

## Bible Greek Vpod Intermediate Greek - Lesson 19

### The Present Tense

The present tense in the Greek can express past, present, or future time. Dr. Young identifies the three time aspects as follows: “The present indicative has a past reference in John 1:29 Γῆ ἐπαυριον βλεπει τον Ἰησοῦν ἐρχομενον προς αὐτον (On the next day he *saw* Jesus coming to him), a present reference in Acts 16:18 Παραγγελλω σοι ἐν ὀνοματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐξελθεῖν ἀπ (I *command* you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her), a future reference in Luke 19:8 where Zacchaeus told the Lord τοῖς πτωχοῖς διδωμι (I *will give* to the poor), and a timeless reference in John 3:18 ὁ πιστευων εἰς αὐτον οὐ κρινεται (the one who believes in him *will never be judged*).”<sup>1</sup>

It is the primary idea of the present tense to represent the action with a time aspect in the indicative mood.

### Uses of the present tense

*Progressive present.* The progressive present is the most common and nearest to the main idea of the present tense. The tense expresses action or a state in progress<sup>2</sup>. The present indicative speaks of present time and can be interpreted as occurring “right now,” or “continues.” An example is found in Galatians 5:16: λεγω δε, πνευματι περιπατεῖτε και ἐπιθυμιον σαρκος οὐ μη τελεσητε. (But I say, **walk** in the Spirit and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh). This has the sense “if you [right now] walk in the Spirit, then you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” Another example is 1 John 1:4: και τοῦτα γραφομεν ἡμεῖς, ἵνα ἡ χαρα ἡμῶν η πεπληρωμενη. (And these things **we are [right now] writing** to you, so that your joy may be full).

*Iterative present.* The iterative present uses the present tense to express the action as a reoccurrence at successive intervals or repeated action. The action may be habitual or a custom and can be interpreted as “always,” “keep on,” or “normally.” Examples are 1 Cor. 15:31: καθ ἡμεραν ἀποθνησκω, νη την ὑμετεραν καυχησιν, ἀδελφοι, ἣν ἔχω ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυριῷ ἡμῶν. (I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, **I die** daily). 1 Thes. 5:17: ἀδιαλειπως προσευχεσθε, (Pray without ceasing), meaning have a regular prayer life.

1 John 3:9: Πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημενος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἁμαρτιαν οὐ ποιεῖ, ὅτι σπερμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μενει, και οὐ δυναται ἁμαρτανειν, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγεννηται. (Whosoever has been born of God **does** not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.);

<sup>1</sup> Richard Young, *Intermediate New Testament Greek* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994) p. 105

<sup>2</sup> Some call this the descriptive present.

means “no one who is born of God habitually sins”. This is a habitual present since 1 John 1:8-10 makes it clear that Christians right now have sin.

### *Special uses of the present*

*Historical present.* The historical present is used when the author wants to present a past event to the reader in a vivid way. The historical present is sometimes referred to as the dramatic present due to its dramatic or vivid effect. Dr. Young says “Since the aorist is the normal tense form in narrative, the historical present is striking and lends prominence to the opening of a scene or to other places where the author wishes to draw the attention of the reader.”<sup>3</sup> Dr. Young goes on to illustrate this by saying Mark uses the historical present in Mark 1:40 to highlight the opening of a new scene: Και ἔρχεται πρὸς αὐτὸν λεπρὸς (and a leper came to him). Another example is Mark 14:17: Και ὀψίας γενομένης ἔρχεται μετὰ τῶν δωδεκά. (and when it was evening **he came** with the twelve).

*Futuristic present.* The futuristic present is used when the author wants to present an event that has not yet occurred and the reader is to understand that the event is certain to take place and in fact is in progress. This useage expresses the theological doctrine of the sovereignty of God and His sovereign control of all. An example is found in Matt. 26:2: οἴδατε ὅτι μετὰ δύο ἡμέρας τὸ πάσχα γίνεται, καὶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου παραδίδεται εἰς τὸ σταυρωθῆναι. (You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of man **will be delivered up** to be crucified). Another example is John 14:3: καὶ ἐὰν πορευθῶ καὶ ἐτοιμασῶ τόπον ὑμῖν, πάλιν ἔρχομαι καὶ παραληψομαι ὑμᾶς πρὸς ἐμαυτὸν, ἵνα ὅπου εἰμι ἐγὼ καὶ ὑμεῖς ἦτε. (And if I go to prepare a place for you, **I will come** back and receive you to myself; that where I am, you may be also).

*Gnomic present.* The gnomic present is used when the author wants to make a general statement of fact in a timeless fashion. An example is Matt. 7:17: οὕτως πᾶν δένδρον ἀγαθὸν καρπὸν ποιεῖ, τὸ δὲ σαπρὸν δένδρον καρπὸν πονηρὸν ποιεῖ. (Even so, every good tree **bears** good fruit, but a bad tree **bears** bad fruit). Another example is found in John 3:8: τὸ πνεῦμα ὅπου θελεῖ πνεῖ καὶ τὴν φωνὴν αὐτοῦ ἀκούεις, ἀλλ’ οὐκ οἶδας ποθεν ἔρχεται καὶ ποῦ ὑπάγει. Οὕτως ἐστὶν πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος. (The wind **blows** where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where **it comes** from where **it goes**. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit).

*Tendential present.* The tendential present is used when the author wishes to show the action that is proposed or attempted, though it is not actually taking place. An example is John 10:32: ἀπεκριθὴ αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς· πολλὰ ἔργα καλὰ ἔδειξα ὑμῖν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς· διὰ ποῖον αὐτῶν ἔργον ἐμε λιθαζετε (Jesus answered them, “Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do **you stone** me?”). Another example is found in Gal. 5:4: κατηγορηθε

<sup>3</sup> Richard Young, *Intermediate New Testament Greek* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 110

ἀπο Χριστοῦ, οἵτινες ἐν νομῷ δικαιούσθε, τῆς χάριτος ἐξέπεσατε. (You have become estranged from Christ, you [**attempt to**] **be justified** by law; you have fallen from grace).

*Static present.* The static present is used when the author wants to represent a condition which is to be forever taken as fact. An example is 2 Peter 3:4: και λεγοντες. ποῦ ἐστιν ἡ ἐπαγγελια τῆς παρουσιας αὐτοῦ; ἀφ' ἧς γαρ οἱ πατερες ἐκοιμηθησαν, παντα οὕτως διαμενει ἀπ' ἀρχῆς κτισεως. (and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things **remain** as [they were] from the beginning of creation.”). Another example is found in 1 John 3:8: ὁ ποιῶν την ἀμαρτιαν ἐκ τοῦ διαβολου ἐστιν, ὅτι ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ὁ διαβολος ἀμαρτανει. εἰς τοῦτο ἐφανερωθη ὁ υἱος τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα λυση τα ἔργα τοῦ διαβολου. (He who sins is of the devil, for the devil **has sinned** from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil).