

# Biblical Greek

## Introduction to Verbs

A verb is a word that represents an action, occurrence, or state of being. Verbs are one of the fundamental building blocks of grammar in most languages. They are crucial for constructing sentences and conveying actions or states.

There are several types of verbs used to express action or a state of being:

1. **Action Verbs:** These describe specific actions performed by the subject. Examples: run, jump, write, speak.
2. **Linking Verbs:** These verbs connect the subject of a sentence to additional information about the subject. They do not describe an action. Common linking verbs include forms of "to be" (is, am, are, was, were), seem, become, appear.
3. **Helping Verbs (Auxiliary Verbs):** These verbs are used with main verbs to form different tenses, moods, or voices. Examples: have, do, will, shall, can, may, must.
4. **Transitive Verbs:** These verbs require a direct object to complete their meaning. Example: "She reads a book."
5. **Intransitive Verbs:** These verbs do not require a direct object. Example: "He sleeps."

The Greek verb system is complex and encompasses various components, including tense, voice, mood, person, and number.

### Tense (Χρόνος)

In the majority of the tenses the kind of action is the primary focus. Only in the Indicative mode is time absolute.

- **Present (Ενεστώτας):** Indicates a continuous or repeated action in the present time (e.g., "I am loosing"). 1 John 3:9, Does not "habitually" sin.
- **Imperfect (Παρατατικός):** Indicates a continuous or repeated action in the past (e.g., "I was loosing"). John 1:1, the Word was before any beginning.
- **Future (Μέλλοντας):** Indicates an action that will occur in the future (e.g., "I will loose"). Matthew 16:18, I will build My Church.
- **Aorist (Αόριστος):** Indicates action in a point of time. It typically refers to past tense; however, time is not the primary focus. Instead, it is the snapshot in time, which can be past, present, or future. (e.g., "I loosed"). John 1:12, as many as received Him
- **Perfect (Παρακειμένος):** Indicates a completed action with a present effect that goes on into the indefinite future (e.g., "I have loosed with the abiding result that he is loosed."). Matthew 4:4, it is written.
- **Pluperfect (Υπερσυντέλικος):** Indicates a completed action with a past effect (e.g., "I had loosed"). John 9:22, the Jews had agreed.

### Voice (Διάθεση)

Voice indicates the relationship between the action of the verb and its subject:

- **Active (Ενεργητική):** The subject performs the action (e.g., "I loose"). Romans 5:8, God demonstrates.
- **Middle (Μέση):** The subject performs an action upon itself or for its own benefit (e.g., "I loose myself" or "I loose for myself"). Romans 6:11, reckon yourself.

- **Passive (Παθητική):** The subject is acted upon (e.g., "I am loosed"). Romans 8:14, led by the Spirit.

### Mood (Εργασία)

Mood expresses the mode or manner of the action or state of being described by the verb:

- **Indicative (Οριστική):** Expresses a statement of fact or asks a question (e.g., "I loose," "I loosed"). Romans 6:9 Christ was raised.
- **Subjunctive (Υποτακτική):** Expresses potential or a condition contrary to fact (e.g., "if I should loose"). Romans 3:4, should be justified.
- **Optative (Ευκτική):** Expresses a wish or potentiality less certain than the subjunctive (e.g., "I wish, I might loose"), Romans 3:4 May it never come to be.
- **Imperative (Προστακτική):** Expresses a command or request (e.g., "Loose!"), Romans 12:2 be transformed.

### Person (Πρόσωπο)

Greek verbs are inflected for three persons:

- **First Person (Πρώτο Πρόσωπο):** Refers to the speaker (e.g., "I loose" or "we loose"), Romans 1:9, I religiously serve.
- **Second Person (Δεύτερο Πρόσωπο):** Refers to the one spoken to (e.g., "you loose" or "you all loose") Romans 2:1 You are without excuse.
- **Third Person (Τρίτο Πρόσωπο):** Refers to the one spoken about (e.g., "he/she/it looses" or "they loose"), Romans 3:30.

### Number (Αριθμός)

Verbs are also inflected for number:

- **Singular (Ενικός):** One subject (e.g., "I loose").
- **Plural (Πληθυντικός):** More than one subject (e.g., "we loose").

### Aspect

Greek verbs emphasize aspect, which is the nature of the action rather than the time:

- **Imperfective Aspect (Continuous or Repeated Action):** Present and Imperfect tenses.
- **Aoristic Aspect (Point in Time):** Aorist tense.
- **Perfective Aspect (Completed Action with Ongoing Effect):** Perfect, Pluperfect, and Future Perfect tenses.

## Participles (Μετοχές)

Participles are verbal adjectives and can indicate tense, voice, and aspect. They function adjectivally and adverbially, modifying nouns or verbs, and come in various forms such as present, aorist, perfect, etc.

## Infinitives (Απαρέμφατα)

Infinitives are verbal nouns that do not change according to person or number. They can convey aspect and are used in a variety of syntactic structures (e.g., after verbs of desire or purpose clauses).

## Deponent or Defective Verbs

Deponent means "to lay aside" and defective is used to imply that a word has no active voice. However, both terms are inadequate to describe the use of a middle or

passive in place of the active voice. The active form did exist; however, through use dropped off because the middle or passive voice by the nature of the word and its use became predominate. However, to say it has “laid aside” its active voice is incorrect and contrary to the history of the verb.

Deponent is not a voice; although some grammarians use the concept of a deponent verb to label verbs they perceive to be active, but do not use the active voice in form. Through the natural development of the language certain middle or passive forms that were better suited to convey what the Greek mind was thinking became predominate to the point that the active voice is no longer seen in use; however, there is a difference between the lack of a voice and the use of one voice for another, so to label this as a deponent verb is inappropriate.

Careful consideration needs to be given to all words perceived as “active” by the English mind that are in the middle or passive form in Greek. Upon close examination of these words there is often no justifiable reason to modify the meaning of the Greek voice of the verb to force them into the concept of English grammar. All “so called” deponent verbs actually are verbs emphasizing a middle or passive voice, not an active voice, and therefore should be translated appropriately to the Greek grammar. Unfortunately, due to the limits of the English language it can be difficult to fully express the Greek meaning. An example can be found in John 1:9 where a passive form of “**ἔρχομαι**” is used for men entering the world. There is no doubt that this does not have an active meaning because entry into the world is not based upon the action of the man who enters it; however, translating this in a passive is impossible in the English due to its limitation with expressing a middle and passive form, therefore it is translated as an active; although, still understood as a passive.