

# 0

## Introduction to NTGreek In Session

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### §0.0 Introduction

As might be expected, learning to say and write the Greek alphabet is the first step learning the Greek language. Mastering the sight and sounds of the alphabet will lay the cornerstone for learning the sight and sounds of NTGreek words in all subsequent lessons.

However, before introducing the Greek alphabet, a few preliminary comments are necessary about the course work as it is presented on the Internet without cost by Dr. William Ramey.



### §0.1 Phonemic System

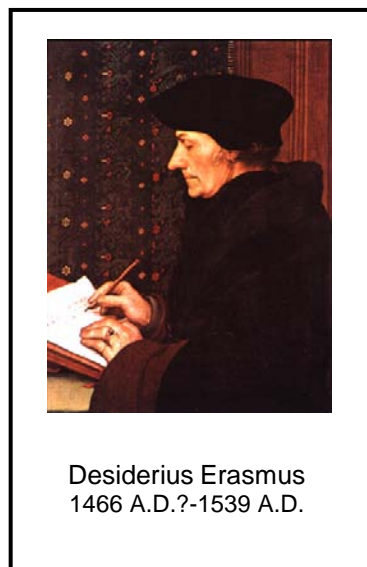
The Greek letter sounds for this course are designed to provide a practical and consistent system of pronunciation. No authoritative source exists in determining how Greek was pronounced during New Testament times. However, as an aid to vocabulary memorization, the Erasmian standardized system of pronunciation has been adopted that is widely used in universities, Bible colleges, seminaries, and in numerous modern New Testament Greek grammars.

Three major approaches are available for learning the pronunciation of New Testament Greek. It would seem natural to learn the standardized pronunciation used today in Greece. However, unless Greek is spoken on a daily basis, a serious draw back exists. Several different phonemes have identical sounds, and some phonemes have multiple sounds, causing confusion between how a word is spoken and actually written. This is no different in English where the letter “c” may sound very different, such as the “c” in “cat”, “circle”, or “cube”, or

the difference in meaning between the two words, “cubical” and “cubicle”, being pronounced identically. The native speaker knows the difference because they are absorbed in the language—very different from a non-native learning to read the Greek New Testament. Furthermore, as with all languages, the pronunciation used in Modern Greek has evolved over the years. Therefore, Modern Greek is not necessarily a proper reflection how Greek was spoken during the New Testament Era, as English spoken today is to Elizabethan English.

A second approach to pronunciation is to learn “reconstructed New Testament Greek”. Scholars, primarily in the last century, have reconstructed what is believed to be the actual pronunciation of Greek during the New Testament Era based upon linguistic guidelines. Even so, with the variety of Greek dialects spoken during that era because of geographical isolation, there was divergence primarily with certain vowels sounds. This is also true how English is spoken differently today in Australia, Great Britain, and the United States.

The final pronunciation approach is the Erasmian system. **Desiderius Erasmus** was a Renaissance Latin and Greek scholar who developed a system for non-native speakers to learn Greek easily. His system diverged from how Greek was spoken during his day in that he assigned different phonemes to the vowels and consonants, differentiating them when spoken. His method greatly enhanced a copyist to duplicate accurately the Greek New Testament. In addition, his approach allowed non-natives to learn rapidly to read the Greek New Testament.



Desiderius Erasmus  
1466 A.D.?-1539 A.D.

Erasmus’ pronunciation gained a foothold in 1588 A.D. when two British professors at Cambridge began to use his method in their Greek classes. The classes were such a success that the approach spread rapidly to other schools, including Bible colleges, universities, and seminaries, both in Great Britain and eventually the United States. Erasmus’ pronunciation method proliferated when many New Testament Greek professors also used his pronunciation in their grammars. It was not until the middle of 1800 A.D., however, that the terms, “Erasmic Greek” or “Erasmian Greek” became commonplace and denoted the pronunciation method set forth by Erasmus.

Erasmian Greek is not how Modern Greek is pronounced, nor how Greek was pronounced during the New Testament Era; it is somewhere in between the two.

It is a practical method for non-native Greek speakers to learn quickly a consistent system of pronunciation. Even if a non-native attempts to learn Modern Greek pronunciation, they will never be able to reproduce the phonemic sounds as a native without living in the country and speaking the language for many years.

