

# SEED & BREAD

FOR THE SOWER    ISA.55:10    FOR THE EATER  
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

## THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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# THE GREEK ALPHABET

It is cause for thanksgiving that in the providence of God the language barrier that once stood between the common man and the truth of God has been broken. The New Testament was written in the common Greek of the first century, usually called *koine* Greek, and for centuries many of the vital facts of divine revelation were hidden from the average man. He had to rely on fallible human authorities in a realm where accuracy and certainty were most vital. He had no means of verifying the correctness of a translation. Now, all this has been changed, so that any person of ordinary intelligence who will apply himself to the task can discover for himself what God has actually said. All he needs to do is make use of the tools that men of God have made available.

By "tools" I refer to such monumental works as *Young's Analytical Concordance*; *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*; *The Englishman's Greek Concordance* by George Wigram; *The Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* by Thayer; *The Englishman's Greek New Testament* (an interlinear by Bagster), *The Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Bagster). The last mentioned contains an alphabetical arrangement of every inflexion of every word in the Greek New Testament with a grammatical analysis of each word.

However, if the student wants to use these books speedily and effectively he must know the Greek alphabet, and be able to transpose upon sight the Greek characters into their English equivalents. For example, when he comes upon the word

*avOpwIlo* (sorry, computer limitations – *O is Theta, Ii is Pi, Ed.*), he should be able on sight to change this into *anthropos*.

There are twenty-four letters in the koine Greek alphabet. Each letter has a name, and it is these names that should first be memorized. Then we must learn its sign and

how it was constructed, both as to capitals and small letters. In the koine period only capitals were used, but it is the lower-case letters in which we are most interested. These will now be displayed for some visual training.

### THE ALPHABET

Capital	Small	Name	Transliteration	Pronunciation
A	a.	alpha	a	a as in <i>cat</i>
B		beta	b	B
*r	'Y	gamma	g	g hard, as in begin
*A	8	delta	d	D
E	E	epsilon	e	e as in <i>get</i>
Z	,	zeta	z	Dz
H	'IJ	eta	e	e as in scene
*e	()	theta	th	th as in <i>thin</i>
I	,	iota	I	i or e, as in machine
K	K	kappa	k	K
*A	A	lambda	L	L
M	P.	Mu	m	M
N	v	Nu	n	N
:*s	I;	XI	X	Ksee
0	0	omicron	0	0 as in <i>top</i>
*II	II	pi	p	Pee
P	P	rho	r	R
*	s''r;	sIigma	s	S
T	T	tau	t	T
T	v	upsilon	u	u as in unite
*Ct	l	phi	ph	F
X	X	chi	ch	Ch
*I'	T	pSI	ps	Ps
*M	M	omega	0	0 as in home

- inadequate computer replication (Ed.)

There are numerous helps that will aid the student in handling the Greek alphabet. It can be divided into six groups of four letters each, learning the first four names, then advancing to the second group. The first letter is named *alpha*. I assume every Bible student is familiar with the passage wherein the Lord says: "**I am the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.**" If so, you have the first and last letters of the alphabet already with only twenty-two more to go. And since you are learning the *alphabet*, you have the first and second letters, *alpha* and *beta*. The third letter *gamma* should be easy since it is used in many English words such as *gamma-ray* and *gamma-globulin*. The fourth letter *delta* should be very easy since we have brought it into English to describe the formation made by the mouth of a river, which is shaped somewhat like the Greek letter *I*:.. Now we have *alpha*, *beta*, *gamma*, *delta* - the first four - and *omega*, the last letter, so only nineteen more to go.

The student should learn to write the Greek letters with careful attention being given to the small ones. *Alpha* is made the same as our letter *a*, both small and capital letters. It is pronounced *a* as in *cat* and *ah* as in *father*. *Beta* is made the same as our capital *B*. In writing the small letter begin with an upward stroke a little below the line. *Gamma* in its capital looks like a gallows, and the small letter resembles our *y*. If the top were closed it would look like our *g*. It is a letter that varies in sound so when it is followed by another *gamma* (*yy*), a *kappa* (*YK*), an *xi* (*y\_*) it is pronounced as an *n*. Thus *aggelos* becomes *angelos* when pronounced.

*Delta* is an easy letter to make. The capital is a simple triangle, but in making the small letter be sure to get the curl at the top. *Epsilon* is the short *e*, made the same as in English in the capital, but the small letter is a semicircle with a horizontal mark in the middle. *Zeta* is pronounced as if it had a *D* in front of it. In making the small letter be sure to add the little mark on the top and the hook on the bottom. *Eta* is the long *e*. It could be somewhat confusing since the capital is made like an *H*, and the small letter like an *n*. In making it be sure the righthand stroke comes below the line, and in transliterating it put a mark over it so it will not be confused with the short *e*. *Theta* is a circle with a bar across the middle, and the small letter is an upright oval with the same bar. *Iota* is the smallest of all the characters and is used figuratively to signify something insignificant. *Kappa* is easy since it is made the same as our letter *K*. *Lambda* is peculiar since the capital looks like an inverted *V*. An oddity about the small letter will make it easy to remember. Notice the leaning right-hand stroke with the little bar on the left to keep it from falling backward.

*Mu* has a long left-hand stroke, a shorter right-hand stroke, and a sagging bridge that ties them together. *Nu* is the same as our *N*, but the small letter looks like our *v*. It

should be made with a slight outward curve to the right-hand stroke. *Xi* (pronounced *ksee*) demands close scrutiny. The capital is three horizontal lines, the middle line being a little shorter. This is not the same as our letter *X*, even though it is made like it. You can remember its distinctive character from the trade name *Xerox* (Kseerox). The small letter is made like a backward number 3, and it should have the small mark at the top and the curved tail at the bottom, a little below the line. *Omicron* is the short *O* and is pronounced as in *box*. *Pi* is familiar to all who have studied geometry, but the pronunciation is *pee*, not *pie*. *Rho* should be given close attention since it looks like the English letter *P*. *Sigma* can be difficult. The capital is easy to recognize, but the small letter looks like an *O*, so it must have the short horizontal stroke at the top in order to distinguish it from *omicron*. When *sigma* occurs at the end of a word, it is made like the letter *S*, but the lower curve should be about half the size of the upper. *Tau* is simple, corresponding to our letter *T*. *Upsilon* in the small letter is the same as our *U*, but the capital should be given that slight palm-tree effect.

The last four letters form an interesting quartet. *Phi* is the equivalent of our *ph* and is made like an *O* with a perpendicular line through it. *Chi* is made, both capital and small, like our letter *X*. However, it is not our *X*, and it transliterates as *ch*. It is often used as a shorthand symbol for *Christ*, as can be seen in our contracted word *Xmas*. *Psi* is the equivalent of our *ps*. As a memory aid, think of it as a little like two lips with a tongue protruding from them. *Omega* is the long *O* as in *home*. The capital looks a little like a horseshoe, and the small letter looks like a double *O*. In transliterating it is identified by the mark over the top (*Ω*).

The student will find many transliterated words that begin with an *H*, and this may puzzle him when he sees nothing in the Greek that represents this letter. In all Greek words that begin with a vowel, a mark will be found over them which curves either to the left ( *·* ) or to the right ( *·* , ). If the hook (not the curve) of this mark is to the right so that it looks like the word could be hung on it, it takes the *h* sound, and an *h* should be added to it when transliterating.

Remember, you are learning the alphabet only so that you can use the available tools. Furthermore, I do not advise anyone to rush out and buy the six expensive books mentioned earlier in this study. I would recommend that he start with *Young's Concordance* and then add to this *The Englishman's Greek New Testament*.

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