

## The Greeks Had a Word for It

The Greek language is uniquely suited to the communication of God's truth, for it has modes of expression so concise and accurate in their descriptive power as to defy fullness of translation into English without becoming unwieldy. That's one reason we have so many New Testament translations, as scholars endeavor to carry over the full import of the Greek into English. So, the careful interpreter of the Bible does well to gain access to the meaning of the Greek which stands behind our English versions.

In addition, it is helpful to know that the New Testament came to us in what is called Koine, or "common" Greek. It is not the language of the classics or the poets, but the common, ordinary language of everyday popular usage. Modern archeology has done tremendous service to the New Testament student by unearthing and clarifying Greek terms that were otherwise obscure. In so doing, the archeologist's spade has buried the destructive critics of the New Testament record under the piles of evidence gleaned from pottery shard, parchment, and papyrus. It is encouraging to know that archeology has confirmed, not denied, the accuracy of our New Testament text, which was written in language the common people could grasp.

Historically, the conquests of Alexander the Great made Greek the language used throughout his broad empire, to the extent that it even carried over into the Roman world of New Testament times. God not only authored the Bible, I believe he providentially provided the language in which he planned to communicate his truth. This is especially true of the Greek of the New Testament, but also applies to the Hebrew of the Old Testament, of which we will have more to say later.

As I have previously stated, it is perfectly possible for the English reader to gain significant understanding of New Testament Greek without knowing Greek. This is because of the intense scholarship that has been applied in this field and expressed in English.

My introduction to this material was through the writings of Kenneth Wuest, now available in a three-volume edition of *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament for the English Reader*. And if you want to whet your appetite for more, read his sections on *Golden Nuggets from the Greek New Testament*, *Untranslatable Riches from the Greek New Testament*, and *Bypaths in the Greek New Testament*. Also, if you can get it, read his *Studies in the Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*. These books will give you a look at some of the added insight on the New Testament available through even a minimal understanding of Greek. We have already mentioned the most basic tool for this purpose, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. Add to these Robertson's *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (in five volumes), and you will have a basic library on this subject. These helps are all designed for use by the English reader. Additional helps for the Greek reader are included in the Appendix.

### **Greek Thought Patterns**

The most graphic and expressive word form in Greek is the verb. Here we find such a distinct difference from our English verb usage that we need to learn to think like a Greek. The function of verbs in any language is to express action; thus verb forms carry the greatest weight in the expression of thought. In English, our verbs emphasize the time of the action, so English verb tenses are the familiar past, present, and future, with their related forms. But Greek verbs emphasize kind of action, with time relationships being secondary. The Greek is more concerned with the manner in which the action takes place than the time at which it occurred, though he is not unmindful of time factors. So we need to change our normal thought pattern to accommodate this difference. With this in mind, let's examine Greek verb structure in more detail.

The major features of verbs, you may recall, are tense, mood, and voice.

- Tense expresses time and/or duration of action.
- Mood expresses the writer's or speaker's attitude toward the action.
- Voice expresses the action as either performed by the subject of the verb or received by the subject. The subject is either acting or being acted upon.

Let's look at these in chart form:

### Greek Verb Tenses

TENSE	KIND OF ACTION	TIME
<i>Present</i>	Continuous, or Durative, like ----->	Present
<i>Aorist</i>	Viewed as a Whole, without defining the manner of its occurrence	Action completed in the past, with present continuing results
<i>Perfect</i>	Completed, with ongoing continuing results, like ----> .---->	
<i>Imperfect</i>	Continuous, like ----->	Past
<i>Future</i>	Undefined, like the Aorist tense	Future

#### Present Tense

The Greek present tense, expressed in English terms reflects the idea I am going instead of I go, the action being in process.

