

Chapter 4: Learning the full story of the fish symbol used to represent Christianity

In the early church period (around AD 100 to around AD 300), Romans persecuted Christians. Because of this Christians held their services in secret and even developed secret codes. One secret code was a fish symbol. Why a fish symbol? Because someone realized that the Greek word for fish also formed an acronym, meaning that if you take each letter in "ichthus" it could stand for another word. This week you will learn about the words formed from those letters.

Lesson 1: The letter epsilon

- It is a vowel.
- It is pronounced like the "e" in "met."

Greek	epison
ε	small
Ε	capital

Lesson 2: New word: God

- θεός
- Pronounced like this: thee-os
- Remember that the Greek "s" sound can take two forms:
 - σ Used whenever it is at the beginning or within a word
 - ς Used at the end of a word

Lesson 3: Possessive: God's

- Greek does not use "'s" to make possessive or show ownership.
- Instead a masculine noun will change the last syllable to ΟΥ
- Therefore, "God's" will look like this: θεοῦ
- Pronounced like this: thee-ou
 - Remember that "th" is like the "th" in "think."
 - the "ou" is like the "ou" in "group."
- Please note that the accent mark changed.
- In this course I will not explain why accent marks change. It is complicated and you only need to know the reason if you are writing in Greek. If not, you will only need to recognize the difference between a breathing mark and accents. I will always tell you this when I introduce a new word.

Lesson 4: New word: Savior

- σωτήρ
- Pronounced like this: sew-tear
- This is not the tear like you cry a tear, but tear like you tear a page out of a book.

Lesson 5: Putting Ichthus together

- I mentioned that the early Christians used secret codes to communicate with each other. Ichthus was one of those. I will write it here without a breathing mark or accent:
 - ιχθυσ
- Now I will write it in a vertical line
- ι
- χ
- θ
- υ
- σ I will use the other form of s here because it will form the first letter of a word
- I will repeat them and include the words you have learned so far. I will also capitalize Christ and God's:
- Ἰησους Jesus
- Χριστός Christ
- Θεοῦ God's
- υἱός son
- σωτήρ savior

Lesson 6: So you now understand the secret code behind ιχθυσ

- If you take each of the Greek letters of ιχθυσ you will have the first letters of 5 new words which form the phrase: "Jesus Christ God's son savior"
- One of the early Christians realized this trick, and it became a popular way of communicating between Christians. Archaeologists have discovered this on walls in houses and in artwork.

What you have learned so far

1. Alphabet

Greek small	Greek capital		English
α	Α	alpha	short a
ε	Ε	epsilon	short e
η	Η	eta	ay
θ	Θ	theta	th

ι	Ι	iota	i/ee
ο	Ο	omicron	o
ρ	Ρ	rho	r
σ ς	Σ	sigma	s
τ	Τ	tau	t
υ	Υ	upsilon	u
χ	Χ	chi	ch
ω	Ω	omega	long o

2. Breathing marks and “h” sound: week 2

3. Accents: week 2

4. Diphthongs from letters we have covered so far: week 2

- ΟΙ ΟΥ ΥΙ

- You can memorize them if you want. Or you can wait and I will tell you if each new word has a diphthong or not.

Vocabulary (this will always be in alphabetical order)

ἦ or

θεός God

Ἰησοῦς Jesus

ἰχθύς fish

σωτήρ savior

υἱός son

Χριστός Christ