

How to Read Tibetan

All-China Edition



How to Read Tibetan: All China Edition
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1. How to Use This Book

This book was originally written for expatriate students learning Tibetan at a university in China. The students were especially interested in how to read the Tibetan Bible and how to share its truths with others. Their need suggested a book that would be a guided tour of a Biblical text, pointing out the fundamentals of Tibetan grammar and introducing the specialized terms that are used to describe the Christian faith. The nine lessons in this book cover the basic building blocks of the language, and how they are put together, using examples from a new translation of the Tibetan Bible. In this way you will begin learning spiritually significant terms from the very first lesson.

Before you begin to study this book, you should be able to read a very simple sentence in Tibetan འགྲུབ་ལྷན་གྱི་ script. Most students are able to do this after their first 6-10 months of language study. The endnotes to each chapter give you references to standard textbooks of spoken and written Tibetan, so that you can get more detailed information about any points that may be unclear. Reviewers from Sichuan and Qinghai Provinces, as well as some from the Tibet Autonomous Region, have made many valuable suggestions about keeping the text free from regional bias. This 'All China Edition' should be useful for students of each of the three major dialects of Tibetan.

Jesus Christ Has Power to Save Us, which is the companion text for *How to Read Tibetan*, is an abridged version of the Gospel of Mark. It was translated for Tibetans by a native speaker highly skilled in the use of the language. Its grammar and style are authentically Tibetan, and most users of this book will already be familiar with the story it tells. The Gospel of Mark has a fast-paced, action-oriented style that appeals to modern readers, yet it addresses issues that are part of the everyday spiritual concerns of most Tibetan people: evil spirits, healing illness, and the way to lead a good life. For these reasons, it's a good idea to use this book with a language helper. The names of the major grammatical features in this book are given in both English and Tibetan, according to the traditional Tibetan system of grammar, so that your language helper can recognize what is being taught.

This book is *not* intended as a complete textbook of modern written Tibetan. It is only an introduction to the grammar of the text *Jesus Christ Has Power to Save Us*. It does not cover the basics of the alphabet, or how letters are combined into syllables. Nor does it cover a number of common grammatical constructions. But anyone who studies this book will have an excellent start on learning to read any other modern Tibetan text, from the newspaper to the Bible. With time and practice, **anyone can learn to read Tibetan.**

A Word About the Language: The spoken forms of the Tibetan language are different from the written form. The spoken Tibetan language as used in China today may be divided into three major groups of dialects: 1) *Amdo* (found in Qinghai, Gansu,

and parts of Sichuan Province); 2) *Kham* (found in Sichuan, Qinghai, Yunnan, and the eastern Tibet Autonomous Region); and 3) *U-Tsang* or Central Tibetan (found in the central part of the Tibet Autonomous Region). Each of these large groups of dialects includes many local variants, some of which have not yet been fully described by linguists.

The classical written language (the language of the Buddhist scriptures) can be understood by a well-educated reader from any dialect area, and in that sense the written language is the same for all Tibetans. In the past 50 years, however, a new form of written Tibetan has emerged, called modern written (or modern literary) Tibetan. This form of the language is in daily use by government, media, and the professions. It can be divided into three broad bands or 'registers' (high, middle, and low) according to its intended use and the number of years of education one needs in order to understand it well. Modern '**high literary**' is used mainly by creative writers, poets, religious scholars, and other intellectuals who have had a specialized monastic or university-level education. '**Mid-literary**' is the ordinary written language of Tibet, as used by people who have studied in secondary school. '**Low literary**' is used by people with three or four years of primary school (a common level of schooling in many areas). It is used at the village level for topics related to the community and its development: farming, health, education, etc.

One of the things that sets these levels apart from each other is how much of the spoken language finds its way into the written form. High literary written Tibetan has the fewest words that would also be found in any of the spoken dialects. Low literary has the most. In general, low level texts are easy to read but do not cross dialect boundaries well. High level texts cross dialect boundaries well but are not easy to read. Mid- and lower-literary texts tend to have characteristic dialect-based features (e.g. "Amdoisms" or "Centralisms") which reflect the speech of the area in which they were written. These may be perceived as "mistakes" or "poor style" by readers from other areas.

All readers should be aware that modern written Tibetan is not yet standardized to the degree that English is. There are regional and dialect-based differences in grammatical rules and many variants in spelling. Even highly educated Tibetans differ in their views about correct grammar and spelling, a fact which all students of the language should keep in mind when they ask questions of such people. Students should also be aware that there are differences between the classical descriptions of Tibetan grammar and those of modern linguists. This book refers to classical Tibetan grammar, but uses modern linguistic terms in order to help you make comparisons with English and other languages.

Things You Should Know: This book is available in two editions: a 26 chapter version for students of Central Tibetan, including the full text of *Jesus Christ Has Power to Save Us*, and this nine chapter "All China" edition. At the time of publication, it was hoped that Kham and Amdo versions of *Jesus Christ Has Power to Save Us* would appear soon.

As you study this book, it may help you to have available any of several modern textbooks of Tibetan. A list of recommended texts appears in Appendix 3. These books have been noted as suitable for beginning, intermediate, and advanced students.

By the time you finish this book, you'll be familiar with the life of Christ in Tibetan. You'll be well-equipped to read a low literary version of the entire Gospel of Mark, and you'll be able to use *Jesus Christ Has Power to Save Us* in your ministry (for example, in teaching Tibetan Christians how to read their own language). Your language helper will benefit, too, by reviewing grammatical concepts in Tibetan. May God bless you and your language helper as you use this book together.

2. Jesus and His World

Names of People, Places, and Things

Sooner or later, most students are confronted with a story or other Tibetan text which they are asked to read aloud in front of others. Often the reader's pulse begins to rise, the palms become sweaty, and there is a fidgety silence as he or she begins to form letters into syllables, syllables into words, and words into intelligible speech, all the while trying to remember the arcane rules of pronunciation, spelling and grammar. For some, this is so hard that they are tempted to give up in despair. But this doesn't need to happen. **Anyone can learn to read Tibetan fluently and confidently.** The key is to know how the language is put together (- and to get lots of practice!)

Like a Tibetan house, the Tibetan language is made up of simple building blocks. There are only two things you need to know about these building blocks: 1) what they are, and 2) how to put them together. In this book we will learn both these things.

Everything on a page of written Tibetan is either: 1) a word, 2) a word-connector called a grammatical particle, or 3) a punctuation mark. **Words** are the basic building blocks of the language.¹ **Grammatical particles** and **punctuation marks** are the cement that holds the building blocks together. The first secret to learning to read Tibetan is this: there are many words, but not many particles or punctuation marks. So if you know all the particles and punctuation marks, then everything else on the page is a word, and its meaning can be looked up in a dictionary.

Key Point: The Basics of the Tibetan Language

Words = 'Building Blocks'

Particles & Punctuation = 'Cement'

If you were building a house, you might use different kinds of building blocks for each type of construction: earthen bricks for the walls, cement blocks for the basement, decorative bricks for a walkway. With these three kinds of building blocks, you might construct an entire building. In a similar way, the Tibetan language is built from only six kinds of building blocks. These six building blocks are called nouns, pronouns, adverbs, adjectives, postpositions and verbs. These names may remind you of long-forgotten drudgery in grammar school, but don't let their names scare you. We'll look at each kind of building block in its turn and give you many examples.²

Key Point: The Six Building Blocks of the Tibetan Language

- | | | |
|-------------|---------------|------------------|
| 1. Nouns | 3. Adverbs | 5. Postpositions |
| 2. Pronouns | 4. Adjectives | 6. Verbs |

In this chapter we will only look at one kind of word, called a **noun**. Perhaps most people have a vague memory of a primary school teacher saying something about nouns. Fortunately, nouns are pretty much the simplest kind of word in any language (which is why you heard about them in primary school and not in university). A noun is just the name of something: it may be the name of a person, place, thing, quality, action, idea, or something else, but the main thing to remember is that nouns are just names. To get started, let's look at nouns as the names of people, places, or things.

Key Point: Nouns (Tibetan མིང་ཚིག་)

A noun is the name of something.

2.1 Names of People: Most of the people in *Jesus Christ Has Power to Save Us* are named below. Some of the names in the list may not be quite what you're used to in English, because these names have been translated directly into Tibetan from Greek. For example, 'John' is *Yohanan* and 'James' is *Yakob*. The name is printed in Tibetan letters in the first column, in English in the second, and the place where you can find this name is referenced in the third column. (The 'Reference' is the chapter number of this book enclosed in parentheses, followed by the chapter and verse number in the Gospel of Mark.)

Name	English	Reference
ཡེ་ཤུ	Jesus	Section titles
པེ་ཏྲོ་	Peter	(25) 5.37
ཡེ་ཤེ་བཀའ་	James	(25) 5.37
ཡེ་ཉ་འཇམ་མགོན་	John	(25) 5.37
པི་ལ་ཏཱ་	Pilate	(21) 15.8
ཡེ་ཤེ་བཀའ་	Joseph	(23) 15.42-43
མགོ་དཔལ་མ་མིང་ཡམ་མཁའ་	Mary Magdalene	(24) 16.1

ཡུ་དྲ་དབྱི་སི་ཀར་རེ། Judas Iscariot (20) 14.10

Notice that each name in the preceding list has a tiny open circle (called a *bindu* or འོ།) underneath its first syllable. This little circle tells the reader that the word was taken from a foreign language (in this case, Greek). Since the first complete edition of the Tibetan Bible in 1948, foreign names and loan words have been marked in Tibetan Bibles with these helpful little circles.³ (You can find in Appendix 1 a list of all the words in the text that are marked in this way.) Also notice the second syllable of the name Judas Iscariot. Underneath the letter ར་ is a small curly bit that looks like the digit '2'. This is called an *a-chung* or 'little a' in Tibetan. It is another way that Tibetans mark words as coming from a non-Tibetan language.

Despite the use of *bindus* and *a-chungs*, it still may not be clear to a Tibetan reader that a certain group of syllables is in fact a Jewish, Greek, or Roman name. In such cases, Tibetan has a handy little term ཟེར་བ། (meaning 'called' or 'so called') that can be used to make things clear. For example:

Name	English
མིའི་རིགས་ཀྱི་བུ་ཟེར་མཁའ་བ།	the one <u>called</u> 'Son of Humanity' (or 'Son of Man')
ཡུ་དྲ་དབྱི་སི་ཀར་རེ་ཟེར་བའི་མི་ཞིག་	a man <u>called</u> Judas Iscariot

2.2 Names of Places: Just as the names of people are nouns, the names of places are also nouns. Here are some place names from ancient Israel that you will find in the story. Notice the *bindu* under each first syllable:

Name	English	Reference
ག་ལིལ།	Galilee	(20) 1.14
ག་ཕར་ན་རུམ།	Capernaum	(21) 1.21
ན་ཙ་རེལ།	Nazareth	(21) 1.24
ཨི་སི་ར་ཨེལ།	Israel	(19) 12.29
ཨ་རི་མ་ཐ།	Arimathea	(23) 15.42-43

2.3 Names of Things: The names of things are usually the simplest nouns in Tibetan. Normally, names of things have either one or two syllables. Here are some examples of each.

Name	English	Reference
མི།	man, person	(21) 1.22
ལྷ།	boy, son	(23) 2.10
གཞོན་འདྲེ།	evil spirit	(13) 1.34
ཁང་པ།	house	(23) 2.1

As with the names of people, it may not be clear to a Tibetan reader that the name of a thing comes from a foreign language and is not a misspelled Tibetan word. Here again the Tibetan term ཟེར་བ། 'called' is useful. In the first example below, the Greek word for 'linen' (*linon*) has been marked with a bindu in the first example, and it has been joined to the Tibetan word ཟེར་བ། in the second example.

Name	English	Reference
ལིན་འོན།	linen	(23) 15.46
ལིན་འོན་ཟེར་བའི་རས།	cloth <u>called</u> linen ⁴	

2.4 Singular and Plural Nouns: Tibetan nouns are generally plural (more than one) unless followed by a word such as 'this' 'that' or 'one'. The context or setting will normally show if a noun refers to one or to more than one of something. There are also ways to mark nouns as plural using special 'add-on words' called **pluralizers**. The most common pluralizers are རྣམས། and ཚོ། though in older or higher literary versions of the Tibetan Bible you may see the pluralizer ཅག as well. ⁵

རྣམས། as Pluralizer:

གཤམ་པོ་རྣམས།	the dead (25) section title
ཉེ་གཞན་རྣམས།	the disciples (25) 5.40
བླ་ཆེན་རྣམས།	chief priests (20) 14.10

ཚོ། as Pluralizer:

ང་ཚོ།	we (19) sec. title
ཁྱེད་ཚོ།	you (20) 1.15
ཁོང་ཚོ།	they (21) 1.21

In addition, there are other words that make Tibetan nouns explicitly plural. ⁶

Word	Meaning	Example	Example Meaning	Reference
མང་པོ།	many	ནད་པ་མང་པོ།	many sick people	(22) 1.34
ཚང་མ།	all	མི་ཚང་མ།	everyone	(25) 5.42
བམས་ཅད།	all	བམས་བམས་ཅད།	all foods	(17) 7.19
ཁ་ཤས།	a few	མི་ཁ་ཤས།	a few people	(22) 15.35
གཉིས།	two	དུམ་བུ་གཉིས།	two pieces	(22) 15.38

2.5 Honorific Nouns Like many other Asian languages, Tibetan has a system of polite speech that is used to show respect to others. Tibetans refer to this kind of language as ཞེས། , or 'honorific'. Some of the honorific nouns you will encounter in *Jesus Christ Has Power to Save Us* are: ⁷

Ordinary Noun	Meaning	Honorific Counterpart	Reference
གཟུགས་པོ།	body	སྐྱུ་གཟུགས།	(23) section title
ལག་པ།	hand	ལྷུག་པ།	(25) 5.23
རྒྱུ་པ།	foot	ཞབས།	(25) 5.22
བུ།	son	བྱམས།	(19) section title
སྐད།	voice	གསུང་།	(22) 15.37

The Particle ལགས། Yet another way that Tibetan makes personal names and other nouns honorific is by adding the particle ལགས།. For example, in Mark 14.45, Judas pretends to show respect to Jesus by adding this syllable to a noun meaning 'great teacher':

Name	English
སྟོན་པ།	great teacher, founder of a religion
སྟོན་པ་ལགས།	honorific form

Note that the particle ལགས། is sometimes also used in written language as a form of the verb 'to be'. More examples can be found in Matthew 14.33 in the 1903 New Testament, or Matthew 11.3 in the 1970 version.⁸

2.6 Noun Phrases: Nouns are not always used by themselves. Sometimes they are combined with other words to make a phrase that acts just like a noun. For example:

Name	English
པེ་ཏྲོ་དང་ཡོ་ཉེ་ནན།	Peter and John: noun list
པེ་ཏྲོ་འི་ཁང་པ།	Peter's house: noun + noun
དམ་པའི་གསུང་རབ།	Holy Bible: adjective + noun
ཉེ་གནས་པེ་ཏྲོ།	the disciple Peter: noun + noun

The last item, 'the disciple Peter' is called an **appositive**. An appositive occurs when two linked words or phrases refer to the same person or thing. In this case, 'Peter' and 'disciple' are one and the same, so 'the disciple Peter' is called an appositive phrase.⁹ In the translation used by this book, the Gospel of Mark begins with the appositive phrase 'God's Son Jesus Christ' (Mark 1.1).

2.7 Summary:

The written Tibetan language is made up of:

- a) **Words** that act like building blocks;
- b) **Grammatical particles** that act like cement, holding the building blocks together and showing how they relate to one another; and
- c) **Punctuation marks.**

There are six kinds of words in Tibetan:

- a) Nouns
- b) Pronouns
- c) Adverbs
- d) Adjectives
- e) Postpositions, and
- f) Verbs

Nouns are names of:

- a) People
- b) Places
- c) Things

Nouns can be:

- | | |
|-------------|------------------|
| a) Singular | c) Honorific |
| b) Plural | d) Non-Honorific |

Nouns can be combined with other words in **noun phrases**.

¹ Technically, it is the syllables themselves which are the smallest meaningful building blocks of the language, but the word-based approach taken in this book is probably more useful for students who are learning to read.

² For an overview of the six types of Tibetan words, see Joe Wilson's *Translating Buddhism from Tibetan*, p. 565.

³ There is another such little circle that appears **above** the line of letters. This is an abbreviation for the Tibetan letter ཨ' . You may see this abbreviation occasionally in other works, e.g. in Tournadre and Dorje's *Manual of Standard Tibetan*, (English Edition) p. 405, but it is not used in this book.

⁴ Linen is an important commodity in the Bible and has great symbolic significance. See Ryken et al. *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998).

⁵ The use of pluralizers in the Lhasa variety of spoken Tibetan is discussed in Bartee and Droma's *A Beginning Textbook of Lhasa Tibetan*, p. 32, and in Tournadre and Dorje, p. 86. The use of pluralizers in the written language is discussed in Goldstein's *Essentials of Modern Literary Tibetan*, p. 50.

⁶ For a description of pluralizers in the Lhasa variety of spoken Tibetan, see Tournadre and Dorje, p. 86.

