Irregular Verbs in the Greek New Testament

Although the list of verbs and the number of instances of each verb in the GNT is drawn from the vocabulary of Mounce’s Basics of Biblical Greek, I have altered the entries of principal parts and have noted in upper-case characters the root(s) of each verb. I have also added comments on salient idiosyncracies of several of the verbs in order to make the listing more useful to learners of NT Greek. Principal parts here indicated are essentially those of the Hellenistic Koine observed in the GNT, not necessarily those of the older Classical Attic era.

Sequence in each entry: frequency in Greek NT; lexical form of verb, basic English equivalent, principal parts (in traditional sequence: pres. indic., fut. indic., aor. indic.act., pf. indic.act., pf. indic.m-p, aor. indic. pass.), verb root, comments on idiosyncracies.

67x, ἐγγράφω, I lead/bring/arrest, ἐγγράφω, ἐγγράφω, ἔγγραφον, *, *, ἔγγραφον, ΔΓ (Note that the aorist active stem is reduplicated (тельные) and that the Gamma is assimilated to the Thetta in the aorist passive.)

101x, ἔγραφο, I raise/take up/take away, ἔγραφο, ἔγραφo, ἔγραφo, ἔγραφo, ἔγραφo, ΑΡ (Note that this is a typical liquid verb with loss of Sigma in future and aorist, that present-stem is metathesized -YO stem).

428x, ἔγινομαι, I hear/learn/obey/understand, ἔγινομαι, ἔγινομαι, ἔγινομαι, ἔγινομαι, *, *, ἔγινομαι, ΑΚΟΥ (Note: so-called “Attic reduplication” in perfect stem, euphonic Sigma added to root in aorist passive stem.)

77x, ἀνοίγω, I open, ἀνοίγω, ἀνοίξω, ἀνοίξω, ἀνοίξω, ἀνοίξω, ἀνοίξω, σῶ + τΟΙ (Several irregularities here derive from fact that digamma (p) of original root survived long enough for augmented and reduplicated forms to use syllabic augment with Epsilon, although this did not retard phonetic change of the diphthong ϒι to the long-vowel with subscript character ωι. Note too assimilation of the Gamma to the Thetta in aorist passive.)

111x, ἀποθνῄσκω, I die/am about to die/am freed from, ἀποθνῄσκω, ἀποθνῄσκω, ἀποθνῄσκω, *, *, ΘΑΝ/ΘΗ (Note that the present stem has the “process” formative element -σκ- added to the root; the iota-subscript form Θη is generally retained but not infrequently is simplified to Θη.)

231x, ἀποκρίνομαι, I answer, ἀποκρίνομαι, ἀποκρίθηκα, ἀποκρίθηκα, *, *, ἀποκρίθηκα, απο + ΚΡΙΝ (It should be noted that this verb is essentially middle in form and sense and that the aorist ἀποκρίνηθα is earlier and rare in Hellenistic Greek; far more common is ἀποκρίθηκα which bears the identical meaning and is not passive; so the so-called “future passive” form ἀποκρίθηκα is the only standard future of this verb in the Koine.)

74x, ἀποστείνω, I kill, ἀποστείνω, ἀποστείνω, ἀποστείνω, *, *, ἀποστείνω, ΚΤΕΝ, ΚΤΟΝ, ΚΤΑΝ (Note typical liquid formations with loss of Sigma in future and aorist.)

90x, ἀπόλλυμι, active: I destroy/kill, ἀπόλλυμι, mid-pass: I perish/die, ἀπόλλυμι, ἀπόλλυμι, ἀπόλλυμι, ἀπόλλυμι, ἀπόλλυμι, ἀπόλλυμι, από + ΣΤΕΛ, ΣΤΟΛ, ΣΤΑΔ (Note typical liquid formations with loss of Sigma in future and aorist.)

132x, ἀποστέλλω, I send (away), ἀποστέλλω, ἀποστέλλω, ἀποστέλλω, ἀποστέλλω, ἀποστέλλω, ἀποστέλλω, ἀποστέλλω, ἀποστέλλω, ἀποστέλλω + ΣΤΕΛ, ΣΤΟΛ, ΣΤΑΔ (Note typical liquid formations with loss of Sigma in future and aorist.)

