

Introduction to New Testament Greek

Week 11 – Verbs, To-Be & the Aorist Active Indicative

The aim of this session is to introduce the *Verb 'To-Be'* in its *Indicative* forms before looking at the *First Aorist Active Indicative Verb*. This session will outline the difference between *present stems* and *verb stems* and include some rules for understanding in order to translate.

Verb Families

The entire Greek Verb system can be divided into two basic conjugations (families): the $-\omega$ family and the $-\mu\iota$ family. So called because the way the word appears in its most basic form in the lexicon shows it to have either an $-\omega$ or $-\mu\iota$ at the end.

All the root verbs we have learnt so far have ended with either $-\omega$, $-\epsilon\omega$, $-\omicron\omega$, or $-\alpha\omega$. The great majority of the verbs in the New Testament belong to the $-\omega$ conjugation.

The older and smaller family is the $-\mu\iota$ family and the most common $-\mu\iota$ verb is $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\mu\iota$ ('I am') – it is used around 2500 times in the New Testament and so warrants specific attention. We will need to return to the general $-\mu\iota$ verb in time.

The Verb 'To-Be'

$\epsilon\acute{\iota}\mu\iota$ is called the *copulative verb* (Latin: *copulo* = 'I link together') because it functions to link the *subject* and the *complement* (predicate) of a sentence together. It is also called the verb 'To-Be'.

It is important to distinguish between the *object* and the *complement* of a verb. The *complement* always refers to the same person or thing as the subject (e.g. 'God became *man*' – '*man*' is the *complement*) – and so it appears in the nominative. In contrast the object always refers to someone or something which relates to the subject (e.g. 'God made *man*' – '*man* is the object) – and so it appears in the accusative.

This is all important because of the way that the verb 'To-Be' functions in the sentence. The *copulative verb* expresses a *state of being* rather than an action and so it often functions as the (non-doing) verb in the sentence or clause (e.g. 'Joshua *is* a sinner' or 'Cameron *was* a ninja'). As such, the verb 'To-Be' is never followed by an *object* (in the accusative) instead it is always followed by the *complement* (in the nominative).

As it describes the *state of being* not an action it does not have an *Active*, *Middle* or *Passive* voice. It appears in the *Present*, *Imperfect* and *Future* tenses and in the *Indicative*, *Subjunctive* and *Infinitive* moods.

The complete paradigm for the verb $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\mu\iota$ in the *Indicative* is:

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INDICATIVE TABLE of εἶμι - the VERB 'TO-BE'							
Num	Pers	PRESENT		IMPERFECT		FUTURE	
<i>Sing</i>	1 st	εἶμι	I am	ἦμην	I was	ἔσομαι	I will
	2 nd	εἶ	you are	ἦς or ἦσθα ¹	you were	ἔσῃ	you will
	3 rd	ἔστι(ν)	he/she/it is	ἦν	he/she/it was	ἔσται	he/she/it will
<i>Plu</i>	1 st	ἔσμεν	we are	ἦμεν or ἦμεθα	we were	ἔσομεθα	we will
	2 nd	ἔστε	you are	ἦτε	you were	ἔσεσθε	you will
	3 rd	εἶσι(ν)	they are	ἦσαν	they were	ἔσονται	they will

What do you notice? Similarities with the *Present Active Indicative* or the *Future Middle Indicative*?

Note:

- In the *present* – the Greek words εἶ (‘you are’) and εἶ (‘if’) are very similar. The circumflex over the second person singular distinguishes them (c.f. Matt 4:3 - εἶ υἱὸς εἶ τοῦ θεοῦ - ‘if you are the Son of God’.)

Exercises

- Find and highlight (on the Mark 1 Appendix) all of the εἶμι verbs in Mark 1:1-45 (there are 12) Translate.

Verse	Verb ‘To-Be’	Translation
6	ἦν	he was
7		
11		
13		
13		
16		
22		
23		
24		
27		
33		
45		

¹ ἦσθα is the alternative form of ἦς - but don't stress too much about it as it only appears in the NT twice (Mt 26:69 & Mk 14:67)

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2. Translate the following verses²:

- a) ἦσαν γὰρ πολλοὶ (many) καὶ ἠκολούθουν αὐτῷ.
- b) ὥστε κύριός ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ τοῦ σαββάτου.
- c) Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός (beloved), ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ.

Aorist Verbs

We now turn to the *Aorist Verb*. The *aorist* is used to describe an event or process that occurred at a point in time, usually in the past. The event or process may be undefined.

Greek has two *Aorists* which are formed differently – *First Aorists* and *Second Aorists*. We will consider the *First Aorist Verb* here.

First Aorist Active Indicative

Like the *Imperfect Verb*, the *First Aorist* carries an augment (*past time morpheme* – ε') at the front. Like the *Future Verb*, which adds a *future time morpheme* to the end of its stem, the *First Aorist* adds an *aorist aspect morpheme* behind its stem ('σα'). The endings will then follow accordingly.