#### Aorist Tense

The aorist tense (*aoristos*, the Greek word from which it comes, means undefined, indefinite, unhorizoned) is perhaps the most unusual from our standpoint. It is what I call the "splash" tense, for the Greek splashes it around in his speech when he is not trying to make any special distinctions such as the other tenses would convey. Dana and Mantey's *Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* tells us that the aorist signifies nothing as to manner of occurrence or completeness, it just makes reference to the action as happening. The aorist tense states the fact of the action without regard to its duration, viewing the event as a whole. It has been likened to a snapshot, whereas the present tense is like a moving picture.

There is the common misconception that the aorist tense specifies once-for-all action. It should be evident from the very name of the tense, aorist (undefined, indefinite) that this is not so. However, there are other factors in a particular context that would carry this meaning, such as the use of the Greek word *hapax*, meaning once, or once for all. In Hebrews 9:28, literally translated, we read "...so also Christ, having been offered once for all to bear the sins of many...." We get the "once for all" idea from *hapax* and the context. "Having been offered" is in the aorist tense and contributes nothing to our understanding as to the duration or finality of the action. That considers the offering of Christ as an event, and is truly indefinite as to its manner of occurrence or completeness.

To illustrate the use of the present and aorist together, John 10:38b reads in literal rendering, "...in order that you may know (aorist tense) and be knowing (that is continue to know, present tense) that the Father is in me and I in the Father." Here there is reference to the fact of knowing and the continuing process of knowing.

Perhaps this is the best way to see the use of the aorist, by contrasting it with the use of the present tense in the same context. Dana and Mantey (1) give a telling illustration of this contrast:

On the question of the believer's relation to sin, it is exceedingly important to observe John's use of the present and aorist tenses in his First Epistle. In I John 2:1 he uses the aorist twice with the verb *hamartanein*, to sin, "My little children, I write these things to you in order that you won't even commit an act of sin (aorist). And, if anyone does commit a sin (aorist), we have an advocate with the Father." In 3:9 he uses the present tense with the same verb: "Everyone born of God does not practice or continue in sin (present); because his seed is abiding in him and he is not able to continue in sin...(present)."

## **Perfect Tense**

The perfect tense in Greek is to my mind the most expressive. It expresses past completed action with presently continuing results. In John 17:10, our Lord speaks concerning his disciples "...I have been glorified in them." "Have been glorified" is in the Greek perfect tense, signifying "I have been glorified and continue to be glorified in them."

## **Imperfect Tense**

The imperfect tense expresses curative or continuous action in past time. John 1:1, 2 has a telling example of this in the use of the verb *to be*. It translates literally like this, "In the beginning the Word was (imperfect tense, implying that he was already there in continuing existence) and the Word was with God (imperfect tense again, speaking of his continuing existence with God from the very beginning) and God *was* the Word (same imperfect tense, same import--the Word *was* always existing as God). (By the way, note the word order: "God was the Word," the emphasis being on the very nature of the Word). This one was (imperfect again--already in continuous existence) "in the beginning with God" (John 1 :1, 2). Note the repetition of "in the beginning" for strong emphasis. We know from John 1:14 and 17 that "the Word" is Jesus Christ. The use of the imperfect tense in this passage is insisting on the fact that he *always was* (his eternal preexistence) and that he *always was deity, and he always was one of the Godhead*.

## **Future Tense**

The Greek future tense, portraying action yet future, is roughly equivalent to our English future. However, since the event is yet future, and thus more or less uncertain, it reflects the "undefined" idea we see in the aorist, rather than continuity of action. A typical future is, "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send name, he will teach you all things..."

There is one other tense, the pluperfect, which occurs so seldom in the New Testament we will not deal with it here. There are also distinctions of usage of each of the tenses which we will not attempt to treat. *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* by Dana and Mantey is a handbook of information which is very useful for study and reference. It is even useful to the English reader, even though it uses Greek words, for definitive data on Greek grammar and syntax.

## **Moods**

Now, shifting our attention to moods, we are reminding you of a language feature that most of us have either forgotten or have never known. The mood (or mode) of a verb expresses the attitude of the writer or speaker with regard to the action.

