

3

Sight and Sounds of Greek Words (Module A)

Consonants, Vowels, and Diphthongs
Phonology (Part 3)

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§3.0 Introduction

Lesson Three lays the foundation for the phonetic pronunciation of Greek words. Phonics is the study between letters and their speech sounds. It may also be thought as the letter-to-sound relationships in a language. It is a very helpful method of learning to pronounce the correct sound with the letter or letter combinations they represent. Phonics is to the letter-to-sound relationship in words as a written musical note is to its corresponding instrumental sound.

Learning Greek phonetics trains one to hear the language, so that both the visualization and spelling of Greek will be intuitive. This approach to Greek phonics will not be entirely inductive or deductive, but a combination of both. This lesson focuses on the elementary pronunciation of all Greek consonants, vowels and diphthongs. Throughout the lesson, these letters are blended into sounds to form single and multi-syllable Greek words.

A systematic training in Greek phonics prepares anyone to read competently the Greek New Testament. An accurate knowledge of the phonetic value of each Greek letter is important to understand morphological changes in words in later lessons. Whereas these introductory lessons will not make one a linguist, they will give the necessary skills to understand Greek phonics.

Unlike English, the pronunciation system for Erasmic Greek is largely phonemic. This means that each phoneme or combinations of phonemes are represented by only one letter or combination of letters. If a Greek word is pronounced correctly, it can be spelled correctly. However, this is not fool proof, for there are exceptions, and these will have to be learned.

The phonetic method alone does not work miracles. Learning to read Greek involves more than phonics. Study and practice is required before reading Greek comfortably. However, you have already begun to learn Greek phonics by mastering the individual twenty-four Greek alphabetical sounds. Now you will build on this knowledge and listen for the likenesses and differences in the phonetic pronunciation of these alphabetical sounds when blended together, beginning with single syllable words and progressing to multi-syllable words.

§3.1 Ten Equivalent Consonants and Two Vowels

Lesson Two began with ten Greek letters that, by form, are similar in appearance with ten English letters (cf. §2.1). These letters included both vowels and consonants. These letters were:

English letters:	a	b	d	e	i	k	o	s	t	u
Greek letters:	α	β	δ	ε	ι	κ	ο	ς	τ	υ

The letters above were grouped because of their similarity in form to those in English. In this lesson, we begin with ten Greek consonants ***phonetically equivalent*** to ten English consonants, but not necessarily similar in form. Although overlap exists between these two groups, they are not to be confused.

The ten Greek consonants below share phonetic correspondence with ten English consonants. However, six of the ten Greek consonants underlined below have a different form than English, although they have the same phonetic sound, namely γ (*gamma*), λ (*lambda*), μ (*mū*), ν (*nū*), π (*pī*) and σ/ς (*sigma*).

We begin learning Greek phonics with these ten consonants. These Greek consonants are the easiest to learn because of their exact phonetic correlation with the corresponding English consonants. Very little practice is required to learn these Greek consonants competently. The remaining seven of the seventeen Greek consonants will receive special attention later.

Ten Greek consonants equivalent in sound to ten English consonants:

Greek letters: β γ δ κ λ μ ν π σ/ς τ

English letters: b g d k l m n p s t

When pronouncing a combination of letters constituting a syllable in Greek, the **phonetic value** of each letter is clearly articulated. This is true for all Greek letters, whether consonants or vowels. Every consonant-vowel and vowel-consonant combination is phonetically pronounced in a blending manner, just as in English when syllables and words are pronounced. However, unlike in English, there are not any silent letters in the Greek language (*i.e.*, the “k” in “knot”, or the “d” in “Wedunesday”). Therefore, generally speaking, if a Greek word is phonetically pronounced, it can be spelled correctly. This will prove a great asset in subsequent lessons as new Greek vocabulary words are learned.



Every Greek letter’s phonetic value is derived from the opening sound of its alphabetical name. On pages 19-20 (cf. §1.4) in the fifth column of the alphabet chart, the Greek phonetic value of the letter is listed corresponding to its alphabetical character in the first.

It is easier if these ten consonants are practiced within syllables. Every Greek syllable always contains a vowel sound, just as in English. Therefore, vowels will also be needed. Two Greek vowels that are always pronounced short will be used. These vowels are Ε ε (ἔ ψιλόν) and Ο ο (ὀ μικρόν). These two vowels are chosen because in Greek they are always pronounced like their English short counterparts (*i.e.*, the “e” in “net”, never like and the “e” as in “equal” or in “term”; “o” in “cot”, never like the “o” as in “open” or “order”).



When consonants are present in a syllable, vowels are always necessary to pronounce the syllable correctly. Consonant(s) and a vowel or diphthong which constitutes a syllable is blended together. Principles which guide syllabification will be introduced in §5.2.

All the following examples are single syllables. For teaching purposes, familiar English words accompany the Greek syllable that have the same sound. This makes it easier to check the pronunciation of new Greek consonants and vowels as they are learned.

The Ten Consonants with the Short Vowel E ε (ἒ ψιλόν)

[listen](#) βεγ, σετ, λεγ, μεν, Κεντ, δελ, δεν, κελπ
(beg) (set) (leg) (men) (Kent) (dell) (den) (kelp)

[listen](#) κεμπ, στεπ, στεπς, δεσκ, πετ, πεπ, βετ
(kemp) (step) (steps) (desk) (pet) (pep) (bet)

[listen](#) κεπτ, σπεκ, τεν, τεντ, βεντ, ενδ, πεν
(kept) (speck) (ten) (tent) (bent) (end) (pen)

[listen](#) σεντ, δεντ, λετ, τελ, μεлт, μεлд, сенд
(sent) (dent) (let) (tell) (melt) (meld) (send)

[listen](#) πεлт, γετ, κεμπ, Βεν, βελ, βελт, менд
(pelt) (get) (kemp) (Ben) (bell) (belt) (mend)

The Ten Consonants with the Short Vowel O ο (ὀ μικρόν)

[listen](#) δογ, λοβ, ποп, σοδ, дот, понд, Βοβ
(dog) (lob) (pop) (sod) (dot) (pond) (Bob)

[listen](#) ποт, топ, нот, лот, соп, Тод, од
(pot) (top) (not) (lot) (sop) (Todd) (odd)

[listen](#) стоп, Γοδ, βλοβ, топς, μοβ, λογ
(stop) (God) (blob) (tops) (mob) (log)

[listen](#) λοп, лост, тон, моγ, он, моп
(lop) (lost) (ton) (mog) (on) (mop)

§3.2 The Seven Greek Vowels

There are two major categories of speech sounds in language. The open sounds with free breath are called vowels. The closed sounds are called consonants.