⁷ For a useful table of ordinary and honorific nouns, see Bartee and Droma, p. 199-204.

⁸ In the 19th century, the Moravians translated portions of the Bible into Tibetan, based on the dialect of Ladakh. In 1903, the British and Foreign Bible Society produced a New Testament translation based on Central Tibetan as used in West Bengal, India. In 1933, this translation was reprinted in Shanghai, and came to be known as the 'Shanghai Version'. In 1948 the Moravians produced the first complete Tibetan Bible translation. The New Testament section of this translation was revised and published in India in 1970. In general, the 1970 New Testament is a higher literary text, while the 1903 New Testament is a lower mid-literary text. Both translations remain in use today in India.

⁹ For a description and examples of noun phrases, see Wilson p. 193.

3. Words That Add Spice

In the last chapter, we saw that words are the basic building blocks of the Tibetan language, and we learned that there are six kinds of words: nouns, pronouns, adverbs, adjectives, postpositions, and verbs. We learned that nouns are names of people, places, and things, and that they can be singular, plural, honorific, or combined with other words in noun phrases. Versatile as they are, life would be very boring if nouns were the only words we had. (If you doubt this, try speaking for 30 seconds using only nouns!)

In this chapter we'll talk about words that add variety. These words let us talk about our friend Tashi using pronouns (that is, a word other than his name). They let us tell the story about how quickly (adverb) Tashi had to run to get away from the hairy black (adjectives) yak. Or how we met him after (postposition) class for a cup of tea and some well-aged yak meat. Pronouns, adjectives, and adverbs add variety, vividness and color to our speech, and also to the stories in the Bible. In this chapter we'll look at these words that add spice to life, plus another, more ordinary, kind of word called a postposition.

3.1 Pronouns: (Tibetan ཚབ་ཚོགས། or མིང་ཚབ།) A pronoun is a word that can be used in place of a noun. Instead of saying 'Tashi', you can say 'he'. Instead of saying 'Drolma', you can say 'she'. Instead of saying 'the book', you can say 'it'. As there are different kinds of nouns, there are also different kinds of pronouns. Some pronouns are called personal pronouns ¹⁰ because they refer to persons. The most common personal pronouns used in Central Tibet are:

Singular Pronouns		Plural Pronouns	
ང།	I	ང་ཚོ།	we
ཁྱེད་རང།	you (honorific)	ཁྱེད་རང་ཚོ།	you (honorific) ¹¹
ཁོང།	he (honorific)	ཁོང་ཚོ།	they (honorific)

The pronouns 'you', 'he' and 'they' have non-honorific counterparts, which are most commonly used outside Central Tibet:

ཁྱེད།	you (non-hon.)	ཁྱེད་ཚོ།	you (non-hon.)
ཁྱེད་རང།	you	ཁྱེད་རང་ཚོ།	you (plural)
ཁོ།	he, she (non-hon.)	ཁོ་ཚོ།	they (non-hon.)
ཁོ་མོ།	she (non-hon.)		

Written Tibetan has other personal pronouns (called inclusive and exclusive pronouns) as well, but they do not appear in *Jesus Christ Has Power to Save Us*, and so will not be dealt with here.¹²

Another type of pronoun refers back to something or someone that was just mentioned. The most common of these is the word རང་། meaning 'self' or 'itself'. Here are some examples:

Tibetan Word	Meaning	Reference
རང་།	self	
རང་དང་འབྲུ་བས།	as yourself	(19) 12.31
རང་གི་བློ་དུ།	in front of, to Himself	(17) 7.14
ཁོང་རང་རེད།	(it is) He Himself	(20) 14.44
བདེན་པ་རང་རེད།	(it is) the truth itself	(22) 15.39

The word རང་། has other uses as well, as we will see in Chapter Eight (8.5).

3.2 Relative and Interrogative Pronouns or ལྷོ་སྐྱོ། Sometimes Bible characters need to ask questions. When they do, they use a set of general question words such as 'who', 'which', 'when', etc. which are also a kind of pronoun. The examples below show how these pronouns are used. Some of these examples include words that have not yet been introduced. If you don't understand them, don't worry. Just try to get the idea of what the pronoun means.

Tibetan	Meaning	Example	Meaning	Reference
སྤ།	who	འདི་སྤ་ཡིན།	<u>Who</u> is this?	(24) 4.41
གང་།	what	རྒྱ་མཚན་གང་ཡིན།	<u>What</u> is the reason?	(21)15.14
		དོན་གང་ཡིན།	<u>What</u> is the meaning?	(24) 4.40
ཅི།	what	ཅི་ཟ་ཅི་འཇུང་།	<u>What</u> you eat / drink	Mt. 6.25 (1903)

At other times, a set of pronouns that refers to people is needed to say things like 'anyone', 'no one', or 'whoever'. Such words are called 'indefinite' or 'general' pronouns.

Tibetan	Meaning (Reference)
སུ་ཡང་།	whoever, anyone, no one
གཞན་སུ་ཡང་།	no one else (25) 5.37
སུ་ཡང་དད་པ་བྱས་ནས།	whoever believes (25) 16.16

Certain adjectives (see Section 3.4) can also be used as pronouns, as in the list below.¹³

Tibetan	Meaning (Reference)
དེ།	that (one, person)
འདི།	this
འདི་ཅི་ཡིན།	What is this? (21) 1.27
ཐམས་ཅད།	all (23) 2.12
གཅིག	one (person) , something
གཅིག་གིས་གཅིག་ལ།	one to another (21) 1.27
གཉིས།	both
པ་མ་གཉིས།	father and mother (25) 5.40

3.3 Adverbs: Adverbs as such are not a part of the traditional description of Tibetan grammar. They are words that tell you how or in what way something was done. In English, adverbs are words like slowly, quickly, very, and desperately. In a Tibetan sentence, you normally find adverbs next to other adverbs, or with adjectives or verbs. Fortunately for students of the language, Tibetan doesn't have many adverbs, at least not stand-alone adverbs like the ones in English. Three Tibetan adverbs you may be familiar with already are:

Tibetan	Meaning (Reference)
ཉ་ཅང་།	very
ཉ་ཅང་སྐྱེག་པ།	very afraid (18) 9.6
ལམ་སེང་།	immediately
ལམ་སེང་ཡར་ལངས།	got up immediately (23) 2.12

ཡོངས་སུ།	wholly, completely
ཡོངས་སུ་ནི་བར་གྱིས།	completely peaceful (24) 4.39

Take note of the adverb ལམ་སེང་། meaning 'immediately'. This is Mark the Evangelist's favorite adverb, and its use is a characteristic feature of his style - it appears many times in his Gospel, though only twice in *Jesus Christ Has Power to Save Us*.

3.3.1 Adverbial Pronouns: Besides words which are always adverbs, Tibetan has a class of words that grammarians call adverbial pronouns.¹⁴ These words are like **adverbs** because they show how, how much, or to what extent something was done.¹⁵ They are like **pronouns** (a kind called relative pronouns) because they link back to something that has already been said. For example, in Mark 2.7, the scribes ask each other, 'How does this man dare talk in this way? 'In this way' (Tibetan འདི་ལྟར།) refers back to the speech of Jesus in Mark 2.5 and so is like a pronoun, yet it also modifies the verb 'talk' and so is like an adverb.

Tibetan	Meaning
གང་འདྲ།	how
ཇི་ལྟར།	how, in what way
དེ་ལྟར།	like that
འདི་ལྟར།	like this

Examples	Reference
1. ཇི་ལྟར་ ལུ་ དགོས་ མིན་ མ་ཤེས། how say must not not know. (Peter) didn't know how to respond	(18) 9.6
2. མུས་ཀྱང་ དེ་ལྟར་ བཟོ་ མི་ཐུབ། No one like that make not able No one could make it like that	(18) 9.3
3. འདི་ལྟར་ ལབ་ དགོས། like this say must must tell this (to Jesus' disciples)	(25) 16.7

3.3.2 **Adverbials:** Besides words which are themselves adverbs or adverbial pronouns, Tibetan uses some of the particles explained in Chapter 6 to make phrases that work like adverbs. ¹⁶ Such phrases are called 'adverbials'.

3.3.2.1 **The Adverbial Particles** གི་སྐོར་ནས། or གི་ངང་ནས། These can be added to a phrase to make it into an adverbial, to show how or in what way something was done.

Example 1:	དགོན་མཚོག་གི་དབང་།	God's power
Adverbial 1:	དགོན་མཚོག་གི་དབང་གི་སྐོར་ནས།	by (God's) power 1.34
Example 2:	སྤོ་ལོག།	courage, bravery
Adverbial 2a:	སྤོ་ལོག་གི་ངང་ནས།	courageously, bravely
Adverbial 2b:	སྤོ་ལོག་ཆེན་པོའི་ངང་ནས།	with great courage (23) 15.42

3.3.2.2 **Using the Agentive Particles** གྱིས། གིས། གྱིས། **to Make Adverbials:** These three particles ¹⁷ which will be discussed in Chapter Six (6.2.3), can be used in a similar way.

Example noun:	རས།	cloth	
Adverbial:	རས་གྱིས།	with a cloth	(23) 15.46
Example noun:	རྩ་ལྷུག།	whip	
Adverbial:	རྩ་ལྷུག་གིས།	with a whip	(21) 15.15
Example phrase:	རྣམས་པ་ཅི་ཡོད།	as much as (you) have	
Adverbial:	རྣམས་པ་ཅི་ཡོད་གྱིས།	with as much as (you) have	(19) 12.30

3.3.2.3 **Using the ལ་དོན་ Particles to Make Adverbials:** The ལ་དོན་ particles (discussed in Chapter Six) can be joined to adjectives to make adverbs.

Adjective + ལ་དོན།	= Adverb	Change in Meaning	Reference
དམ་པོ། ས་	དམ་པོར།	firm -> firmly	(20) 14.44
གསོན་པོ། ས་	གསོན་པོར།	live -> alive	(25) 16.6

3.4 **Adjectives** (Tibetan རྒྱུན་ཚིག་) These words describe nouns: salty tea, good news, big house. In most cases in Tibetan, you find adjectives right after the nouns they modify, but sometimes they come before them. Examples of common adjectives are:

Adjective	Meaning	Example	Translation
བཟང་།	good	འཕྲིན་བཟང་།	good news (20) 1.14
ཀུན་།	all	འཇིག་རྟེན་ཀུན་།	whole world (25) 16.15
ཆེན་པོ།	big	ཨི་ཁུང་ཆེན་པོ།	a big hole (23) 2.4
གལ་ཆེ།	important	གལ་ཆེ་བའི་བཀའ་བློན་མཁུ།	important command 12.31

3.4.1 **Verbal Adjectives:** Sometimes verbs (see Chapter Four) are made into adjectives, as in the phrase, 'the food that Drolma made' or 'the tea that she drank'. In these examples, the phrase 'that she made / drank' is a **verbal adjective** that tells us which food or which tea is being talked about. Verbal adjectives are very common in spoken, modern written, and classical Tibetan. ¹⁸

Verbal Adjective	Modified Noun
ང་ཚོ་ us power to save us	སྐྱོབ་པའི་ ཉམང་། power
གདོན་འདྲེ་ demon power to drive out demons	སྐྱོད་པའི་ རྒྱལ་མཁུ། power
གོམ་པ་སློ་ walk a man unable to walk	མ་སྐྱབ་པའི་ ནད་པ། sick one

3.4.2 **Adjectives with །ལ།** The particle །ལ། or དང་ལཱ། (meaning literally 'having' or 'being associated with') can be added to a noun to make it into an adjective:

ཉམང་།	=	power
ཉམང་ལཱ།	or	ཉམང་དང་ལཱ། = powerful

3.5 Postpositions: In English, there is a group of words called prepositions (such as 'in, to, from, by, with') that tell us the time or location of an action. These words always come before the other words to which they are joined, and so are called pre-positions. But in Tibetan, exactly the opposite is true: such words come after the words to which they are joined, and are called post-positions.

Postposition	Meaning	Example	Translation	Reference
མདུན་དུ།	in front of	མི་ཚང་མའི་མདུན།	in front of all	(23) 2.12
འོག་ཏུ།	below	སྟེང་ནས་འོག་བར།	from top to bottom	15.38
ཕྱོད་དུ།	before	ཕྱོད་ནས།	previously	(20) 14.44
རྗེས་སུ།	after	ཕྱིན་པའི་རྗེས།	after leaving	(23) 2.1
བར།	until	ཚུ་ཚོད་གསུམ་པའི་བར།	until 3:00	(22) 15.33
ཆེད་དུ།	for	སྲོད་པའི་ཆེད་དུ།	in order to release	(21) 15.11
ཕྱིར།	for	སྐོང་ཕྱིར།	in order to satisfy	(21) 15.15

3.6 Summary: There are six kinds of words in Tibetan: nouns, pronouns, adverbs, adjectives, postpositions, and verbs. In Chapter Two we talked about nouns, which are the names of people, places, or things. In Chapter Three we learned about pronouns, adverbs, adjectives, and postpositions.

1) **Pronouns** are words that can be used in place of nouns, which in turn are names of persons, places, or things. There are pronouns for persons (I, you, she, who, whoever, both, one); places (here, there); and things (what, that, it, all, both, one).

2) **Adverbs** show how an action was done (slowly, quickly) or tell us about an adjective (very hot, extremely large). There aren't many adverbs in Tibetan, but there are a lot of adverbials, which are formed by adding གི་སྐོར་ནས། གི་ངང་ནས། ; one of the agentive particles གིས། གིས། གིས། ; or one of the ལ་དོན། particles (discussed in Chapter Six) to a phrase.

3) **Adjectives** are words that tell us something about (i.e. qualify or modify) nouns (big, small, heavy).

4) **Postpositions** are words that correspond to prepositions (in, for, to, by) in English, but are joined after the word they modify.

¹⁰ To see how personal pronouns work in the Lhasa variety of spoken Tibetan, see Tournadre and Dorje, p. 92.

¹¹ In Kham the pronouns ལྷོད་རང་། ལྷོད་རང་ཚོ། may sometimes be used as reflexives (e.g. 'you yourself').

¹² Other pronouns used in modern or classical written Tibetan include རེད་ཅག་ རང་ཅག་ རང་རེ། ལྷོད་ཅག་ དེ་དག་ དེ་ཚམས། དེ་ཚོ།

¹³ A classification of pronouns is given in Wilson, p. 579. An extensive table of pronouns used in both the Lhasa variety of spoken Tibetan and in the written language, appears in Tournadre and Dorje, p. 407-409.

¹⁴ See Wilson p. 580 for examples of adverbial pronouns.

¹⁵ For an explanation of some adverbs in the spoken language of Lhasa, see Tournadre and Dorje, p. 318.

¹⁶ These are called adverbials (see Goldstein's *Essentials of Modern Literary Tibetan*, p. 132.) To see how they work in classical Tibetan, see Craig Preston's *How to Read Classical Tibetan*, p. 4.

¹⁷ These are called ergative (Bartee and Droma) or instrumental (Goldstein) particles.

¹⁸ Preston p. 58.

4. Action Words

So far we've talked about nouns and their relatives (Chapter Two), and pronouns, adverbs, adjectives, and postpositions (Chapter Three). These are the sort of words that let us say that Tashi is a student, a teacher, or a doctor, or that his yak is black, slow, or hairy, or that he (the yak, not Tashi) moves slowly, quickly, or lazily. But to bring these words to life, we need verbs.

A verb is a word that expresses a mode of **being** ('is, was, will be') or some kind of **action** ('go, run, do'). We can call these two kinds of verbs 'being' verbs and 'action' verbs.¹⁹

Key Point: There are two kinds of verbs in Tibetan:

'Being' verbs	'Action' verbs
----------------------	-----------------------

4.1 **'Being' Verbs:** The first kind of verb, called 'being' (or auxiliary) verbs, are usually the first verbs learned by foreign students.²⁰

'Being' Verbs:	Function	Examples
ཡིན། རེད།	expresses nature , essence or identity	God is good. I am Tashi.
ཡོད། འདུག།	expresses existence, location, quality	Tashi has a book. The book is red.

The Lhasa variety of spoken Tibetan puts these 'being' verbs together with the connector particle གི་ to express: a) person (I, you, he); b) tense (past, present, or future); and c) something called volition (whether or not an action is under a subject's control).

Action Verb	Being Verb	Person	Tense
ང་ འགོ་ གི་	ཡིན།	I	<u>will go.</u> future
ཁྱེད་པང་ འགོ་ གི་	རེད།	You	<u>will go.</u> future
ང་ འགོ་ གི་	ཡོད།	I	<u>go.</u> present
ཁོང་ འགོ་ གི་	འདུག།	He	<u>goes.</u> present

By contrast, non-Central dialects of Tibetan more often use the connector particle ཟུ instead of གི་ , as in the sentence: ར་འགོ་ཟུ་ཡིན། .

In written Tibetan, the auxiliaries (གི་ཡིན། བ་རེད།) etc. are only occasionally used to show person and tense. In fact, they occur regularly only in transcribed spoken Tibetan (such as in the subtitles of Tibetan music videos). Most sentences in written Tibetan end directly in one of the words belonging to the other class of Tibetan verbs, 'action' verbs.