So the *First Aorist Active Indicative verb* is made up of four parts:

The augment + the verb stem + aoristic morpheme + the aorist ending

e.g. - ἐ + λύ + σα + μεν = 'We loosed' (in *active indicative 1st person plural*)

So the paradigm of the *Aorist Active Indicative Verb* for λύω is:

AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE			
Num	Person	Greek	English
<i>Sing</i>	1 st	ἐλύσα	I loosed
	2 nd	ἐλύσας	you loosed
	3 rd	ἐλύσε(ν) ³	he/she/it loosed
<i>Plu</i>	1 st	ἐλύσαμεν	we loosed
	2 nd	ἐλύσατε	you loosed
	3 rd	ἐλύσαν	they loosed

² KEY: a. Mk 2:15; b. Mk 2:28; Mk 9:7.

³ Because the first person singular does not have a suffix, the third person singular modifies the σα to σε (without a person number suffix) – thereby differentiating the first and third singular forms.

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What do you notice? Similarities with the *Imperfect Active*?

As learnt last session the rules for *amalgamation* will apply to the *Aorist* and so when the *aoristic morpheme* ('σᾶ') is attached to the stem the exact same kinds of modification are made in the final consonants of the stem as happens with the *future time morpheme* ('σ').

κ, γ, χ + σ = ξ

π, β, φ + σ = ψ

τ, δ, θ + σ = σ

–€ω verbs undergo a lengthening of the € to η before the σ

Contract verbs - the contract vowel lengthens before the σ

Exercises

3. Applying the rules above for –€ω verbs, fill in the table for the *Aorist Active Indicative* for ποιέω = 'I make'.

AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE VERB table for ποιέω			
Num	Person	Greek ⁴	English
<i>Sing</i>	1 st	ἔποιησα	I made
	2 nd		
	3 rd		
<i>Plu</i>	1 st		
	2 nd		
	3 rd		

Verb Stems

Verbs can be tricky (as you may have discovered!), but they can be mastered! One of the tricky things to note about verbs is recognizing the verbal forms because the stem may vary in different tenses.

Present and *Imperfect* tenses are built on the *present stem* (as already learnt).

The fact that all verbs appear in a lexicon according to their *present form* tends to fix our attention on this form, but that is deceptive. The *present stem* is actually derived from the *verb stem*. The *verb stem* is the most important part of the verb.

The *aorist tense* (and in fact usually the *future tense*) is built from the *verb stem*. The *present stem* is usually an expanded form of the *verb stem* (although in the case of λυ- they are the same).

This is important because the rules for *amalgamation* apply to the basic *verb stem* and so the word may modify and if the student does not know the *verb stem*, the word will become difficult to translate.

⁴ KEY: ἔποιησα; ἔποιησας; ἔποιησεν; ἔποιησαμεν; ἔποιησατε; ἔποιησαν.

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Below are examples of three types of verb in which the *present stem* has been modified from the shorter *verb stem*.

- –ζω present forms usually have a verb stem ending in –δ.

e.g.	<i>present form</i>	<i>verb stem</i>	<i>first aorist</i>	<i>future</i>
	βαπτίζω	βαπτίδ	έβαπτισα (I baptised)	βαπτισω (I will baptize)

Notice how the *dental* –δ amalgamates to become a σ in the *first aorist* and *future* form.

- –σσω present forms have a verb stem ending in –γ or –κ.

e.g.	<i>present form</i>	<i>verb stem</i>	<i>first aorist</i>	<i>future</i>
	κηρύσσω	κηρύκ	έκηρύξα (I preached)	κηρύξω (I will preach)
	πρασσω	πραγ	έπράξα (I did)	πράξω (I will do)

Notice how the *gutterals* –κ and –γ amalgamate to become a ξ in the *first aorist* and *future* form.

- –πτω present forms have no τ in the verb stem ending.

e.g.	<i>present form</i>	<i>verb stem</i>	<i>first aorist</i>	<i>future</i>
	κρύπτω	κρύπ	έκρυψα (I hid)	κρύψω (I will hide)
	άποκαλύπτω	καλύπ	ήποκαλύψα (I revealed)	άποκαλύψω (I will reveal)

Notice that a) **άποκαλύπτω** is a *compound verb* and so we focus on the *verb stem*, b) the *labial* –π amalgamates to become a ψ in the *first aorist* and *future* form, and c) the *augment* έ lengthens to an η in the *aorist* as it follows the rules for augmentation.

Exercises

4. Below is a list of the same word in its *present form* and then in either its *first aorist* or *future* form. Considering the below vocab list...
 - What factor/s is affecting the change in the *aorist* or *future* form?
 - a. present stem vs verb stem
 - b. augmentation
 - c. –εω verb contraction
 - d. –οω verb contraction
 - e. –αω verb contraction
 - f. amalgamation
 - g. *aorist* or *future* tense

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- What is the English translation of the *aorist* or *future* word?

