<https://bible.org/seriespage/appendix-one-brief-definitions-greek-grammatical-terms>

**Appendix One -- Brief Definitions of Greek Grammatical Terms**

I. TENSE

A. Tense or aspect involves the relationship of the verbs to completed action or incomplete action. This is often called “perfective” and “imperfective.”

1. Perfective tenses focus on the occurrence of an action. No further information is given except that something happened! Its start, continuation or culmination is not addressed.

2. Imperfective tenses focus on the continuing process of an action. It can be described in terms of linear action, durative action, progressive action, etc.

B. Tenses can be categorized by how the author sees the action as progressing

1. It occurred = AORIST

2. It occurred and the results abide = PERFECT

3. It was occurring in the past and the results were abiding, but not now = PLUPERFECT

4. It is occurring = PRESENT

5. It was occurring = IMPERFECT

6. It will occur = FUTURE

A concrete example of how these tenses help in interpretation would be the term “save.” It was used in several different tenses to show both its process and culmination:

1. AORIST - “saved” (cf. [Rom. 8:24](javascript:%7b%7d))

2. PERFECT - “have been saved and the result continues” (cf. [Eph. 2:5, 8](javascript:%7b%7d))

3. PRESENT - “being saved” (cf. [I Cor. 1:18; 15:2](javascript:%7b%7d))

4. FUTURE - “shall be saved” (cf. [Rom. 5:9, 10; 10:9](javascript:%7b%7d))

C. In focusing on verb tenses, interpreters look for the reason the original author chose to express himself in a certain tense. The standard “no frills” tense was the AORIST. It was the regular “unspecific,” “unmarked,” or “unflagged” verb form. It can be used in a wide variety of ways which the context must specify. It simply was stating that something occurred. The past time aspect is only intended in the INDICATIVE MOOD. If any other tense was used, something more specific was being emphasized. But what?

1. PERFECT TENSE. This speaks of a completed action with abiding results. In some ways it was a combination of the AORIST and PRESENT TENSES. Usually the focus is on the abiding results or the completion of an act. Example: [Eph. 2:5](javascript:%7b%7d) & 8, “you have been and continue to be saved.”

2. PLUPERFECT TENSE. This was like the PERFECT except the abiding results have ceased. Example: “Peter was standing at the door outside” ([John 18:16](javascript:%7b%7d)).

3. PRESENT TENSE. This speaks of an incomplete or imperfect action.

4. IMPERFECT TENSE. In this tense the relationship to the PRESENT TENSE is analogous to the relationship between the PERFECT and the PLUPERFECT. The IMPERFECT speaks of incomplete action that was occurring but has now ceased or the beginning of an action in the past. Example: “Then all Jerusalem were continuing to go out to him” or “then all Jerusalem began to go out to him” ([Matt. 3:5](javascript:%7b%7d)).

5. FUTURE TENSE. This speaks of an action that was usually projected into a future time frame. It focused on the potential for an occurrence rather than an actual occurrence. It often speaks of the certainty of the event. Example: “Blessed are. . .they will. . .” ([Matt. 5:4-9](javascript:%7b%7d)).

II. VOICE

A. Voice describes the relationship between the action of the verb and its subject.

B. ACTIVE VOICE was the normal, expected, unemphasized way to assert that the subject was performing the action of the verb.

C. The PASSIVE VOICE means that the subject was receiving the action of the verb produced by an outside agent. The outside agent producing the action was indicated in the Greek NT by the following prepositions and cases:

D. The MIDDLE VOICE means that the subject produces the action of the verb and is also directly involved in the action of the verb. It is often called the voice of heightened personal interest. This construction emphasized the subject of the clause or sentence in some way. This construction is not found in English. It has a wide possibility of meanings and translations in Greek. Some examples of the form are:

III. MOOD (or “MODE”)

A. There are four moods in Koine Greek. They indicate the relation of the verb to reality, at least within the author’s own mind. The moods are divided into two broad categories: that which indicated reality (INDICATIVE) and that which indicated potentiality (SUBJUNCTIVE, IMPERATIVE and OPTATIVE).

B. The INDICATIVE MOOD was the normal mood for expressing action that had occurred or was occurring, at least in the author’s mind. It was the only Greek mood that expressed a definite time, and even here this aspect was secondary.

C. The SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD expressed probable future action. Something had not yet happened but the chances were likely that it would. It had much in common with the FUTURE INDICATIVE. The difference was that the SUBJUNCTIVE expresses some degree of doubt. In English this is often expressed by the terms “could,” “would,” “may,” or “might.”

D. The OPTATIVE MOOD expressed a wish which was theoretically possible. It was considered one step further from reality than the SUBJUNCTIVE. The OPTATIVE expressed possibility under certain conditions. The OPTATIVE was rare in the New Testament. Its most frequent usage is Paul’s famous phrase, “May it never be” (KJV, “God forbid”), used fifteen times (cf. [Rom. 3:4, 6, 31; 6:2, 15; 7:7, 13; 9:14; 11:1, 11](javascript:%7b%7d); [I Cor. 6:15](javascript:%7b%7d); [Gal. 2:17; 3:21; 6:14](javascript:%7b%7d)). Other examples are found in [Luke 1:38, 20](javascript:%7b%7d):16, [Acts 8:20](javascript:%7b%7d), and [I Thess. 3:11](javascript:%7b%7d).