4.2 **'Action' Verbs:** These words show the action in the sentence. Here are three examples of the approximately 1200 single-syllable action verbs used in modern written Tibetan: ²¹

Verb	Meaning	Reference
འབྲིད།	to take or lead	(22)1.32
འགོ	to go	(23) 2.12
ཤེས།	to know	(21) 1.24

Unfortunately, Tibetan action verbs are very slippery creatures. They lurk at the end of a sentence like an octopus under a rock, using all eight legs to reach out and control other parts of the sentence in ways that are hard to see unless you know what to look for. Like the spineless, squishy octopus, Tibetan verbs are good at changing their form and disguising their colors. They are also good at squirting ink, as anyone who has studied Tibetan verbs in any depth can attest. A complete description of Tibetan action verbs would fill a book; this chapter is only a general introduction to their main points.

4.3 **Subjects and Objects:** A key point about Tibetan verbs is that they always come at the end of a sentence. To illustrate, consider the English sentence, 'Tashi cuts wood'. In this example, Tashi is the person doing the action of the verb 'cutting', so he is the subject of the sentence. The verb 'cuts' shows an action - what Tashi does with the wood. The wood is what Tashi cuts, and also the grammatical object of the sentence. So we have three basic parts to this simple English sentence: the **subject** (Tashi) the **object** (wood) and the **verb** (cuts). In English, the order of these three sentence elements is always the same: subject, then verb, then object. ²²

Subject	Verb	Object	=	S.V.O. (English)
Tashi	cuts	wood.		

In Tibetan, however, the order is different: Tibetan always states the subject (who is doing the action), followed by the object of the action, followed by the verb. ²³ So our English sentence would become 'Tashi wood cuts' in Tibetan. For most native English

speakers, this feature of Tibetan takes some time to get used to. It can be a problem in long sentences, since we don't find out what the subject did until the very end.²⁴

Subject	Object	Verb	=	S.O.V. (Tibetan)
Tashi	wood	cuts.		

Key Point:

In Tibetan, the main verb always comes at the end of the sentence.

Another important point to remember about word order is that Tibetan sentences don't always mention the subject. In fact, the subject may be (and often is) omitted entirely both in written²⁵ and spoken²⁶ Tibetan.

4.4 Transitive and Intransitive Verbs: Like their English counterparts, Tibetan verbs may take an object (Tashi cuts wood) or may not (Jesus slept.) Verbs that take objects are called **transitive verbs**. Verbs that don't take objects are called **intransitive verbs**.²⁷ Examples of transitive verbs, with their objects underlined, appear in the following list.

Verb	Meaning	Subject	Verb	Object
འབྲིད།	take, lead	He	leads	<u>me</u> .
སློབ།	teach	She	teaches	<u>children</u> .
གསོད།	kill	The soldiers	killed	<u>him</u> .

And here are some examples of intransitive verbs:

Verb	Meaning	Subject	Verb	Object
འགྲོ།	go	He	goes.	<u>no object</u>
སློབ།	arrive	They	arrived.	<u>no object</u>
འགྲོ་བཟ།	die	Jesus	died.	<u>no object</u>

The verb 'go' is intransitive because it can't take an object. For example, the sentence

Subject	Verb	"Object"
He	goes	it.

is ungrammatical in English (and Tibetan). So is 'they arrived her' or 'they died him'. Such sentences are ungrammatical because their verbs (go, arrive, die) can't take objects.

Key Point: Transitive and Intransitive Verbs

Transitive verbs take objects. **Intransitive verbs** don't take objects.

Warning! The notions of 'transitive' and 'intransitive' are basic categories in the study of languages. However, the way that Tibetans perceive transitivity and intransitivity are rather different from the way that English speakers do. Some verbs which English speakers consider transitive (love, hate, like, trust) are traditionally classified as intransitive by Tibetans. Some words which English speakers use mainly as intransitives (e.g. wait) are seen as transitive by Tibetans. The reasons for this are beyond the scope of this chapter, but be warned that this is one of the octopus-like qualities of Tibetan verbs: their appearance can be deceptive!

One way to look at the notion of transitivity is through a table of transitive - intransitive (or 'causative-resultative') pairs of some of the verbs that are used in this book.²⁸ For example, take the verb pair རྒྱུ་ལ། (a transitive verb meaning 'to roll or wrap' something) and its intransitive counterpart རྒྱུ་ལ། (which means to roll by itself, like a log down a hill). The transitive form རྒྱུ་ལ། 'to roll or wrap' is used in Mark 15.46 of Joseph of Arimathea wrapping the body of Jesus in a linen cloth. It is the right verb for this sentence because it takes an object (in this case, the body of Jesus) while its intransitive counterpart རྒྱུ་ལ། does not. Note that in general, the intransitive verbs are also verbs which are not under the subject's control, a point further explained in section 4.5. The following table cites only a few of many transitive-intransitive pairs.

Cause		Result	
Transitive Verb	Meaning	Intransitive Verb	Meaning
ཕྱེད།	to give birth to	ཕྱེ	to be born
ལྡོང།	to change	འགྲུང།	to be changed
ལྡོལ།	to cause to fall down, to knock down, overturn	འགྲེལ།	to fall down (e.g. on the ground, as to trip and fall, or collapse)
ལྟུགས།	to arrange, set up	འགྲིགས།	to be in agreement or conformity
ལྟོལ།	to roll or wrap something	འགྲོལ།	to roll by itself, e.g. a stone down a hill
ལྟུབ།	to accomplish or do	འགྲུབ།	to be accomplished, to be done
ལྡོལ།	to spread, to make something increase	འགྲེལ།	to increase or multiply by itself
འབེབས།	to cause to come down, make descend	འབབ།	to fall (e.g. like rain, snow)

4.5 Voluntary and Involuntary Verbs: Tibetan verbs are also classified as voluntary (also called causative, volitional, intentional, or རང་དབང་ཅན་གྱི་བྱ་ཚིག།) or involuntary (also called non-causative, non-volitional, unintentional, or གཞན་དབང་ཅན་གྱི་བྱ་ཚིག།). A

voluntary verb describes an action that the subject can control, such as call, say, put on, or do. Since these verbs are controllable, they have imperative stems and can be used as commands (e.g. Call her! Say it! Do it!). A voluntary verb may be either transitive or intransitive, and it may be used with auxiliaries such as གི་ཡིན། or བ་ཡིན།. In general, Tibetan grammar requires that the subjects of sentences with voluntary verbs be marked with a special particle called a འོད་སྒྲ། , of which more will be said later (in Chapter Six).

By contrast, an **involuntary verb** describes an action that the subject cannot control, or that he or she did without intending to do, such as see (as opposed to look) hear (as opposed to listen), fall asleep (accidentally during class as opposed to intending to sleep at one's regular bedtime), get broken (as opposed to break), get torn (as opposed to tear). Involuntary verbs, like their voluntary relatives, may be either transitive or intransitive, but they do not take voluntary auxiliaries like གི་ཡིན། or བ་ཡིན།. A couple of examples may make things clearer.

Verb	Meaning	Example
སྒོད།	to soak, to wet	Soaked a sponge in wine Mk. 15.36

བང་།	to be / get soaked	The sponge was soaked in water.
གཞོན་གྱི་	to break intentionally	She broke the cup (e.g. in anger).
ཆག་	to break unintentionally	She broke the cup (by accident).

As another example, we can take the idea of 'looking' (the voluntary verb ལྟ།) as opposed to 'seeing' (the involuntary verb མཐོང་།). These two verbs are listed below, together with their past and future forms, and the imperative (command) form of 'to look', all of which will be explained in a moment (see 4.6).

Verb	Meaning	Past	Future	Imperative
ལྟ།	look / watch	བལྟས།	བལྟ།	ལྟོས།
མཐོང་།	see	མཐོང་།	མཐོང་།	

The verb ལྟ། is a transitive voluntary verb, so it may be joined with auxiliaries like བ་ཡིན། as in sentence (1). Because it is voluntary, its imperative root ལྟོས། can be used in a command, as in sentence (2).

- (1) ངས་བལྟས་བ་ཡིན། I looked.
- (2) ལྟོས། or ལྟོས་ཤིག་ Look! (command form)

The verb མཐོང་། is also a transitive verb, but it is involuntary, so it cannot be joined with first person auxiliaries like བ་ཡིན། as in sentence (3). Instead, it must be joined with a different auxiliary such as བྱུང་། as in sentence (4).²⁹ It does not have an imperative stem, and it cannot be used in a command as in sentence (5).

- (3) ངས་མཐོང་བ་ཡིན། I saw (it) - incorrect.
- (4) ངས་མཐོང་བྱུང་། I saw (it) - correct.
- (5) མཐོང་། or མཐོང་ཞིག་ See! - incorrect

Just a few of the intransitive verbs, like འགྲོ། (go) འོང་། (come) ཉལ། (sleep) or མཚོང་། (jump) are voluntary verbs with imperative roots. Most of the intransitive verbs are involuntary verbs that lack imperative roots.

Voluntary and involuntary verbs should not be confused with the active and passive moods in an English sentence. Tibetan verbs are neither active nor passive (or equally active and passive, depending on how you look at it).³⁰ For example, an English speaker can say, 'The cup was broken', but this gives us no idea whether the cup was broken intentionally in a fit of anger (that is, intentionally or causatively) or whether it simply fell off the table while the housewife was churning the tea (that is, unintentionally or non-causatively). In Tibetan we have an idea of what happened depending on which of the two verbs above, གཞིག་ལྟོག་ (voluntary) or རྒྱུ་ཚུགས་ (involuntary) comes at the end of the sentence.

In summary, a Tibetan action verb may be either transitive (it takes an object) or intransitive (it does not take an object); or it may be voluntary (under the subject's control) or involuntary (not under the subject's control).³¹ A list of verbs used in this book, together with their classification as voluntary, involuntary, transitive, or intransitive, appears in Appendix 2.

Verb Type	English Translation
རང་དབང་ཅན་གྱི་བྱ་ཚིག་	Voluntary verbs (v.a.)
གཞན་དབང་ཅན་གྱི་བྱ་ཚིག་	Involuntary verbs (v.i.)
ཐ་དད་པ།	Transitive verbs (T)
ཐ་མི་དད་པ།	Intransitive verbs (I)

4.6 Verb Roots: Each Tibetan verb has a number of different forms. These forms are used to show the past, present, or future tense in the written language. In addition, voluntary verbs (and a few involuntary ones) have a form which is used in imperative sentences (in which someone is commanding somebody to do something). These different forms of the verb are called **roots** or **stems**. The roots of four voluntary verbs are listed in the following table.

Present Root	Meaning	Past Root	Future Root	Imperative Root
བཞུགས།	stay (hon.)	བཞུགས།	བཞུགས།	བཞུགས།
འདྲི།	ask	འདྲིས།	འདྲི།	འདྲིས།
ལང།	stand	ལངས།	ལང།	ལྟངས།
བྱེད།	do	བྱས།	བྱ།	བྱོས།

Note that the four roots of the verb 'to stay' are all spelled in the same way, so it is called a **single stem** verb. The four roots of the verb 'to ask' are spelled in only two ways (the present root and the future root are the same, and the past root and the imperative

root are the same) so it is called a **two-stem** verb. Likewise, the four roots of the verb 'to stand' are spelled in three different ways (only the present and future roots are spelled in the same way) so it is called a **three-stem** verb. Lastly, the four roots of the verb 'to do' are each spelled in a different way, so it is called a **four-stem** verb.

Involuntary verbs have different roots as well, sometimes including an imperative.

Present Root	Meaning	Past Root	Future Root	Imperative Root
ཟིན།	to be finished	ཟིན།	ཟིན།	
སློབ།	arrive	སློབས།	སློབ།	
སེམས།	think	བསམ།	བསམ།	སོམས།

Many involuntary verbs have only a single stem.

You can look up these verb roots in any good dictionary, or in Appendix 2. However, you should be aware that **their spelling is not standardized** and even the dictionaries sometimes do not agree among themselves about how all the different verb roots should be spelled. This can make for some interesting discussions with your teacher or language helper!

Key Point: The spelling of many Tibetan verb roots is not standardized.

4.7 Compound Verbs: So far in this chapter we have looked at Tibetan verbs that have just one syllable: verbs such as འདྲི། "to ask" or མཐོང། "to see". Such verbs are called **simple verbs** or འདོད་རྒྱལ་གྱི་བྱ་ཚིག། .

However, most Tibetan verbs are made up of more than one syllable. Such verbs are called **compound verbs**, or རྗེས་གྲུབ་ལྡན་བའི་བྱ་ཚིག། and there are several types or classes of these verbs. The simplest class is called **fixed compound verbs** because they are made from two joined syllables which do not change their form with tense. Examples of fixed compounds include ཉན་གོ། to understand, ཡིད་ཆེས། to believe or trust someone, and རོ་ཤེས། to know or recognize.

A second class of compound verbs adds a special form called a **verbalizer** to a root word to make a **verbalized compound**. For example, the Tibetan word སློབ་གསོ། means 'education'. When this root word is combined with a verbalizer, it can express either the idea 'to educate' (the voluntary form) or the idea 'to get educated' (the

involuntary form). Verbs formed in this way are quite common in written and spoken Tibetan.

Noun	Verbalizer			Meaning
	Voluntary	Involuntary	Combined Form	
སློབ་གསོ།				education
	གཏོང་།		སློབ་གསོ་གཏོང་།	to educate
		ཐེབས།	སློབ་གསོ་ཐེབས།	get educated

There are three very common verbalizers which you will meet in *Jesus Christ Has Power to Save Us*. (There are many other verbalizers in addition to these.)

Verbalizer	Example	Meaning	Reference
གཏོང་།	དམའ་འབེབས་གཏོང་།	defame, slander	(17) 7.22
	སློག་ཐོག་གཏོང་།	execute / kill	(21) section title
	སློང་འགྲོལ་གཏོང་།	release / set free	(21) 15.6
	སྐད་གཏོང་།	call / summon	(23) 15.44
རྒྱག་ ³²	གོམ་པ་རྒྱག་	to walk	(25) 5.42
	གཟེར་རྒྱག་	to nail	(22) 15.25
	སྐད་རྒྱག་	to shout	(22) 15.37
བྱེད།	གུས་བཀུར་བྱེད།	to respect	(23) 15.42-43
	ཁུབ་བསྐྱུགས་བྱེད།	to proclaim	(25) 16.15
	དད་པ་བྱེད།	to believe	(25) 16.16

A third type of compound verb is formed by joining involuntary and voluntary verbs. For example, one can link an involuntary verb to a helper verb such as བྱེད། 'to do', which gives an **involuntary-voluntary paired verb** as illustrated in the table below. Notice that in each of these paired verbs, the involuntary verb root comes first, and it is followed by the present root of the voluntary verb བྱེད།.

Action	(Voluntary Verb)	Involuntary Counterpart	Voluntary-Involuntary Pair ³³
look / see	ལྟ།	མཐོང།	མཐོང་བར་བྱེད།
listen / hear	ཉན།	གོ།	གོ་བར་བྱེད།
learn / know	སློབ།	ཤེས།	ཤེས་པར་བྱེད།
seek / find	འཚོལ།	རྟོན།	རྟོན་པར་བྱེད།

In a similar way, verb stems can be combined to show that something caused the verbal action or somehow made it happen.

Action	Verb 1	Verb 2	Compound	Meaning
lose + do	འཕམ།	བྱེད།	འཕམ་པར་བྱེད།	cause to be defeated
believe + make	ཡིད་ཆེས།	བཟོ།	ཡིད་ཆེས་པར་བཟོ།	to cause to believe

Other examples include བར་ཚད་པར་བཟོ། to make tired, རོང་ལྡོ་ལངས་པར་བཟོ། , to cause someone to be angry, མངོན་དུ་འགྱུར་བར་བྱེད། to cause something to appear. Such constructions are called verb phrases.

4.8 Helper Verbs: A number of secondary or helper verbs are used in *Jesus Christ Has Power to Save Us*. The helper verbs below are joined to the main verb of the sentence, and they give the meaning 'to be able to do' the verbal action, or 'to have to do' the verbal action.

Helper Verb	Example	Meaning	Reference
བྱབ།	སྲིག་ཉེས་སེལ་བྱབ།	<u>able</u> to forgive sin	(23) 2.7
དགོས། ³⁴	སྲོད་དགོས།	<u>have to</u> release	(21) 15.9

Aside from these two, there are many other **helper verbs** (བྱ་ཚིག་ཕལ་པ།) in Tibetan which can be combined with main verbs to express meanings such as 'dare to', 'know how to', 'have to', 'allowed to', 'want to', or 'about to', do a verbal action.

