Chapter 3

Last time we read from John's gospel, we covered the first two verses. This week, we'll work on the next two. Remember that the point of these guided readings is that you are exposed to as much Greek as possible while learning a little bit of grammar and not getting too "lost in the weeds" when it comes to Greek in general. This is all supposed to complement your work on Duolingo and Memrise, which is where the *real* language learning will take place.

Last time, we covered John 1:1-2. This time, we'll start with John 1:3-4 and see how far we get. Here, then, is John 1:3-4

Πάντα δι' αὐτου ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτου ἐγένετο οὐδε ἕν. ὃ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων.

We would translate it like this: *All things came to be through him, and without him not one thing came to be. In him was life, and that life was the light of mankind.*

Let's break it down. First, we have πάντα, which means "all." That's straightforward enough. Then, after that, we have δι' αὐτου ἐγένετο, which we would translate as "came to be through him." That verb ἐγένετο is an aorist middle indicative verb. Lots of big words, right? The word "aorist" just means it is in the simple past tense.

See, in Greek, the verbs undergo lots of changes in how they look in order to communicate changes in *meaning*. In other words, the verb carries a lot of information in it. Through simply changing a few letters here or there, we can communicate things like whether the action happened repeatedly in the past (as in "he kept doing this") or whether it was just once or twice in the past. In English, when we want to say something like that we add words (like "she *kept* working.") In Greek, we just change a letter here or there to communicate that. In this situation, the letter ε communicates that the verb is in the "aorist" tense, which – again – means the simple past.

The other word that's there is αὐτου. That's just a pronoun – it means "him." It could also mean "it." If we wanted to say "she" or "her" we would say αὐτη. Our next phrase is καὶ χωρὶς αὐτου ἐγένετο οὐδε ἕν. You've already seen a few of these words: καὶ means "and," αὐτου means "he" or "him," and ἐγένετο means "came to be." Other than that, we have χωρὶς, which means "without" or "apart from" or "except for." Then we have οὐδε ἕν. This simply means "not one thing."

Moving on, we have the phrase ὃ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν. We would translate it as "what has come into being in him was life." That first part, ὃ γέγονεν, means "that which has come into being." It's an interesting aspect of Greek. See, γέγονεν is a verb, for all intents and purposes. In Greek, though, if you take a verb and put an article (that's the word for "the") in front of it, it becomes a noun. That little word ὃ means "the," and it changes γέγονεν from a verb to a noun.

After that, there's ἐν αὐτῷ. It just means "in him." Notice that little squiggle under the ω? It's a marker that the pronoun "him" is in the dative case, which is the case of indirect objects. In the

sentence "I'll put the pen *in the drawer*" the words "in the drawer" are the indirect object. In Greek, those words are often marked by that little squiggle, which is called an "iota subscript."

Next, we have ζωὴ ἦν, which just means "was life." The word ζωὴ means "life" and the word ἦν means "he/she/it was." All that you need to remember with that is that in Greek, the word order of sentences can change all the time. That's why we have to pay attention to each word in the sentence, more than we would in English.

Finally, the phrase καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων means "and the life was the light of humanity." Our unfamiliar words here are φῶς, which means "light" (think "photography"), and τῶν ἀνθρώπων which means "for humanity." Strictly speaking, the word ἀνθρώπων means "men" but in almost every situation it is used, it refers to mixed groups. So we'd translate it as "humanity."

That's enough for now, I think! Good luck.