begin with *as if* and *as though* when such clauses describe a speculation or condition "contrary to fact"; and 4) begin with *that* and express a demand, requirement, request, or suggestion.
 - She wishes her husband were here.
 - If Wayne were more aggressive, he'd be a better hockey player.
 - We would have passed if we had studied harder.
 - He acted as if he were guilty.
 - I requested that he be present at the hearing.

The words *if*, *as if*, or *as though* do not always signal the subjunctive mood. If the information in such a clause points out a condition that is or was plausible or likely, the verb should be in the indicative mood. The indicative tells the reader that the information in the dependent clause is true, or probably true.

The subjunctive is not as important a mood in English as it is in other languages, like Greek and Spanish, which happen to be more subtle and discriminating in hypothetical, doubtful, or wishful expressions. Many situations which would require the subjunctive in other languages are satisfied by using one of several auxiliary verbs in English.

The present tense of the subjunctive uses only the base form (infinitive) of the verb.

- He demanded that his students use two-inch margins.
- She suggested that we be on time for the meetings.

The past tense of the subjunctive has the same forms as the indicative except (unfortunately) for the verb *to be*, which uses *were* regardless of the number of the subject.

- If I were seven feet tall, I'd be a great basketball player.
- He wishes he were a better student.
- If you were rich, we wouldn't be in this mess.
- If they were faster, we could have won that race.

6. Person

Verbs occur in one of three numbers: **first-person** (*I* or *we* perform the action), **second-person** (*you*, singular or plural, perform the action), or **third person** (*he*, *she*, *it*, or *they* perform the action).

7. Number

Verbs occur in one of two numbers: **singular** (*I*, *you* [singular], *he*, *she*, or *it*), or **plural** (*we*, *you* [plural], or *they*).

8. Conjugation of the Present Progressive Active Indicative of eijniv (to be)

- **Third Word of John 1:1:** hñ —a Verb

hñ is a form of the verb **eijniv**, the verb *to be*. The dictionary entry of all Greek verbs, according to tradition, is the *present progressive active indicative first person singular*, so **eijniv** means *I am*. Like the verb to be in most languages, **eijniv** is irregular.

Present Progressive Active Indicative—eijniv			
Singular		Plural	
eijniv	I am	ejsmew	we are
ei^	you are	ejestev	you are
ejsiti[n]	he/she/it is	ejsiti[n]	they are

- John uses the phrase **egwñ eijniv** (“I am”) to equate the Lord Jesus with the OT Yahweh (Jehovah), thus strongly asserting His deity.
- Infinitive: **einaì** means *to be*.
- Participles: **wh**, **ouša**, **oh** (The genitive form **ohto** reveals the stem [oht-], which means *being*. Ontology, the study of being, is borrowed from this).

1. **First person singular:** egwñ eijnì to\pwn" tou' kosmou: oJakol ouqwn einoif oujmhl\peripathsh/eh th'/skotia\ajl = e\rei to\pwn" th" zwh" = I am the Light of the word; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life (Jh 8:12).

2. **Second-person singular:** kai\hjrwthsan aujton: tivouh; suv hliia" ei\ kai\legei: ouk eijniv oJprophth" ei^ suv kai\apekriqh: ou! = And

they asked Him, “What then? **Are** You Elijah?” And He says, “I am not.” “**Are** You the Prophet?” And He answered, “No” (Jh 1:21).

3. **Third-person singular:** Kai\au\th **ejstih** hJmarturia tou' jwannou, ofe apestelan prof' au\to\h oiJ Joudaibi ek Jerosolumwn idrei" kai\ Leui\va" i\fa ejrwthwsin au\to\w: sul\ ti\ v' ei\l = And this **is** the witness of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are You?” (Jh 1:19).

4. **First-person plural:** ejw\f kai\ vo\j pathr' ef **ejsmen** = I and the Father **are** One (Jh 10:30).

5. **Second-person plural:** e\legen ou\h o\j Jhsou" prof' tou\l' pepisteukota" au\jw\ Joudaiou": e\j\h udei" me\i\hte ej tw\logw\tw\ejw\aj hqw" maqhtaimou**ejste** = Then Jesus said to the Jews who believed in Him, “If you continue in My word, [then] **you are** truly My disciples” (Jh 8:31).

6. **Third-person plural:** ajakuya" del\o\j Jhsou" ei\pen au\jth\ gu\mai: pou' **eijsin**; ou\jei\ v' se katekrinen; = Jesus stood up and said to her, “Woman, where **are** they? Has no one condemned you?” (Jh 8:10).

9. Conjugation of the Past Progressive Active Indicative Form of ei\jiv (to be)

Past Progressive (Imperfect) Active Indicative—ei\jiv			
Singular		Plural	
h\thn	I was	h\ten	we were
h^ (h\sq)a	you were	h\te	you were
h\th	he/she/it was	h\san	they were

1. **First-person singular:** xewo" **h\thn** kai\f sunhgagetevme = **I was** a stranger and you gathered me [in] (Mt 25:35).