143x, ἀφίμη, I let go/leave/permit, ἀφίμη or αφίσα, ἀφίσα, ἀφίσα, *, *, ἀφίμη, ἀφίμη, ΑΡ + ΙΗ/ΛΕ (Note: this very important verb—frequently used in later Greek with acc. + inf. as an alternative imperative construction—has competing forms in the Hellenistic-NT era in the older MI-verb and younger Omega-verb forms; while the perfect m-p and aorist passive forms are rare, their augment-pattern evidently derives from a lost consonant--Sigma or Digamma--originally an integral element in the verb root.)

122x, βάλλω, I throw/put, βάλλω, βάλλω, βάλλω, βάλλω, βάλλω, βάλλω, βάλλω, βάλλω, βάλλω, βάλλω (One must note that the future stem has typical liquid verb formation with contraction while the aorist is normal second-aorist, while the perfect and aorist passive stems show the ablauted form of the root ΒΛΗ.)

669x, γίνομαι, I become/am/exist/am born/created, γίνομαι, γινθήκα, ἔγενομαι, ἔγενομαι, ἔγενομαι, ἔγενομαι, ἔγενομαι, ἔγενομαι, ἔγενομαι (Note: Present stem is from older form of reduplicated γίγνομαι: in the aorist ἔγενομαι is the traditional form which in the Koine is being increasingly replaced by ἔγενομαι: all forms of this verb may be used intrinsically or as a passive with an agent construction (υό + genitive)

222x, γνώσκω, I know/come to know/realize/learn, γνώσκω, γνώσκω, γνώσκω, γνώσκω, γνώσκω, γνώσκω, ΓΝΩΝΟΙΝ (Present stem shows reduplication (originally γνώσκω) as well as -σκ- inchoative formative element; note the euphonic Sigma added to root in the perfect middle and aorist passive stems.)

33x, δείκνυμι or δείκνυμι, I show/explain, δείκνυμι or δείκνυμι, δείκνυμι, δείκνυμι, δείκνυμι, δείκνυμι, δείκνυμι, ΚΕΙ (Here only the present stem is irregular, and even there the younger Omega-verb form δείκνυμι is competing with the older MI-verb form δείκνυμι. The perfect stem shows a not-uncommon aspiration of the final consonant in a non-Kappa or “Second” perfect)
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56x. δέχομαι, I take/receive, δέχομαι, δέχομαι, ἔδέχομαι, -ο-, δέχομαι, ἔδέχομαι, ΔΕΧ (This verb scarcely qualifies as an irregular verb, the only item to note being ways in which the final consonant of the root assimilates to tense-stem formative elements such as Sigma of future and aorist, personal endings of the perfect m-p, and -θη- of aorist passive.)

97x. διδάσκω, I teach, διδάσκω, διδάσκω, ἔδιδα, ἔδιδα, ΔΙΔΑΧ (Noteworthy here are phonetic factors responsible for loss of Chi in present tense when formative element -σκ- was added to the root.)

415x. δίωμι, I give (out)entrust/give back/put, δίωμι, δίωμι, δίωμι, δίωμι, δίωμι, ΔΩ/ΔΟ (One needs to learn the idiosyncrasies of this MI-verb: alternation of long and short vowels in singular & plural of present and aorist active; partial assimilation to Omega-verb conjugation in the imperfect.)

210x. δύναμαι, I am powerful/able, δύναμαι, δύναμαι, -α-, -α-, ὁδύναμη, ΔΥΝΑ (This verb is actually regular in that all the principal parts are predictable from the root; what is not predictable is that the future is a standard future middle while the aorist has only the passive -θη- form; noteworthy too is that the augment is with Ετα rather than with the expected Epsilon).