4.9 Honorific and Humilific Verbs: Like nouns, some verbs are **honorific** and express respect to the subject of the action described by the verb. They may do this either by having a completely different honorific form, or by combining a non-honorific verb with an honorific one. ³⁵

Meaning	Non-Honorific Verb	Honorific Verb	Example
do	བྱེད།	མཛད།	(25) 16.20
go	འགྲོ།	ཐེབས།	(20) 1.14
discuss	སྐད་ཆ་བཤད།	བཀའ་མོལ་གནང།	(18) 9.4

Other verbs are just the opposite and are used to express the speaker's humility towards the person to whom the verbal action is directed. Such verbs are called **humilifics**. There are not many humilific verbs as such in Tibetan, but in the Tibetan Bible they are both frequent and important. ³⁶

Humilific Verb	Meaning	Example
འབུལ།	give / offer to someone higher (e.g. God, Jesus)	(23) 2.12
བཀའ་མོལ་ལྟུ།	speak to someone higher	
བཀའ་འདྲི་ལྟུ།	ask someone higher	(17) 7.17
དགའ་བསུ་ལྟུ།	to welcome someone higher	
ཞབས་འདེགས་ལྟུ།	to serve someone higher	

The following page gives a summary of what we have learned about Tibetan verbs so far.

4.11 **Summary:** Tibetan has two different kinds of verbs: 'being' verbs and 'action' verbs.

- a) **'Being verbs'** express nature, essence, identity (ཡིན། , རེད།) or existence, location, or quality (ཡོད། འདུག།).
- b) **Action verbs** show some kind of action. They may be:
 - b.1) **transitive** verbs (that take objects)
 - b.2) **intransitive** verbs (that do not take objects)
 - b.3) **voluntary** (causative) verbs whose actions are under the subject's control
 - b.4) **involuntary** (non-causative) verbs whose actions are not under the subject's control
- c) **Verb Roots:** Action verbs may have three or four roots. The roots may be spelled identically (single-stem verbs) or not (two, three, or four stem verbs).
- d) **Compound Verbs:** Tibetan verbs may have one or more than one syllable. **Fixed compound** verbs combine two or more syllables in a single verb form. **Verbalized compounds** combine a root expression with a special form called a verbalizer to make a compound verb. **Involuntary-voluntary paired verbs** combine two verbs of differing volition in a single verbal expression. There are also **helper verbs** which add meanings such as 'able to', 'have to', or 'dare to' do a verbal action.
- e) **Honorifics and Humilifics:** Verbs that are used to show respect to others are called honorific. Verbs that are used to show one's low position before a superior are called humilific.

¹⁹ There are many ways to classify Tibetan verbs and the English terminology for even the simplest ones is confusing. The verbs in the ཡིན། and རེད། family are called **linking verbs** by Goldstein (*Essentials of Modern Literary Tibetan* p. 37) and **essential verbs** by Tournadre (*Manual of Standard Tibetan* p. 80). The verbs in the ཡོད། and འདུག། family are called **existential verbs** by Goldstein (p. 29) and Tournadre (p. 120). Joe Wilson uses the term **existential verbs** to mean both types (*Translating Buddhism from Tibetan* p. 126).

²⁰ For the use of ཡིན། and རེད། in the Lhasa variety of spoken Tibetan, see Bartee and Droma p. 32; for འདུག། see p. 62.

²¹ The estimate of 1,200 single-syllable 'core' verbs in Tibetan comes from Gyurmed, p. 338 (see References).

²² For this reason, linguists call English an 'SVO' (subject-verb-object) language, as opposed to Tibetan, which is an 'SOV' (subject-object-verb) language.

²³ There are exceptions to this rule. There are certain situations when (for special emphasis) the object may be placed before the subject. The verb, however, will still come last in the sentence. See, for example, Tournadre's *Manual of Standard Tibetan* p. 79.

²⁴ This is particularly an issue when reading the Tibetan Bible, where sentences may be quite long, as in the original Greek.

²⁵ For classical Tibetan, see Preston p. 31.

²⁶ For the Lhasa variety of spoken Tibetan, see Tournadre and Dorje, p. 189.

²⁷ Students should remember that verbs which are considered intransitive in English may be considered transitive by Tibetans. This is because Tibetan grammarians perceive something called an 'implied object' as part of the sentence. For example, the Tibetan verb 'to wait' ལྷོག་པ། is considered transitive in Tibetan, but is used mainly as an intransitive verb in English.

²⁸ For more examples, see Paul G. Hackett's *A Tibetan Verb Lexicon: Verbs, Classes, and Syntactic Frames*, (Ithaca: Snow Lion 2003), p. 7 and Kalsang Gyurmed's *Tibetan Grammarian's Clear Mirror*, p. 363.

²⁹ See Goldstein, *Essentials of Modern Literary Tibetan*, p. 88.

³⁰ Wilson, p. 588.

³¹ Different authors have suggested many different ways to classify Tibetan verbs. It may be helpful to think of each classification as useful for a different purpose, depending on the needs of the student. For Tibetans, *The Great Tibetan Chinese Dictionary* classifies verbs as simply transitive or intransitive, and *The New Compilation Lexicon* adds a third category, 'verbal complements' for 'being verbs'. Kalsang Gyurme's *Tibetan Grammarian's Clear Mirror* divides verbs into three broad categories based on perceived spelling consistencies. For expatriates, Melvyn Goldstein's *New Tibetan English Dictionary of Modern Tibetan* lists verbs as active or inactive. For those wanting to read classical Tibetan, Joe Wilson's *Translating Buddhism from Tibetan* classifies verbs into eight categories based on the grammatical cases of their accompanying subjects and objects. All these methods are used in Appendix 3. For the non-Tibetan student who is trying to learn low literary Tibetan, a classification using both transitive-intransitive and voluntary-involuntary dimensions seems to work best.

³² In Lhasa dialect this verb is usually pronounced, and sometimes written ལྷོ།.

³³ Alert readers will notice that two of the pairs contain the syllable ལྷོ་ while the other two contain the syllable ལྷོ་ . The meaning is the same; in general, the syllable ལྷོ་ is used when the final letter of the preceding syllable is ལྷོ་ ལྷོ་ ལྷོ་ or a vowel, and the syllable ལྷོ་ is used after all other finals.

³⁴ The use of the verb ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ is rather complex. For a full explanation, see Goldstein's *Essentials of Modern Literary Tibetan*, p. 165-171.

³⁵ A short table of non-honorific verbs together with their honorific counterparts appears in Goldstein's *Essentials of Modern Literary Tibetan*, p. 96.

³⁶ A short table contrasting honorific and humilific verbs appears in Tournadre and Dorje, p. 447.

5. Talking About Time

In the last chapter we learned that a verb is a word that shows being or action, and that Tibetan verbs may be **transitive** or **intransitive** (depending on whether the verb takes an object) and **voluntary** or **involuntary** (depending on whether the verb's action is under the subject's control). We learned that action verbs have at least three roots (past, present, and future) and that some have an imperative (command) root as well.

In this chapter we will learn how to use these verb roots to make sentences that show action in the past, present, or future. Linguists call this dimension of language **tense**, and they classify it as **past** (for actions that happened before now), **present** (for actions that are happening now), or **future** (for actions that have yet to happen). As we saw in section 4.1, sometimes **auxiliaries** like གི་ཡིན། , གི་ཡོད། , and བ་རེད། are used to express tense. But in written language these do not appear very often.³⁷ Instead, tense is shown in three other ways: 1) by using the past, present, or future root of the sentence's main verb (the one at the end of the sentence); 2) by using certain helper words; or 3) simply by the context. Each of these will be discussed below.

Key Point: Written Tibetan shows tense in three ways:

- a) by a past, present or future **root** of the main verb *
- b) by **auxiliaries** such as གི་ཡིན། or བ་རེད།
- c) by the **context**

5.1 Showing the Tense by Verb Root Remember that Tibetan verbs have three (for most intransitive verbs) or four (for most transitive verbs) roots. Except for the imperative, each root is associated with a specific tense, just as in English 'ran' is past tense, 'runs' is present tense, and 'will run' is future tense. In the same way, sentences in written Tibetan can show that their action is past, present or (sometimes) future by using the corresponding verb stem.

Here are some examples using the past root of three different main verbs.

Example	Past Root	Meaning
ཞོང་གི་བྱུང་དུ་	ཞོངས།	ཞོངས། is the past root of ཞོང་། to come, as in ' <u>came</u> to Him' (23) 2.3.

* The **main verb** is the simple or compound verb at the end of a Tibetan sentence. Of course, a Tibetan sentence may have more than one verb, as in, 'Seeing the wild yaks, the nomads fled.' This sentence has two verbs: 'see' in the clause, 'seeing the wild yaks'; and 'fled', which is the main verb at the end of the sentence. Since the verb 'fled' is the past tense of 'to flee', we know this action took place in the past.

Example	Past Root	Meaning	Reference
ཞི་བར་	གྱུར།	གྱུར་ is the past root of འགྱུར་ to become, as in 'became calm' (24) 4.39	
“སློན་པ་ལགས་” ཞེས་	བཤད།	'Teacher' he said.	(20) 14.45

In this sentence, note that བཤད། is the past root of the verb ཤོད། , to say.³⁸ By this we know that someone (Judas in this case) **said something** in the sentence ended by this verb root.

Of course, when we see the present root of the sentence's main verb, we know that the whole sentence is in the present tense.

Example	Present Root	Meaning	Reference
དེས་མི་མི་གཙང་བར་	བྱེད།	It makes a man unclean.	(17) 7.20

So in general, when we see that a sentence ends in the past root of its main verb, we know that the sentence describes something that has happened in the past. When we see that a sentence ends in the present root of its main verb, we know that the sentence describes something that is happening in the present. When we see that a sentence ends in the future root of its main verb, we know that the sentence describes something that will happen in the future; though the future tense is more often shown by helper words than by the simple verb root alone.

5.2 Showing the Tense by Helper Words As we have seen, sometimes **auxiliaries** such as གི་ཡིན། , གི་རེད། , or གི་ཡོད། are used to express tense. These syllables are not used in *Jesus Christ Has Power to Save Us*, though the helper words བ་རེད། and གྱི་འདུག། make an occasional appearance:

Example	Main Verb	Helper Words	Meaning	Reference
ས་ཕྱོགས་གང་སར་	བྱུང་	བ་རེད།	(it) spread everywhere	(21) 1.28
མར་	ཕབ་	བ་རེད།	(they) lowered (him)	(23) 2.4
	འབོད་	གྱི་འདུག།	(Jesus) calls (Elijah)	(22) 15.35

In this case, the auxiliary (the syllables after the main verb in the sentence) tells us the tense. The past auxiliary བ་རེད། indicates the past tense, and the present auxiliary གི་འདུག་ indicates the present tense. Once we know this, we know the tense of the whole sentence.

5.3 Showing the Tense by Context In written Tibetan, the tense is very frequently shown only by the context. For example, in *Jesus Christ Has Power to Save Us*, we know that we are reading a story about events that happened 2,000 years ago. So where tense is not made clear by verb roots or helper words, a past tense sentence is intended.

Example		Meaning	Reference
འོ་ཚོ་དང་མཉམ་དུ་གྲུ་གཞན་ཡང་	ཡོད།	other boats were also with them	(24) 4.36.
འདུ་ཁང་ནང་ལ་	ཡོད།	was in the synagogue	(12) 1.23
ལུགས་སྒོལ་	ཡོད།	had a custom	(21) 15.6

In these three examples, only by the context do we know that the verb ཡོད། should be translated in the past tense ('were', 'was', 'had') and not in the present ('are', 'is', or 'has').

Now that we know how Tibetan sentences show tense, we can take a more detailed look at how each tense is conveyed through verb stems and helper words.

5.4 Showing the Past Tense in Written Tibetan In general, there are five common ways to show past action in written Tibetan.

5.4.1 Past Stem Alone: The past stem of the main verb may be used alone, or with one of the sentence-terminator particles discussed in Chapter Seven. (Sentence terminator particles function like the period at the end of an English sentence.)

Past Stem	Terminator	Meaning	Reference
བྱས་	སོ།	did	(25) 16.20
འདས་	སོ།	died	(22) 15.37
བཅུལ་	ལོ།	sought	(20) 14.11

5.4.2 **Past Root + བར་བྱས།** The past root of the main verb may be combined with the helper words བར་བྱས། as follows (these examples are from the 1903 edition of the New Testament): ³⁹

Past Stem	Helper	Meaning	Reference
མནལ་སད་	བར་བྱས།	awakened	Mt. 8.25 (1903)
མེད་	བར་བྱས།	destroyed	Mt. 15.6 (1903)
ཕྱིག་	བར་བྱས།	built	Lk. 17.28 (1903)

5.4.3 **Intransitive Verb + བར་གྱུར།** Intransitive verbs can be combined with the helper term བར་གྱུར། or བར་གྱུར། ⁴⁰

གྲུབ་བར་གྱུར།	was accomplished	Mt. 13.15 (1903)
དགའ་བར་གྱུར།	rejoiced	2 Cor. 7.7 (1903)

5.4.4 **Past Root + བ་ཡིན།** As in the Lhasa variety of spoken Tibetan, the past root of a verb can be combined with the helper term བ་ཡིན།

བྱས་བ་ཡིན།	did	Mt. 13.28 (1903)
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5.4.5 **Past Root + བྱང་། / སོང་།** The past root of involuntary verbs may appear with the helper verbs བྱང་། or སོང་། ⁴¹ The use of these is complex and a full description is beyond the scope of this chapter.

དགའ་བོ་བྱང་།	rejoiced	(20) 14.11
ཉ་གོ་སོང་།	understood	Mt. 13.51 (1903)

5.5. **Showing the Present Tense in Written Tibetan** In general, there are four common ways to show present action in written Tibetan. ⁴²

5.5.1 **Present Root:** For verbs with four stems, the present stem is used either alone or with one of the sentence-terminator particles.

ལགས་སོ།	is	(19) 12.29
ལོག་གཡེམ་བྱེད་དོ།	commits adultery	Mt. 5.32 (1903)
ཁ་ངན་གཏོང་ངོ།	(they) abuse (you)	1 Pet. 4.4 (1903)

5.5.2 **Present Root + བར་བྱེད།** The present root may be combined with the helper term བར་བྱེད། as follows (these examples are from the 1903 edition of the New Testament):

ཉན་བར་བྱེད།	obeys	(24) 4.41
བྱམས་བར་བྱེད།	loves	1 Jn. 3.11 (1903)
གཙོད་བར་བྱེད།	shut off	Rev. 11.6 (1903)

5.5.3 **Present Root + གི་ཡོད། གི་འདུག།** The present root may be joined with the helper words གི་ཡོད། or གི་འདུག། . However, this is not very frequent in written Tibetan.⁴³

གཏོང་གི་ཡོད།	send	Mt. 10.16 (1903)
གསུང་གི་འདུག།	says	Heb. 10.16 (1903)

5.5.4 **Present Root + བཞིན།** The present root may be joined to the helper word བཞིན།. This usually indicates a present continuous tense - that something is in the process of happening right now.⁴⁴

གསུང་བཞིན་པ།	speaking	Mt. 12.46 (1970)
བྱེད་བཞིན་པ།	doing	Heb. 6.10 (1970)

5.6. **Showing the Future Tense in Written Tibetan** The future tense can be shown in any of the following five ways:

5.6.1 **Future Root + Sentence Terminator:** The future root of a transitive verb can be combined with one of the sentence-terminator particles discussed in Chapter Six.

བརྗོད་	will harvest
བརྗོད་པོ་	will arrange
གཤམ་བོ་	will plant

5.6.2 **Present Root + བར་བྱ།** The present root of a transitive verb may be combined with the helper term བར་བྱ། as follows:

བཟོ་བར་བྱ།	will make	(18) 9.5
གསོད་བར་བྱ།	will kill	Mt. 10.21 (1903)
སྐྱུག་བར་བྱ།	will wait	Lk. 7.20 (1903)

5.6.3 **Present Root + བར་འགྱུར།** The present root of a transitive or intransitive verb may be combined with the helper phrase བར་འགྱུར།

ཚད་པ་གཙོད་བར་འགྱུར།	འགྱུར་ is the future root of འགྱུར། to become, here used in a compound verb to mean ' <u>will be punished</u> '.	(25) 16.16
སྐྱབ་བར་འགྱུར།	will be done	Lk. 1.45 (1903)
སྐྱོག་བར་འགྱུར།	will be burned	Lk. 3.17 (1903)

5.6.4 **Present Root + བ་ཡིན།** The present root of a transitive verb may be combined with བ་ཡིན། . Though the helper word བ་ཡིན། is also used for the past tense, here we know the future tense is meant, because the action verb stem is not in the past tense.

གཏོང་བ་ཡིན།	I will send
བྱེད་བ་ཡིན།	I will do

5.6.5 **Present Root + ལྟུ་ཡིན།** A present root may be combined with ལྟུ་ཡིན།

ལྟུག་ལྟུ་ཡིན།	will make
འགྲོ་ལྟུ་ཡིན།	will go

5.7. **Aspect:** In addition to the simple past, present, and future tenses, sometimes we need to say that a thing has begun, is going on, or has been completed within a the past, present, or future time frame. Linguists call this feature of language **aspect**.⁴⁵

5.7.1 **The Perfect Tense:** For our purposes in this book, we need to pay attention only to whether an action has been completed in the past. For example, in the sentence, 'The students have completed their examinations', the action 'taking an examination' is finished, and was already finished when the speaker began to tell about it. Grammarians call this state of affairs the **perfect tense**.

In written Tibetan, a completed past action is rendered as the past tense verb stem + one of the 'being' verbs ཡོད། / ལངས། .⁴⁶ The former is more common in written language.

