

Chapter 2

The Verb: Present Active Indicative / Nu-movable / Negation / Proclitics / Conjunctions / Aspect

PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE: One of the first things to be learned about verbs is the language grammarians use to describe them. (This is actually quite a complicated topic, but for now we will keep it as straightforward as possible.) Three words of this grammatical language appear in the chapter title: *present*, *active*, and *indicative*. *Present* refers to the *tense* of the verb. Verbs in the present tense refer to something going on in the present time (from the viewpoint of the speaker or writer) or something which is always happening or true. *Active* refers to the *voice* of the verb. When the voice is active the subject of the verb is doing / does the action of the verb. *Indicative* refers to the *mood* of the verb. Verbs in the indicative mood describe an action or state of being as real or actual. All the verbs in this chapter are present active indicative.

The Greek verb is *inflected*. This means that it has different forms (or more specifically different endings) corresponding to the personal pronoun subjects.

In English a complete *conjugation* (listing of forms) of a regular verb includes the personal pronouns and shows very little change in form.

EXAMPLE: I hear we hear
 you (s.) hear you (pl.) hear
 he/she/it hears they hear

Two additional terms used in verb identification are *person* (*first*, *second*, and *third*) and *number* (*singular* and *plural*).

First person singular is “I.” / First person plural is “we.”

Second person is always “you.”

Third person singular is “he/she/it.” / Third person plural is “they.”

Because Greek has a different form for each of these six possibilities, it is possible to omit the personal pronouns. [They do exist; we will learn them later.] The present active indicative has a *stem* which remains constant and gives the root meaning of the word and six *personal endings* which correspond to the pronouns.

Using the stem $\lambda\upsilon-$, which has as one of its meanings “free,” we can write the *present active indicative conjugation* thus:

PROCLITICS: Note that *οὐ* and *οὐκ* do not have an accent, only a breathing mark. Words such as this are considered to be so closely connected to what follows that they are not accented separately. These words are called “proclitics.”

CONJUNCTIONS: A conjunction is a word that connects two or more words, phrases, or clauses. Two common Greek conjunctions are *καί* (“and”) and *ἀλλά* (“but”). When these words appear in a vocabulary list they have an acute accent. When they are followed immediately (i.e., with no intervening punctuation) in a sentence by another word, the accent is changed to a *grave* accent. This is true not only for these two words but for any word with an acute accent on the last (or only) syllable.

ἐσθίουσι καὶ πίνουσιν. They are eating and drinking.

ASPECT / TYPE OF ACTION: In Greek, the tense of a verb gives more information than just time. In fact, absolute time is only a part of the verb tense in the indicative mood. In addition, the tense indicates something about the nature of the action or how the writer views the action (or wants the reader to view it). The present tense describes an action as on-going or continuous (though the duration may be very brief) or it describes something which is always happening or true. It sees the action in progress. On the one hand, the present tense is used for specific situations: “The cat is chasing a mouse.” / “I hear you.” On the other hand, it can also be used for general statements: “Cats chase mice.” Statements of the latter type sometimes have the characteristic of being maxims or general truths: “God loves us.” The question of “aspect” or “type of action” should never be ignored when dealing with Greek verbs.

VOCABULARY

The words given in brackets following some vocabulary entries are English *derivatives* from the Greek words. These are not usually the same as a definition for the Greek word, though occasionally they are, but they can serve as memory aids for vocabulary learning (and for expanding your English vocabulary!).

λύω – loose, untie; free, set free, release; break, annul; destroy [analysis]

δοξάζω – glorify [doxology]

κωλύω – hinder, prevent

ἀκούω – hear, listen (to) [acoustics]

λέγω – say, speak, tell

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ἔχω – have, possess, hold

ἐσθίω – eat

σώζω – save (The mark under the *omega* is called an *iota subscript*. It is part of the spelling, but does not affect pronunciation. We will see more examples of this later.)

πίνω – drink

πέμπω – send

βαπτίζω – baptize [baptize]

ἀγοράζω – buy

ἐλπίζω – hope, hope (for)

οὐ, οὐκ – not [utopia]

καί – and

ἀλλά – but

PREPARING FOR THE QUIZ:

- (1) You should understand what is meant by the terms: *present*, *active*, and *indicative*.
- (2) You should have *memorized the vocabulary* given in the chapter. [This is true for each chapter and will not be specifically mentioned again.]
- 3) You should *recognize immediately* the six personal endings and be able to connect them to the correct English pronoun subject.
- (4) You should be comfortable with the fact that a given Greek word may be translated into English in *more than one way*. This applies to both vocabulary choice and ways to express the present tense.

