

Chapter Three

Present Active Indicative Verbs

Vocabulary

		Verbs	
ἄγω	I lead	ἔχω	I have
ἀκούω	I hear	θέλω	I wish, will
βλέπω	I see	λαμβάνω	I take, receive
γινώσκω	I know	λέγω	I say, speak
γράφω	I write	λύω	I loose, or destroy
διδάσκω	I teach	πέμπω	I send
ἐγείρω	I raise up	φέρω	I bear, bring

The Greek Verb

In Greek as in English, the verb is the focal point of action. The verb is usually the key word in the sentence and serves as the most important part of interpretation. The verb is a word that describes action or state of being. As in most languages, the Greek verb has tense, voice, mood, person, and number. The verb must agree with its subject in person and number. For example if the subject is third person, the verb must be third person.

Tense in English is restricted to the time when the action of the verb takes place. That is, tense is either past (“I wrote”), present (“I am writing”), or future (“I will write”). In the Greek; however, tense provides two elements – time of action, and kind of action (also called aspect). With time, the meaning may be either past, present, or future. When kind of action is indicated, it expresses progressive, undefined, or perfected action. Progressive action implies a continuation of action. Undefined action means that the action is thought of as a simple event and says nothing about whether or not it is a process. Perfected action describes the action as having been completed with the result of the action continuing.

No element of the Greek language is of more importance to the student of the New Testament than the matter of tense. A variation in meaning exhibited by the use of a particular tense will often dissolve what appears to be an embarrassing difficulty, or reveal a gleam of truth which will thrill the heart with delight and inspiration....The development of tense has reached its highest in Greek, and presents its greatest wealth of meaning. ‘Among all known ancient languages none distinguishes the

manifold temporal (and modal) relations of the verb so accurately as the Greek'.¹

Voice is that quality of the verb that indicates the relationship of the subject to the action. If the subject does the action, then the verb is in the active voice. In the example “John hit the ball.” Hit is in the active voice because the subject, John, did the action. If the subject receives the action, the verb is in the passive voice. In the example, “John was hit by the ball.” The subject John “was hit” by the ball making the action passive voice. The middle If the action is returning to the subject, then the voice is middle. In the example “John hit himself,” the subject, John, participated in the action, either directly or indirectly.

Mood provides the thought with the aspect of reality. For example to say, “the child runs,” relates the idea of the fact of the child is running in the present. To say, “if the child runs,” relates the idea of the possibility of the child running in the present. Mood represents the attitude of mind on the part of the speaker.” There are two moods in the Greek, (1) the real mood – called the indicative; and (2) the potential mood – which includes (a) the subjunctive (may, might), (b) the optative (may –expressing more hesitation than the subjunctive), and (c) imperative (command).

Person provides the thought with whether the subject is speaking (first person – I, we), is being spoken to (second person – you), or is being spoken about (third person – he, she, it, they). Finally, the verb will indicate the *number* – whether the subject is singular or plural. The verb agrees with its subject in person and number.

Present Active Indicative

The first verb system that most students encounter is the present active indicative. The verb is identified by its stem (λυ -) followed by a personal pronoun ending.

Singular		Plural	
1 st λύ-ω	I am loosing, I loose	1 st λύ-ο-μεν	we are loosing, we loose
2 nd λύ-εις	you are loosing, you loose	2 nd λύ-ε-τε	you are loosing, you loose
3 rd λύ-ει	he/she/it is loosing	3 rd λύ-ουσι(ν)	they are loosing, they loose

The *verb stem* is the distinguishing factor of the verb. The stem remains unchanged as the personal pronoun endings change according to person and number, and as the front of the stem is augmented with addition of tense prefixes.

¹ H.E. Dana & Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (The Macmillan Co.:Toronto, 1994), pp. 176,177

Notice the second person singular and plural are distinguished in the Greek but in the English they have the same form (“you are loosing”). Also notice the movable nu (ν). In the ancient texts sometimes a nu (ν) appears in the third plural form of the present active indicative after the iota (ι). In addition, it appears at the end of other words ending in σι, or ε, especially when followed by another word beginning with a vowel. This is noted so that you may be aware that at times a nu is added and at others it is not.

Parsing Verbs

To parse a verb is to identify its parts. One identifies its tense, voice, mood, person and number. For example to parse the verb λύεις, one says it is a Present Active Indicative, 2 person, singular of λύω (note one uses the first person singular as the root).

The Use of the Present Active Indicative

The present tense describes the time of action or kind of action. For the present tense the fundamental significance is the idea of progress. It is the *linear* or *durative* action. The active voice means the subject is producing the action. The indicative mood means that the action is real or that there is the reality of the action. The indicative is the mood of certainty. “It represents the verbal idea from the viewpoint of reality. This is the attitude of mind expressed, whether the assumed reality is an objective fact or not.”²

The Present Active Infinitive

The present active infinitive possesses the idea of a verbal noun having tense and voice. The infinitive can function as relating (a) time using “while,” or “as;” (b) reason using “because;” (c) purpose using “to,” “in order to,” “so that;” (d) result using “that,” “so as to,” “as a result;” and (e) means using “by means.”

Present Active Infinitive λύ-ειν to loose

Practice

Parse and translate the verbs below in the following format: tense, voice, mood, person, number, root, translation (e.g., ἀκούει – P.A.I.3Sg. from ἀκούω – he/she/it is hearing).

1. βλέπει
2. γινώσκομεν
3. λέγουσιν
4. φέρετε
5. γινώσκεις
6. πέμπει
7. λέγεις
8. φέρουσιν
9. ἀκούω
10. διδάσκεις

² Dana And Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Macmillan Co., 1955), p. 168