བཟོས་ཡོད།	has made	
བཞག་ཡོད།	has placed	
ལས་ངན་ག་རེ་བྱས་ཡོད།	What evil has He done?	(21) 15.14

5.7.2 **The Helper Word ཟྱོང་།** Another common helper verb that shows completed past action is ཟྱོང་། This word is common in the spoken dialects of Central Tibet.⁴⁷ It conveys the meaning that someone has experienced something. When combined with an voluntary verb, it gives the idea that someone has done something in the past, for example,

མི་བསད་ཟྱོང་བའི་བཙོན་པ།	prisoners who had killed people	(21) 15.7
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5.7.3 **The Helper Words ཚར། and ཟིན།** The helper verbs ཚར། and ཟིན། can also express completed past action when combined with a past verb stem.⁴⁸

སྡིག་ཉེས་བསལ་ཟིན་པ་ཡིན།	(your) sin is already forgiven	(23) 2.5
ཤི་ཚར།	(your daughter) is already dead	(25) 5.35
བསྐྱེལ་ཚར།	(the stone) is already rolled away	(25) 16.4

5.8 **Imperatives:** An imperative is a command, like the Ten Commandments. Commands may be positive ('do this', 'thou shalt') or negative ('do not do this', 'thou shalt not'). Commands can be formed in a number of different ways, depending on how polite the speaker must be to the person being commanded. In general, voluntary verbs can form imperatives by using: a) their imperative roots alone, b) negative imperatives (called

དགག་སྐྱེལ་ཚིག་) and c) request forms (called ལྷན་ལོ་གྱི་ཚིག་). Involuntary (Tibetan གཞན་ དབང་ཅན།) verbs, except for optative forms called སློན་ཚིག་ , have no imperatives.

5.8.1 **Imperative Root Alone:** This form is used between equals, or by a higher person to a lower. For example, the voluntary verb 'to get up' has three stems:

Present	Past	Future	Imperative
ལང།	ལངས།	ལང།	ལོངས།

When Jesus tells the paralyzed man who had been lowered through the roof in (23) 2.11 that he should arise and go his way, He simply says ལོངས། which is the imperative root of the verb 'to get up'. Other examples are:

རྗོས།	Harvest (it)!	ཚོངས།	Keep/hold it!
རྒྱགས།	Put it together!	སོང།	Go!

5.8.2 **Imperative Root + Command Particle:** ཅིག་ ཞིག་ འིག་ This is another construction that we find on the lips of Jesus. When He healed Jairus' daughter, He said to the girl ལོངས་འིག་. The word ལོངས། is the imperative root of ལང། 'to stand up', and the particle འིག་ shows that a command is being given.

The command particles ཅིག་ ཞིག་ འིག་ are used depending on the last letter of the preceding syllable as follows.

Last letter	Particle	Example	Meaning	Reference
ག་ད་བ་ན།	ཅིག་	སོད་ཅིག་	kill!	(21) 15.13
ང་མ་ལ་ར་ལ།	ཞིག་	མཚོད་བ་སྤུལ་ཞིག་	offer!	Luke 5.14 (1903)
ས།	འིག་	དད་པ་རང་གྱིས་འིག་	just believe!	(25) 5.36

5.8.3 **Imperative Root + the particle དང།** This is a more polite form of command than the ones above. It is used every day in the Lhasa variety of spoken Central Tibetan,⁴⁹ and it is also used in in *Jesus Christ Has Power to Save Us* in reported natural speech. For example, those standing at the foot of the cross say ཉོན་དང། 'Listen!

He is calling for Elijah'). In this case ཉོན། is the imperative root of the verb ཉན། 'to listen' and དང། is a command particle.⁵⁰

5.8.4 Negative Imperatives Negative imperatives tell us not to do something, and they are formed by putting the syllable མ་ in front of the present verb stem:

Initial	Neg.	Verb	Meaning	Reference
ཞེད་སྣང་	མ་	བྱེད།	do not be afraid	(25) 5.36
མི་གཞན་ལ་	མ་	ཤོད།	don't tell others	(25) 5.43

5.8.5 Request forms: or ལུ་གསོལ་ཚིག། are formed by adding a ལ་དོན་ postposition (discussed in Chapter Six) to a verb root and adding the verb གསོལ། .

གཙོ་བོ་ཡི་བྱ་ཕྱིབས་སུ་གསོལ།	Come, Lord Jesus!	Rev. 22.20 (1903)
ལྷ་ས་ཤིག་བསྟན་དུ་གསོལ།	Show us a sign.	Mt. 16.1 (1903)

Occasionally the Central Tibetan verbal request form 'verb + རོགས་གནང། ' also appears in written Tibetan, especially in quoted speech.

ངའི་ཁང་བ་ལ་ཕྱིབས་རོགས་གནང།	Please come to my house.	Lk. 8.41 (1903)
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5.8.6 Optative Forms or ལྷོན་ཚིག། are used for wishing or praying that someone may acquire a thing or a characteristic. They are especially common in the Tibetan Bible. There are two types:

5.8.6.1 The 'May It Happen' Form: This combines an involuntary verb root with the suffix བར་གྱུར་ཅིག། to give the meaning 'may it happen'.

ས་ལ་ཡང་སྐབ་བར་གྱུར་ཅིག།	May it be done on earth	Mt. 6.10 (1903)
ཁྱོད་གཙོ་བོ་བར་གྱུར་ཅིག།	May you be clean	Mt. 8.3 (1903)

This form can also be used to wish that someone may acquire or continue to have a thing or characteristic:

གཟི་བརྗིད་དང་ལྷན་པར་གྱུར་ཅིག	Be glorified	Rom. 16.27 (1903)
རྣོ་བས་དན་ལྷང་པར་གྱུར་ཅིག	Be strong	Eph. 6.10 (1903)

5.8.6.2 **The 'Prayer' Form:** Involuntary verbs can combine with the particle ཤོག (come) to express a prayer that someone may have or get something.

དགོན་མཚོག་ཁྱེད་དང་མཉམ་དུ་བཞུགས་པར་ཤོག	May God be with you	Rom. 15.33 (1903)
ཞེ་བདེ་ཁྱེད་ལ་འབབ་པར་ཤོག	Peace to you.	Col. 1.2 (1903)

5.9 **Negatives of Compound Verbs:** In general, present and future tense verbs are negated by putting the negative particle མི་ in front of the non-past stem of the final verb root, and past tense verbs are negated by putting the negative particle མ་ in front of the past stem of the final verb. ⁵¹ For example:

5.9.1 Present Tense Negatives

1st Verb	Neg.	Final	Meaning	Reference
ཐུགས་སྒྲུང་	མི་	མཛད།	do You not care? ⁵²	(24) 4.38
བྱེད་	མི་	བྱབ།	cannot do	(17) 7.15

5.9.2 Past Tense Negatives

1st Verb	Neg.	Final	Meaning	Reference
ཡོང་	མ་	བརྟུག	did not let them come	(25) 5.37
none	མ་	ཤེས།	did not know	(18) 9.6

5.10 Summary:

Written Tibetan shows tense by means of:

- a) Verb roots
- b) Auxiliaries
- c) Context

Completed past action may be shown by:

- a) Combining the past root of a verb with the 'being' verb ཡོད།
- b) Using helper words such as ཚད།, ཟིན། and ཟློད།

Commands are shown by:

- a) Imperative root alone
- b) Imperative root plus helper words or 'command' particles

Request and optative forms combine a verb root with helper words.

Verbs may be negated ('not go', 'not do') by the particles མ་ or མི་.

³⁷ In general, using auxiliaries such as གི་ཡིན། or བ་རེད། from the spoken variety of Lhasa Tibetan in written materials is considered poor form by most literate Tibetans, especially if they are from areas outside Central Tibet.

³⁸ Note that the past root of the verb རོད། is བཤད། and that the future root is also spelled བཤད། So how do we know if the sentence means 'will say' or 'said'? Here the *spelling* of the verb root tells us that the sentence is either about a past or future event, but the *context* tells us for certain that the event must be in the past. (In this case, the story of Jesus casting out a demon.) Many verbs have identical past and future roots.

³⁹ The 1903 New Testament was selected because its level of language and ease of reading for Central Tibetans is closest to that of *Jesus Christ Has Power to Save Us*.

⁴⁰ There is no difference in meaning between བཤད། and བཤད།. The syllable བཤད། is used after words ending in the syllables ར་ལ། and vowels, while བཤད། is used after all others.

⁴¹ This is different from the use of the verb རོད། to mean 'go'.

⁴² Actually, the list of present-tense helper words is larger than that presented here, but these are the most common ones in modern written Tibetan. For a full list, see Goldstein's *Essentials of Modern Literary Tibetan*, p. 56.

⁴³ When these helper words do appear in print, they suggest the author was writing for a Central Tibetan audience.

⁴⁴ Strictly speaking, the use of this particle shows aspect and not tense, but the use shown here is classified by Tibetan grammarians as part of the present tense. (See for example Kalsang Gyurmed's བོད་ཀྱི་བརྗོད་སྐད་རིག་པའི་ཁྲིད་རྒྱན་རབ་གསལ་མེ་ལོང། Sichuan Nationalities Publishing House, 1992)

⁴⁵ For a discussion of aspect in the Lhasa variety of spoken Tibetan, see Tournadre and Dorje p. 161.

⁴⁶ The perfect tense in the Lhasa variety of spoken Tibetan works somewhat differently - see Tournadre and Dorje p. 163ff. For the perfect tense in written Tibetan, see Goldstein's *Essentials of Modern Literary Tibetan*, p. 233-234.

⁴⁷ For the 'experience' verb ལྟོན། see Tournadre and Dorje, p. 216, Bartee and Droma p. 106, and Goldstein's *Essentials of Modern Literary Tibetan*, p. 228.

⁴⁸ See Goldstein, *Essentials of Modern Literary Tibetan*, p. 230 for the use of ཟློན། and ཚེས། .

⁴⁹ Bartee and Droma, p. 135.

⁵⁰ This (imperative) use of the particle དང། should not be confused with its use as a linking particle meaning 'and'.

⁵¹ For examples, see Goldstein, *Essentials of Modern Literary Tibetan*, p. 127ff.

⁵² The final question particle was omitted from this example for the sake of clarity.

6. Just in Case

In Chapter Two, we saw that everything on a page of written Tibetan is: a) a **word** that expresses a meaning; b) a **particle** that shows how words connect to each other; or c) a **punctuation mark** that shows where larger units like sentences or paragraphs begin and end. Words are the building blocks of the language, and particles and punctuation are the cement that sticks them together. We have now discussed all of the Tibetan language's 'building blocks' (the six kinds of words covered in Chapters 2-5: nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, postpositions, and verbs). In this and following chapters we will look at the 'cement': the case particles that show how the words are stuck together.

6.1 What's a Case? To understand what a case is, we need to return to our discussion in Chapter 4, where we met Tashi, who cut the wood. Remember the sentence 'Tashi cuts wood'?

Subject	Verb	Object ⁵³
Tashi	cuts	wood.

In English, the subject of the sentence, Tashi, is shown by its position before the verb. This is not true in Tibetan. In general, the subjects of Tibetan sentences with voluntary verbs require a marker (called an **agentive particle**) to show that a word is the subject of the sentence (though there are exceptions). Another way of saying this is that the word 'Tashi' must be in what is called the **agentive case**: it shows that Tashi is the agent of the cutting.

Now, Tashi is a farm boy and his family keeps a number of yaks for plowing the fields. Tashi is very fond of yaks generally, but he loves his family's yaks best of all. In other words:

Subject	Verb	Modifier	Object
Tashi	loves	(his family's)	yaks.

Notice that in this English sentence we have inserted the phrase 'his family's' in order to show that Tashi loves these particular yaks. Notice also that the word 'family's' has a punctuation mark called an apostrophe between the letter 'y' and the letter 's' in 'family'. This connects the words 'yaks' and 'family' in such a way that we know that the yaks belong to his family. In Tibetan this relationship is shown by the **connective (or genitive) case**: it connects the yaks with the family.

Now let us suppose that Tashi has one special pet yak named Dorje, of which he is very fond. Another way of saying this is, 'Among his family's yaks, Tashi loves Dorje the yak.'

Subject	Verb	Modifier	Object
Tashi	loves	(from his family's yaks).	Dorje the yak.

In this case, we need a way to say that Tashi loves not just any yak, but just one certain special yak from among his family's yaks. In English we say this using the word 'from'. In Tibetan, we show this relationship by something called the **originative case**: that is, the yak Dorje originates from the family's yak herd.

Because Tashi loves his pet yak so much, on cold winter days when the high grassland lies deep under snow and Dorje the yak is down on the family farm for the winter, Tashi brings him food and water. In English we would say:

Subject	Verb	Object
Tashi	gives	food to Dorje the yak.

Notice how we express this by putting the word 'to' in front of the word 'Dorje'. In Tibetan, we have to show this relationship using something called the **dative case**. (The way to remember this is that 'dative' is a Latin word meaning 'to give'. It has nothing to do with dates!)

Finally, in the winter, Tashi keeps Dorje the yak in a corral at his family's farm.

Subject	Verb	Object
Tashi	keeps	Dorje in the corral.

Here we have joined the word 'in' to the noun phrase 'the corral' to show where on the family farm Dorje the yak is located. Tibetan marks this with the **locative case**: it shows the location of something.

Taking care of his favorite yak is a full time job, and Tashi puts his heart and soul into it. So sometimes he's pretty tired. Once he went to school and fell asleep in class.

Subject	Verb
Tashi	slept.

Tashi didn't mean to sleep in class (it was unintentional) he just kind of dozed off. In Tibetan, Tashi is the subject of an unintentional verb, and as such his name is in the **nominative case**. The nominative case shows just the name of something. (Think of nominating someone to serve on a committee.) Fortunately for all of us who have to memorize case particles, the nominative case is unmarked - it has no case-marking particles.

Because poor Tashi slept in class, even though he couldn't help it, his teacher spoke harshly to him.

Subject	Verb	Object
The teacher	spoke	to Tashi.

Here, Tashi is the object of the verb 'to speak', and so his name is in the **objective case**, which of course shows an object.

His friends feel sorry for him, so they call him out to play after class. They say,

Vocative

Hey, Tashi. Come out and play!

Notice that to get Tashi's attention, the friends call out to him with the English interjection 'Hey'. This word is what linguists call a vocative ('vocative' comes from a Latin root that means 'call', from which we get the English word 'vocation') and the corresponding word in Tibetan is in the **vocative case**.

So at this point we can leave Tashi and his friends playing happily in the schoolyard, and Dorje the yak munching on some grass in his stall, as we think about the fact that Tibetan has eight grammatical cases. Tibetan grammarians number them one through eight, and the same number always refers to the same case, no matter who you talk to or which of their books you read (for example, the second case is always the objective case).⁵⁴ While some modern linguists classify the grammatical cases of Tibetan differently⁵⁵ in the following table we have used the traditional system and its Tibetan names so that you can ask your language helper how each case works.

The Eight Traditional Grammatical Cases or རྣམ་དབྱེ་བ་རྒྱུད།			
English Name	Tibetan Name	Particles or ཚིག་ཕྱད།	Number of Particles
1. Nominative:	མིང་ཙམ་སྟོན་པ།	none	0
2. Objective:	ལས་སུ་བྱ་བ་སྟོན་པ།	སུ་སུ་ཏུ་དུ་ན་ར་ལ།	7
3. Agentive:	བྱེད་པ་པོ་སྟོན་པ།	གིས་གྱིས་གྱིས་འིས་ཡིས།	5
4. Dative:	དགོས་ཆེད་སྟོན་པ།	སུ་སུ་ཏུ་དུ་ན་ར་ལ།	7
5. Originative:	འབྱུང་ཁུངས་སྟོན་པ།	ནས། ལས།	2
6. Connective:	འབྲེལ་བ་སྟོན་པ།	གི་གྱི་གྱི་འི་ཡི།	5
7. Locative:	གནས་གཞི་སྟོན་པ།	སུ་སུ་ཏུ་དུ་ན་ར་ལ།	7
8. Vocative:	འབོད་པ་སྟོན་པ།	ཏྲེ ཀྱ་ཡེ།	2

6.2 The Cases and Their Particles

6.2.1 **The Nominative Case:** The Tibetan term for this case, མིང་ཙམ། , means literally 'just the name' (remember nominative = name), and that gives you a pretty good idea of how this case is used. Basically, this is the case for subjects of sentences with 'being' verbs (ཡིན། , ཡོད། , and their relatives) or sentences with intransitive verbs like 'come'.

All of the subjects in these simplified sentences below are in the nominative case.

Subject		Verb	Reference
རྒྱ་མཚོན་ reason	གང་ what	ཡིན། is?	(23) 2.8
མི་ཞིག་ a man	ནང་ལ་ in(side)	ཡོད། is	(21) 1.23
ཡི་ཤུ་ Jesus	ག་ལིལ་ཡུལ་དུ་ to Galilee	ཐེབས། came	(20) 1.14

The nominative case (despite its English name) may also be used for the direct **objects** of certain verbs. For example, in the sentence, 'Jesus gave food to the crowd',

ཡེ་ཤུས་	མི་ཚོགས་	ལ་	ཟས་	གནང་།
Jesus	crowd	to	food	gave

the direct object of the voluntary verb 'gave' is 'food', which stands alone in the nominative case (even though it is a direct object) and is not marked by any case marking particle. By contrast, the indirect object, 'crowd' is in the dative case and is marked as such by the case-marking particle ལ་. Direct and indirect objects are explained in 6.2.4.