144x. ἐγείρω, I raise up/wake, ἐγείρω, ἐγείρω, ἐγείρω, ἐγείρω, ἐγείρω, ΕΓΕΡ/ΕΓΟΡ/ΕΓΡ (This very important verb shows typical liquid-verb forms without Sigma in future and aorist; it is also extraordinary in many respects: the active is normally causative while the middle ἐγείρομαι--and its correlative forms ἐγείρεσαι, ἐγείρεσαι, and ἐγείρεσαι--may bear either the intransitive sense of awaken/rise up/arise or the passive sense of “be awakened/be raised up”)

2460x. εἰμί, I am/exist/live/am present, εἰμί, εἰμί, εἰμί, εἰμί, εἰμί, ΕΣ (This verb has only present and future tense systems, the aorist and perfect normally being supplied by forms of γίνομαι; the future follows regular middle Omega-verb patterns, but the imperfect in Hellenistic Greek is beginning to shift into the middle voice (1 sg. ἦμη), a change that is complete for the whole verb in Modern Greek.)

708x. εἴπον (2 aor act.most commonly used as aorist of λέγω, ΕΠ (Compare λέγω below; the aorist stem was originally a reduplicated εἴψες-; after loss of the digammas the Epilons contracted into εἰς-)

636x. ἐργάζομαι, I come/go, ἐργάζομαι, ἐργάζομαι, ἘΡΧ/ἘΛΕΥΘΟ/ΕΛΟΥΘΟ/ΕΛΥΘΟ (While the present-stem derives from a root of its own, most tense-stems derive from the same root as that whence the word ἔλθομαι (= “free”) is derived; the aorist stem was originally ἐλήθη- but the Epsilon syncopated out; the perfect stem shows “Attic” reduplication of both initial vowel and consonant.)

158x. ἐσθίω, I eat, ἐσθίω, ἐσθίω, ἔσθησα, ἔσθησα, ἔσθησα, εἴσθησα, εἴσθησα, ΕΔ/ΦΑΓ (The verb derives from two different roots: ΕΔ in the present stem with a formative element added, ΦΑΓ elsewhere; extraordinary is the future without a Sigma.)

176x. εὑρίσκω, I find, εὑρίσκω, εὑρίσκω, εὑρίσκω, εὑρίσκω, ΕΥΡ/ΕΥΡΕ (The present tense shows the same formative element as seen in ἔσθησα--originally θησικόω--an extended form of the root is seen in the future, perfect, and aorist passive tense-stems.)

708x. έρχομαι, I have,hold, έρχομαι, έρχομαι, έρχομαι, ΣΕΧΙΣΩΣΕΧ (This very important verb may well serve as an object-lesson in the kinds of phonetic change brought about by the evanescence of original initial sigma: to be noted is the smooth-breathing of the present stem, the rough-breathing of the future stem, the original reduplication of the perfect stem [σεσεκίκα].)

208x. θέλω, I will/wish/desire/enjoy, θέλω, θέλω, θέλω, θέλω, θέλω, ΘΕΛ (The Ετα-augment of this verb derives from its older Attic form θάλω, where the Epsilon of the root had the Syllabic augment and became Θά.)

154x. ἱστημαι, trans: I cause to stand, ἱστημαι, intrans: I stand: στήσεις, στήσεις, στήσεις, στήσεις, στήσας, ΣΤΗ/ΣΤΑ (One needs to learn the idiosyncrasies of this MI-verb: alternation of long and short vowels in singular & plural of present and aorist active; partial assimilation to Omega-verb conjugation in the imperfect, distinct causative active and intransitive forms in the aorist.)

148x. καλέω, I call/name/invite, καλέω, καλέω, καλέω, καλέω, καλέω, καλέω, ΚΑΛΕ/ΚΑΛΗ (The chief irregularity of this verb is formation of the perfect and aorist passive stems from an alternative form of the verb root.)

61x. κηρύσσω, I proclaim/preach, κηρύσσω, κηρύσσω, κηρύσσω, κηρύσσω, ΚΗΡΥΧ (The apparent irregularities here are all explained in terms of phonetic changes: the present stem shows the formative element -υO added to the root κηροκ-; the aorist passive stem shows assimilation of Kappa to Theta by aspiration: κηροκ- χθ.)

