

Lesson 2

Declension of η-Nouns

ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη. God is love. I John 4:8

11. Nouns. A noun is the name of anything, as a person, quality, action, or an idea. We say John is a man. Both John and man are nouns. Another name for a noun is “substantive,” which includes pronouns, verbal nouns, and any part of speech which may be used as a noun equivalent.

12. Declension. Nouns have certain qualities or properties. In the sentences θεὸς ἀγάπη, God is love, the word ἀγάπη “love” is parsed as nominative feminine gender, and the singular. This means that it is in the nominative case, the feminine gender, and the singular number. It is necessary to know what these mean before any progress can be made.

Number describes whether a substantive is singular (representing one) or plural (representing more than one); e.g., ἡ ἀγάπη the love, αἱ ἀγάπαι the loves.

Gender is a quality of a word that requires that other words (like pronouns, adjectives or participles) agrees with it in accordance with the class to which it belongs. There are three such classes: masculine, feminine, and neuter. Modern English has lost this use of grammatical gender and retains it for the most part only with words denoting sex. However in Greek all nouns have gender and are classified in one of these three groups. The gender must be learned by observation but is usually indicated by the article. The articles are ὁ (masculine), ἡ (feminine), and τό (neuter). Thus we have ὁ ἄγγελος, the angel; ἡ γῆ, the land; and τὸ ἔργον, the work. Nouns denoting sex follow the same classification as in English, as ὁ ἄνθρωπος, the man; ἡ γυνή, the woman; τὸ τέκνον, the child. But here the likeness stops. In all other respects gender is grammatical and belongs to all nouns, even inanimate objects. Nor does gender represent sex. Thus τὸ πνεῦμα, the spirit, is neuter, but this does not mean that the Holy Spirit is a “thing” rather than a person. If the article is not known, the gender must be learned from a lexicon. Later it will be learned that certain endings in the nominative case indicate that the noun is a certain gender; e.g., all nouns with η in the nominative singular in the first declension are feminine.

Case refers to the inflectional forms of the noun, pronoun, and adjective (shown by the change of spelling in the word) which indicate their inflection to the other words in the sentence, as subject, object, etc. Compare English (which has retained little of its original inflection) I, my, me. In Greek declension there are five case forms. However some of these five are composites and represent functions of more than one case. Generally speaking, the nominative, genitive, and accusative cases correspond to our nominative, possessive, and objective cases respectively. But the genitive case form is also an ablative or separation (“from”) case. The dative form also is a combination with the instrumental and locative functions. The vocative is the same as our nominative of address. The complete chart of the cases and their functions is shown thus:

<u>Nominative</u> :	Case of subject, predicate nominative
<u>Genitive</u> :	Specifying case, the case of possession, description, etc., the “of” case
<u>Ablative</u> :	The case of separation or origin: “from,” “of”
<u>Dative</u> :	The case of personal interest (advantage or disadvantage), the indirect object case, “to” or “for” whom something is done.
<u>Instrumental</u> :	The means case, expressing means or association “with”
<u>Locative</u> :	The case of position (< <u>locus</u> , “place”) “at,” “on,” “by”
<u>Accusative</u> :	The case of extension, signifying the receiving of the action or thought, hence the direct object case.
<u>Vocative</u> :	The case of address, like the English nominative of address.

To give all these forms for both singular and plural is to decline a noun.

13. Stems. Greek substantives fall under three sets of forms called the First, Second, and Third Declensions. They differ according to the letter with which their stems end. The first is the α -declension, the second the o -declension, and the third the consonant declension.

14. The α -Declension. The first declension includes all substantives whose stems end in α . This α becomes η in certain words. All stems in α or η are feminine; those in $\eta\varsigma$ or $\alpha\varsigma$ are masculine. There are no neutral nouns of this declension. Nouns that have an acute accent on the last syllable (*ultima*) are called “oxytones” (sharp tones).

15. Declension of η -Nouns. Substantives with stems in η are declined as follows:

	Singular		Plural	
Nom.	ἀγάπη	<u>love</u>	ἀγάπαι	<u>loves</u>
Gen.	ἀγάπης	<u>of love</u>	ἀγαπῶν ¹	<u>of loves</u>
Abl.	ἀγάπης	<u>from love</u>	ἀγαπῶν	<u>from loves</u>
Dat.	ἀγάπῃ	<u>to love</u>	ἀγάπαις	<u>to loves</u>
Inst.	ἀγάπῃ ²	<u>with love</u>	αγάπαις	<u>with love</u>
Loc.	ἀγάπῃ	<u>in love</u>	αγάπαις	<u>in love</u>
Acc.	ἀγάπην	<u>love</u>	ἀγάπας	<u>loves</u>
Voc.	ἀγάπη	<u>O love</u>	ἀγάπαι	<u>O loves</u>