E. The IMPERATIVE MOOD emphasized a command which was possible, but the emphasis was on the intent of the speaker. It asserted only volitional possibility and was conditioned on the choices of another. There was a special use of the IMPERATIVE in prayers and 3rd person requests. These commands were found only in the PRESENT and AORIST tenses in the NT.

VII. CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

A. A CONDITIONAL SENTENCE is one that contains one or more conditional clauses. This grammatical structure aids interpretation because it provides the conditions, reasons or causes why the action of the main verb does or does not occur. There were four types of conditional sentences. They move from that which was assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his purpose to that which was only a wish.

B. The FIRST-CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE expressed action or being which was assumed to be true from the writer’s perspective or for his purposes even though it was expressed with an “if.” In several contexts it could be translated “since” (cf. [Matt. 4:3](javascript:%7b%7d); [Rom. 8:31](javascript:%7b%7d)). However, this does not mean to imply that all FIRST CLASSES are true to reality. Often, they were used to make a point in an argument or to highlight a fallacy (cf. [Matt. 12:27](javascript:%7b%7d)).

C. The SECOND-CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE is often called “contrary to fact.” It states something that was untrue to reality to make a point. Examples:

1. “If He were really a prophet, which He is not, He would know who and of what character the woman is who is clinging to Him, but He does not” ([Luke 7:39](javascript:%7b%7d)).

2. “If you really believed Moses, which you do not, you would believe me, which you do not” ([John 5:46](javascript:%7b%7d)).

3. “If I were still trying to be pleasing to men, which I am not, I would not be a slave of Christ at all, which I am” ([Gal. 1:10](javascript:%7b%7d)).

D. The THIRD CLASS speaks of possible future action. It often assumes the probability of that action. It usually implies a contingency. The action of the main verb is contingent on the action in the “it” clause. Examples from I John: 1:6-10; 2:4, 6, 9, 15, 20, 21, 24, 29; 3:21; 4:20; 5:14, 16.

E. The FOURTH CLASS is the farthest removed from possibility. It is rare in the NT. As a matter of fact, there is no complete FOURTH-CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE in which both parts of the condition fit the definition. An example of a partial FOURTH CLASS is the opening clause in [I Pet. 3:14](javascript:%7b%7d). An example of a partial FOURTH CLASS in the concluding clause is [Acts 8:31](javascript:%7b%7d).

**DAVID’S ADDITIONAL NOTES ABOUT THE GREEK PRESENT AND AORIST TENSE FORMS (both of these tense forms are very commonly misinterpreted by preachers and some Bible teachers)**

* It's an extremely common misunderstanding that the Greek present-tense form inherently indicates a continuous, habitual, linear action or state. As my buddy Tom Stegall writes, this "is a deeply ingrained misconception."
* The use of the present-tense form does not automatically refer to an ongoing action or state; and similarly, the use of the aorist-tense form does not automatically mean a once-for-all action or state.
* Tom Stegall explains this well, "the tense forms indicate the subjective portrayal of that action or state by the writer (aspect). A biblical writer may choose to portray a momentary, instantaneous action using the present-tense form in order to bring the reader more vividly into a scene or he may choose to zoom out and use the aorist-tense form to more broadly and remotely portray an action that is continuous and repeated but presented in a summary statement.
* A biblical writer may choose to portray a momentary, instantaneous action using the present-tense form in order to bring the reader more vividly into a scene or he may choose to zoom out and use the aorist-tense form to more broadly and remotely portray an action that is continuous and repeated but presented in a summary statement.
* This difference in subjective portrayal between the present and aorist tenses is often illustrated by two different vantage points for viewing a parade. The present-tense form effectively places the reader on the street curb to see the parade passing right in front of him, and the aorist-tense form would be used to view the parade from a helicopter with a bird’s-eye view (Stegall).
* Tom goes on to explain, "This explains why Gospel writers oftentimes portray the same objective action in Christ’s earthly ministry using two different verb tenses. For example, Matthew 4:1 says, “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted [*peirasthēnai*] by the devil.” Here the infinitive form of “to be tempted/tested” (*peirazō*) is in the aorist tense. But in Luke’s parallel account, the participle form of *peirazō* is present tense: “Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted [*peirazomenos*] for forty days by the devil” (Luke 4:1-2). In cases where one passage has one tense form and a parallel Gospel passage uses another tense form, the Gospel writers are not making different, conflicting claims about the nature of the Lord’s actions or speech; rather they are simply choosing to portray His actions or speech from a vantage point that is either more proximate or remote."

**Source Used For David’s Notes**

Köstenberger, Andreas J.; Merkle, Benjamin L.; Plummer, Robert L. *Charts for Intermediate Greek Grammar and Syntax: A Quick Reference Guide to Going Deeper with New Testament Greek.*B&H Academic. Kindle Edition.