When a person says “ah” for the doctor, an open sound is made with free passage of breath. This sound is a vowel, as are all the other open and freely breathed sounds in speech. The open quality of vowels distinguishes them from consonants. Consonants are made with the breath totally or partly checked. This hindering of sound is done by the tongue, teeth, or lips. This is true of the ten equivalent Greek consonants that have already learned (§3.1).

Our attention turns to the open sounds, the vowels. Greek has seven letters that are vowels. The vowel sounds in Greek are represented by the letters below. In their alphabetical order, they are:

[listen](#) Α α, Ε ε, Η η, Ι ι, Ο ο, Υ υ, Ω ω

Two of these seven vowels are always pronounced long, two always short, and three may be either long or short. These latter vowels are called the **variable vowels**, due to their phonetic dual nature. All seven vowels may be charted and compared together as below:

listen	Always long:	Η η, Ω ω
listen	Always short:	Ε ε, Ο ο
listen	May be long or short: (the variable vowels)	Α α, Ι ι, Υ υ

Similarly, these Greek vowels may be charted horizontally to indicate their relation to one another:

listen	Short:	Ε ε	Ο ο	Α α	Ι ι	Υ υ
listen	Long:	Η η	Ω ω	Α α	Ι ι	Υ υ

Observe from above that Η η is the long form of Ε ε, and Ω ω is the long form of Ο ο. There are not any distinct Greek letters to differentiate between the variable short and long forms of Α α, Ι ι, and Υ υ. There is a distinct phonetic

sound associated between the long and short sounds of Α α and Ι ι, as well a difference in the pronunciation between the long and short of Υ υ.

In a different manner, these same seven vowels may be also charted vertically:

Always Short:	Always Long:	Variable (short or long):	
Ε ε	Η η	Α α	Α α
Ο ο	Ω ω	Ι ι	Ι ι
		Υ υ	Υ υ

3.2.1 Open and Close Vowels

The seven Greek vowels are classified as “open” or “close”, depending on whether the mouth is relatively open or the lips close together when making the sound of the vowel. The open vowels are Α α, Ε ε, Ο ο, Η η and Ω ω because whether long or short they are sounded with the mouth open. The close vowels are Ι ι and Υ υ because they are sounded with the mouth almost closed. The tongue and lips assume different positions in the case of each.

Practice pronouncing the seven Greek vowels

Six of the seven Greek vowels are used below in conjunction with the ten consonants that you have already learned. Υ υ will not be found because its sound actually does not occur in English. In addition, the long sound of Α α will not be exemplified because of its rarity in single syllable words in English.

All the following examples are single syllables. Familiar English words accompany the Greek syllable that have the same sound. This will help to check your pronunciation of these new Greek vowels.

listen λη, βη, δη, γη, μη, πη, ση, λητ, βηκ, δητ
 (lay) (bay) (day) (gay) (may) (pay) (say) (late) (bake) (date)

listen ηκ, ητ, γωτ, βηβ, νημ, των, λων, βωλτ
 (ache) (ate) (goat) (babe) (name) (tone) (lone) (bolt)

listen **στητ, γητ, μωτ, νωτ, δωπ, σωκ, δωμ**
(state) (gate) (moat) (note) (dope) (soak) (dome)

listen **γοτ, κεπτ, λες, βεστ, βομ, νετ, βεδ**
(got) (kept) (less) (best) (bomb) (net) (bed)

The short sounds of Α α and Ι ι

listen **α, αμ, δαδ, ταδ, λαδ, βαδ, σατ, ταν,**
(am) (dad) (tad) (lad) (bad) (sat) (tan)

listen **ι, λιδ, λιπ, διγ, μιντ, λιμ, κιδ, τιπ, σιτ**
(lid) (lip) (dig) (mint) (limb) (kid) (tip) (sit)

The long sound of Ι ι

listen **ι, βι, μι, κιπ, διπ, σλιτ, Πιτ, τι, Λι, κιν**
(bee) (me) (keep) (deep) (sleet) (Pete) (tee) (Lee) (keen)

§3.3 The Greek Diphthongs

A diphthong is a combination of an open and close Greek vowel (cf. §3.2.1). There are two categories of diphthongs in Greek: **proper diphthongs** and **improper diphthongs**. The proper diphthongs will be examined first.

§3.3.1 The Eight Proper Diphthongs

There are eight proper diphthongs in NTGreek. Proper diphthongs are two vowels pronounced in rapid succession so that the first vowel glides into the second without interruption.

Diphthongs arise normally when the open vowels Α α, Ε ε, Ο ο and Η η are immediately followed by the close vowels Ι ι or Υ υ. There are only two exceptions to this principle. The vowel combination υ + ι form a diphthong, whereas the vowel combination η + ι never form a diphthong.