It can represent one of two viewpoints: (1) that which is actual and (2) that which is possible, like this:

## **Greek Moods**

	MOOD	FORM	MEANING OR USAGE
Actual	Indicative	Declaration of fact--reality	Verbal idea is actual--it indicates what is true about the subject
Possible	Imperative	Command--potential reality	Imposes a demand upon the will to do what is commanded and is contingent upon the response.
	Subjunctive	Contingency--potentially possible	Expresses uncertainty. Used in exhortations and conditional clauses, where the action is objectively possible depending upon certain conditions and/ or responses.
	Optative	Possibility conceivably possible	Expresses a wish or desire often introduced by "may."

### The Indicative Mood

In English this is sometimes called the Declarative Mood for by it the writer is stating a declaration of fact. In John 17.4 our Lord declares, addressing his Father in prayer, "I glorified thee" (aorist active indicative pointing to this action viewed as a whole, which he is stating as an actual fact) "having accomplished work (aorist active participle which describes having fulfilled the assigned work) which thou gayest me to do...." (perfect active indicative--which the Father gave him and still gives him, stated as a fact).

I hope I'm not moving too fast for you, for now we are viewing *tense, voice, and mood* together, plus an auxiliary verb form, the participle, which participates in the action of the main verb, describing, modifying or explaining its meaning.

### The Imperative Mood

A rather startling use of the imperative is seen in 1 Thessalonians 5:

And we exhort you, brethren, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them, see that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophesying, but test everything; hold fast what is good, abstain from every form

Did you notice the string of imperatives? *Admonish, encourage, help, be patient, see that none repays, seek to do good, rejoice, pray, give thanks, do not quench, do not despise, test, hold fast, abstain* --all make a demand on the will of the reader to obey the command. No light options, these! How we do it becomes another matter, but there is no mistaking the commands God issues through the apostle.

Sprinkled throughout the imperatives in this passage are a few indicative forms: *we beseech you*, in verse 12, a statement of fact making a strong plea for cooperation with God's design; and in verse 24, *he who calls you is faithful* (indicative--a fact) and *he will do it* (another indicative--it's a fact, but future tense--a promise he will prove true in time).

In the midst are two verbs in the *optative* mood, "may the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:23). *May God ...sanctify you* (aorist active optative, expressing the wish or desire of the inspired apostle and thus of God himself). The same is true of *may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless*.

What a great deal we learn from these verb forms, especially their mood.

### **The Subjunctive Mood**

Here is a feature of language almost lost in English, but very prominent in New Testament Greek. The subjunctive is the mood of uncertainty or contingency. In English we have a vestige of the subjunctive mood remaining in expressions like: *if I were king* using *were* instead of *was* to express a wish or condition which is not so in this case. In our English Bible it is seen often in the exhortations like, "Therefore *let us leave* the elementary doctrines of Christ *and go on* to maturity..." (Heb. 6:1). The words *let us* clue us in to the subjunctive mood, for the outcome is in doubt, contingent upon the response of the hearer to the appeal. Here, however, the Revised Standard Version loses the form of the initial verb in the Greek text; in this case, as in a number of others, the King James Version is better: "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, *let us go on* to perfection." This translation carries over the verb *leaving* in its participial form and retains the subjunctive force of *let us go on* in its exhortation of the hearer. There is thus only one exhortation here, not two. This highlights the value, for English Bible students, of comparing translations, and for Greek students, the value of getting behind the English texts into the Greek New Testament. Other good key words of the English subjunctive are "should" and "might" when used as auxiliary verbs--"If I should go to the store..." "He came that we might have life."

