

Greek Grammar Defined for Use in Our Bible Study

By Mike Sobol

Verbs have a Tense

Meaning: Greek Tenses are important to understand because the English language often does not have a “tense” that matches up with a specific Greek tense. When this happens, something is “lost” in the translation from Greek into English.

Aorist

Undefined action without a specific reference to time but just a “simple occurrence”. Aorist is often used to refer to an action in the past without reference to a specific time.

Present

Carries the idea of an ongoing action. The main exception is when a Present tense is paired with the indicative mood. Then the Present tense just means that something is happening “right now” with the focus on “right now” rather than an ongoing action.

Perfect

An action that was completed in the past but whose results continue on and on and on.

Imperfect

An action that was completed in the past. The results of that past action continued on for a period of time in the past but had a definite ending point.

Future

Speaks of an action that will happen in the future!

Verbs have a Voice

Meaning: Greek Voice speaks to who is doing the action of a verb.

Active

The subject of the sentence performs the action of the verb.

Middle

The subject of the sentence does the action of the verb to themselves. The Middle Voice is not as simply defined as the Active and Passive voices. The middle voice can also carry the following two ideas which have to be discerned from the context:

- The subject **acting** in his **own interest** or on his **own behalf**.
- The subject **participating** in the **results** of the action of the verb.

Passive

The subject of the sentence receives the action of the verb.

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Mood

Meaning: Greek Moods speak to the potential for the action of the verb happening.

Indicative

This mood speaks to the certainty or factualness of something happening. It is a statement of fact or certainty!

Subjunctive

This mood relates to something of which there is doubt that the action can be accomplished but the biblical meaning is that the action will come to pass.

Optative

This mood carries much more uncertainty than the subjunctive mood and is often thought of as a wish rather than something that will occur.

Imperative

Simply put, this is a command to do something, not an option.

Verbs can be Infinitive

This is Verbal noun.

In English, an adjective is a descriptive word. In Greek a noun can act like an adjective! The Greek infinitive often translates into English adding the word “to” before the noun.

Verbs can be Participle

This is a verbal adjective.

In English, an adjective is a descriptive word. In Greek a verb can act like an adjective! The Greek participle often translates into English adding the word “ing” to the end of the verb.

A good brief reference:

<https://www.blueletterbible.org/help/greekverbs.cfm>

http://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/verbs1.htm