Diphthongs have pronunciations specific to them. Observe that of these eight diphthongs, four have I i and four have Y u as the second vowel. Thus, the second vowel in a Greek diphthong is always I i or Y u.

listen αι ει οι υι | αυ ευ ηυ ου

Guide in pronunciation: English sound examples:

listen	αι	as in <u>a</u> isle	βαικ, δαικ, λαικ, καιτ (bike) (dike) (like) (kite)
listen	ει	as in <u>e</u> ight	βειτ, πειδ, τεικ, δειτ (bait) (paid) (take) (date)
listen	οι	as in <u>o</u> il	τοι, βοι, οιλ, τοιλ (toy) (boy) (oil) (toil)
listen	υι	as in <u>u</u> ite	υικ, κυιν, συιπ, υιδ (weak) (queen) (sweep) (weed)
listen	αυ	as in <u>o</u> w	αυλ, δαυτ, ταυλ (owl) (doubt) (towel)
listen	ευ	as in <u>eu</u> d	κευ, κευτ, μευλ, μευτ (cue) (cute) (mule) (mute)
listen	ηυ	as in <u>eu</u> d	κηυ, κηυτ, μηυλ, μηυτ (cue) (cute) (mule) (mute)
listen	ου	as in <u>ou</u> p	σουπ, δουκ, κουπ (soup) (duke) (coop)

Other than the above eight proper diphthongs, all other possible vowel combinations will never form a proper diphthong in Greek. When vowels come together in Greek words that do not constitute a diphthong, each vowel is pronounced separately.

For example, the following vowel combinations NEVER constitute a diphthong in Greek (as they do in English). Therefore, they are to be pronounced separately when encountered (some of these vowel combinations do not occur in Greek).

αε, αο, εα, εε, εο, ιε, οα, οε, οο, υε

Sometimes the combinations of open and close vowels do not form a diphthong, but instead, are pronounced as two separate sounds. In these instances, a

dieresis (αῖ) is placed over the second vowel. It is not uncommon to see the dieresis in proper names and words borrowed from other languages.

αῖδιος αῖ normally forms a diphthong, but in this instance, the dieresis indicates that separate vowel sounds are pronounced (cf. “naïve” in English). Some further Greek (multi-syllable) examples are:

[listen](#) Αχαῖα, αῦλος, διῦλιζω, γενεῖ

Combinations of the long (open) vowel Η η and the short (close) vowel Ι ι (η + ι = ηι), as well as the long vowel Ω ω and the short vowels Ι ι (ω + ι) and Υ υ (ω + υ = ωυ) never form a proper diphthong in NTGreek. The second vowel in these instances is always marked with a dieresis. These vowel combinations occur rarely in NTGreek. Some (multi-syllable) examples are:

[listen](#) λωῖς, Λωῖδι, νηῖ, Μωῦσης

§3.3.2 The Three Improper Diphthongs

The second category of diphthongs is the **improper diphthongs**. Improper diphthongs consist of a long vowel, α (*alpha*), η (*ēta*), or ω (*ōmega*) with a small *iōta* written under the vowel: α, η, ω. They are created when the first vowel is both open and long, and the second vowel is ι. In these instances *iota* is written beneath the vowel. The ι is said to be “subscripted”, hence, ***iōta subscript***. The *iōta* is never pronounced in improper diphthongs. The long vowel retains its pronunciation value as if it had no *iota* subscript. A few single and multi-syllable examples are:

[listen](#) τη, τω, τιμα, τιμας, λογω

The reduction of a diphthong to a single vowel is called ***monophthongization***. The improper diphthongs are the result of monophthongization.

When α, η and ω are written as capitals (Α, Η, Ω) the *iōta* subscript is written on the line instead of under the capital letter. In these instances, the ι is called an ***iōta adscript***. Some single and multi-syllable examples are:

[listen](#) τη = ΤΗΙ τω = ΤΩΙ τιμα = ΤΙΜΑΙ ηδει = ΗΙΔΕΙ

[listen](#) τιμας = ΤΙΜΑΙΣ αδης = ΑΙΔΗΣ τω λογω = ΤΩΙ ΛΟΓΩΙ

Important observations concerning improper diphthongs:

1. Improper diphthongs are always long. Although the *iōta* subscript does not affect the pronunciation of the long vowels η or ω, the *iōta* subscript distinguishes the variable vowel α as long.
2. Improper diphthongs normally occur as the last letter in a word.
3. When α is transliterated into English, the English “a” has the macron (= a short horizontal line placed over a vowel to indicate that it is long) placed over it (Āi/āi) to differentiate it from the diphthong αι (Ai/ai).
4. The *iōta* subscript and the *iōta* adscript are useful for distinguishing between the written form, and not pronunciation. During the Classical Era, the *iōta* adscript was written on the line with both capital and small letters. Between about 100 BC and 1000 AD, it was not written at all and therefore is not found in uncial manuscripts of the Greek New Testament.
5. Because the *iōta* subscript is part of the spelling of a word, it must NEVER be omitted when writing a word in which it occurs.

§3.4 Similarities between Vowels and Diphthongs

Although Greek vowels and diphthongs are spelled differently, several instances exist where they overlap in pronunciation. Let us examine these occurrences.

The pronunciations suggested for η and ει are identical. The pronunciation of the diphthong ει and η are the same in μεινητε. In addition, the improper diphthong η is pronounced the same. The examples below are actual single and multi-syllable Greek words.

[listen](#) **δει, δη, τη, λειπει, λειπη, ηδει, ηδει, ηδη, ηκει**

The pronunciations suggested for the two proper diphthongs ευ and ηυ make them indistinguishable. This difficulty may be avoided by giving a true diphthongal sound to each diphthong as illustrated below.

[listen](#) **ΕΥ** may be pronounced as the “e” in met + “u” as in rude (= eyyou)

[listen](#) **ηΥ** may be pronounced as the “e” in obey + “u” as in rude (= ayyou)

Moreover, there will be a tendency to confuse these diphthongs with the pronunciation of Υ υ. A distinction between these will come with practice.

There is also possible confusion when pronouncing *υ* and *ου*. It will be helpful to remember that *upsilon* is pronounced with the lips closely rounded while attempting to say the “ee” in “beet” or “geese”. It will be helpful to remember the following examples and exaggerate the distinctions between the diphthong *ου* and the vowel *υ*. The two Greek words below are single syllables.

