

Introduction to New Testament Greek

Week 5 – The Greek Article & 1st Declension Nouns

The goal of this session is to introduce the Greek *Definite Article* and understand how it helps us translate nouns in general. We will then learn about *Second Declension Nouns*. There is a fair amount of paradigm learning in this unit.

The Definite Article

In Week 2 when looking at language and meaning we said briefly:

Article: the word ‘the’ (definite) or ‘a/an’ (indefinite).
In Greek there is only the definite article.

We return to this part of speech today. The Greek *definite article* is a true friend to the translator.

In Greek, the *definite article* is the word ‘the’ which proceeds the noun (or its substitute) and makes the noun definite.

In English there are three uses of the article (or not, as the case may be!)

- i. The *indefinite article* – ‘a’ or ‘an’ (e.g. Shane is *a* faithful man)
- ii. The *definite article* – ‘the’ (e.g. Shane is *the* faithful man)
- iii. *Anarthrous* – when there is no article at all. (e.g. Shane and Kate have faith)

There are two main differences between Greek and English concerning the article. The first is that in Greek there is no indefinite article making the noun either *anarthrous* (no article) or *articular* (having the article). There is no middle ground.

Where no article appears in Greek, the indefinite article ‘a’ or ‘an’ is generally inserted (e.g. Mark 1:3 *φωνή βοώντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ*, = ‘[A] voice crying out in the desert’). There are a few occasions, when the context suggests it, where the definite article ‘the’ should be inserted (c.f. Mark 1:1 *Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* = ‘[The] beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ’).

Generally speaking the presence of the article emphasizes a *particular identity* while the absence emphasizes *quality or characteristics*.

The second difference is more significant. In Greek, like nouns, adjectives, pronouns, participles etc. the article is highly inflected. In other words, just as there are different cases for a noun depending on its usage in the sentence, there are different cases for the article. This is what makes *the article* such a friend. You can always tell the *gender, number and case* of a noun (or its substitute) based on *the article* (if there is one) because the article always agrees with the noun (or substitute) in *gender, number and case*. While nouns or their substitutes are spelt differently and morph into sometimes almost unrecognizable words, *the article* remains and, provided you know the form, will be a great friend in your translation.

And so we are now in a position to learn the paradigm of the *Definite Article*.

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| The Definite Article | | | | |
|----------------------|------------|-----------|----------|--------|
| Num | Case | Masculine | Feminine | Neuter |
| <i>Sing</i> | <i>Nom</i> | ὁ | ἡ | το |
| | <i>Gen</i> | του | της | του |
| | <i>Dat</i> | τω | τη | τω |
| | <i>Acc</i> | τον | την | το |
| <i>Plu</i> | <i>Nom</i> | οἱ | αἱ | τα |
| | <i>Gen</i> | των | των | των |
| | <i>Dat</i> | τοις | ταις | τοις |
| | <i>Acc</i> | τους | τας | τα |
| English | | the | the | the |

- What do you notice? Similarities?
- Compare the 2nd Declension Masculine and Neuter Noun paradigms to this paradigm. What do you notice?

The *article* provides the basic declension pattern for nouns, its mastery will mean you will have control of much of the Greek noun system.

Exercise

1. The *definite article* is used 16 times in Mark 1:1-6. Find and mark each one (on your Mark 1 appendix) and identify its *case*, *number* and *gender* (Note: there may be more than one possibility and so your work last week in 2nd Declensions nouns may help you determine the correct answer – what gender noun does it qualify?)

| Reference | Greek article as it appears in the text of Mark 1:1-6 | Case | Number | Gender |
|-----------|---|------|--------|--------|
| Mark 1:1 | του | Gen | Sing | Neut |
| 1:2 | | | | |
| 1:2 | | | | |
| 1:2 | | | | Masc |
| 1:2 | | | | |
| 1:3 | | | | |
| 1:3 | | | | |
| 1:3 | | | | |
| 1:4 | | | | |

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| 1:4 | | | | |
|-----------|---|------|--------|--------|
| 1:5 | | | | |
| 1:5 | | | | Masc |
| 1:5 | | | | |
| 1:5 | | | | |
| 1:6 | | | | |
| 1:6 | | | | |
| Reference | Greek article as it appears in the text of Mark 1:1-6 | Case | Number | Gender |

If you are really eager, continue this exercise through the rest of Mark 1.

The Article exceptions!

In translation you may possibly notice that the use of the *definite article* is not always what you would expect. There are four notable exceptions where the Greek and the English diverge in relation to the article. In Greek the following are usually preceded by the article but in translation the article can be dropped off (for obvious reasons).

