

“It’s Greek to Me!”

“It’s Greek to me!” is a phrase meaning something hard to understand. For centuries the Bible was available in very few languages - Hebrew, Greek and Latin to the European world.

Indeed Greek is a difficult language! If we count grammatical cases (nominative, objective, etc.) genders (male, female, dual, neuter), number (singular or plural) and mood (indicative, interrogative, etc.) the possibilities of verb conjugations and noun declensions become rather dizzying! In fact, there are 24 ways to spell the near demonstrative pronoun, “this” and 24 ways to spell the far demonstrative pronoun, “that!” Whew!

After a few weeks of Greek, the student begins to wonder if this is a language or a bad joke on history! However, God gave us the New Testament in KOINE Greek (“common” Greek), the language of the marketplace. In today’s world we might call it “newspaper Greek” or “personal letter” Greek.

Once scholars thought the style of New Testament Greek was specific to the scriptures. But discoveries in the last 150 years have brought new light to our understanding of biblical Greek. In his book, *Light from the Ancient East*, by Adolf Deissmann (originally published in 1927 and now back in print again) shows conclusively that the New Testament is **not** written in “Holy Spirit” Greek, as formerly assumed, but is written in the language of the people.

Drawing from letters to and from family members, commerce in the market place, etc., Deissmann concludes that the greatest book ever written is in the language of the people - not “high brow” Greek like Homer’s Iliad or Odyssey, but rather the language people would speak over the back fence. ***What a master work of the Holy Spirit – to give us the book for God’s word and wisdom in the language of everyday life.***

“So what?” you say? So - don’t be afraid to read the Bible. It is to **you**, not merely scholars. Yes, a **few** verses are hard to understand (II Peter 3:14-16), but personal time with God, ***in His love letter to you***, is a vast treasure awaiting those who open the Book.

Read, you can understand. **Ponder**, you will grow. **Meditate**, you will thrive like a tree planted near the water (Psalm 1). Why not have lunch with Jesus today or read a little over your dinner or ponder a bit of scripture before you turn out the lights tonight. He’s waiting, just for you, just inside that leather cover!

Ray Wallace