[listen](#) *ΥΥΥ* *ΥΟΥΥ*

Practice pronouncing Greek proper and improper diphthongs

All proper and improper Greek diphthongs are represented below. Where applicable, vowels sharing the identical phonetic sounds are included with the respective diphthong.

Three consonants not studied yet, *θ* (*thēta*), *ξ* (*xsī*), and *χ* (*chī*), are used in several of these examples. In order to make this table as complete as possible, these consonants were included. The diphthong *ηυ* occurs only at the beginning of a word and does not appear frequently in the Greek New Testament.

listen	α, α	δοξα, Σατανα, Σατανα, αληθεια, αληθεια
listen	αι	και, ναι, παις, καιω, αιων, παιδια
listen	ει, η, η	δει, ειπον, λειπει, ειδης, εικη, τη
listen	ου	ουκ, ουδε, που, πους, δουλος, ιδου
listen	οι	οικος, λοιπος, ποιμην, τοις, πολλοι
listen	αυ	εμαυτου, αυγης, αυλη, αυτος, Δαυιδ
listen	ευ	πιστευω, ψευδος, ευλογεω, λευκος
listen	ηυ	ηυξησα, ηυχοντο, ηυχομην, ηυξανεν
listen	υι	λελυκκια, συνειδυιης
listen	ω, ω	Κως, τω, πως, λογω, λεγω, παιδων

Practice the phonetic distinctions between vowels and diphthongs

Practice the following examples, making a clear distinction between the vowels and diphthongs. This important exercise should be repeated as many times as necessary.

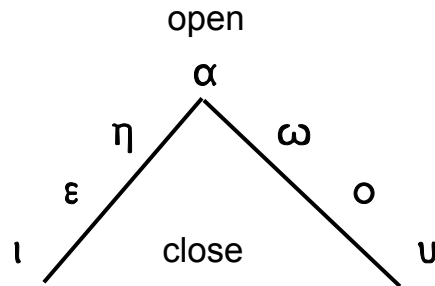
listen	Between ε and η, η	δε, δη, εμη, εμην, μετεβη
listen	Between α and ο	αιωνας, μαλλον, σαββατον
listen	Between ο and ω, ω	λογος, λογων, λογω
listen	Between α, ο and ω	κατανοεω, Σαδωκ, κωμος
listen	Between υ and ευ	γευση, εσπευδεν, εσυρον
listen	Between υ and ου	νυν, νουν, μυλου, λυουσιν
listen	Between υ, ευ and ου	Ευβουλος, εσπευδεν, ενδυμα
listen	Between α, ο, ου and ω	συμβαντων, λογουμεν, λογω
listen	Between ε, η, η and ει	μεινητε, λεγητε, εμεινεν, εισηει
listen	Between ευ, η, η and αι	ευ, ης, γευσηται, κτιση

§3.5 A Vowel and Diphthong Comparison Guide

All the Greek vowels and diphthongs have been introduced. This section of the lesson is devoted to showing their phonemic similarities.

§3.5.1 Single Vowels.

Single vowels are the independent and indispensable sounds in speech, whether in English or Greek. A vowel can be pronounced alone, whereas a consonant can be pronounced only in conjunction with a vowel. Single vowels may be classified according to their phonetic value to whether they are open or closed in pronouncing them (cf. §3.2.1). The mouth is most open in pronouncing *alpha*, less open pronouncing *ēta* and *omikron*, and least open in pronouncing *iōta* and *upsilon*. The degree of openness between the single vowels may be illustrated by the following **vowel pyramid**.



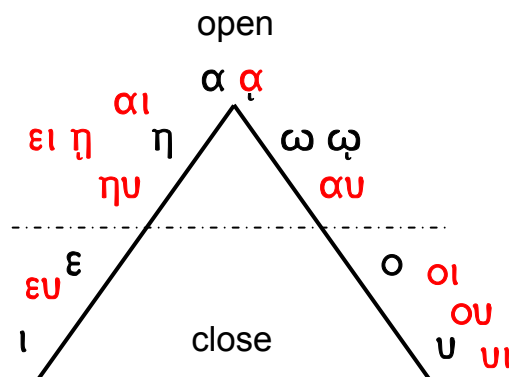
As one moves up the vowel pyramid, the openness of the mouth increases, with the mouth being the most open while pronouncing *alpha*. The vowels across from one another are pronounced with the same degree of openness of the mouth. From *alpha* to *iōta*, and from *alpha* to *upsilon*, the elevation of the tongue gradually increases. As the vowels are pronounced on the right-hand side, moving from *alpha* to *upsilon*, the rounding of the lips becomes more prominent.

Single vowels do not always occur alone in syllables, however. Many times, a vowel combines with another vowel, forming a diphthong.

§3.5.2 Diphthongs.

As studied in §3.3, there are eight proper diphthongs and three improper diphthongs. If two vowels can combine to form a diphthong, they usually do. However, not every instance of two consecutive vowels constitutes a diphthong. The principles that govern the formation of diphthongs was covered in §3.3.

When phonemic values of the diphthongs are compared to the degree of openness of the mouth with the single vowels, there is notable overlap. Furthermore, it should be noted that several diphthongs are pronounced identically to a long single vowel. The tongue sharply drops for all vowels and diphthongs below the dotted line compared to those above the line.



not within a word. *Rhō* may be compared to the English “p” wherein it is aspirated in “pit”, and not aspirated as the “p” in “tip”. In English, aspiration is usually signaled by the letter “h” (*i.e.*, “horse”, “house”, “rhapsody”).

