

# Englishman's Greek

## Chapter 2

### How To Read Greek

It is not too difficult to learn how to read Greek. Some courses in Greek teach the students how to read Greek on the very first day of class. Of course, to understand what you are reading would require weeks of study as is true with any language.

For the person not trained in the Greek language, learning the Greek alphabet and learning how to read are important skills which will help you to look up words in a Greek lexicon (a Greek dictionary) and will help you to be able to do some basic reading in a Greek-English Interlinear New Testament.

#### 1A. The Alphabet.

If you know the word "ALPHABET," then you already know the first two letters of the Greek Alphabet (Alpha and Beta). If you know Revelation 1:8, then you already know the first and last letters of the Greek Alphabet (Alpha and Omega). So you only need to learn 21 more letters and many of these are similar or identical to English letters. You may have learned some Greek letters when you took courses in mathematics (Delta, Pi, etc.).

CAPITAL LETTERS	SMALL LETTERS	NAME	PRONUNCIATION
A	α	Alpha	a as in <u>father</u> , " <u>ABBA</u> " (Rom. 8:15)
B	β	Beta	b as in <u>Bible</u>
Γ	γ	Gamma	g as in <u>girl</u> , <u>get</u>
Δ	δ	Delta	d as in <u>demons</u> , <u>devil</u>
E	ε	Epsilon	e as in <u>let</u> , <u>set</u> , <u>met</u>
Z	ζ	Zeta	ds as in <u>leads</u> , <u>foods</u>
H	η	Eta	a as in <u>late</u> , <u>fate</u> , <u>ate</u>
Θ	θ	Theta	th as in <u>thanksgiving</u>
I	ι	Iota	short i as in <u>hit</u> , <u>sin</u> , <u>sit</u> long i as in <u>machine</u> ( <u>feet</u> )

Κ	κ	Kappa	k as in <u>kind</u> , <u>keep</u>
Λ	λ	Lambda	l as in <u>love</u> , <u>Lord</u>
Μ	μ	Mu	m as in <u>Master</u> , <u>might</u>
Ν	ν	Nu	n as in <u>night</u> , <u>new</u>
Ξ	ξ	Xi	ks as in <u>breaks</u> , <u>lacks</u>
Ο	ο	Omicron	o as in <u>soft</u> , <u>on</u> , ( <u>awful</u> )
Π	π	Pi	p as in <u>Praise Him!</u> , <u>peace</u>
Ρ	ρ	Rho	r as in <u>righteousness</u> , <u>reign</u> (do not confuse with English "P"; Rho looks like an English "P" but it functions like an English "R")
Σ	σ (ς)	Sigma	s as in <u>Saviour</u> , <u>Son</u> [this letter has two forms, see under 2B]
Τ	τ	Tau	t as in <u>teacher</u>
Υ	υ	Upsilon	u as in <u>feud</u> , <u>food</u> , <u>few</u>
Φ	φ	Phi	ph as in <u>phone</u> ( <u>fun</u> , <u>fight</u> )
Χ	χ	Chi	ch as in <u>Christ</u> (like a "k" sound)
Ψ	ψ	Psi	ps as in <u>cups</u> , <u>supps</u> , <u>soaps</u>
Ω	ω	Omega	o as in <u>rope</u> , <u>hope</u> , <u>no</u> (do not confuse with English "w"; it looks like an English "w" but it is actually a vowel which functions like the English long "o")

**2A. Pronunciation of Diphthongs (two vowels together).**

We also have diphthongs in English: feud, aisle, oil, team, etc.