The subjunctive mood also has significant usage in *conditional clauses*. In John 1:8 and 9, for instance, we have several subjunctives: "If we say (subjunctive--maybe we do and maybe we don't; there is the possibility) we have no sin (indicative mood, assumed as a fact) we deceive ourselves (yes, you guessed it--indicative again) and the truth is not in us (another statement of fact, assuming we have said *we have no sin* ). If we confess our sins (another subjunctive--maybe yes, maybe no) he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (one indicative, *is faithful*, and two subjunctives, *will forgive* and *will cleanse*, implying that forgiveness and cleansing are contingent upon our confession but based on God's faithfulness to do what he promised). The one indicative form *he is faithful* stresses the basis of his being able to forgive and cleanse--the work of Christ, as in 1 John 1:7 "...the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all unrighteousness."

Contextually, we need to recall that the issue here is *fellowship*, not salvation. Our enjoyment of life with God is at stake, not our possession of that life. Our salvation is based on the work of Christ which we appropriated when we invited him to be our Lord and Savior. Our fellowship (enjoying full participation in all that God has made available to us in his Son) is contingent upon our agreeing with him on the issues of our life--our walk with Christ and in Christ.

### **Conditional Clauses**

At this point it should be noted that the conditional clauses cited above represent only one of four kinds the

Greek uses. This one is the *truly conditional* clause which expresses the genuine contingency (maybe it's true and maybe it's not) in which the subjunctive mood is used to express that uncertainty based on the fact that the response could go either way. All four kinds are listed in the following chart comprising an interesting and unusual (from our standpoint) feature of Greek.

### Greek Conditional Clauses

CLASS	EXPRESSION	IDENTIFICATION
First Class Condition	If...and it's true, or I am assuming it to be true for the purposes of my argument. The writer wishes to assume (or seem to assume) the reality of his argument	<i>Ei</i> (if) used with any tense assuming it to be true for of the indicative, the mood of reality. e.g. "my God is for us..." (Rom. 8:31) and he is, as Paul has taken 8 chapters of Romans to prove. Could be translated "Since God is for us..." Here the reality of the premise is assumed, and is established by the context.
Second Class Condition	If...and it's not true. A contrary-to-fact condition or unfulfilled condition, e.g. John 11:32 "Lord, if you had been here..." (imperfect indicative) but you were not.	<i>Ei</i> (if) used with only the past tenses (aorist, imperfect or pluperfect) of the indicative mood. <i>Ei</i> (if) plus imperfect indicative = if...and it's not true about present. e.g. John 15:19, 22, Gal. 1:10. <i>Ei</i> (if) plus aorist or pluperfect = if...and it's not true about past. e.g. John 11:32, Matt. 11:21, Mark 13:20
Third Class Condition	If...and maybe it's true, maybe not. A true condition, where the actual state is in doubt. e.g. I John 1:8-9 as explained previously.	<i>Ean</i> (if, implying uncertainty) used with the subjunctive, also implying uncertainty, leaving the issue in doubt. e.g. 1 John 1:8,9 cited previously.
Fourth Class Condition	Same as third class, with less probability of fulfillment.	<i>Ei</i> and <i>an</i> with the optative mood e.g. 1 Cor. 14:10, 15:37, 1 Peter 3:14.

Dana and Mantey, quoting A. T. Robertson, make a pertinent statement in regard to these expressive forms: "The point about all four classes to note is that the form of the condition has to do only with the statement, not with the absolute truth or certainty of the matter...we must distinguish always therefore between the fact and the statement of the fact. The conditional sentence deals only with the statement." (2)

For instance, the illustration I have given in the chart for a first class condition (Rom. 8:31 ) points up the reality of the fact that "God is for us," which is easy to see if we relate the conditional clause to the context. However, there are cases in which the conditional clause is not stating what is true, but rather the writer is assuming the premise stated in the conditional clause for the sake of his argument. This is the case with Galatians 2:21. "I do not nullify the grace of God; for *if righteousness comes through the Law* (a first class condition, assumed as true for the sake of the argument when *it is not really true* ), then Christ died needlessly" (Gal. 2:21 NASV, italics mine). We see this same situation in 1 Corinthians. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:15: "We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testify of God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise *if it is true that the dead are not raised.*" (Here, first class condition assumed as true for the sake of the argument, when in fact the dead *are* raised.)