16. The feminine article (η) and the feminine adjective $-\eta$ are declined in the same way:

	Singular				Plural			
Nom.	η ³	πρώτη	ἀγάπη	<u>the first love</u>	$\alpha\iota$ ³	πρῶται	ἀγάπαι	
Gen.	$\tau\eta\varsigma$ ⁴	πρώτης	ἀγάπης	<u>of the first love</u>	$\tau\omega\upsilon\upsilon$	πρώτων	ἀγαπῶν	
Abl.	$\tau\eta\varsigma$	πρώτης	ἀγάπης	<u>from the first love</u>	$\tau\omega\upsilon\upsilon$	πρώτων	ἀγαπῶν	
Dat.	$\tau\eta$	πρώτῃ	ἀγάπῃ	<u>to the first love</u>	$\tau\alpha\iota\varsigma$	πρώταις	ἀγάπαις	
Ins.	$\tau\eta$	πρώτῃ	ἀγάπῃ	<u>with the first love</u>	$\tau\alpha\iota\varsigma$	πρώταις	ἀγάπαις	
Loc.	$\tau\eta$	πρώτῃ	ἀγάπῃ	<u>in the first love</u>	$\tau\alpha\iota\varsigma$	πρώταις	ἀγάπαις	
Acc.	$\tau\eta\upsilon$	πρώτην	ἀγάπην	<u>the first love</u>	$\tau\alpha\varsigma$	πρώτας	ἀγάπας	
Voc.		πρώτη	ἀγάπη	<u>O first love</u>		πρῶται	ἀγάπαι	

¹The genitive ablative plural of this declension is always circumflexed.

²Notice the iota subscript, which must be written.

³Notice that η and $\alpha\iota$ have no accents. They are called proclitics and are pronounced with the following word, as in English th' boy

⁴See rule 14.

17. Accent of Nouns. The accent of a noun in Greek (as in English) must be learned with the word itself from a dictionary. The accent is kept on the same syllable throughout the declension as in the nominative case, if the rules permit. This is the most important fact in the accenting of nouns.

18. Vocabulary. All nouns in the vocabulary in η are declined like ἀγάπη. Write out the declensions of γῆ and ζωή.

ἀγαθή,	<u>good</u> (fem. adjective)	ζωή, ἥς, ἥ,	<u>life</u>
ἀγάπη, ης, ἥ,	<u>love</u> (caring concern for)	ἥ,	<u>the</u> (fem. definite article)
γῆ, ἥς, ἥ,	<u>earth, land</u>	καλή,	<u>beautiful</u> (adj.), <u>good</u>
γραφή, ἥς, ἥ,	<u>writing, Scripture</u>	πρώτη,	<u>first</u> (fem. adjective)
διδάσκω,	<u>I teach</u>	συναγωγή, ἥς, η,	<u>synagogue</u>
δικαιοσύνη, ης, ἥ	<u>righteousness</u>	σύ,	<u>you</u> (personal pronoun, sing.)
εἰρήνη, ης, ἥ,	<u>peace</u>	ψυχή, ἥς, ἥ,	<u>soul, life</u>
ἐν,	<u>in</u> (prep. with loc. case), <u>with</u>	φωνή, ἥς, ἥ,	<u>voice</u>
ἐντολή, ης, ἥ,	<u>commandment</u>	παραβολή, ἥς, ἥ,	<u>parable</u>

19. Rules of Syntax.

a. The subject of a finite verb is in the nominative case.

ἡ γῆ ἔχει εἰρήναν The land has peace.

ἡ ἐντολή ἄγει ζωήν The commandment brings life.

b. The direct object of a transitive verb is in the accusative case.

διδάσκει τὰς γραφάς He teaches the Scriptures

γινώσκεις τὴν ἐντολήν You know the commandment

c. The subject agrees with the verb in number and person.

ἐγὼ λαμβάνω I take

αἱ γραφαὶ ἄγουσι ζωήν The Scriptures bring life.

d. There is no indefinite article in Greek. A noun without an article may be translated “a” or “an” if the sense demands it.

20. Exercises

I. Text A.

διδάσκομεν τὰς γραφὰς ἐν τῇ γῆ. Ἰησοῦς διδάσκει τὴν ἐντολήν τῆς ἀγαθῆς ζωῆς ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ. ἀκούουσι καὶ εὐρίσκουσι εἰρήνην. λέγει εἰρήνην τῇ ψυχῇ. γράφει τὴν ἐντολήν ἐν ταῖς γραφαῖς. γινώσκετε τὴν ἀγαθὴν φωνήν; σὺ γινώσκεις τὰς ἐντολὰς καὶ ἔχεις ζωήν.

II. Text B.

1. γῆ, ἡ γῆ, γῆς, τῆς γῆς, ἡ ἀγαθὴ γῆ, ἐν τῇ γῆ, ἐν τῇ ἀγαθῇ γῆ.

2. φωνή, ἡ φωνή, φωναί, αἱ φωναί, φωνῶν, τῶν φωνῶν, ἀκούει τὴν φωνήν.

3. ἀκούομεν φωνήν; ἐγὼ ἀκούω τὴν φωνήν. σὺ δὲ οὐκ ἀκούεις τὴν φωνήν.

4. διδάσκουσι τὴν ἐντολήν ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ καὶ ἔχουσιν¹ εἰρήνην καὶ δικαιοσύνην ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς.
(¹Movable nu, ἔχουσιν.)

5. ζωή, ἡ ζωή, ἡ καλὴ ζωή, αἱ καλαὶ ζωαί, εὐρίσκετε τὴν καλὴν ζωήν.

III. Translate.

1. The commandment, the good commandment, the commandment of life.

2. They have righteousness and peace in the souls.

3. They are teaching parables in the synagogue.

4. I have love in the soul, but you do not know the voice of peace.

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