56x. κραγέω, I cry out/call out, κραγέω, κραγέω, κραγέω, κραγέω, κραγέω, κραγέω, ΚΡΑΓ (The apparent irregularities here are all explained in terms of phonetic changes: the resultant present stem shows the formative element -υO added to the root κραγ-)}

114x. κρίνω, I judge (often “condemn”)/decide/prefer, κρίνω, κρίνω, κρίνω, κρίνω, κρίνω, κρίνω, ΚΡΙΝ (Note typical liquid formations with loss of Sigma in future and aorist)

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258x, λαμβάνω. I take/receive, λαμβάνω, λήμψωμαι, ἔλαβον, εἴληφα, -ς, ἐλήμψθην, ΛΑΒ (The present stem displays the formative elements of infixed nasal + -αν-, extraordinary in Hellenistic verb is the analogical extension of the Mu before labial /p/ into the future and aorist passive stems. The perfect active stem depends upon an original reduplication of the older form of the verb root, ΣΑΒ in σεσάβῃ.)

2354x, λέγω. I say/speak, λέγω, ἔρω, εἶκον, εἰρήκα, εἰρήμη, ἐρήμησθι; three different verb roots supply tense-stems: ΔΕΓ the present stems, ΕΡ/ΠΕ/ΡΗ the future, perfect & aorist passive stems, and ΕΦΗ the aorist active stem.

109x, μέλλω. I am about to, μέλλω, μελλήσσω, -ς, -ς, ΜΕΛ (note that this verb functions mostly as an auxiliary with an infinitive to create a periphrastic future tense, but it is also used personally or impersonally to refer to what is destined).

118x, μένω. I remain/live/abide/stay/reside, μένω, μενάω, ἐμένα, μεμένηκα, -ς, -ς, ΜΕΝ/ΜΟΝ/ΜΝ (Note typical liquid formations with loss of Sigma in future and aorist)

318x, οἶδα. I know/understand, ἔιΔ/ΟΙΔ/ΙΔ (This is a perfect tense form with present meaning; therefore the future-perfect εἰδήσαω has a simple future sense and the superperfect ἠδεν has the sense of an imperfect tense.)

52x, πείθω. I persuade, πείθω, πείσω, ἐπείσα, πεπειθα, πεπείμα, ἐπείσθην, ΠΕΙΘ, ΠΟΙΘ, ΠΙΘ (It should be noted that in the middle-passive forms this verb often bears the sense “I trust/am convinced” or “I obey/give heed (to)”)

73x, πίω. I drink, πίω, πόμαι, ἐπομ, πέτσκοκα, -ς, ἐπάθην, ΠΙΠΟΙΩ (It should be noted that the present stem only has a formative Nu; note also that the future of this verb, as of ἔσθω, φάγομαι, lacks the characteristic future Sigma-marker.)

90x, πίπτω. I fall, πίπτω, πεποθμαι, ἐπεσον/ἐπέσα, τεπθώκα, -ς, -ς, ΠΕΤ/ΠΟΤΙΠΤ (Reduplication in the present stem should be noted; the sigma in the future and aorist is a consequence of historical phononic change of Tau to Sigma).

52x, σπείρω. I sow, σπείρω, σπερω, ἐσπερω, ἐσπερμαι, ἐσπάρην, ΣΠΕΡ/ΣΠΟΡ/ΣΠΑΡ (Note typical liquid formations with loss of Sigma in future and aorist)

100x, τίθημι. I put/place, τίθημι, ὁθημ, ἔθηκα, τεθεὶκα, τέθειμα, ἔτεθην, ΘΗΘΕ (One needs to learn the idiosyncrasies of this MI-verb: alternation between long and short vowels in singular & plural of present and aorist active; partial assimilation to Omega-verb conjugation in the imperfect; loss of aspiration in root syllable owing to dissimilation of aspirates in the aorist passive.)

66x, φέρω. I carry/bear/lead, φέρω, φέσω, ἰνεκα, ἐνέγα, ἐνέγμαι, ἐνέγκην, ΦΕΡ/ΦΟΡ/ΕΝΕΚ/ENOK/ENK/OΣ (three different roots supply different tense-stems for this verb: ΦΕΡ/ΦΟΡ the present, OΣ the future, and ΕΝΕΚ/ΕΝΟΚ/ΕΝΚ the aorist, perfect, and aorist passive).

66x, φημί. I say/affirm, φημί, φήσω, ἔφησα, -ς, -ς, ΦΗ/ΦΑ (This verb shows typical MI-verb alternation between long-vowel stem in singular, short-vowel stem in the plural; the GNT shows the future “passive” while the aorist “passive” functions intransitively in the aorist.)

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