6.2.2 The Objective Case: This case is used to mark the object of certain verbs - for example, by showing a destination with a verb of motion, or a listener for a speaker. ⁵⁶

གཞུང་ལ་	ལྷོ་	མཇུག་	(23) 2.1	Here ལ་ shows the destination (Capernaum) of the verb of motion 'came'.
Capernaum	to	came.		
ནད་པ་དེ་	ལ་	གསུངས།	(23) 2.5	Here ལ་ shows the object of the action verb 'said'.
Sick person	to	said		
དགོན་མཚོག་	ལ་	སྐྱུར་བ་འདེབས།	(23) 2.7	Here ལ་ shows the object of the action verb 'blaspheme'
God	to	blaspheme		

Although all the examples above use the simple particle ལ་ to mean 'to', this is really only one of seven particles used for this purpose in written Tibetan. Which of these particles are used depends on the final letter of the preceding syllable, as follows.

Final Letter of Preceding Syllable	Objective Particle	Example	Reference
ག བ།	ཏྲ།	ལག་ཏྲ།	(20) 14.10
ང་ད་ན་མ་ར་ལ།	ཏུ།	ཡུལ་ཏུ།	(20) 1.14
ས།	སྐ།	ཞེང་འམས་སྐ།	(25) 16.19
ལ། and vowels	ར། or རྩ།	དེ་ཚོར།	(12) 1.22
any letter above	ན་ལ།	འཕྲིན་བཟང་ལ།	(20) 1.15

Note that: 1) syllables ending in any letter may be followed by the objective particles ན་ or ལ་; and 2) the objective particle ར་ actually joins itself to the previous syllable (the one ending in a vowel, in the example above, ར་ཚོ།). All the other particles stand by themselves. These seven particles are referred to collectively as the ལ་དོན། .

6.2.3 The Agentive / Instrumentive Case: As in the spoken language, the subject of a voluntary verb is marked with an agentive case particle ⁵⁷ . For example:

Subject	Agentive	Object	Verb	Reference
ཁོང་	གིས།	དེ་ཚོར་	ཚོས་བསྟུན།	(12) 1.22
He		them-to	preached.	

In this sentence, the agentive particle གིས། marks 'He' (Jesus) as the subject of the voluntary verb 'preached'. The subjects of most involuntary verbs are not in the agentive case, but a few involuntary verbs such as མཐོང་། 'to see' and སེམ། 'to know' are exceptions to this rule. Their subjects are marked with an agentive particle. ⁵⁸)

An agentive case particle is also used to mark the instrument by which an action is done (so it is also sometimes called 'instrumentive'). For example, in the sentence, 'He cut the bread with a knife', the word 'knife' would be marked with an agentive case particle. ⁵⁹ In the example below, the whip is the instrument of beating, so it is marked with the instrumental case particle.

Instrument	Particle	Verb	Reference
རྩ་ལྷུག་	གིས།	རུང་།	(21) 15.15
whip beaten with a whip	with	beat	

Like the seven objective particles, the agentive particles change form according to the final letter of the preceding syllable.

Final Letter of Preceding Syllable	Agentive Particle	Example	Reference
ག ར།	གིས།	ཁོང་གིས་	(23) 2.2
ད་བ་ས།	ཀྱིས།	ཟླེད་ཀྱིས་	(24) 4.38

ན་མ་ར་ལ།	གྱིས།	ཡོ་ཉ་ནན་གྱིས།	Mt. 3.15 [†]
vowels	ས།	གདོན་འདྲེས།	(21) 1.23
ལ། and vowels	ཡིས།	མི་བཞི་ཡིས།	(23) 2.3

Here are some examples of how each is used:

Subject	Agentive Particle	Remainder of phrase		Reference
ཁོང་ He	གིས་	ལས་ངན་ evil works	ག་རེ་ བྱས་ཡོད། what has done?	(21) 15.14
ཉེ་གནས་ Disciples	གྱིས་	དབེ་དེའི་ parable's	དོན་ བཀའ་འདྲི་ཞུས། meaning asked	(17) 7.17
ཡོ་ཉ་ནན་ John	གྱིས་	ཁོང་ལ་ (to) Him	ཁྱུས་གསོ་ལ། baptized.	Mt. 3.15*
གདོན་འདྲེ Demon	ས་	ཟིན་པའི་ caught	མི། man	(21) 1.23
མི་བཞི་ Four men	ཡིས་	ནད་པ་ sick man	ཁྱུར། carried	(23) 2.3
ངས་ I (agentive particle)		ཤེས་ know	གྱི་ཡོད། present auxiliary	(21) 1.24

Note the last example where the subject ང་ is shown by the agentive particle ས་ being joined directly to it to give the contraction ངས། . Another way to think of this is:

Subject		Agentive		Short Form
ང་	+	ཡིས་	=	ངས།

[†] Example from 1903 version.

6.2.4 The Dative (or Beneficial-Purposive) Case As we mentioned above, the word 'dative' comes from a Latin word that means 'to give'. In English, the dative case is used for what grammarians call 'indirect objects'. It may be helpful to review two different types of grammatical objects: direct objects and indirect objects.

Subject	Verb	Direct Object	Indirect Object
Drolma	made	tea	
Drolma	gave	the tea	to him

In both English and Tibetan, 'he' is the indirect object of the verb 'gave'; that is, 'he' is the one who benefits from the action of giving. This is marked in English with the preposition 'to' and in Tibetan with a dative case marker - one of the ལ་དོན། particles we met in section 6.2.2.

The dative case has two major uses in Tibetan: a) to show the indirect objects of certain verbs (those whose indirect objects receive some kind of benefit from the action of the verb); and b) to show the purpose or aim of an action or state of being. Like the second or objective case, the dative case is marked with one of the seven ལ་དོན། particles.

For example, in Mark 5.43, when Jesus has raised Jairus' daughter, He commands that she be given something to eat.

གུ་མོ་	ལ་	ཟས་	སྤྲོད།	'girl' is the indirect object
girl	to	food	give	who benefits by being given food. (25) 5.43

(Note the ལ་དོན། particle ལ་ after the indirect object 'girl'.) Again, at the Transfiguration, Peter wishes to make shelters for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. Note the use of the dative particle ལ་ after the pronoun 'You' and the noun 'Moses' in the example below.

ཁྱེད་ལ་གཅིག་དང་མོ་ཤེ་ལ་གཅིག་	one for You and one for Moses	(18) 9.5
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This case is also used to show the purpose, aim, or goal of an action.

ང་ཚོ་མེད་པ་བཟོ་བར་མེད་ས་སམ།	have You come <u>in order</u> to destroy us? (21) 1.24
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(Note the ལ་དོན། particle ར་ suffixed to the compound verb མེད་པ་བཟོ་བ། 'to destroy'.)

By way of review, it may be helpful to recall our earlier point that a Tibetan action verb is like an octopus lurking at the end of a sentence, reaching out with all eight

legs to control the other parts of the same sentence. In this discussion of case particles, we have seen that the nature of the verb controls whether the subject is in the nominative case (being verbs and intransitive verbs) or the agentive case (voluntary verbs), whether the object of the verb has to be marked with one of the seven objective case particles, or whether it can take an indirect object which must be marked with the dative case.

6.2.5 The Originative Case: This case is used to show origin or separation.

Origin or Source: The 5th or originative case is used to show the source or origin of a thing or an action, in a manner similar to the English word 'from'. For example: 'milk comes from a cow', or 'smoke comes from a fire'. This case is also used to show origin in other senses, for example: a) the start of a journey: 'from Beijing to Lhasa', 'he fell from a horse'; b) the start of a period of time: 'from last year until now', 'from yesterday to today', 'from here to eternity'; or c) the beginning of a sequence of some sort, 'from one to ten'.

Separation: The originative case also separates, isolates, or distinguishes one thing from a class or group, for example, 'Among mountains, Mt. Everest is highest', or 'Among metals, gold is the most precious'. It is also used to separate items for comparison: 'Lhasa is bigger than Nedong', 'China has more people than Nepal'.⁶⁰

The 5th (originative) case particles are རྣམ་ and ལས་. Here are some examples of how they are used in *Jesus Christ Has Power to Save Us*.

བཀའ་བྲིམས་ གྱི་ རྣང་ རྣས། (19) 12.28
 commands **among**
 'among the commandments' (which is the greatest?)

ནད་ ལས་ ཐར་བ། (25) 5.23
 sickness **from** save
 'save from (her) illness'

འདི་གཉིས་ ལས་ གལ་ཆེ་བའི་བཀའ་བྲིམས་གཞན་མེད། (19) 12.31
 these two **than** important laws other are not
 'no commandments more important than these two'

དཔོན་པོའི་ཁང་པ་ རྣས། (25) 5.35
 official house **from**
 'from the official's house'

6.2.6 The Connective (Genitive) Case: In English, this case shows possession: his dog, Tashi's yak, Drolma's tea. In Tibetan, the connective case mainly shows possession as well, but it is also used in other ways to link nouns, pronouns, and adjectives with nouns

and pronouns. ⁶¹ Connective case particles depend on the last letter of the preceding syllable.

Final Letter of Preceding Syllable	Connective Particle	Example	Reference
ག ང།	གི	དགོན་མཚོག་གི་སྐུ། God's Son	(19) sec. title
ད་བ་ས།	ཀྱི	ཚོད་ཀྱི་སྐྱིག་ཉེས། your sin	(23) 2.5
ན་མ་ར་ལ།	ཀྱི	གོང་ཁྱེར་གྱི་མི། the town's person	(22) 1.33
vowels	འི།	ཁང་བའི་ནང་དུ། in the house	(23) 2.1
vowels	ཡི།	བྱ་ཡི་ལུག། the sheep of the flock	Mt. 26.31 †

6.2.7 The Locative Case: This case is used to show the location of something in time or space, and also to show possession.

6.2.7.1 Location: Locative markers show the location of something in space.

Example	Meaning	Reference
སྐྱོའི་ འགྲམ་ ཁྱིམ། door side at	at the door	(23) 2.2
འཇིག་རྟེན་ ཁྱིམ། world in	in the world	(25) 16.15

They can be combined with other words to show where something is. In this mode, they work like English prepositions:

† 1903 version.

ནང་ལ།	in, into, inside	སྒྲིང་ལ།	on, on top of
འོག་ལ།	under, beneath, below	སྒྲིང་ལ།	on, over

6.2.7.2 **Time:** Locative case markers also show location in time:

ད་དུས་ ལ་	འབབ་འདུག	now the time has arrived	(20) 1.15
ཉིན་གུང་ ལ་	སྤོངས་དུས།	when it was noon	(22) 15.33
ཚུ་ཚོད་གསུམ་པ་	ར།	at 3:00	(22) 15.34

6.2.7.3 **Possession:** The locative case is also used to show possession. The possessor of something is marked with a 7th case particle as follows.

Possessor + 7th case particle ལ་དོན། + possessed thing + 'being' verb ཡོད / འདུག

ཡེ་ཤུ་	ལ།	རྣམ་མཐུ་	ཡོད།	
Jesus	to	power	is	
Jesus has (supernatural) power.				(21) section title

6.2.8 **The Vocative Case:** This case has two particles ཉེ and ཀ་ཡེ། (the former is common in the Bible, the latter is not) which are used for calling out to someone to get their attention. In a technical sense, these words are not really particles, since they have a meaning ('Oh, Hey') but they are traditionally classified this way. The particle ཉེ is especially common in the Psalms, and in prayers and laments in which someone is crying out to God.

ཉེ་ངའི་དགོན་མཚོག། Oh, my God Mt. 27.46 (1903)

In modern Tibetan, the Chinese interjection *wei* occasionally appears as a vocative particle, but it is not part of the traditional classification.

6.3 **Twenty one Case Particles:** In all, there are 21 unique case particles.⁶² Remember that case particles have no meaning by themselves. Their only purpose is to show how words are connected to other words.

Case	Particles
2. Objective	སུ་སུ་ཏུ་བྱ་བ་ལ།
3. Agentive	གིས་གྱིས་གྱིས་འིས་ཡིས།
5. Originative	ནས་ལས།
6. Connective	གི་གྱི་གྱི་འི་ཡི།
8. Vocative	ཏྲེ་ ཀླ་ཡི།

You should be aware that some of these particles occur in other contexts where they are NOT case particles but regular words:

Particle	Also means
སུ།	who
སུ།	section
ན།	to be ill
ད།	goat
ལ།	mountain pass
གྱིས།	the imperative form of བྱི to do
ནས།	barley
ལས།	deeds, actions, works (Sanskrit <i>karma</i>)

6.4 Cases With Example Sentences: Here is a summary table of all eight grammatical cases with simplified example sentences for each. Your life as a student of written Tibetan will be much easier if you can memorize this table with its example sentences.

The Eight Traditional Grammatical Cases or རྣམ་དབྱེ་བ་རྒྱུ་དེ།

English Name	Particles or ཚོགས་པ།	Example Phrase / Sentence:
1. Nominative:	none	ཡེ་ཤུ། སྐབས་མགོན་ ཡིན། Jesus Savior is
2. Objective:	སུ་རུ་ཏུ་དུ་ན་ར་ལ།	ཡེ་ཤུ། ག་ལིལ་ཡུལ་ བ། རེབས། Jesus Galilee to came.
3. Agentive:	གིས་ཀྱིས་ཀྱིས་འིས་ཡིས།	ཡེ་ཤུས། ཁོ་ཚོ་ སྤྱིར་ བཏོན། Jesus them outside put
4. Dative:	སུ་རུ་ཏུ་དུ་ན་ར་ལ།	ཡེ་ཤུས་ མི་ཚོགས་ བ། ཟས་ གནང། Jesus crowd to food gave.
5. Originative:	ནས། ལས།	ཡེ་ཤུ། ག་ལིལ་ཡུལ་ ནས། རེབས། Jesus Galilee from came.
6. Connective:	གི་ཀྱི་ཀྱི་འི་ཡི།	ཡེ་ཤུ་འི་ ཉེ་གནས། Jesus' disciples.
7. Locative:	སུ་རུ་ཏུ་དུ་ན་ར་ལ།	ཡེ་ཤུ། ལྗོངས་ འགྲམ་ རྒྱ ཡོད། Jesus door near/at is
8. Vocative:	ཧྲེ ཀྱ་ཡི།	ཧྲེ། སྐབས་མགོན་ ཡེ་ཤུ། O Savior Jesus

6.5 Summary: Tibetan has eight grammatical cases which are traditionally numbered in a standard way: 1st or Nominative, 2nd or Objective, 3rd or Agentive, 4th or Dative (Beneficial-Purposive), 5th or Originative, 6th or Connective, 7th or Locative, and 8th or Vocative. The second, fourth, and seventh cases are marked by the ལ་དོན། particles; the third by the agentive particles, the sixth by the connective particles and the eighth by one of two vocative particles. Letters and syllables that are used as case particles occasionally have other uses as well.

⁵³ Of course, in Tibetan this would be 'Tashi yaks loves', but the word order is not important for this example.

⁵⁴ Some non-Tibetan authors classify these cases differently, and use different numbers.

⁵⁵ To see how modern grammarians classify Tibetan grammatical case, see Tournadre and Dorje p. 99ff, and Wilson p. 626ff.

⁵⁶ Note that some of the present tense constructions discussed in Chapter Four, such as ཉན་པར་བྱེད། 'listens', and certain fixed verbal compounds like མངོན་དུ་གྱུར། 'to realize or achieve', **appear** to contain ལ་དོན། particles but actually do not. These 'false ལ་དོན་' are attached to verbs rather than nouns, and so are not case marking particles, even though they have the same form.

⁵⁷ Some authors (e.g. Bartee and Droma, p. 185) and many linguists call this an **ergative**. It is one of the most common grammatical structures in spoken and written Tibetan. To see how they work in Lhasa dialect, see Bartee and Droma, p. 124-125.

⁵⁸ Goldstein, *Essentials of Modern Literary Tibetan*, p. 84, note 1. The following unintentional verbs take the 3rd (agentive) case marker on their subjects. Unintentional verbs which do not require an agentive are given for comparison. Table taken from Losang Thonden's *Modern Tibetan Language*, Volume I, p. 226-7.