The Erasmian approach is a viable alternative to Modern Greek pronunciation for several reasons. First, the beginner quickly learns to differentiate between the seven vowel and seventeen consonant sounds, as well as the binary diphthong vowel sounds. This leads to rapid learning of Greek vocabulary, and eventual reading of the Greek New Testament. Second, most institutions outside of Greece teach New Testament Greek using the Erasmian pronunciation method. Unless one plans to move to Greece and speak the language, Modern Greek pronunciation in the end is disadvantageous for those who plan to read only the Greek New Testament and communicate to those who learned Erasmian Greek—who are in the majority. Finally, after learning New Testament Greek vocabulary using the Erasmian pronunciation, one can attempt to learn Modern Greek pronunciation, thereby not being initially confused with identical Modern Greek phonemic sounds.

If Erasmian Greek pronunciation is so good to learn Greek, why did not Greece eventually adopt it? Whereas Erasmian Greek is a wonderful learning tool, it is caustic to the ear when compared to Modern Greek lyrical sounds. If one compares the seemingly musical sounds of Modern Greek, Erasmian Greek sounds barbaric—even intolerable to the native speaker! However, most non-native students are not interested investing the time to achieve these lyrical sounds; they are more interested in being able to read the Greek New Testament, and as rapidly as possible.

With the foregoing rationale set forth for using the Erasmian Greek pronunciation, let us move on to another matter: the Greek font used in this course.

## §0.2 The Greek Font

The Greek **SPlonic font** has been chosen for this grammar for several reasons. First, the SPlonic font is compatible for both the Macintosh<sup>®</sup> and Windows<sup>®</sup> platforms, utilizing the same character and keyboard maps. The font is also designed to follow the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae encoding scheme. Second, it is a public domain font, meaning that the font may be downloaded and used without copyright restrictions. Finally, the SPlonic font is an easy to read typeface similarly found in modern printed texts of the Greek New Testament, a Greek typeface dating from the middle ages.

Unless the SPionic font has been downloaded and installed in the font folder of your computer, the Greek characters will not be displayed or print properly. Instructions how to install the **SPionic font** may be found [here](#). If the font in the right-hand column below appears similar as the graphic image in the left-hand column, the SPionic font is already installed in your font folder. No further action is necessary to view and print the course materials.

Graphic SPionic Font	SPionic Font
Ἐν ἀρχῆ ἦν ὁ λόγος	Ἐν ἀρχῆ ἦν ὁ λόγος

### §0.2.1 SPionic Keyboard Layout



### §0.2.2 Special Notes:

1. *Alpha* and *ōmega* are the only Greek characters considered wide; all other vowels (ε, η, ι, ο, υ) are narrow characters.
2. Diacritics are overstrikes; those for wide characters are marked in yellow.
3. Narrow macron = < (shift + comma).
4. Wide macron = > (shift + period).
5. Sublinear dot = ? (question mark).
6. Raised dot = : (colon).
7. Iota subscript = | (shift + backslash).
8. Nonbreaking space (to insert breathers before capital letters) = 7 (seven).

### §0.3 Course Deployment

All course lessons are offered in Adobe Acrobat format. The **Adobe Acrobat Reader**® software is free and allows all major computer platforms to view and print the lesson materials. If you wish to listen to the lessons' accompanying MP3 audio files, a MP3 player is required. If you do not have a MP3 player, you may download without cost **Winamp**® or **MediaPlayer**®.

All materials for this New Testament Greek course are distributed on the World Wide Web from **InTheBeginning.org** web site and are copyrighted by the author. However, they may be freely distributed without prior permission from Dr. William D. Ramey, if two conditions are met: (1) the material in the lessons is not altered in any manner, including the copyright at the bottom of the page; and (2) the transmission and distribution of all course materials are done without cost. Please note that all NTGreek MP3 sound files, as well as all animated gif files, are also copyrighted by the author and may not be used in any application that involves cost to the user.

### §0.4 Course Numerical Structure

Traditional method of outlining is not used for this course. Instead, a logical numerical system is used to divide the individual chapters into sections. This straightforward method makes it easy to locate specific places in the course material for cross-reference purposes.

Typical	Numerical
I.	§1.0
A.	§1.0.1
B.	§1.0.2
1.	§1.0.2.1
2.	§1.0.2.2
a.	§1.0.2.21
b.	§1.0.2.22
II.	§1.1
A.	§1.1.1
1.	§1.1.1.1
2.	§1.1.1.2
B.	§1.1.2
III.	§1.2
IV.	§1.3

If this type of numerical system of outlining seems strange to you, do not be concerned; as with most things, you will become acquainted with the system after some use, and it will become easy to follow.

You are now ready to begin one of the most rewarding experiences of a lifetime: the study of the New Testament in its original language. Go [here](#) to download *NTGreek Lesson One: The Sight and Sounds of the Greek Letters*.