- ὁ θεός = when referring to God (e.g. Mark 2:7)
- ὁ ἄνθρωπος = when referring to humanity as a race or class (e.g. Mark 2:27)
- **the abstract noun** = when the *noun* is abstract (e.g. love - ἀγάπη (c.f. Jn 15:9) ; truth - ἀλήθεια (c.f. Jn 1:17); joy - χαρά (c.f. Mt 13:34); grace – χάρις (c.f. Jn 1:17) etc.)
- ὁ Ἰησοῦς = when referring to the name of Jesus (c.f. Mk 1:14)

It is time to return back to the Noun. Last week we looked at the *Second Declension Noun* family, this week the *First Declension Noun* family.

First Declension Nouns

In the *First Declension* family there are *Feminine* and *Masculine* nouns – no *Neuter*.

1st declension nouns are characterized by suffixes (endings) which all begin with vowels – **α** or the lengthened **η**. You might notice that the *2nd declension nouns* (learnt last week) are also characterized by suffixes beginning with vowels – generally **ο** (in the masculine) or the **ο** and **α** (in the neuter).

There are four paradigms for us to learn here – three types of *feminine* and one for *masculine*.

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| 1 st Declension Nouns | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|------|-----------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Num | Case | Masculine | Feminine | | |
| | | | Stem ends with Consonant | Stem ends with a vowel or ρ - | Stem ends with a ξ – or σσ - |
| Sing | Nom | προφήτης | γράφη | ώρα | δόξα |
| | Gen | προφήτου | γράφης | ώρας | δόξης |
| | Dat | προφήτη | γράφη | ώρα | δόξη |
| Plu | Acc | προφήτην | γράφην | ώραν | δόξαν |
| | Nom | προφήται | γράφαι | ώραι | δόξαι |
| | Gen | προφήτων | γράφων | ώραν | δόξων |
| | Dat | προφήταις | γράφαις | ώραις | δόξαις |
| | Acc | προφήτας | γράφας | ώρας | δόξας |
| English | | prophet | writing | hour | glory |

What do you notice? Similarities?

Some tips:

- Notice how all the plural ending are the same across the 1st declension family. This aids with memory.
- Every plural *genitive* (of any declension and gender) ends in **ων**.

Compare the 1st Declension Feminine Noun paradigms to the paradigm for the Feminine Article. What do you notice?

To give you an idea of the range of Greek nouns you will understand using these declensions the following statistics may be encouraging. The feminine noun is by far the most prevalent 1st declension noun. Excluding names, there are 111 masculine nouns following the paradigm for **προφήτης**¹. Of the feminine nouns, 191 nouns that follow the paradigm of **γράφη**, 310 nouns that follow the paradigm of **ώρα** and 22 nouns that follow the paradigm of **δόξα**.

Let's do some exercises to put this into practice.

¹ There is one exception: the word **νεανίας** which means 'young man' is a 1st declension masculine noun and follows a different declension pattern. As it is the one word in this category (and only appears in Acts), a separate paradigm has not been taught. For completeness its occurrences appear as:

Sing. Nom: **νεανίας** (Acts 20:9)
 Gen: **νεανίου** (Acts 7:58)
 Acc: **νεανίαν** (Acts 23:17)

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Exercises

1. Decline the 1st Declension Feminine Noun paradigm for **φωνή** and add the matching article.

| 1 st Declension Nouns | | | Article |
|----------------------------------|------|---------------------------------|---------|
| Num | Case | Feminine | Article |
| | | <i>Stem ends with Consonant</i> | |
| Sing | Nom | | |
| | Gen | | |
| | Dat | | |
| | Acc | | |
| Plu | Nom | | |
| | Gen | | |
| | Dat | | |
| | Acc | | |
| English | | sound, voice | |

2. Decline the 1st Declension Feminine Noun paradigm for **βασιλεία** and add the matching article.

| 1 st Declension Nouns | | | Article |
|----------------------------------|------|--------------------------------------|---------|
| Num | Case | Feminine | Article |
| | | <i>Stem ends with a vowel or ρ -</i> | |
| Sing | Nom | | |
| | Gen | | |
| | Dat | | |
| | Acc | | |
| Plu | Nom | | |
| | Gen | | |
| | Dat | | |
| | Acc | | |
| English | | kingdom | |

| The Definite Article | | | | |
|----------------------|------|-----------|----------|--------|
| Num | Case | Masculine | Feminine | Neuter |
| Sing | Nom | ὁ | | |
| | Gen | | | |
| | Dat | | | |
| | Acc | | | το |
| Plu | Nom | | αἱ | |
| | Gen | | | |
| | Dat | | | |
| | Acc | | | τα |
| English | | | | |

3. Decline the Masculine, Feminine and Neuter Definite Article

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Vocab List 4 – Nouns – Feminine (Stem ends with Consonant)

| | |
|----------|-----------------------|
| ἀρχή | beginning (Mk 1:1) |
| διδασχά | teaching (Mk 1:22) |
| ζωή | life (Mk 9:43) |
| ζώνη | belt (Mk 1:6) |
| παραβολή | parable (Mk 4:13) |
| συναγωγή | synagogue (Mk 1:21) |
| φωνή | voice, sound (Mk 1:3) |

Nouns – Feminine (Stem ends with a vowel or ρ-)

| | |
|----------|--------------------------|
| ἀμαρτία | sin (Mk 1:4) |
| βασιλεία | kingdom (Mk 1:15) |
| ἐξουσία | authority (Mk 1:22) |
| ἡμέρα | day (Mk 1:9) |
| θύρα | door (Mk 1:33) |
| μετάνοια | repentance (Mk 1:4) |
| οἰκία | house (Mk 1:29) |
| χώρα | country, region (Mk 1:5) |

Nouns – Feminine (Stem ends with a ξ – or σσ -)

| | |
|---------|---------------------|
| γλῶσσα | tongue (Mk 7:23) |
| δόξα | glory (Mk 8:38) |
| θάλασσά | sea, lake (Mk 1:16) |

Nouns – Masculine

| | |
|---------|-----------------------------|
| ἐργάτης | worker, labourer (Mt 10:10) |
| κριτής | judge (Mt 5:25) |
| μαθητής | disciple (Mt 10:24) |

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προφήτης prophet (Mk 1:2)

Nouns – Feminine (but which decline like 2nd Declension Masculine Nouns)

ἔρημος desert (Mk 1:3)

ὁδός way (Mk 1:2)

παρθένος virgin (Mt 1:23)

τρίβος path (Mk 1:3)

Further Exercises

- Using the appendix from week 3, find and mark all the 1st declension nouns listed below that occur in Mark 1 (the lexical form of each word appears in Vocab list 4). By comparing to the 1st declension noun paradigms, parse each word to work out its *case*, *number*, *gender*, *lexical form* and *meaning*. You may find that *the article* (if present) will help.

| Reference | Greek word as it appears in the text of Mark 1 | Case | Number | Gender | Lexical Form | English Meaning |
|-------------|--|------|--------|-------------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Mark 1:1 | Ἄρχῃ | Nom | Sing | Fem | ἀρχή | beginning |
| 1:2 | προφήτη | | | | | |
| 1:2 | ὁδόν | | | | | |
| 1:3, 11, 26 | φωνή | | | | | |
| 1:3,4 | ἔρημῳ | | | Fem | | |
| 1:3 | ὁδόν | | | | | |
| 1:4 | τρίβους | | | | | |
| 1:4 | μετανοίας | Gen | Sing | | | |
| 1:4 | ἁμαρτιῶν | | | | | |
| 1:5 | χώρᾳ | | | | | |
| 1:5 | Ἰορδάνῃ | | | Masc (check vocab 1) | | |
| 1:5 | ἁμαρτίας | | | | | |

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| 1:6 | τρίχας | Acc | Plu | Fem | θρίξ, τριχός | hair |
|-----------|--|------|--------|--------|--------------|-----------------|
| 1:6 | ζώνην | | | | | |
| 1:9 | ἡμέραις | | | | | |
| 1:12 | ἔρημον | | | | | |
| 1:13 | ἐρήμῳ | | | | | |
| 1:13 | ἡμέρας | | | | | |
| 1:15 | βασιλεία | | | | | |
| 1:16 | θάλασσαν | | | | | |
| 1:16 | θαλάσση | | | | | |
| 1:21 | συναγωγὴν | | | | | |
| 1:22, 27 | διδαχῆ | | | | | |
| 1:22, 27 | ἔξουσίαν | | | | | |
| 1:23 | συναγωγῆ | | | | | |
| 1:29 | συναγωγῆς | | | | | |
| 1:29 | οἰκίαν | | | | | |
| 1:33 | θύραν | | | | | |
| 1:39 | συναγωγὰς | | | | | |
| 1:39 | Γαλιλαίαν | | | | | |
| Reference | Greek word as it appears in the text of Mark 1 | Case | Number | Gender | Lexical Form | English Meaning |

What do you notice? What is important to remember?

For next week:

1. Commit to memory the paradigm for the *Definite article*.
2. Commit to memory the *1st Declension Noun paradigm – Masculine and Feminine*
3. Learn the Vocab from list 4 (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