Nominative, Vocative, and Accusative

It's time to see how the Greek case system is more flexible than perhaps you have realized. The term in bold at the beginning of each category below is its technical name. These are the terms commentators will use.

NOMINATIVE

15.1 **Subject**. We learned that the nominative can be used to indicate the subject of a verb.

φωνὴ ἐγένετο ἐκ   τῶν οὐρανῶν, σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου ὁ   ἀγαπητός
voice came   out of heaven   *you* are son   my   the beloved
A *voice* came from heaven, "*You* are my Son, the Beloved"
(Mark 1:11).

φωνή does the action of the verb ἐγένετο. σύ is the subject of the verb εἶ.

15.2 **Unexpressed subject**. We learned that a Greek sentence does not require an expressed subject. A verb by itself can be a complete sentence. The verb ἀκούω means, "I hear," which is a sentence. The subject is supplied by the personal ending on the verb.

οἴδαμεν δὲ ὅτι καλὸς ὁ νόμος
we know   but that good   the law
But *we know* that the law is good *(1 Tim 1:8).*

There is no expressed subject "we," so it's derived from the personal ending on the verb οἴδαμεν.

15.3 If a simple pronoun derived from the verb's personal ending might be confusing, translators will sometimes supply the actual subject. Take, for example, Hebrews 4:7–9.

He again sets a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, "Today if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts." For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that. Consequently, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. *(NASB)*

Who is the "He" who "would not have spoken"? It may appear, initially, to be Joshua; that is what the normal rules of English grammar would require. However, the subject of the verb is "God," who is alluded to in the context. That is why the NASB capitalizes "He," and why the NIV replaces "He" with "God." The ESV also supplies the antecedent "God" and adds a footnote, "Greek *he*," as is its custom in this situation.

οὐκ ἂν περὶ ἄλλης ἐλάλει μετὰ ταῦτα ἡμέρας.
not would concerning another *he was speaking* after these days
ESV: God would not have spoken of another day later on *(Heb 4:8).*

Another example is Romans 3:9, where the ESV adds "Jews" and marks it with a footnote, "Greek *Are we*."

τί οὖν; προεχόμεθα; οὐ πάντως·
what therefore *we are better off* not at all
ESV: What then? Are we *Jews* any better off? No, not at all.
CSB: What then? Are we any better off? Not at all!

15.4 **Predicate nominative**. We also learned that the nominative is used for a predicate nominative, primarily with εἰμί and γίνομαι.

ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ χριστός
I am *the Christ*
I am *the Christ (Matt 24:5).*

χριστός is predicating something about ἐγώ.

15.5 **Simple apposition**. A word in the nominative can be in apposition to another substantive in the nominative. "Apposition" means that the second word refers to the same entity as the first and is telling us something more about that entity. The two substantives will be next to each other and in the same case. Simple apposition occurs in all four cases.

παραγίνεται Ἰωάννης ὁ βαπτιστὴς κηρύσσων ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ
came John *the Baptist* preaching in the desert
NIV: John *the Baptist* came, preaching in the wilderness *(Matt 3:1).*

ὁ βαπτιστής is referring to the same person as Ἰωάννης, and identifies this John as opposed to other Johns.

Παῦλος ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ
Paul *apostle* of Christ Jesus through will of God
Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God *(Eph 1:1)*

Paul is the apostle writing the letter.

VOCATIVE

15.6 **Simple address**. We learned that the vocative case is used for *direct address.* When speaking directly to a person, the word used is in the vocative.

ἔρχου κύριε Ἰησοῦ.
come *Lord Jesus*
Come, *Lord Jesus*! *(Rev 22:20)*

15.7 **Emphatic address**. We also learned that ὦ may be included if there is deep emotion or emphasis.

ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτῇ, ὦ γύναι, μεγάλη σου ἡ πίστις
Jesus said to her *O woman* great your the faith
ESV: Then Jesus answered her, "*O woman,* great is your faith!" *(Matt 15:28)*
NET: Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, your faith is great!"

15.8 **Nominative for vocative**. In many instances, the nominative is used in place of the vocative, so don't be surprised when you mouse over the word, thinking it should be a vocative, but it parses as a nominative.

ἡ παῖς, ἔγειρε
Child   arise
Child, get up! *(Luke 8:54)*

παῖς is nominative, and the child is being directly addressed.

ACCUSATIVE

15.9 **Direct object**. We have seen how the accusative is used for the direct object (5.13).

καὶ εἶχον ἰχθύδια ὀλίγα
also they had *fish*   few
They also had a few small *fish* (Mark 8:7).