The English spelling of the alphabetical names of the Greek consonants lends a reminder which ones are aspirated. Consider the following:

listen Θ θ = thēta Ρ ρ = rhō Φ φ = phī Χ χ = chī

All of these consonants share an aspirated “h” sound in its spelling. These are the only consonants in the Greek alphabet spelled in this manner. Historical Greek grammars note that *rhō* probably had lost most of its aspiration by New Testament times. In any case, *rhō* was never aspirated within a word, but trilled by the tip of the tongue as currently in Modern Greek.

Practice saying the following aspirated consonants. The examples in the first line are the actual Greek names for these consonants.

listen θητα, ρω, φι, χι
 (θη-τα)

listen θερμος, θεος, εθος, καθως, ληθη, μηθεν, θηλυσ
 (θερ-μος) (θε-ος) (ε-θος) (κα-θως) (λη-θη) (μη-θεν) (θη-λυσ)

listen ρακα, Ρησα, ρησις, πληρης, Κορε, ροδον, ροπη
 (ρα-κα) (Ρη-σα) (ρη-σις) (πλη-ρης) (Κο-ρε) (ρο-δον) (ρο-πη)

listen φως, φυω, φρικη, Φρυξ, σοφια, προφητις
 (φω-ω) (φρι-κη) (σο-φι-α) (προ-φη-τις)

listen χαλκος, χαιρω, εχω, Σιχαρ, ραχη, βροχη
 (χαλ-κος) (χαι-ρω) (ε-χω) (Σι-χαρ) (ρα-χη) (βρο-χη)

Pay strict attention between the pronunciation of Κ κ (*kappa*) and Χ χ (*chi*). The breath is not entirely cut off with *chī* as with *kappa*, and the emission of breath should produce only a strong “h” sound. Compare the following word pairs.

listen ρακα -- ραχη

listen κρισιν -- χρησιν

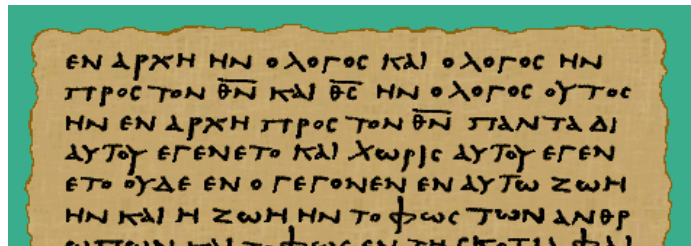
Both the *kappa* and *chi* occur in the word, *καυχησις*. Many beginning grammars suggest that *chi* closely approximates the German “*ch*” in “*ich*”. If one does not know German, however, this is of very little use.

§3.7 Types of Greek Letters from Ancient to Modern

The earliest forms of the Greek letters were the capitals, as seen in inscriptions cut in stone or metal. The form of these capitals is called *majuscule*. The shapes of these letters were square. Each majuscule letter is characterized by angularity and straight lines, being cut or engraved on some hard substance.

Later the majuscule letters were modified to a more rounded shape. These rounded Greek capitals are called *uncials*. In nearly every instance, the uncial letter is a simplified form of the majuscule and can be easily identified (except uncial sigma, which is **Ϛ**). Uncial letters are more readily inscribed with a pen on parchment or papyrus. In general, majuscules are older than uncials, and both are older than *minuscules*.

From the fourth century BC until the eighth or ninth century AD, the types of the Greek letters changed incrementally. During any given period, more than one style was in use, and the transition from one style to a new one always lasted at least one generation.



Above are the first five verses of John's Gospel, written in an early Greek uncial script. Abbreviations are indicated by a line drawn above the letters.

The lower case or small letters are called *minuscules*. They are imitations of forms used in cursive (connected and flowing) writing. These letters led to the displacement of the uncials.

All Greek biblical manuscripts before the tenth century A.D. were written in either majuscules or uncials. The Greek letters were never divided into separate words, but were run together with no intervening punctuation.

With the invention of printing, modern editorial devices were introduced. In most printed editions of the Greek New Testament, capital letters are used to begin proper names and sentences, as in English. Some editions, however, will not

begin each sentence with a capital letter, but only the first sentence of each paragraph, with sentences within paragraphs beginning with small letters.

The Westcott-Hort Greek edition uses uncials to preserve quotations from the Old Testament. Some other Greek editions use a capital letter to begin such a quotation, while still others, such as the United Bible Societies edition, present Old Testament material in lower case letters printed in bold face type.

Below is a chart which depicts various uncial scripts. Details concerning the different manuscripts used in the chart follow on the next page.