Here are the common diphthongs in Greek, showing how each one is pronounced:

<b>αι</b>	pronounced like ai in <u>aisle</u> (also as <u>eye</u> , <u>I</u> )
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<b>ΕΙ</b>	pronounced like the "a" in <u>fate</u> (same sound as η)
<b>ΟΙ</b>	pronounced like the oi in <u>oil</u> , <u>soil</u>
<b>ΑΥ</b>	pronounced like ow in <u>cow</u> , <u>WOW!</u>
<b>ΕΥ</b>	pronounced like eu in <u>feud</u> ( <u>you</u> )
<b>ΟΥ</b>	pronounced like ou in <u>group</u> , <u>soup</u> (same sound as v)
<b>ΥΙ</b>	pronounced like uee in <u>queen</u> ( <u>we</u> )

Another type of diphthong is called IOTA SUBSCRIPT. This occurs when the ι (iota) is written very small under the letters (vowels) α, η or ω to form a special diphthong ( α ι ω ι η ι ). But when you see this, don't worry about it. It's pronounced the same as the letter or vowel would be pronounced if the small **iota** were not there.

α ι pronounced like α

ω ι pronounced like ω

η ι pronounced like η

### 3A. Other Rules that Must Be Understood In Order To Read Greek.

1B. When the letter γ (**Gamma**) comes before another γ or κ or χ the γ is pronounced like **ng** (as in **song**).

Examples:

Compare the English word "angle." If this were a Greek word it would be spelled "aggle" but it would be pronounced as "angle."

Compare the English word "ankle." If this were a Greek word it would be spelled "agkle" but it would be pronounced as "ankle."

The Greek word for **angel** is

ἄγγελος

and is pronounced "angelos." The Greeks, if they were spelling in English, would probably spell "angel" as "aggel."

2B. The letter Sigma is written as  $\varsigma$  when it comes at the end of a word, elsewhere it is written as  $\sigma$ . It is the same letter but it appears in two different forms according to the rule just stated.

Example: The Greek word for Christ is **χριστός (Christos)**. Notice that the letter Sigma is found twice in this word but in two different forms. The last Sigma takes a different form because it comes at the end of the word.

3B. A vowel or diphthong at the beginning of a word always has a breathing. The rough breathing  $\alpha'$  (notice the small breathing mark above the Alpha) indicates that an h-sound is to be pronounced before the initial vowel or diphthong; the smooth breathing  $\alpha$  (notice the small breathing mark above the Alpha, curved in the opposite direction from the rough breathing mark) indicates that no such h-sound is to be pronounced.

Examples:

$\epsilon\nu$  is to be pronounced en (smooth)

$\epsilon\nu$  is to be pronounced hen (rough)

$o\upsilon$  is to be pronounced oo (smooth)

$o\upsilon$  is to be pronounced hoo (rough)

The letter Rho ( $\rho$ ) always has a rough breathing when it occurs at the beginning of a word ( $\rho'$ ) and is pronounced rh. Compare the English words rhythm, rhino, rhetoric, etc.

4B. There are three accent marks in Greek:

the acute (  $'$  )

the circumflex (  $\sim$  )

the grave (  $`$  )

In pronunciation you should stress the syllable that has an accent mark.

Examples:  $\alpha\pi\acute{o}\sigma\tau\omicron\lambda\omicron\varsigma$  (apostle, accent on second syllable)

$\alpha\acute{\nu}\theta\rho\omega\pi\omicron\varsigma$  (man, accent on first syllable)

$\mu\iota\kappa\rho\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$  (little, accent on last syllable)

$\delta\acute{\omega}\rho\omicron\nu$  (gift, accent on first syllable)

5B. Punctuation

The four marks of punctuation in Greek are:

1. The comma ( , )
2. The period ( . )
3. The colon ( : ). The Greek colon is used for both colon and semicolon (Greek simplifies; They have one mark whereas English has two).
4. The question-mark ( ; ) Do not confuse this with the English semicolon.