15.10 **Object of a preposition**. We have also seen the accusative used for the object of certain prepositions (6.8).

ἰδοὺ μάγοι ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν παρεγένοντο εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα
behold Magi from East   came   to *Jerusalem*
Magi from the east came to *Jerusalem (Matt 2:1).*

Ἱεροσόλυμα is the object of the preposition εἰς, which takes its object in the accusative.

15.11 **Simple apposition**. The accusative can be in an appositional relationship to another substantive in the accusative.

εἶδεν Σίμωνα καὶ Ἀνδρέαν τὸν ἀδελφὸν Σίμωνος
he saw Simon   and Andrew *the brother*   of Simon
He saw Simon and Andrew, Simon's *brother (Mark 1:16).*

This Andrew was in fact Simon's brother.

15.12 **Unexpressed direct object**. It's common for Greek to drop a verb's direct object, and English translators must add them back in (since English doesn't allow this, for the most part). This often happens when there is a parallelism in the sentence, and words from the first half are assumed in the second.

ἔλαβεν ὁ Πιλᾶτος τὸν Ἰησοῦν καὶ ἐμαστίγωσεν.
took   Pilate   Jesus   and flogged
Pilate took Jesus and flogged *him (John 19:1).*

Ἰησοῦν is the direct object of ἔλαβεν, and also the implied direct object of ἐμαστίγωσεν.

15.13* **Double accusative**. Some verbs require two objects to complete their meaning. This construction falls into two categories.

Person-thing. Sometimes the two objects will be a personal (e.g., "you") and a nonpersonal (e.g., "things") word.

ἐκεῖνος ὑμᾶς διδάξει   πάντα
he   *you*   he will teach   *all things*
He will teach *you all things (John 14:26).*

The coming Holy Spirit will teach the disciples ("you"), and he will teach everything ("all things") Jesus taught them.

Object-complement. The other category is the object-complement. This means that one word will be the direct object and the second will predicate something about the direct object.

δεῦτε ὀπίσω μου, καὶ ποιήσω ὑμᾶς ἁλιεῖς   ἀνθρώπων.
follow after   me   and I will make *you*   *fishermen* of men
ESV: Follow me, and I will make *you* [to be] *fishers* of men *(Matt 4:19).*

Jesus is going to make the disciples (ὑμᾶς) into fishermen (ἁλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων).

Sometimes a translation will add a word like "as" or "to be" before the second accusative to help you understand its meaning.

ἀπέστειλεν   τὸν υἱὸν   αὐτοῦ   ἱλασμὸν
He sent   the son   of him   *propitiation*
NIV: he … sent his Son *as an atoning sacrifice (1 John 4:10).*
NASB: He … sent His Son *to be the propitiation*.

15.14* Subject of an infinitive. A word in the accusative can function as if it were the subject of an infinitive. Infinitives are "in-finite" in that they are not limited by a subject, but a word in the accusative can act as if it were a subject.

ὁ θεός … οὐκ ἐάσει   ὑμᾶς   πειρασθῆναι ὑπὲρ ὃ   δύνασθε
God   not will allow *you*   *to be tempted*   beyond what you are able
NIV: God… will not let *you* be tempted beyond what you can bear *(1 Cor 10:13).*

ὑμᾶς is accusative and is functioning as the subject of the infinitive πειρασθῆναι.

15.15* Measure. The word in the accusative can behave as an adverb, modifying the verb.

ζητεῖτε πρῶτον   τὴν βασιλείαν   τοῦ   θεοῦ
seek   *first*   the kingdom   of   God
Seek *first* the kingdom of God *(Matt 6:33).*

πρῶτον is technically an adjective, but here it's functioning as an adverb.

15.16* Time how long. When used with time designations, the accusative is used to indicate length of time. This can be called the "accusative of time how long."

ἦν   ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ τεσσεράκοντα ἡμέρας πειραζόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ σατανᾶ
he was in the desert *forty*   *days*   being tempted   by Satan
He was in the wilderness *forty days*, tempted by Satan *(Mark 1:13).*

VOCABULARY

ὄχλος	crowd (175)
πόλις	city; town (163)
ἔθνος	nation (162) plural: Gentiles
ἡμέρα	day (389)
ὄνομα	name (229)
Ἰουδαῖος	Jewish (195) noun: a Jew
Παῦλος	Paul (158)
Πέτρος	Peter (156)

92,130 word occurrences out of 137,663 (67%). Congratulations. You now know two-thirds of all word occurrences in the Greek Testament.