Letter	Rose tta Stone	Ⲁ ⁶⁶	Ⲙ	Β	Α	Δ ^{ea}	Ν	Λ ^e	Ε ^e	Θ	Σ
Α	Α	Ⲁ	Ⲙ	Β	Α	Δ	Ν	Λ	Ε	Θ	Σ
Β	Β	Ⲃ	Ⲙ	Β	Β	Ⲃ	Β	Ⲃ	Ⲃ	Ⲃ	Ⲃ
Γ	Γ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Γ	Γ	Γ	Γ	Γ	Γ	Γ	Γ
Δ	Δ	Ⲇ	Ⲇ	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
Ε	Ε	Ⲉ	Ⲉ	Ε	Ε	Ⲉ	Ε	Ⲉ	Ε	Ⲉ	Ⲉ
Ζ		Ⲑ	Ⲑ	Ζ	Ζ	Ⲑ	Ζ	Ⲑ	Ⲑ	Ⲑ	Ⲑ
Η	Η	Ⲓ	Ⲓ	Η	Η	Ⲓ	Η	Ⲓ	Ⲓ	Ⲓ	Ⲓ
Θ	Θ	Ⲕ	Ⲕ	Θ	Θ	Ⲕ	Θ	Ⲕ	Ⲕ	Ⲕ	Ⲕ
Ι	Ι	Ⲗ	Ⲗ	Ι	Ι	Ⲗ	Ι	Ⲗ	Ⲗ	Ⲗ	Ⲗ
Κ	Κ	Ⲙ	Ⲙ	Κ	Κ	Ⲙ	Κ	Ⲙ	Ⲙ	Ⲙ	Ⲙ
Λ	Λ	Ⲛ	Ⲛ	Λ	Λ	Ⲛ	Λ	Ⲛ	Ⲛ	Ⲛ	Ⲛ
Μ	Μ	Ⲝ	Ⲝ	Μ	Μ	Ⲝ	Μ	Ⲝ	Ⲝ	Ⲝ	Ⲝ
Ν	Ν	Ⲟ	Ⲟ	Ν	Ν	Ⲟ	Ν	Ⲟ	Ⲟ	Ⲟ	Ⲟ
Ξ	Ξ	Ⲡ	Ⲡ	Ξ	Ξ	Ⲡ	Ξ	Ⲡ	Ⲡ	Ⲡ	Ⲡ
Ο	Ο	Ⲣ	Ⲣ	Ο	Ο	Ⲣ	Ο	Ⲣ	Ⲣ	Ⲣ	Ⲣ
Π	Π	Ⲥ	Ⲥ	Π	Π	Ⲥ	Π	Ⲥ	Ⲥ	Ⲥ	Ⲥ
Ρ	Ρ	Ⲧ	Ⲧ	Ρ	Ρ	Ⲧ	Ρ	Ⲧ	Ⲧ	Ⲧ	Ⲧ
Σ	Σ	Ⲩ	Ⲩ	Σ	Σ	Ⲩ	Σ	Ⲩ	Ⲩ	Ⲩ	Ⲩ
Τ	Τ	Ⲫ	Ⲫ	Τ	Τ	Ⲫ	Τ	Ⲫ	Ⲫ	Ⲫ	Ⲫ
Υ	Υ	Ⲭ	Ⲭ	Υ	Υ	Ⲭ	Υ	Ⲭ	Ⲭ	Ⲭ	Ⲭ
Φ	Φ	Ⲯ	Ⲯ	Φ	Φ	Ⲯ	Φ	Ⲯ	Ⲯ	Ⲯ	Ⲯ
Χ	Χ	Ⲱ	Ⲱ	Χ	Χ	Ⲱ	Χ	Ⲱ	Ⲱ	Ⲱ	Ⲱ
Ψ	Ψ	Ⲳ	Ⲳ	Ψ	Ψ	Ⲳ	Ψ	Ⲳ	Ⲳ	Ⲳ	Ⲳ
Ω	Ω	Ⲵ	Ⲵ	Ω	Ω	Ⲵ	Ω	Ⲵ	Ⲵ	Ⲵ	Ⲵ

Description of the manuscripts in the above table:

- **The Rosetta Stone.** Inscription from 196 BC. Although not written in an uncial script, the stone was carved in an engraved style.
- **P⁶⁶.** Second century AD. Probably the oldest substantial New Testament papyrus in a good calligraphy style.
- **Codex Sinaiticus (S).** Fourth century AD.
- **Codex Vaticanus (B).** Fourth century AD.
- **Codex Alexandrinus (A).** Fifth century AD. Style is more detailed than previous manuscripts.
- **Codex Bezae (D^{ea}).** Fifth or sixth century AD.
- **Codex Petropolitanus (N).** Sixth century AD. Uncials were written with large silver letters (with some gold) on purple parchment.
- **Codex Regius (L^e).** Eighth century AD.
- **Codex Basiliensis (E^e).** Eighth century AD.
- **Codex Koridethi (Θ).** About ninth century AD.
- **Codex S (S).** This codex is a very late uncial manuscript, and the only one dated (March 5, 949).

The following uncial letters were easily confused when manuscripts were copied. Prior to the printing press, every manuscript had to be prepared by hand, a long and painstaking task. Sometimes, copyists accidentally confused letters and introduced errors into a text.

Α Δ Λ	Α Δ Λ
Ε Θ Ο Σ	Ε Θ Ο Σ
Ι Κ	Ι Σ Κ
Γ Τ	Γ Τ
Η Π Τ ΤΤ	Η Η Π Τ ΤΤ
Μ ΛΛ	Μ ΛΛ

The uncial style had a long and distinguished history, extending over a period of about fifteen hundred years. By the time of the tenth century AD, however, the style of uncial writing had deteriorated. It had lost the grace of the earlier specimens. Sometimes uncials were written with a marked slope to the right, and sometimes the strokes were heavy and appear cumbersome.

3

Study Guide

Sight and Sounds of Greek Words (Module A) Phonology (Part 3)

Introductory phonetic pronunciation of Greek letters was presented in this lesson. Some of the terms used to define these concepts were perhaps new. However, as with any new discipline or area of work, new concepts are important to master in order to be competent and successful. Learning New Testament Greek is no different.

Technical terms relating to language study may be intimidating, especially when first encountered. A good way to become further acquainted with these concepts is to look them up in a multi-volume English dictionary. Additionally, if you are interested in phonics, your local public library, as well as many internet sites, has resources about Greek/English phonics, both written and audio.

The terms below were introduced in the lesson. In several instances, further explanations and examples are cited. The definitions should be understood, for they will be used in subsequent lessons. Mastery of them will come with usage, and usage with practice. The terms are listed in the order introduced.

- **Phonics:** a method of learning the correlation between the written letters and their corresponding speech sounds and sound combinations in a language. Most American primary school children were introduced to phonics while learning the many different ways English letters—especially vowels—are pronounced in words. Consider the different pronunciations of the English vowel “o” in the following words: “hot”; “open”; “order”; “oil”; “out”; and “broad”. In addition, how would one know how to properly pronounce the sound “sh” in the following words without help: “ocean”; “machine”; “special”; “sure”; “conscience”; “tension”; “issue”; and “nation”? Phonics is a valuable method, as in English, to learn the various phonetic sounds of Greek vowels and consonants in words.
- **Consonant:** when forming a letter sound, the partial or total blockage of air. This stoppage of air in the oral cavity distinguishes consonants from vowels. The hindering of breath is accomplished with the tongue, teeth, or lips. There are no silent consonants in Greek as in English (cf. “knot”, “know”, “Wednesday”, “thorough”). More in-depth information about Greek consonants will be introduced in Lesson Four.

