

Questions that arose in class today (Sunday, 28 SEP 08)

Q. Where is the augment in προσῆλθον (1), “they approached”, ‘went to’?

A. The augment (ἐ) is used to show past tense and therefore shows up only in the indicative mood, the mood of asserted fact.

- for verbs that begin in a consonant, the ἐ is prefixed to the verb.
- if the verb is compounded with a preposition, the augment is prefixed to the verb stem, NOT the entire form, that is, NOT in front of the preposition.
 - That is because the prefixed preposition is felt as not truly part of the verb.
 - (There are a few exceptions to this, but they do not occur in Koine Greek.)
 - In Homer in fact, sometimes the prefixed preposition and the verb form are separated or ‘cut apart’, that is, the preposition may occur a number of words before or after the verb itself. This is called *tmesis*.
- For verb stems which begin with a vowel, the vowel is lengthened and the ἐ augment disappears. This is called the ‘temporal augment’ (temporal here refers to the lengthened amount of *time* it takes to pronounce a long vowel. Of course, if the vowel of the stem is already long, there can be no further lengthening.
- The stem of this verb is ελθ. When ἐ is prefixed to it, it becomes ἤλθ.
- See Mounce, **Grammar...**, 21.10 (pp. 184-185)

Q. The phrase ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου () is translated “in my name”. How do you get ‘in’ from ἐπὶ?

A. ἐπὶ properly means (among other things) ‘upon’ or ‘on top of’. In classical Greek this phrase would be simply τῷ ὀνόματί μου, with the simple ‘dative of means’ sufficing. In Koine, however, ἐπὶ has also gotten a meaning on ‘in’.

Q. Does στραφῆτε (3) mean ‘repent’?

A. No. This is an aorist passive 2nd pl. subjunctive from the Greek word στρέφω, ‘turn’. It means ‘turn around’ in the intransitive sense. So, here it means ‘change the course of one’s life’ or ‘behavior’. Properly, ‘repent’ in Greek is μετανοεῖσθαι, ‘to change one’s mind or attitude’

Other matters of interest:

- ἄρα (1) is an inferential particle, roughly equivalent to Eng. “so” as in, “So... who is”
 - see the entry ἄρα in Gingrich/Danker “Shorter Lexicon”
- τὸ σκάνδαλον (7) and σκανδαλίζει (8). Originally a σκάνδαλον was the lever that sprang a trap (for example, the little lever in a mouse trap you put the bait on). When you touch it, the trap is sprung.
- In response to Herb’s question: in classical Greek it appears only as a compound: τὸ σκανδαλάθρον, which is “the stick or support in a trap on which the bait is placed” (so **LSJ, Greek-English Lexicon**). But as a compound it is at least 5th cen. BCE Greek.
 - My sense is that σκάνδαλον was a word used in ‘low’ or ‘demotic Greek’ and that is why it surfaced in Koine and did not appear in high classical Greek. σκανδαλάθρον only shows up in writers like Aristophanes who was often imitating common, lower class speech in his comedies.
- From that it came to have the meaning of something you trip over. And from that, the meaning of something that makes you make a mistake, either a simple physical mistake or a moral mistake. (Eng. ‘scandal’ of course derives from this.) The verb σκανδαλίζειν means ‘to cause someone to trip’, ‘to cause someone to make a mistake’. The KJ version renders this as ‘offend’ which is misleading to modern speakers of English. Sometimes it is rendered as ‘make (someone) sin’.
 - Apologies to Allen, who raised the following question to which I gave too hasty an answer. When teamed with πέτρα in the phrase πέτρα σκανδάλου, it can mean ‘stumbling block’, as in Romans 8.33: καθὼς γέγραπται, Ἴδου τίθημι ἐν Σιών λίθον προσκόμματος καὶ πέτραν σκανδάλου, καὶ ὁ πιστεύων ἐπ’ αὐτῷ οὐ κατασχυνθήσεται. However, NOT all by itself. You need the πέτρα (stone) there to get ‘stumbling block’. The πέτρα is the ‘block’; the σκανδάλου is the ‘stumbling’.