Present form	First Aorist or Future Word	Factors in play (circle what is relevant)	English Translation
ἐγγίζω	ἤγγισαν Mt 21:1	a. present stem vs verb stem b. augmentation c. –εω verb contraction d. –οω verb contraction e. –αω verb contraction f. Amalgamation g. Aorist or Future	They draw near
σταυρώω	ἔσταυρώσατε Acts 2:36	a. present stem vs verb stem b. augmentation c. –εω verb contraction d. –οω verb contraction e. –αω verb contraction f. Amalgamation g. Aorist or Future	
ἀποκαλύπτω	ἀποκαλυφθήσεται Lk 12:2	a. present stem vs verb stem b. augmentation c. –εω verb contraction d. –οω verb contraction e. –αω verb contraction f. Amalgamation g. Aorist or Future	
ἐπερωτάω	ἐπερωτήσω Mk 11:29	a. present stem vs verb stem b. augmentation c. –εω verb contraction d. –οω verb contraction e. –αω verb contraction f. Amalgamation g. Aorist or Future	
ἐλεέω	ἐλεηθήσονται Mt 5:7	a. present stem vs verb stem b. augmentation c. –εω verb contraction d. –οω verb contraction e. –αω verb contraction f. Amalgamation g. Aorist or Future	
κηρύσσω	ἐκήρυξαν Mk 6:12	a. present stem vs verb stem b. augmentation c. –εω verb contraction d. –οω verb contraction e. –αω verb contraction f. Amalgamation g. Aorist or Future	5

5. Translate the following verse (you may need to refer to the below vocab list).⁶

- a. προσέπιπτον αὐτῷ καὶ ἔκραζον λέγοντες (saying) ὅτι Σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ.

⁵ KEY: ἤγγισαν – verb stem, augment, amalgamation, aorist, they drew near; ἔσταυρώσατε – verb stem, amalgamation, –οω verb contraction, aorist, you crucified; ἀποκαλυφθήσεται – verb stem, amalgamation, future, he/she/it will be revealed; ἐπερωτήσω – present stem, –αω verb contraction, future, I will ask; ἐλεηθήσονται – present stem, –εω verb contraction, amalgamation, future, they will be shown mercy; ἐκήρυξαν – verb stem, augmentation, amalgamation, aorist, they proclaimed.

⁶ Key: a. Mk 3:11.

Vocab List 10 – Verbs – Special Stems & other Verbs

Copulative verbs

εἰμί	I am, is, are (present) (Mk 1:7)
ἦμην	I was, were (imperfect) (Mk 1:6)
ἔσομαι	I will (future) (Mk 13:13)

-ιζω (δ) Stems

βαπτίζω	I baptise (Mt 3:11)
ἐγγίζω	I draw near (Mk 1:15)
καθαρίζω	I cleanse (Mk 1:40)

-αζω (δ) Stems

ἐτοιμάζω	I prepare (Mk 1:3)
κατασκευάζω	I ready, build (Mk 1:2) ▣
πειράζω	I tempt, test (Mk 1:13)

-σσω (γ or κ) Stems

κηρύσσω	I preach, proclaim (Mk 1:4)
πράσσω	I do, practice (Lk 3:13)

-πτω (lose the τ) Stems

ἀποκαλύπτω	I reveal, disclose (Mt 10:26) ▣
κρύπτω	I hide, conceal (Mt 5:14)
προσπίπτω	I fall down (at the feet) (Mk 3:11)

▣ = indicates a *Compound Verb*

-ω Verbs (to add to what was learnt in Vocab list 2)

ἀγγέλλω	I tell, announce (Jn 20:18) •
αἴρω	I carry, lift (Mk 2:3) •

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ἀνοίγω	I open (Mk 7:35)
ἀποκτείνω	I kill (Mk 3:4) •
ἄρχω	I rule (Lk 3:8)
βλέπω	I see, look (Mk 4:12)
γινώσκω	I know (Mk 4:13)
διώκω	I persecute, pursue (Mt 5:10)
εὐαγγελίζω	I preach the gospel (Acts 14:7)
κλαίω	I weep (Mk 5:38)
κρίνω	I judge (Mt 5:40) •
λαμβάνω	I take (Mk 4:16) •
μένω	I remain (Mk 6:10) •
ὀφείλω	I owe (Mt 18:28) •
πείθω	I persuade, convince (Mt 27:20)
πέμπω	I send, commission (Mk 5:12)
περισσεύω	I abound (Mk 12:44)
προφητεύω	I prophecy (Mk 7:6)
σπείρω	I sow (Mk 4:3) •
χαίρω	I rejoice (Mt 14:11) •

• = indicates a *Liquid Stem Verb* – these verbs have stems which end in either λ, μ, ν, or ρ. More will be explained about *liquid stem verbs* in Unit 12 to come.

For next week:

1. Commit to memory the paradigms for the *Verb To-Be* & the *First Aorist Active Indicative Verb*.
2. Learn the Vocab from list 10 (and develop flash cards).

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Bibliography

In putting this material together the following texts may have been consulted.

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Note to leader: Bring highlighters and interlinear Bible