- **Vowel:** when forming a letter sound, the unobstructed passage of breath with no audible friction through the oral cavity. This unobstructed passage of air in the oral cavity distinguishes vowels from consonants. The vocal cords generally vibrate, but not necessarily. The Greek vowels are produced by modification of the shape of the oral cavity by movements of the tongue and lips. The Greek vowels are:

Α α, Ε ε, Η η, Ι ι, Ο ο, Υ υ, Ω ω

- **Proper diphthong:** a vowel sound made of two identifiable vowel sounds in immediate sequence. All Greek proper diphthongs are a combination of an open and a close vowel in immediate sequence to one another. There are only two exceptions: the vowel combination υ + ι form a diphthong, while vowel combination η + ι never form a diphthong. Diphthongs may be found at the beginning of Greek words, or anywhere else within the word. The eight Greek proper diphthongs are:

Beginning with a capital letter:	Αι	Ει	Οι	Υι	Αυ	Ευ	Ηυ	Ου
Beginning with a small letter:	αι	ει	οι	υι	αυ	ευ	ηυ	ου

- **Dieresis:** two dots (¨) placed over the second of two consecutive vowels to indicate that the second vowel is a separate syllable (syllabification will be introduced in Lesson Five).

αγαθοποιῖα, διῖστημι, διῦλιζω, Λωῖδι
 (α-γα-θο-ποι-ῖ-α) (δι-ῖ-στη-μι) (δι-ῦ-λι-ζω) (λω-ῖ-δι)

Dieresis also distinguishes the combination of open and close vowels that do not form a proper diphthong, but instead, are pronounced as two separate sounds. Only five of the eight diphthongs are exemplified.

αῖδιος, Σεμῖν, χοῖκοι, οσφυῖ, πραῦς
 (α-ῖ-δι-ος) (Σε-με-ῖν) (χο-ῖ-κοι) (ο-σφυ-ῖ) (πρα-ῦς)

- **Improper diphthong:** an open and long vowel, α, η, or ω with a small *iōta* written under the vowel: α̣, η̣, ω̣. These diphthongs are never dissolved into their constituent elements (αῖ, ηῖ, ωῖ), and treated as simple vowels.

αγαπα	λογιζη	αγωγη	μνεια
αγνωστω	μεγαλω	μεσω	πατρωω (!)
αγρα	νικα	μιμνησκη (!)	οικια

- ***iōta* Subscript:** a diminutive *iōta* written below (hence, “subscript”) the open and long vowels α, η, and ω (*i.e.*, α, η, ω), denoting a (improper) diphthong. The *iōta* subscript has no phonetic value of its own, nor does it affect the sound of the open and long vowel. Historically, the subscript “originated in many cases at least, as a prosodic mute mark, in that the vacancy left by a lost sound was, for rhythmical purposes, indicated by schoolmasters and rhythmicians with a stroke analogous to our sign of the apostrophe. This stroke then came to be annexed in the form of a mute ι to the preceding vowel” (Antonius N. Jannaris, *An Historical Greek Grammar*, p. 29). For examples, see *improper diphthong* above.
- ***iōta* Adscript:** The *iōta* subscript is written on the line when α, η, and ω are written as capitals (Α, Η, Ω).

νικα = ΝΙΚΑΙ παντη = ΠΑΝΤΗΙ λογω = ΛΟΓΩΙ

- **Compound consonant:** a consonant wherein its phonetic sound is a composite of a consonant + sigma. There are three compound consonants in Greek: Ζ ζ = δσ, Ξ ξ = κσ, and Ψ ψ = πσ. The significance of these compound consonants will become evident in later lessons.
- **Aspirated Consonant:** a consonant pronounced with air accompanying or following the consonant. The four aspirated Greek consonants are Θ θ, Ρ ρ, Φ φ, and Χ χ.
- **Majuscule:** the earliest form of Greek letters. They were large square letters and all their forms were capitals. The majuscule letters were written together without breaks between words.
- **Uncial:** the modified majuscule capital Greek letters that later became rounded in shape. The uncial letters were written together without breaks between words.
- **Minuscule:** extremely small Greek letters (compared to majuscule and uncial letters) that were neither majuscule nor uncial in form. Their forms

resemble cursive writing wherein the letters were connected and flowing. Minuscule style developed at the close of the eighth or beginning of the ninth century. The script could be written more rapidly as well as more compactly, thus saving both time and parchment.

Exercise One: Short Answer. Briefly answer the following questions.

1. What constitutes a consonant letter sound?

2. Which ten Greek consonants are phonetically equivalent to ten English consonants? Fill in the spaces below with the appropriate Greek or English small letter.

Ten Greek consonants equivalent in sound to ten English consonants:

Greek letters:	β		δ			μ	ν	π	σ/ς	
English letters:		g		k	l		n			t

3. Define what constitutes a vowel letter sound.

4. List the seven Greek vowels, giving both their small and capital forms together.

5. Which two Greek vowels are always considered short?

6. Which two Greek vowels are always considered long?
7. Which three Greek vowels may be either long or short?
8. Fill in the chart below with the appropriate long or short vowel. Be sure to include both the capital and small letters.