## YOU ARE NOW READY TO READ GREEK!

### 4A. Exercises in Reading and Pronunciation.

#### 1B. Reading common Greek words.

Practice reading the following Greek words aloud:

βαπτίζω baptize	χάρις grace	παραβολή parable
βιβλίον book	καρδιά heart	Φαρισαίος Pharisee
τέκνον child	γυνή woman	προφήτης prophet
ἐκκλησία assembly (church)	λόγος word	μετανοέω repent
διαμόνιον demon	Ἰησοῦς Jesus	δίκαιος righteous
μαθητής disciple (learner)	καί and	σάββατον Sabbath
εὐαγγελίζω evangelize (preach the gospel)	ἀλλά but (strong contrast)	γραφή Scripture
πίστις faith	κόσμος world	δοῦλος slave
πατήρ father	κύριος Lord, master	ψυχή soul

φόβος fear	ἀγάπη love (1 Corinthians 13)	πνεῦμα Spirit
σαρξ flesh	μήτηρ mother	ἀλήθεια truth
δόξα glory	μυστήριον mystery	σοφία wisdom
θεός God	νύξ night	μαρτυρία witness

2B. Reading familiar Bible verses in Greek.

Practice reading the following verses aloud:

John 3:16	<p>Οὕτως (so) γὰρ (for) ἠγάπησεν (loved) ὁ (Greek article) θεός (God) τὸν (the) κόσμον (world), ὥστε (that) τὸν (the) υἱὸν (Son) τὸν (the) μονογενῆ (only begotten) ἔδωκεν (He gave), ἵνα (that) πᾶς (everyone) ὁ (who) πιστεύων (believes) εἰς (in) αὐτὸν (Him) μὴ ἀπόληται (should not perish), ἀλλ (but) ἔχη (should have) ζωὴν (life) αἰώνιον (eternal).</p>
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John 1:1	<p>Ἐν (in) ἀρχῇ (beginning) ἦν (was) ὁ (the) λόγος (Word), καὶ (and) ὁ (the) λόγος (Word) ἦν (was) πρὸς (with) τὸν (Greek article) θεὸς (God), καὶ (and) θεὸς (God) ἦν (was) ὁ (the) λόγος (Word).</p>
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1 John 4:8	<p>...ὅτι (because) ὁ (Greek article) θεὸς (God) ἀγάπη (love) ἐστίν (is).</p>
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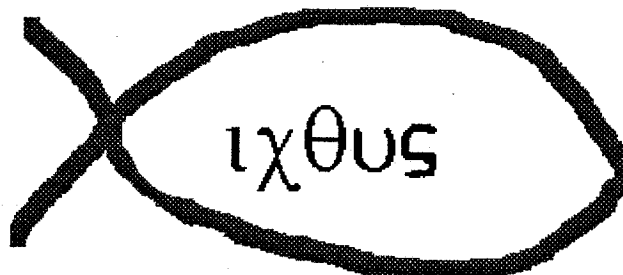
1 Thess. 5:16 (the shortest verse in the Greek New Testament). "Jesus wept" in John 10:35 is shorter in English but longer in Greek.	Πάντοτε (always) χαίρετε (be rejoicing)
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John 17:17	ὁ (the) λόγος (Word) ὁ σὸς (belonging to You) ἀλήθεια (truth) ἐστίν (is).
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Galatians 5:22	ὁ (the) δὲ (now) καρπὸς (fruit) τοῦ (of the) πνεύματος (Spirit) ἐστίν (is) ἀγάπη (love), χαρὰ (joy), εἰρήνη (peace)...
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1 Corinthians 16:21	εἰ (if) τις (anyone) οὐ (not) φιλεῖ (does love) τὸν (the) κύριον (Lord), ἦτω (let him be) ἀνάθεμα (ANATHEMA). Μαρινα θα (MARANATHA).
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3B. A Greek Acrostic--THE SIGN OF THE FISH.



**The Sign of the Fish**

The Greek word for FISH (ΙΧΘΥΣ), pronounced ick-thuse, was used by the early Christians as a code word because each of the letters of the word FISH stood for a key word representing the Christian faith. Even today people use the sign of the fish as a sign that they are Christians.

Here are what the words are:

Ι	ησοῦς	<b>Jesus</b>
Χ	ριστός	<b>Christ</b>
Θ	εός	<b>God</b>
Υ	ιός	<b>Son</b>
Σ	(σ)ωτήρ	<b>Saviour</b>

**What then is the message of the fish?  
Jesus Christ, God (the) Son, (our)  
Saviour!**

**Is He your Saviour?**