2. **Second-person singular (form 1):** e\ph au\jw\o\j ku\rio" au\jou: Eu\ dou\le a\gaqel\ kai\ pisteyepi\vo\j i\ga **h\ v'** pistov' = His lord said to him, “Well done, good and faithful slave, in a few [things] **you were** faithful” (Mt 25:21).

3. **Second-person singular (form 2):** kai*l*i*ḡ*ou*s*a to*h* Pe*tr*on qermainomenon e*ḡ*mbleyasa au*ḡ*tw/i*e*gei: Kai*l*su*l*meta*l* tou' Nazarih*no*u' **h*s*qa** tou' **Jhsou'** = And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, “**You were** also with Jesus of Nazareth” (Mr 14:67).
4. **First-person plural and third-person plural:** **h*s*an** del*l*ampate" i*k*ana*i*ve*ḡ* tw/u*ḡ*perw*w*/ou|**h*m*en** sunhgme*ḡ*oi = And many lamps **were** in the upper room where **we were** gathered (Ac 20:8).
5. **Second-person plural:** o*f*i **h*t*e** tw/kairw/e*k*eimw/cwri*l*' Cristou' a*ḡ*ph*l*lotriwme*ḡ*oi th" politeia" tou' I*s*rah*l* kai*l*x*e*me*ḡ*oi tw*h* dia*ḡ*hkwh th" epaggel*i*a" e*ḡ*p*i*da mh*l*e*ḡ*onte" kai*l*va*ḡ*eoi e*ḡ* tw/kosm*w*/ = That **you were** at that time apart from Christ, being aliens from the community of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, not having hope and godless in the world (Ep 2:12).
6. **Third-person plural:** kai*l*w*ḡ* a*ḡ*tenizonte" **h*s*an** e*i*j' to*h* ou*r*janoh poreuome*ḡ*ou au*ḡ*to*u*' kai*l*i*ḡ*ou*l*a*ḡ*dre" du*ḡ* pareisth*k*eisan au*ḡ*toi" e*ḡ* e*ḡ*s*q*h*s*esi leukai" = And while **they were** looking steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel (Ac 1:10).

10. Conjugation of the Present Progressive Active Indicative Form of *l egw*

Present Progressive Active Indicative— <i>l egw</i> (I say, speak)			
Singular		Plural	
<i>l egw</i>	I say/am saying	<i>l egomen</i>	we say/are saying
<i>l egei</i> "	you say/are saying	<i>l egete</i>	you say/are saying
<i>l egei</i> [n]	he/she/it says/is saying	<i>l egousi</i> [n]	they say/are saying

The “present tense,” as it is called in most grammars, is indeed a present tense, for its action occurs in current time. Also implied by the Greek “present tense” is progressive aspect—action is viewed as ongoing and unfinished. In the active voice, the person and number are shown by endings, connected by a “thematic” vowel (here *o* or *e*) to the stem:

Augment	Progressive stem	Vowel	Secondary endings
[none]	<i>l eg-</i>	o or e	[w],[ei]" ,[ei], men, te, si [n]

1. **First-person singular:** ajnhh ajnhh **legw** uñih ofi ojtoñ logon mou akouwn kailpisteuwn tw/pemyantivme eñei zwhh aijwion, kai veij' krisin ouk eñcetai, aj lal metabebhken ek tou' qanavou eij' thh zwhh = Truly, truly, **I say** to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has eternal life, and will not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life (Jh 5:24).
2. **Second-person singular:** epeif eñh eujogh' ej pneumati, o jahapl hrwh toñ topon tou' iñiwvrou pw" eñei' to lavnhh epivth'/sh/eujaristia/ epeidhf tiv **legei**" ouk oiden = Otherwise, when you bless in [the] spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the unlearned say "Amen" upon your giving of thanks, since he does not know what **you are saying**? (1 Cr 14:16).
3. **Third-person singular:** th'epavvion blepei toñ jhsouh ejcomenon prof' autou kai **legei** [de o jhmnof' tou' qeou' o jairwn thh amartian tou' kosmou = The next day John sees Jesus coming to him, and **says**, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jh 1:29).
4. **First-person plural:** jpekriqhsan oi j joudaibi kai veipan autw/ ouj kalw" **legomen** hñei" ofi Samarivh" ei sul kail daimonion eñei"; = The Jews answered, and said to Him, "Do we not **say** well that You are a Samaritan, and have a devil?" (Jh 8:48).
5. **Second-person plural:** uñei" fwneitevme: ojdidaskalo", kai f o jkurio", kai kalw" **lete** eijnivgar = You call me Teacher and Lord, and **you say** well, for [so] I am (Jh 13:13).
6. **Third-person plural:** Eijde l Cristof' khruvsetai ofi ek nekrwh eghgertai pw" **legousin** ej uñih tine" ofi ajastasi" nekrwh ouk estin; = Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you **say** that there is no resurrection of the dead? (1 Cr 15:12).