

### 34.1 Grammatical features of postclassical Greek

Hellenistic Greek, Biblical Greek, New Testament Greek, Alexandrian Greek, koinê Greek...<sup>1</sup> Which of these labels should we use? The period when this stage of the language developed is Hellenistic (roughly, 3rd century BCE to 3rd century CE), which explains the first label; the second and the third reflect the fact that this language was used to translate the Old Testament (the so-called “Septuagint”) and to set in writing the New Testament. It is sometimes labelled Alexandrian because Alexander the Great was instrumental in spreading it throughout the vast empire he conquered. The most descriptive title is that of *κοινή διάλεκτος*, a common form of Greek adopted by peoples whose native language was not Greek.

In this lesson I present a short list of examples of forms and constructions that differ in classical and koinê Greek. This chart lists the most common contrasts in forms.

	<i>Classical Greek</i>	<i>Koinê Greek</i>
<b>SPELLING</b>		
ττ EX	<i>πράττω, ἀλλάττω</i>	<i>σσ πράσσω, ἀλλάσσω</i>
movable <i>ν</i> occurs when a vowel follows <i>λέγουσι πολλάκις / λέγουσιν αἰί</i>		movable <i>ν</i> used in any context: <i>λέγουσιν πολλάκις / λέγουσιν αἰί</i>

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<sup>1</sup> You may have noticed the vagaries of my use of these titles. To file in my university system the first and second semesters at two academic levels, I had to describe the same course as an introduction to “ancient and biblical” and “classical and koinê Greek.” Belated apologies. Click [here](#) for a brief reference made in the first semester to the history of the Greek language, and [here](#) for final general observations on the contrast between classical and postclassical Greek.

DECLENSION		
NOUNS, ADJECTIVES, PRONOUNS	Dual number	rare, eventually no longer used
NOUNS	Vocative sg of <i>θεός</i> : <i>θεέ</i> Changes in gender Many neuter abstract nouns Uncontracted forms	rare; the Nom <i>θεός</i> is used instead Ex: τὸ ἔλεος, τὸ σκότος, τὸ ζῆλος, τὸ πλοῦτος <i>ἀνάθεμα, εὕρεμα, σύστημα</i> <i>ὑγεία</i> for <i>ὑγίεια</i>
DEGREES OF COMPARISON	Comparative degree of adjectives: <i>σοφώτερος, βελτίων</i> Superlative degree: <i>-τατος,</i> <i>-ιστος</i>	An irregular comparative may be regularized: <i>ἀγαθώτερος</i> <sup>2</sup> Positive degree used as comparative: Matt.22.36 <i>ποία ἐντολή μεγάλη</i> (for <i>μεγίστη</i> ) Comparative used instead of the disappearing superlative: Luke 7.28 <i>ὁ δὲ μικρότερος ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ</i>
NUMERALS	See the <b>chart</b> in lesson 33	<i>εἷς, μία, ἓν</i> turns into an indefinite in the <i>Septuagint</i> and later becomes an article
		<i>δύο</i> for Nom, Gen, Acc; <i>δυσὶν</i> for Dative; <i>δεκαδύο</i> , etc, used in addition to the Attic forms.

PRONOUNS	Personal: <i>αὐτός</i> in the Nom is emphatic	<i>αὐτός</i> may be used as unemphatic and emphatic
	Genitive of personal pronouns used for possession, but also possessive adjectives such as <i>ἐμός, σός, ἡμέτερος, ὑμέτερος</i>	Only the genitive of personal pronouns is used: <i>μου, σου, αὐτοῦ</i> , etc.
	Reflexives: see <b>review chart</b> <i>ἑαυτῶν</i> : 3rd person pl	<i>ἑαυτῶν</i> used also for 1st and 2nd persons of the plural
	Demonstratives	<i>ὅδε</i>
	Indefinites	<i>εἷς, μία, ἓν</i> turns into an indefinite

<sup>2</sup> This form is found occasionally; it is not attested in the Bible.

## CONJUGATION

VERB TO BE	See <a href="#">chart</a>	Imperf 1st sg ἤμην, 2nd sg ἦς, 1st pl ἤμεθα. Imperative 3rd pl ἔστωσαν
GENERAL TENDENCIES IN CONJUGATION		The perfect is limited mostly to the indicative mood; the future participle is scarcely used. Pluperfect without augment, with the tense mark <i>–κει–</i> instead of <i>–κε–</i> . Passive voice tends to be used rather than middle.
	<i>–ω</i> verbs	First aorist forms develop and replace or alternate with 2nd aorist Attic forms. Ex: εἶπα, εἶδα The 3rd pl ending <i>–σαν</i> is extended to Imperfect and Imperative
	<i>–μι</i> verbs	Endings with <i>κ</i> of the sg active aorist are applied also to the plural: ἐθήκαμεν, ἐδώκαμεν Present of οἶδα in the plural: οἶδαμεν, οἶδατε, οἶδασιν
	Aorists and imperfects had different secondary endings	The ending <i>–σαν</i> is used with aorists and imperfects; e.g., – εἶδοσαν, – ἐλάβοσαν, – ἤλθοσαν
	Aorist passive: 1st and 2nd	Second aorist and future passive forms (without <i>–θη</i> ) are common: ex. ἡγγέλην for ἡγγέλθην.
	Optative Verbal adjectives in <i>–τέος</i>	Dying out: rare.