Requires Agentive	Example Meaning	No Agentive	Example Meaning
ངས་མཐོང་གི་འདུག	I see.	ང་དགའ་གི་འདུག	I like / love it.
ངས་གོ་གི་འདུག	I am hearing.	ང་ན་གི་འདུག	I feel / am sick.
ངས་བསམ་གྱི་འདུག	I am thinking (naturally occurring thoughts)	ང་སེམས་སྐྱོ་གི་འདུག	I feel / am sad.
ངས་བློ་གྱི་འདུག	I remember.	ང་པ་སྐོམ་གྱི་འདུག	I feel / am thirsty.
ངས་ནོར་གྱི་འདུག	I am making a mistake.	ང་སྐོད་ལོག་ལྷོག་གི་འདུག	I feel / am hungry.
ངས་བོ་གི་འདུག	I spill something.	ང་གཉིད་ལུག་གི་འདུག	I feel / am sleepy.
ངས་འཁྱེག་གི་འདུག	I carry it.	ང་སེམས་པམ་གྱི་འདུག	I feel / am disappointed.
དེ་ངས་ཆག་སོང་།	I broke it.	ང་བླ་གི་འདུག	I am recovering (from an illness)

⁵⁹ Linguists call this an **instrumentive**. Ergatives and instrumentives are marked with the same set of case particles in Tibetan.

⁶⁰ In traditional Tibetan grammar, the particle རྟོན་ is used to separate items of like nature, as in 'Among mountains, Mt. Everest is highest'; while the particle ལྟོན་ is used to separate items of unlike nature, as in 'The elephant is stronger than the yak'. See p. 20 of Dorje Gyalpo's commentary on the ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ in

Appendix 4, item 2 under 'Works in Tibetan'.

⁶¹ For more on the connective case, see Wilson, p. 644-651.

⁶² A summary of the case-marking particles can be found in Tournadre and Dorje, p. 468, and in Wilson's Appendix 5.

7. Life Among the Particles

In the last chapter we saw how grammatical particles are used to show the case of a given word, that is, how a word relates to the other words around it and to the rest of the sentence. According to traditional Tibetan grammar, particles come in two 'flavors': dependent and independent.

7.1 Dependent Particles: These particles come in groups or sets of 2-11 particles. Which individual particle in the set should be used in a sentence depends on the last letter of the syllable preceding the particle, just like the agentive, dative, and connective particles discussed in the previous chapter. It can be helpful to write out on a small card a list of the dependent particles, and the final letters on which they depend.

7.1.1 The Sentence Terminators: Called ལྷུར་བསྐྱུ། or རྗོགས་ཚིག། in Tibetan, these eleven particles work like the period at the end of an English sentence. They show that a sentence is complete.

Final Letter of Preceding Syllable	Sentence Terminator	Example
ག།	གོ།	འདུག་གོ།
ང།	ངོ།	བྱུང་ངོ།
ད།	དོ།	བཤད་དོ།
ན།	ནོ།	ཡིན་ནོ།
བ།	བོ།	ཐུབ་བོ།
མ།	མོ།	བསམ་མོ།
no suffix or འ།	འོ།	ཞེས་འོ། འགྲོའོ།
ར།	རོ།	ཐར་རོ།
ལ།	ལོ།	བཙུན་ལོ།
ས།	སོ།	གསུངས་སོ།
post suffix ད།	ཏོ།	གསོལ་ཏོ།

(Note that in modern Tibetan the post suffix letter ད་ is no longer written, but its influence lives on in the fact that it still takes the sentence terminator particle ཏོ་ .)

For example:

སྐྱབས་མགོན་	ཡེ་ཤུ་	སྐྱེ་ཚོ་	ལས་	འདས་	སོ།
Savior	Jesus	life	from	passed	sentence terminator

Jesus died. (22) 15.37

7.1.2 **The Question Particles:** Called འབྱེད་སྒྲུབ། in Tibetan, these work just like the question mark at the end of an English sentence. ⁶³

Final Letter of Preceding Syllable	Question Particle	Example
ག	གམ།	འདུག་གམ།
ང།	ངམ།	ཡོང་ངམ།
ད།	དམ།	བྱེད་དམ།
ན།	ནམ།	ཡིན་ནམ།
བ།	བམ།	ཐུབ་བམ།
མ།	མམ།	བསམ་མམ།
ལ།	ལམ།	འགོ་ལམ།
ར།	རམ།	ཐར་རམ།
ལ།	ལམ།	འཚོ་ལ་ལམ།
ས།	སམ།	བྱས་སམ།
post suffix ད།	ཏམ།	གྱུར་ཏམ།

ཁྱེད་ཀྱིས་	ང་ཚོ་	མེད་པ་བཟོ་བར་	མེད་པ་	སམ།
You	us	to destroy	come	?

Have You come to destroy us? (21) 1.24

7.1.3 **The Concessive Connectives** (རྒྱལ་སྒྲུབ།) These three particles are used with the meaning 'but' 'also' 'though' 'although' or 'even'. Like all dependent particles, they come in different forms which are used according to the last letter of the preceding syllable.

Final Letter of Preceding Syllable	Connective Particle	Example	Reference
ག་ད་བ་ས།	ཀྱང་།	གདོན་འདྲེས་ཀྱང་།	(21) 1.27
ང་ན་མ་ར་ལ།	ཡང་།	གདོན་འདྲེ་ལ་ཡང་།	(21) 1.27
ལ། and vowels	འང་།	སྟོང་པ་འང་།	(23) 2.2

These particles are used in such sentences as 'He commands even the demons, and even they obey Him (21) 1.27; or 'there was not even an empty place by the door' (23) 2.2.

7.1.4 **The Gerundive Particles** Also called continuative particles (or ལྟག་བཅས། in Tibetan) these three particles show that there is more meaning to follow.

Final Letter of Preceding Syllable	Gerundive Particle	Example	Reference
ན་ར་ལ་ས།	ཉི།	ཐེབས་ཉི།	(21) 1.21
ག་ང་བ་མ་འ་	ཉི།	གནང་ཉི།	(21) 1.27
ད།	དེ།	བསྐྱེད་དེ།	(22) 1.34

There are several basic uses of these particles. The first is to join two sentence elements in such a way that one follows the other in a sequence, such as: having entered the synagogue, He taught (12) 1.21. The second is to join two phrases in such a way that one of them could be translated using a verb with an '-ing' ending in English (a **gerund**): laughing at Him, (25) 5.40; touching His feet (25) 5.22; His method of instruction being unlike (that of) those skilled in the religious law (21) 1.22. A third use is simply to join two phrases with the meaning 'and', as in: everyone was surprised and (21) 1.27; men came from the leader's house and (25) 5.35. ⁶⁴ Sometimes they are simply left as untranslated connectors.

7.1.5 **The 'Alternative' Particles:** These particles are identical to the question particles described above, but they are used in written Tibetan to give the meaning 'or'. For example:

ཡིག་འབྲུ་གཅིག་ གམ། ཐིག་གཅིག་ 'a syllable **or** a line' Mt. 5.18 (1903)
 syllable one or line one

Jesus uses one of these particles to ask whether it is easier to say 'your sins are forgiven', or to say 'get up, take up your bed, and go' (23) 2.9.

ཁྱོད་ཀྱི་	སྤྲིག་ཉེས་	བསལ་	ཟིན་	ཟེར་བ་	ལས་	སྤྲོ་པོ་	ཡིན་	ནམ།
your	sin	clear	past	say	than	easy	is	OR
ཡང་ན།	འོངས་	ལ་	ཉལ་ཁྲི་	ཁྱེར་ནས་	སོང་	ཞིག་	ཟེར་བ་	
(or)	get up	and	bed	carrying	go	com.	say	
ལས་སྤྲོ་པོ་	ཡིན།							
easy	is							

Notice that there are two words in this sentence translated as 'or'. The second one, ཡང་ན་ is also used to mean or, either / or, otherwise. Using a question particle together with ཡང་ན་ is a common way to say 'or' in written Tibetan. Note also how the letter ལ་ is used to join the two parts of this sentence with the meaning 'and'. This is one of the non case-marking uses of ལ་ .

7.1.6 The Imperative & Singular Particles: (ཞིག་སྤྱོད་) Three particles mark the end of a sentence in which someone is told to do something.

Final Letter of Preceding Syllable	Imperative Particle	Example	Meaning	Reference
ག་ད་བ་ན།	ཅིག	འོག་ཅིག	Return home!	(23) 2.11
ང་མ་ལ་ར་ལ།	ཞིག	སོང་ཞིག	Go!	Mt. 2.20 (1903 NT)
ས།	ཤིག	འོངས་ཤིག	Get up!	(25) 5.41

Note that ཅིག is used after verbs ending in the post-suffix ད། and that ཞིག is used after syllables without suffixes. Remember that polite imperatives can also be formed by adding the syllable དང་། to the verb root.

The same particles can also be used according to the rules above to give the meaning 'one' of something.

Example	Meaning	Reference
མི་ཞིག	a man, a person	(21) 1.23
དབང་ལྡན་ཞིག	one who has authority	(21) 1.22
ཨི་ཁུང་ཆེན་པོ་ཞིག	a big hole	(23) 2.4

ངས་སྐྱེས་ལེགས་ཤིག	a piece of good quality cloth	(23) 15.46
སྐད་ཅིག	a voice	Mt. 3.17 (1903)

7.1.7 **The Quotation Particles** (ཞེས་སྟེ།) These particles do the same job as quote marks do in English. They show that someone has said or thought something, as in, He said, 'Tashi loves yaks'. Tibetan places a **quotation particle** after the sentence that is being quoted, which is rather like using only the second of the two quotation marks in English.

English Example: He said, Tashi loves yaks". (only one quote mark)

Tibetan Example: He Tashi yaks loves (**quote particle**) said.

There are three quotation markers, and which one is used depends on the final letter of the preceding syllable.

Final Letter of Preceding Syllable	Quote Particle	Example	Reference
vowels and ང་ན་མ་འ་ར་ལ།	ཞེས།	ཡོང་ཞེས།	(24) 16.3
ག་ད་བ།	ཅེས།	ཐུབ་ཅེས།	(23) 2.7
ས།	ཤེས།	ལགས་ཤེས།	(20) 14.45

Some modern Tibetan works use quotation marks as well as quote particles, and this is the situation you will see in *Jesus Christ Has Power to Save Us*, as in the following excerpt from Mark 1.25.

“ཁ་རྒྱུ་སྤོད།	མི་དེའི་	གཟུགས་ནས་	ཐོན་	ཞེས་”	ཅེས་	གསུངས།
"Be quiet!	man-that's	body-from	come out	command"	quote	said.
"Be quiet! Come out of him!"						

Quoted thoughts are treated similarly, except that the Tibetan has no quote marks for quoted thoughts, as you can see in this portion of Mark 2.7:

དགོན་མཚོག་	གཅིག་པོས་	མ་གཏོགས་	གཞན་	སུས་	སྤིག་ཏེས་	སེལ་
God	alone	except	other	by who	sins	forgive
(They) thought, "who other than God alone is able to forgive sins?"						

ཐུབ་	ཅེས་	བསམས།
able	quote	thought

7.1.8 **The Connective Particles** (ཚིག་ཕྲད་ཞིང་སོགས།) These particles give the meaning 'and', or are used in showing a sequence. They link parts of sentences. ⁶⁵

Final Letter of Preceding Syllable	Connective Particle	Example	Reference
ག་ད་བ།	ཅིང་།	རྒྱུང་ལ་བཀའ་བཏུན་མཛད་ཅིང་། wind rebuked and	(24) 4.39
ང་ན་མ་འ་ར་ལ། or no final	ཞིང་།	བུ་ཞིང་སྒྲེ་སྒྲུགས་། crying and wailing	(25) 5.38
ས།	ཤིང་།	ནམ་མཁའ་ཕྱེས་ཤིང་། the sky opened and	Mt. 3.17 (1903)

Note that ཅིང་། is used after words ending in the post-suffix ད། and that ཞིང་། is used after syllables without suffixes. The connector ཤིང་། is also used after syllables ending in the post-suffix ས།.

7.1.9 **The 'Doer' Particles** Also called བདག་སྐྱེ in Tibetan, these six particles are combined with verbs to show that someone is the doer of the action of the verb, or that they come from a particular place.

Final Letter of Preceding Syllable	'Doer' Particle
ག་ད་ན་བ་མ་ས་ or post suffix ད།	བ། བོ།
ང་འ་ར་ལ། or vowel	བ། བོ།
Any letter	མ། མོ།

Particle	'Doer'	Meaning	Reference
བ།	ཐོས་བ།	hearer	(21) 1.22
	སྟོན་བ།	teacher	(24) 4.38

	གྱོན་པ།	wearer	(24) 16.5
	ཞུགས་པ།	that which enters	(17) 7.15
བ།	ཟེར་བ།	the one called	(25) 5.22

They can also be combined with place names to show that someone is from that place. Notice that a man takes the male particle བ་ or བོ་ and a woman the female particle

མ་ or མོ་. ⁶⁶

བ།	ན་ཙ་རེལ་བ།	man of Nazareth	(21) 1.24
མ།	མག་དལ་མ།	woman of Magdala	(25) 16.1

Another way to show that someone is the 'doer' of an action is to add the suffix particle མཁམས། to the action verb. This particle is also used in the spoken language. ⁶⁷

Particle	'Doer'	Meaning	Reference
མཁམས།	ཟེར་མཁམས།	the One called	(23) 2.10
	ལུས་མཁམས།	launderer	(18) 9.3
	རྒྱལ་གཏོད་བྱེད་མཁམས།	betrayed	(20) 14.44
	སྐྱུག་མཁམས།	one who waits	(23) 15.42-3

7.2 The Independent Particles These particles are called 'independent' because there is just one to a set and it may be used regardless of the last letter of the preceding syllable.

7.2.1 The Subject-Marker Particle also called the རི་སྐྱོད་ in Tibetan, is used to mark the subject, theme, or main topic of a sentence. ⁶⁸ When you see it, you know that everything to the left of it is marked as especially important.

Example

འདི་	ཞི་	ངའི་	གཅེས་པའི་	སྐྱས་	ཡིན།	Reference
This	subject	My	beloved	Son	is	(18) 9.7

This is My beloved Son.

ཁོང་གིས་	དེ་ཚོ་	ར་	ཚོས་བསྟན་སྟངས་	ནི་	
He by	they	to	religion teaching way	subject	(21) 1.22
His way of teaching them					

སྐྱབས་མགོན་	ཡེ་ཤུ་	ནི་	དགོན་མཚོག་གི་	སྲས་	ཡིན།	
Savior	Jesus	subject	God's	Son	is	(18) section title

7.2.2 **The Sequential Particle རྟེན།** In addition to its use as a case-marking particle for the 5th grammatical case, རྟེན་ may be attached to the past tense form of a verb to give the meaning, 'having done A, B occurred'. This is similar to the sequential function of the continuative particles discussed in 7.14.

ཡེ་ཤུ་	ག་ལིལ་ཡུལ་	དུ་	ཕེབས་ ནས་	after Jesus came to Galilee,	(20) 1.14
Jesus	Galilee	to	come		

ཁྱེད་ཚོས་	སྦྱོད་པ་	ངན་པ་	སྦངས་ ནས་	abandon your evil deeds and	(20) 1.15
You	deeds	evil	abandon		

The particle can also be used do show in what way something happened:

ནད་པ་	གཟིག་	ཁུར་ ནས་	carrying a sick man	(23) 2.3
sick man	one	carrying		

ཁོ་ཚོའི་	བསམས་པ་	མཁྱེན་ ནས་	knowing their thoughts	(23) 2.5
Their	thoughts	knowing		

7.2.3 **The Use of ལ་ to Join Sentences:** In addition to its use as a case-marking particle, the syllable ལ་ also joins sentences with the meaning 'and' (or sometimes 'but'). When ལ་ is used like this, it is NOT a case-marking particle, but a sentence-joining particle.

འོངས་	ལ་	ཉལ་ཁྲི་ཁྲེར་ནས།	(23) 2.9
Get up	and	carry bed/mat	

In *Jesus Christ Has Power to Save Us*, the second and third sentences of the double verse Mk. 15.42-43 are joined by the syllable ལ་ .

7.2.4 **The Demonstrative Particle** or དེ་སྐོར་ is used like the English words 'that' or 'the' to refer to something that was previously mentioned ('that tea we drank yesterday') to point something out ('Look at that'). The demonstrative use of the particle དེ་ should not be confused with its use as a gerundive particle explained earlier in this chapter.

Example	Reference
<p>ཡེ་བྱས་ བད་པ་ རྟོ་ ལ་ Jesus sick man that to (said) Jesus said to the sick man</p>	(23) 2.10
<p>རུས་ རྟོ་ ཉིད་ རུ་ time that very at At that very time (at once)</p>	(18) 9.8
<p>ཉིན་ རྟོ་ day that That day</p>	(23) 15.42-3

7.2.5 **The 'Who, What, Which' Particles** or ལྟོ་སྐོར་ (general particles) are used like their English counterparts.

Particle Example	Meaning	Reference
ཅི། འདི་ཅི་ཡིན།	what is this?	(21) 1.27
ཇི། ཇི་ལྟར།	in what way, how	(21) 1.27
སྟུ། འདི་སྟུ་ཡིན་ནམ།	who is this?	(24) 4.41
གང། འོན་གང་ཡིན།	what is the meaning?	(25) 5.39
མིའི་ཡིད་ནང་ནས་ཕྱིར་གང་འཕྱོན་པ།	what comes out of a man	(17) 7.15
གལ་ཆེ་ཤོས་གང་ཡིན།	what's most important	(19) sec. title

7.2.6 **The Negative Particles** Also called དགག་སྒྲི in Tibetan, these four particles may be joined to any word to give the meaning 'is not' or 'without' . In general, the syllable མ་ is used for negating past tense verbs ('didn't go, didn't want) and the syllable མི་ is used for negating present and future tense verbs (doesn't go, doesn't want, won't want).