This is a bit tricky, but we can gain considerable understanding from conditional clauses if we take the time to think them through.

### Voice

Voice is that property of the verbal idea which indicates how the subject is related to the action. In Greek, the active and passive voices are just like the English equivalents, but the Greek has an additional voice called the Middle Voice which has a reflexive force.

## Greek Voices

VOICE	THOUGHT	EXAMPLE
<i>Active</i>	The subject of the verb produces the action us..." (Rom. 5:8).	"But God <i>shows</i> his love for us..."(Rom. 5.8).
<i>Passive</i>	The subject of the verb receives the action	"...but you <i>were sanctified</i> , you <i>were justified</i> ..." (1 Cor. 6:11).
<i>Middle</i>	The subject of the verb participates in the results of the action	"He <i>himself secured</i> eternal redemption" (Heb. 9:12).

The middle voice is peculiarly Greek in its usage and defies exactness of translation into English. But we can understand several things about its various uses.

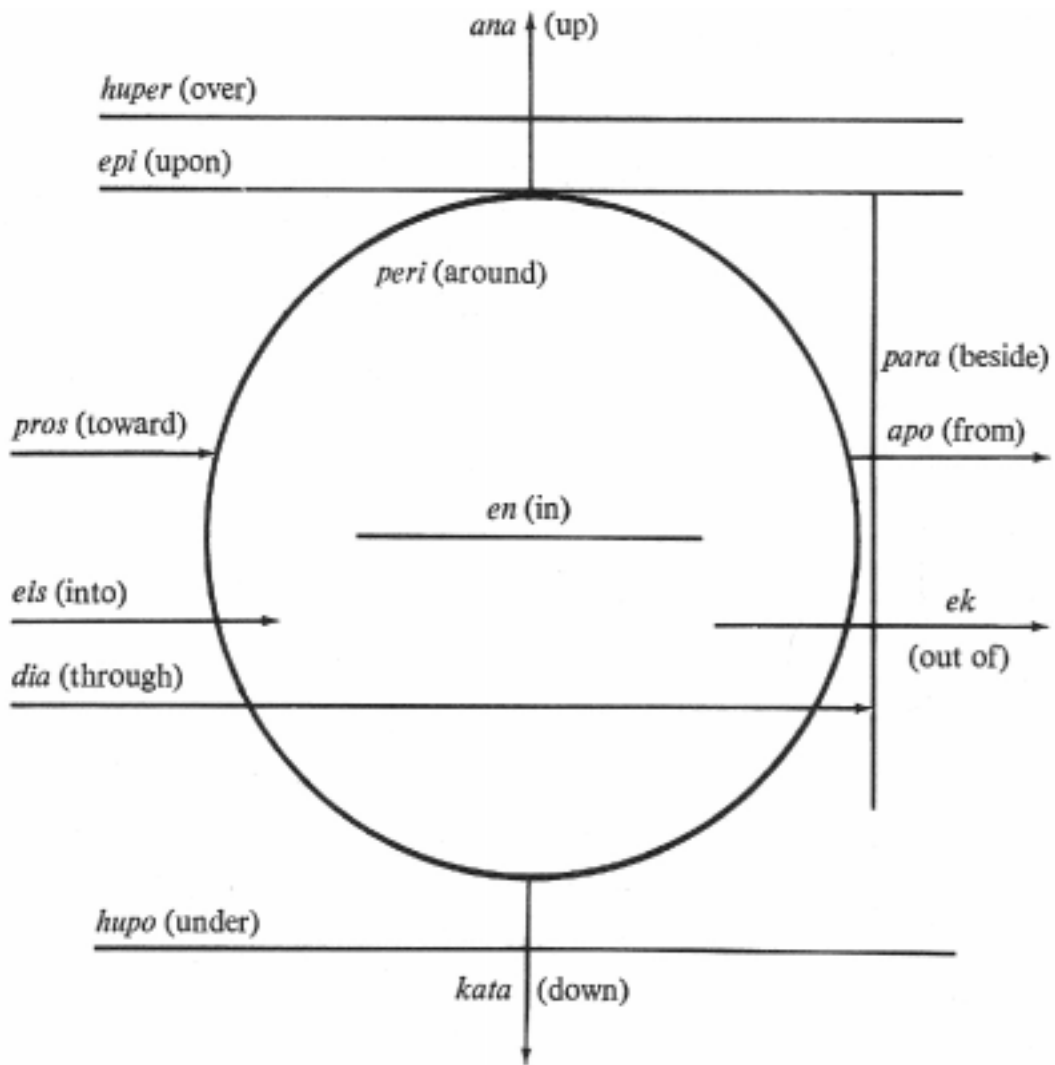
1. It refers the action back to the one acting. The action in some way reflects back upon the subject of the verb. It can have roughly the force of a reflexive pronoun as we would use it in English. For example, "...I will myself be a Father to him..." (Heb. 1:5, italics mine) in which the verb *will be* is in the middle voice.
2. It can have the force of emphasizing the part taken by the subject of the verb as in "...*having by himself* made a cleansing of sins..." (Heb. 1:3, literal translation, italics mine).
3. It can represent the subject as voluntarily yielding himself to the action of the verb, e.g., "Why not *let yourselves* be wronged?" (1 Cor. 6:7, literal translation, italics mine).

