

30. μι Verbs, εἰμί

Lesson in a Nutshell

Mi verbs are an ancient form of the Greek verb that behave slightly differently than the others. For the most part, they are very easy to recognize and the clues we have already learned will still apply.

There is one last form of the verb that we must mention. These are usually called the μι verbs because in their lexical form they end in μι in rather than ω.

In John 1 we will come across three μι verbs: δίδωμι, φημί, and ἵστημι.

For study purposes, I have added τίθημι and δείκνυμι to the chart below. The μι verb is an ancient form. There are not very many of them in the New Testament but the few that occur do so with great frequency.

Here are the principal parts of some μι verbs.
What patterns do you see?

Present	Future Active	Aorist Active	Perfect Active	Perfect Middle/Passive	Aorist Passive
δίδωμι I give	δώσω	ἔδωκα	δέδωκα	δέδομαι	ἐδόθην
ἵστημι I stand	στήσω	ἔστησα	ἔστηκα		ἐστάθην
τίθημι I place, put	θήσω	ἔθηκα	τέθεικα	τέθειμαι	ἐτέθην
δείκνυμι I show	δείξω	ἔδειξα	δέδειχα		ἐδειχθην

For the most part, you would be able to parse the μι verbs just by using the clues you have already learned for the regular verbs. (φημί is an unusual μι verb that only occurs in two tense stems, so don't worry about it.)

Here are the four strange twists that **μι** verbs throw at you.

1. In the present tense, **μι** verbs reduplicate the initial letter and separate the reduplicated consonant with an iota.

This is easy to see with **δίδωμι**. It is less obvious with the other examples. Here is what happened.

The root of **ἴστημι** is **στα**. When it is reduplicated, it becomes **σιστα**. But the repetition of the sigma was offensive to the Greek ear, so they turned it into a rough breathing: **ἴστα**.

The root of **τίθημι** is **θε**. When this is reduplicated it becomes **θιθε**. You are probably getting enough of a feel for Greek by now to know that this sound would offend the Greek ear. So they de-aspirated the first **θ** and made it a **τ**: **τιθε**.

2. **μι** verbs use slightly different endings in the present active indicative, as you can see below.

Present Active Indicative
δίδωμι
δίδως
δίδωσιν
δίδομεν
δίδοτε
διδόασιν

3. The stem vowel of the **μι** verb changes a lot. It can shorten, lengthen, or drop out completely.
4. Most of the **μι** verbs use **κα** instead of **σα** to indicate aorist tense. These are called “kappa aorists.”

However, in all the other tenses, the endings look like what we have come to expect. All the clues apply. We simply have to be aware of the slight variations in the present active indicative.

Here is a sample of **δίδωμι** with endings for your viewing pleasure. Notice how the clues we have learned apply.

Present Indicative	Future Indicative	Aorist Indicative	Perfect Indicative	Present Subjunctive	Aorist Subjunctive
δίδωμι	δώσω	ἔδωκα	δέδωκα	διδῶ	δῶ
δίδως	δώσεις	ἔδωκας	δέδωκας	διδῶς	δῶς
δίδωσιν	δώσει	ἔδωκεν	δέδωκεν	διδῶ	δῶ
δίδομεν	δώσομεν	ἔδώκαμεν	δεδώκαμεν	διδῶμεν	δῶμεν
δίδοτε	δώσετε	ἔδώκατε	δεδώκατε	διδῶτε	δῶτε
διδόασιν	δώσουσιν	ἔδωκαν	δέδωκαν	διδῶσιν	δῶσιν

εἶμί

εἶμί is a very irregular **μί** verb. It is also one of the most common words in Greek. The best thing to do is simply memorize it. There is no aorist or perfect form of **εἶμί**.

εἶμί (I am)			
	Present	Imperfect	Future
1s	εἶμί I am	ἦμην I was	ἔσομαι I will be
2s	εἶ you are	ἦς you were	ἔσῃ you will be
3s	ἐστίν he/she/it is	ἦν he/she/it was	ἔσται he/she/it will be
1p	ἐσμέν we are	ἦμεν we were	ἐσόμεθα we will be
2p	ἐστέ you (all) are	ἦτε you (all) were	ἔσεσθε you (all) will be
3p	εἰσίν they are	ἦσαν they were	ἔσονται they will be