Always long:	, ,
Always short:	, Ο ο
May be long or short:	, ,

9. Circle the short vowel corresponding to Η η.

Α α, Ε ε, Ι ι, Ο ο, Υ υ, Ω ω

10. Circle the short vowel corresponding to Ω ω.

Α α, Ε ε, Η η, Ι ι, Ο ο, Υ υ

11. Which Greek vowels are open and close? What constitutes an open and a close vowel?

12. What constitutes a proper Greek diphthong?

13. Circle all the Greek proper diphthongs below.

αε, αι, αο, εα, ει, εο, ιε, οα, οι, οο, υι, αυ, ευ, ηυ, ου

14. What constitutes an improper Greek diphthong?

15. What are the three improper Greek diphthongs?

16. What is a dieresis and when is it used?

17. Which two Greek diphthongs are pronounced identical to the long vowel Η η?

18. Which Greek diphthong is pronounced identical to the long vowel Α α?

19. Which Greek long vowel sound is identical to the improper diphthong ω̄?

20. What constitutes a Greek compound consonant? What are the three Greek compound consonants? Be sure to include their compound phonetic equivalents.

21. What constitutes a Greek aspirated consonant? Which four Greek letters are aspirated? What is their common denominator when spelling these letters in English?

Exercise Two: True or False Questions. Choose whether the statement is true or false.

1. *Lambda* is equivalent in sound to the English “l”. True False
2. *Sigma* is always equivalent in sound to the English “z”. True False
3. Every Greek letter’s phonetic value is derived from the opening sound of its alphabetical name. True False
4. The two Greek vowels, *epsilon* and *iota* are always pronounced short. True False
5. The two Greek vowels, *eta* and *omega* are always pronounced long. True False
6. *Omikron* is the long form for *omega*. True False
7. *Alpha* is the long form for *eta*. True False
8. The three variable vowels are *alpha*, *iota*, and *omikron*. True False
9. At least six Greek vowels are classified as “open”. True False
10. A proper diphthong is a combination of two “open” vowels. True False
11. $\epsilon\iota$ is considered a proper diphthong. True False
12. $\eta\iota$ is considered a proper diphthong. True False
13. The vowel combination, $\epsilon\epsilon$, is a proper diphthong. True False

14. The vowel combination, $\omega\omega$, is a proper diphthong. True False
15. There are three improper diphthongs in Greek. True False
16. The reduction of a diphthong to a single vowel is called monophthongization.
True False
17. The *iōta* subscript may be associated with *omikron*. True False
18. The *iōta* adscript is associated with the Greek capitals. True False
19. Improper diphthongs may or may not be long in pronunciation. True False
20. The *iōta* subscript does not affect the pronunciation of η or ω . True False
21. The *iōta* subscript and the *iōta* adscript are useful for distinguishing between the written form, but not pronunciation. True False
22. The pronunciations suggested for η and $\epsilon\iota$ are identical. True False
23. A compound consonant is one that is a consonant + *sigma*. True False
24. A Greek aspirated consonant is pronounced with air accompanying or following the consonant. True False
25. Aspiration is usually signaled by the letter “h” in English. True False
26. The four aspirated Greek consonants are $\Theta \theta$, $\Phi \phi$, and $\Chi \chi$.
True False
27. The earliest forms of the Greek letters were the capital letters. True False
28. Minuscule letters came before uncial letters. True False
29. There are no inscriptions of John’s Gospel written with the uncial script.
True False
30. Majuscule letters came before the uncial letters. True False
31. The uncial style extended over one thousand years. True False

Exercise Three: Multiple Choice. Choose the best answer.

- Which letter below is pronounced identically to ω ?
 - η
 - \omicron
 - φ
 - α
- What sounds are the independent and indispensable sounds in speech?
 - consonants
 - vowels
 - accents marks
 - breathing marks
- Examples of Greek epichorical alphabets are:
 - Argos and Corinth
 - Koiné and Gothic
 - Modern and Ionia
 - boustrophedon
- Which alphabet is the first known phonetic alphabet?
 - Phoenician
 - Greek
 - Cyrillic
 - Hebrew
- Modern Greek contains how many alphabetical letters?
 - twenty-four
 - twenty-eight
 - twenty-seven
 - twenty-one
- Which one of the following Greek letters sounds like the “p” in “party”?
 - ϕ
 - Π
 - P
 - θ
- Which one of the following Greek letters sounds like the “k” in “kin”?
 - χ
 - Δ
 - Θ
 - κ

Exercise Four: Write the Greek alphabetical letters from memory. Write both the capital and small Greek letters in their alphabetical order. Write the capital letters on the left side of the column and the small letters on the right side.

Capital	Small	Capital	Small	Capital	Small
1.		9.		17.	
2.		10.		18.	
3.		11.		19.	
4.		12.		20.	
5.		13.		21.	
6.		14.		22.	
7.		15.		23.	
8.		16.		24.	

Exercise Five: Transposition of capital letters. Transpose all the following Greek capital letters into their corresponding small letters.

- | | | | |
|----------|-------|------------|-------|
| 1. ΚΑΛΩΝ | _____ | 8. ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ | _____ |
| 2. ΓΑΜΜΑ | _____ | 9. ΝΕΚΡΟΙ | _____ |
| 3. ΑΛΦΑ | _____ | 10. ΓΡΑΦΑΣ | _____ |
| 4. ΔΕΛΤΑ | _____ | 11. ΗΙΔΕΙ | _____ |
| 5. ΩΜΕΓΑ | _____ | 12. ΤΗΙ | _____ |
| 6. ΖΗΤΑ | _____ | 13. ΔΟΞΑ | _____ |
| 7. ΠΑΣΙΝ | _____ | 14. ΔΑΥΙΔ | _____ |

Exercise Six: Transposition of small letters. Transpose all the following Greek small letters into their corresponding capital letters.

1. τη _____
2. τω λογω _____
3. νυι δε χριστος _____
4. κρινομενοι δε υπο κυριου _____
5. παλιν ουν επηρωτησεν _____
6. αδης _____
7. λεγει αυτω σιμων Πετρος _____
8. η τοις πτωχοις _____
9. ο λογος ην προς τον θεον _____
10. και το φως εν τη σκοτια _____
11. εν αυτω ζωη ην _____
12. εξ αιματων ουδε εκ θεληματος _____