Perhaps these examples are enough to give the flavor of the middle voice. Your own investigations of its specific use can, I hope, lead you to the local significance as you encounter its

## Prepositions

Though they are usually very small words, a great deal of meaning can be determined by their usage. The diagram and chart which follow will illustrate how far-reaching their effects can be.

### Diagram of the Directive and Local Functions of Prepositions



(From Dana and Mantey, *Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*)



						account of		
<i>dia</i>	through		for	by	through, by means of	because of		for the sake of
<i>ex</i>	out of	on			by means of	because of		
<i>en</i>	into	in, on, at, within	besides, among	in	with, by means of	because of	with	
<i>eis</i>	into, unto, to	in, among, upon	as, for, against, in respect to			because of		for the purpose of
<i>epi</i>	up to, to	upon, at, on, in, by, before, over	against, after, in the time of			on account of		for
<i>kata</i>	along, down, upon, throughout	down, from, upon, at, in, by, before	according to, with reference to					
<i>meta</i>			after				with	
<i>para</i>	beyond, to the side of, from	beside, before	contrary to				with	
<i>peri</i>	around, about		in behalf of, concerning, about				with	
<i>pro</i>		before						
<i>pros</i>	to, toward	at, on, beside	against, for, pertaining to		by means of	on account of	with	for
<i>sun</i>			besides				with	
<i>hyper</i>	beyond	over, above	concerning, for, instead of, on behalf of					for the sake of
<i>hupo</i>		under		by				

(From Dana and Mantey, *Manual Grammar of the Greek Testament*).

I have found this chart so helpful that I have put it in the flyleaf of my Bible. To illustrate how important prepositions can be, I would like to cite two glaring cases of careless (and thus faulty) translation. In the Revised Standard Version John 13:8 reads, "If I do not wash you, you have no part in me." The Greek preposition translated "in" is *meta*, which should be translated "with." The King James Version and the New American Standard properly translate it so. The difference is crucial! "In me" would indicate that Peter's salvation was in question, whereas "with me" speaks of Peter's fellowship with Christ--his joint participation with the Lord in the activities of life.

The other faulty translation is perhaps just as costly if we fail to get the true meaning inferred from the prepositions used. It is in Ephesians 4:11, 12, and here even the New American Standard Version doesn't keep it straight. The passage should read, if we observe the Greek prepositions used: "And he gave some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers *toward* (Greek, *pros*) the equipping of the saints *unto* (Greek, *eis*) the work of ministry, *unto* (Greek, *eis*) the building of the body of Christ." (italics mine).

Most of the translations fail to make the distinction between the prepositions used here in the Greek text. Thus it obscures the fact that the ministry belongs to all God's people, not just the pastor-teachers. The result of this failure has, among other things, contributed greatly to the Christian "unemployment" problem. Many Christians would think themselves to be presumptuous to entertain the idea of having a ministry for the Lord.

In his *Practical Use of the Greek New Testament* Kenneth Wuest resolves a seeming contradiction by translating a single preposition properly:

A careful study of the Greek preposition discloses some precious truth that would otherwise be obscured by reason of a wrong interpretation put upon an English preposition, and at the same time saves the expositor from arriving at a wrong interpretation.

Take the difficult statement in Matthew 3:11, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance." The word "unto" means "result." For instance, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel,...for it is the power of God unto (resulting in) salvation" (Rom. 1: 16) Are we to understand that a person's submission to water baptism results in his repentance? That is exactly what the Authorized Version says.

The Greek student will find that the preposition *eis* appears in Matthew 3:11 and Romans 1:16. But prepositions in Greek are not confined to a single meaning in every context. Nor are they to be translated in a uniform way in their every occurrence in the Greek text.

A *preposition* has *root* meanings, *resultant* meanings, and *remote* meanings. It also has special meanings when used in composition with verbal forms. When the student is confronted with a problem like this, he should consult Dana and Mantey on the word *eis*. These scholars have classified the various uses of the prepositions in the New Testament. They also give illustrations of their various usages. For instance they give "they repented at the preaching of Jonah" (Matt. 12:41). Of course, one would not translate, "They (the men of Nineveh) repented unto the preaching of Jonah." That is, it would be ridiculous to say that the preaching of Jonah was the result of the repentance of the Ninevites. It was the other way round. They repented *because* of the preaching of Jonah. The Greek student would say here that this usage of *eis* would fit the context in which Matthew 3:11 is found. It would agree with the teaching of other scriptures regarding the significance of water baptism. He would translate, "I indeed baptize you with water *because* of repentance." That is, repentance precedes water baptism, and baptism is the outward visible testimony of an inward fact, the person's repentance. Thus, another problem is solved, a difficulty removed, and an erroneous translation corrected, upon which translation is built the false doctrine of baptismal regeneration. We have the same difficulty in Acts. 1:38. The same Greek preposition is used,

and the same solution will meet the problem. (3)

## Word Studies

A productive interpretive exercise is to use the Greek lexicon to arrive at a deeper or clearer meaning of words than our English translations give. A most revealing example of this kind of vocabulary study is contained in the Greek text of Romans: "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind..." (Rom. 12:2 NASV) In this verse we have "conformed" and "transformed" in the English text. "Conformed" is a translation of the Greek verb *suschematizo*, "to form with." Vine's *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* tells us *suschematizo* refers "to that which is transitory, changeable, unstable, and it could not be used of inward transformation" (Vine, p. 227).

"Transformed" is a translation of the Greek verb *metamorphoo*, and Vine, speaking of *morphe*, from which it is formed, says this with particular reference to Philippians 2:5-11. (The verse referred to here is Philippians 2:6):

An excellent definition of the word is that of Gifford: "*morphe*" is therefore properly the nature or essence, not in the abstract, but as actually subsisting in the individual, and retained as long as the individual itself exists...Thus in the passage before us *morphe* Theou is the Divine nature actually and inseparably subsisting in the Person of Christ...(4)

*Schema* is described this way:

*Schema*, a figure, fashion (akin to *echo*, to have), is translated "fashion" in I Corinthians 7:31, of the world, signifying that which comprises the manner of life, actions, etc., of humanity in general; in Phil. 2:8 it is used of the Lord in His being found "in fashion" as a man, and signifies *what He was in the eyes of men*, "the entire outwardly perceptible mode and shape of His existence, just as the preceding words *morphe*, form, and *homoioima*, likeness, describe what He was in Himself as Man" (Gifford on the Incarnation, p. 44). "Men saw in Christ a human form, bearing, language, action, mode of life...in general the state and relations of a human being, so that in the entire mode of His appearance He made Himself known and was recognized as a man" (Meyer). (5)

So, what have we learned? Looking back to Romans 12:2, to paraphrase the verse, "Do not let yourself be formed into the world's pattern by its transient external pressures, but rather be permanently changed from within by the renewing of your mind..." And if you recall Titus 3:5, that "renewing" is by the Holy Spirit. The idea is that we do not just put on an outward show of change, but we undergo a deep, abiding change in our innermost being. Phillips' translation then shines with considerable brilliance as it reflects the meaning of the Greek.

With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I beg you, my brothers, as an act of intelligent worship, to give him your bodies, as a living sacrifice, consecrated to him and acceptable by him. *Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God re-make you so that your whole attitude of mind is changed.* Thus you will prove in practice that the will of God's good, acceptable to him and perfect (Rom. 12:1,2, italics mine).

One more example: let us check the use of the word nature in the New Testament. If we were to rely solely on the English texts we would be somewhat misled, for the translators sometimes translate the Greek word *anthropos*, meaning man, by the word "nature." This is done in the Revised Standard Version of Colossians 3:9 and 10, where *old nature* and *new nature* are really *old man* and *new man*. This is misleading, for the Greek word for nature is *phusis*, and it only occurs some sixteen times in the New Testament, if we count noun, adverbial, and adjectival forms. These occurrences are Romans 1:26, 1:27, 2:14, 2:27, 11:21, 11:24; 1 Corinthians 11:14; Galatians 2:15 & 4:8; Ephesians 2:3; James 3:7; 2; Peter 1:4, 2:12 and Jude 10.

You may say, so what? Well, it doesn't seem to mean much until we do a study on the nature of man. Does the Christian have one nature or two? From our English translations and from what many have taught on this subject it would appear that we have *two* natures. But if we seriously consider the use of the word *phusis* as

meaning nature in the sense of doing what comes naturally and being what we are, then we must review our thinking.

*Phusis* is used in Galatians 2:15 of those who are "Jews by nature." Certainly it is not possible to be both Jews by nature and Gentiles by nature at the same time. It's either one or the other, not both. If we turn from this thought to the one occasion in the New Testament where *phusis* is used of Christians we read, "that by them you might become partakers of the *divine nature* ..." (2 Peter 1:4 NASV, italics mine). So I conclude that the Christian only has *one nature*. It is now, since I am in Christ and no longer in Adam, as natural for me to be like Christ as it was previously natural for me to be ungodly. And our expectancy is exactly that, even though our experience sometimes falls short. It's interesting how clearly we expect godly behavior from Christians. Even the world expects us to behave better when we are in Christ! When we do badly even we ourselves consider it a *lapse* from the norm--not the norm.

What practical use has this view of the nature of man? Well, for one thing it forces me to stop making room for sin and excusing myself with, "I'm only human after all." And that's progress. But so that we don't misconstrue, this doesn't mean I will never sin again, either. God makes this clear in 1 John 1:8-10, so that if I say, "I have no sin," I only fool myself. What God's Word is saying in all this is that though I cannot say *I will never sin again*, I can say *I need not sin again*. Why?

Because I have God's nature now, and any actions that would indicate the contrary are just part of my Adamic hangover. After all, I trained the flesh quite well before I knew Christ.

To conclude, if you want to talk about "old nature" and "new nature" just remember the old one is "old" in the sense that it *used to belong to you, but no more*. You only have one new nature. Now it is natural for you to be Christlike!

I hope these suggestions make you eager to understand some of the "untranslatable riches" that God has implanted in the Greek of the New Testament.

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