The Negative Particles

མ། མི། མིན། མེད།

མ།	མ་བརྟུག།	did not allow	(22) 1.34
	གོམ་པ་སློ་མ་ཐུབ་པ།	one who couldn't walk	(23) 2.3
	ཞེད་སྣང་མ་བྱེད།	do not be afraid	(25) 5.36
	མ་ཤོད།	do not tell	(25) 5.43
	མ་ཤེས།	did not know	(18) 9.6
མི།	མི་འདྲ།	unlike	(21) 1.22
	ཐུགས་སྒྲུང་མི་མཛད་དམ།	don't You notice?	(24) 4.38
	མི་གཙང་བ།	unclean	(17) 7.15
	བྱེད་མི་ཐུབ།	cannot do	(17) 7.15
	མི་འགོ།	does not go	(17) 7.19
	མི་དགའ།	does not like	(17) 7.22
	ཞེད་མི་དགོས།	don't be afraid	(25) 16.6
མི།	དད་པ་མི་བྱེད་པ།	the one who doesn't believe	(25) 16.16
མིན།	ང་མིན།	It is not I	Mark 14.70 (1903)
མེད།	ཡིད་ཆེས་མེད།	without faith	(24) 4.40
	གཞན་མེད།	no others	(19) 12.31
	ཡོད་མེད།	whether or not	(23) 15.44
	འདིར་མེད།	is not here	(25) 16.6

7.2.7 **Rhetorical Particles:** These particles have to do with meanings and showing the logical relationships between the parts of a sentence, such as 'if', 'so that', and 'because'. Other constructions that have this meaning are discussed in Chapter Eight.

7.2.7.1 The Conditional Clause Marker The particle ན་ is placed at the end of a clause to give the meaning 'if' :

Conditional Particle	Example	Meaning	Reference
ན།	ང་ཚོ་འདིར་བསྐྱད་ན།	if we are here	(18) 9.5

Note that there are other particles which are also used in written Tibetan which give the meaning 'if', such as ཚེ། གལ་ཏེ། and གལ་སྲིད།. ན། itself may occasionally mean 'because'.⁶⁹

7.2.7.2 The Logical Markers The particles སྦྱིར། and ཚེད་དུ། show the purpose or reason that something was done.

Logical Particle	Example	Meaning	Reference
སྦྱིར།	ཤེས་པའི་སྦྱིར།	so that you will know	(23) 2.10
	འདོད་པ་སྐྱོང་སྦྱིར།	in order to satisfy	(21) 15.15
	གསོད་པའི་སྦྱིར།	in order to kill	(21) 15.15
ཚེད་དུ།	སྐྱོད་པའི་ཚེད་དུ།	in order to release	(21) 15.11

The particle བས་ is also used to show a reason, and is generally translated 'because' or 'since'.

Logical Particle	Example	Meaning	Reference
བས།	གཟིམས་ཡོད་བས།	because He was sleeping	(24) 4.38
	སྐྱག་བས།	because he was afraid	(18) 9.6
	ཁོང་ཚོ་ཤེས་ཀྱི་ཡོད་བས་རེད།	because they knew Him	(22) 1.34

In addition, there are short phrases which can help to show the logical connection between parts of the sentence:

Example	Meaning	Reference
གང་ཡིན་ཟེར་ན།	for, because	(17) 7.19
གང་ཡིན་ཞེ་ན།	(same as above)	
རྒྱ་མཚན་ནི།	the reason being	(17) 7.20

And there are also two logical particles, མ་ཟད། and མ་གཏོགས། , ⁷⁰ which show the meanings 'not only' and 'except for':

Logical Particle	Example	Meaning	Reference
མ་ཟད།	བཙུན་གནང་བ་མ་ཟད།	not only did He heal	(22) 1.34
མ་གཏོགས།	དགོན་མཚོག་གཅིག་པོས་མ་གཏོགས།	except for God only	(23) 2.7

7.2.8 Introducers These words or short phrases are generally found at the beginning of a clause or sentence and serve a variety of functions. In *Jesus Christ Has Power to Save Us*, the main introducers are:

Introducer	Example	Reference
འོན་ཀྱང་།	however, but	(21) 1.25
ཡིན་ན་ཡང་།	however, but	(17) 7.15
དེ་ནས།	then	(21) 1.21
དེ་ནས་ཡང་།	then, then again	(17) 7.14
དེའི་སྐབས།	at that time, then	(21) 1.23
དེ་དུས།	at that time, during that time	(24) 4.38
དེ་མ་ཐག་ཏུ།	as soon as that (had happened)	(21) 1.28
དེའི་ལན་དུ།	in answer (to a question)	(19) 12.29
ལན་དུ།	in answer	(21) 15.13
དེ་ལྟར།	in that way	(25) 16.19
གསུངས་དོན།	introduces direct speech	(20) 1.15

7.2.9 **The Reflexive Particle ཉིད།** The particle ཉིད། is joined after a noun or pronoun to give the restrictive meaning 'that very one' or 'that exact one'. In other contexts it can mean 'the person him/her self' or 'that thing itself', like the particle རང། , which is discussed in Chapter Eight. ⁷¹

དུས་དེ་ཉིད་ཀྱི། at that very time, at once (18) 9.8

7.2.10 **Separation Suffix:** The phrase དང་ཁ་བྲལ། is used to mean that someone left a group to go elsewhere or in some way separated from something.

མི་ཚོགས་དང་ཁ་བྲལ་ཉི། leaving the crowd (24) 4.36
crowd leaving

7.3 **Use of the Tsheg ཚེག and the Shad ཤ།** By now you have noticed that all Tibetan words are separated by little solid dots called ཚེག. (These should not be confused with the little open circles under foreign words called *bindu*.) Clauses and sentences end with short vertical lines called ཤ། . *Shads* are also used to separate items in a list. In the དབྱེ་ཅན། form of Tibetan writing, a tsheg should always appear between the letter ཅ་ and a ཤ། .
No tsheg is needed between any other ending letter and the ཤ། . ⁷²

7.4 **Summary:** Tibetan uses two broad types of particles to show the relationship between words. Dependent particles come in sets, and which member of the set is used depends on the last letter of the preceding syllable. Such particles are used to show the end of a sentence, questions, commands, quotes, and for many other uses. Independent particles are single and may be used regardless of the last letter of the preceding syllable. The ཚེག and the ཤ། are punctuation marks that separate syllables, clauses, items in a list, and complete sentences.

⁶³ The Lhasa variety of spoken Tibetan uses question particles as well. See Tournadre and Dorje, p. 85.
⁶⁴ There is also an appositive use of these particles, such as in the sentence, 'Being the Son of God, Jesus was able to forgive sins': ཡི་བྱ་དཀོན་མཚོག་གི་སྲས་ཡིན་ཉི་སྲིག་ཉེས་བསལ་བྱུང་བོ།.

⁶⁵ Tibetan also uses the two syllables ལ་ནང་། in a similar way, with the meaning 'and' or 'and then', e.g. in Mk. 1.25.

⁶⁶ Tibetan does not have grammatical gender, however there is a gender-like system for Tibetan letters which explains how they may be combined into syllables. This system is explained in a famous Tibetan grammatical text called the རྟགས་འཕྲུག་པ། .

⁶⁷ See Tournadre and Dorje, p. 249.

⁶⁸ Occasionally, this particle can be used to give special emphasis to other sentence elements as well.

⁶⁹ See Goldstein's *Essentials of Modern Literary Tibetan*, p. 366.

⁷⁰ See Tournadre and Dorje, p. 256. The expression ལ་ཚང་། is used similarly.

⁷¹ For other uses of the particle ཞིང་ , see Wilson p. 204.

⁷² For more on punctuation, see Tournadre and Dorje, p. 405-407.

8. Time, Cause, and Other Constructions

In the last chapter, we looked at some of the standard Tibetan grammatical particles that are used to show the relationship between the parts of a sentence. In this chapter, we will look at some standardized grammatical patterns or **constructions** which are used in *Jesus Christ Has Power to Save Us*. These constructions express permission, cause, time relationships, lists, and other useful things.

8.1 Permission Constructions:

8.1.1 **Using the Verb འདྲུག** A verb stem can be combined with the verb འདྲུག to give the meaning to 'let' or 'allow' the action of the verb. ⁷³ Unfortunately, this construction can also be used to mean to 'cause' or even to 'force' someone to do the verbal action. The difference between 'allowing' and 'causing' is usually shown by context. The tense of the sentence is shown by which root of the verb འདྲུག appears in the sentence: the present འདྲུག , or the past བཅུག .

Let / Allow:

སྐད་ཆ་ལ་བ་ཏུ་མ་བཅུག	did not allow (them) to speak	(22) 1.34
ཡོང་མ་བཅུག	did not allow anyone to come	(25) 5.37

Cause / Force:

རྟ་ལྷུག་གིས་རླང་རུ་བཅུག	caused to be whipped	(21) 15.15
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The verb འདྲུག is also a little tricky in that it is the present tense of a transitive verb meaning to make or cause something to happen (as just explained) and also the present tense of an intransitive verb meaning 'to enter'. A number of Tibetan transitive and intransitive verb pairs share common roots in this way. ⁷⁴

8.1.2 **Using the Noun ཚོག་མཚན།** The word ཚོག་མཚན། means approval, authorization, sanction, or permission to do something. When combined with a verb, the meaning 'permission to do' the verbal action is expressed.

སྲོད་པ།	to give
སྲོད་རྒྱུའི་ཚོག་མཚན།	permission to give
ཡོ་སེབ་ལ་སྲོད་རྒྱུའི་ཚོག་མཚན།	permission to give to Joseph 15.45

8.2 **'Because' Constructions:** In addition to the particle བས། (which we met in Chapter Seven) there are other particles in *Jesus Christ Has Power to Save Us* that are used at the end of clauses to mean 'because A happened, B'. These particles are ལྟབས། and ཅང་། .⁷⁵

Particle	Example
ལྟབས།	མ་ཐར་ལྟབས། because they couldn't get through (23) 2.4
ཅང་།	ངལ་གསེའི་ཉིན་མོ་ཡིན་སྲིད་ཅང་། because it was the Sabbath

8.3 **Time Constructions:** There are several constructions in written Tibetan which express a verb's relationship to time.

8.3.1 **'As soon as':** When the particles མ་ཐག། or ཅམ་གྱིས། are joined with a past tense verb at the end of a clause, the meaning is that 'as soon as' clause A happened, clause B happened.⁷⁶

Particle	Example	Meaning	Reference
མ་ཐག།	བྱོན་མ་ཐག།	as soon as they came	(21) 1.21
	སླེབས་མ་ཐག།	as soon as he arrived	(20) 14.45
	དེ་མ་ཐག།	immediately	(21) 1.28
ཅམ་གྱིས།	གཏམ་གྲགས་པ་ཅམ་གྱིས།	as soon as it was heard	(23) 2.1

8.3.2 **'Never':** When the adverb བམ་ཡང་། is used with a negative involuntary verb, the meaning is 'never'.⁷⁷

Particle	Example	Meaning	Reference
བམ་ཡང་།	བམ་ཡང་མ་བློང་མ་བྱོང་།	never seen	(23) 2.12

8.3.3 **'Still, Even Now':** The word ད་དུང་། means 'even, yet, still, furthermore' and it usually appears at the beginning of clauses.

Particle	Example	Meaning	Reference
ད་དུང་།	ད་དུང་ཡིད་ཆེས་མེད་དམ།	do you still lack faith?	(24) 4.40
	ཁོང་གིས་ད་དུང་གསུངས་པ།	He said further,	(17) 7.20

8.3.4 **'About To':** The particle གྲབས། when joined to a verb stem carries the meaning that the verbal action was just about to occur.⁷⁸

Particle	Example	Meaning	Reference
གྲབས།	ཁེངས་གྲབས་བྱས།	was about to fill	(24) 4.37
	གྲོ་གྲབས་འདུག།	is about to die	(25) 5.23

8.3.5 **'When':** Connective particles such as དུས། and སྐབས།, when joined to the end of a clause, mean 'when' or 'at the time' the clause happened.⁷⁹

Particle	Example	Meaning	Reference
དུས།	ཉིན་གུང་ལ་སློབས་དུས།	when it was noon	(22) 15.33
	ཁོང་ཚོས་ཡར་ལྷ་དུས།	when they looked up	(25) 16.4
སྐབས།	ཕེབས་སྐབས།	when they arrived	(25) 5.38
	ཟིང་འབྲུག་སྐབས།	at the time of the uprising	(21) 15.7

8.3.6 **'From Then On':** The phrase དེ་ནས་བཟུང་། means 'from then on' or 'from that point forward'.

དེ་ནས་བཟུང་།	ཡུ་དུས་ ཡེ་ཤུ་	ཁོ་ཚོའི་ལག་ཏུ་སློད་རྒྱུའི་གོ་སྐབས་	བཅུ་ལོ།
from then	Judas Jesus	their hands give chance	sought
From then on, Judas sought a chance to betray Jesus.			(20) 14.11

8.4 **List Particles:** The particles མོགས། and བཅས། are used to show whether a list of three or more items is open or closed. ⁸⁰

8.4.1 **The 'Open' List Particle མོགས།** An 'open' list gives items as specimens of some larger class, for example, 'Red, blue, green, and yellow, etc. are colors'. In written Tibetan, the particle མོགས། works much like the term *et cetera* does in English, to show that the listed items are just examples taken from some larger class, such as colors. Jesus uses this particle to end a list of evils of the human heart in Mark 7.22.

..... ང་རྒྱལ། ཚོས་ལ་མི་དགའ་བ་མོགས།
 pride, folly, and so forth.

8.4.2 **The 'Closed' List Particle བཅས།** By contrast, a 'closed' list gives all the items belonging to a particular group or class, for example, 'Red, blue, and yellow are the three primary colors'. In the account of the Resurrection beginning at Mark 16.1, three women come to the tomb to annoint Jesus' body, and the list of their names ends in བཅས། to show that no other women were present.

མིང་ཡམ་དང་།	ཡ་ཤོབ་ཀྱི་ཨ་མ་མིང་ཡམ།	ས་ལོ་མེ་	བཅས།
Mary	Yacob's mother Mary,	and Salome	(end)

8.5 **Uses of the Particle རང་།** The particle rang has many meanings in Tibetan, but only three of them appear in our text, *Jesus Christ Has Power to Save Us*.

8.5.1 **རང་། as a Pronoun:** As we saw in 3.1, the particle རང་། is frequently used as a pronoun in Tibetan. Uses such as རྩོད་རང་། and རྩེད་རང་། are familiar to beginning students of Central Tibetan. These are often used as reflexives ('you yourself, he himself') in Kham.

རྩོད་རང་།	you	(24) 4.40
རྩེད་རང་།	you	(25) 5.23
ཁོང་རང་།	he Himself	(20) 14.44
རང་གི་བླང་དུ།	in front of Himself	(17) 7.14

8.5.2 རང་། as an **Intensifier**: Sometimes རང་། is used as an intensifier to express the meaning 'really, precisely, exactly' or 'the thing itself'.⁸¹

སྐྱུར་བ་འདེབས་པ་རང་རེད།	it's nothing other than blasphemy	(23) 2.7
བདེན་པ་རང་རེད།	it is the truth itself	(22) 15.39

8.5.3 རང་། **Meaning 'Just' or 'Only'**:

དད་པ་རང་གྱིས་ཤིག།	just believe	(25) 5.36
ང་ཚོའི་གཙོ་བོ་གཅིག་རང་ཡིན།	our Lord is just One	(19) 12.29

8.6 **The 'Way of Doing' Particle ལྟར་སྟེ།** The particle ལྟར་སྟེ། may be added to the present root of a verb to give the meaning 'the way / manner' of doing the verbal action.

present verb root + ལྟར་སྟེ། = 'way of doing' the verbal action

For example:

བཟོ་ + ལྟར་སྟེ། = 'way / method of making'
e.g. by hand vs. by machine

ཟ་ + ལྟར་སྟེ། = 'way / method of eating'
e.g. with chopsticks vs. with a fork

ཁོང་གིས་དེ་ཚོར་ཚོས་བསྟན་ལྟར་སྟེ། = 'the way He taught' (21) 1.22

This construction is used in the Lhasa variety of spoken Tibetan⁸² and several other particles in the written language function similarly, e.g. ལུགས།.⁸³

8.7 Summary: Words are the building blocks of any language. As we've seen in Chapters Two through Five, Tibetan has six kinds of words: nouns, pronouns, adverbs, adjectives, postpositions, and verbs. **Grammatical particles** are the cement that holds these building blocks together. In Chapters Six through Eight, we've seen that written Tibetan has **case marking particles** that show how words fit together in a sentence, and **logical particles** that help show the reasoning or logical structure in a sentence. Now we are ready to put this knowledge to practical use.

⁷³ Goldstein, *Essentials of Modern Literary Tibetan*, p. 278.

⁷⁴ See Preston, *How to Read Classical Tibetan*, p. 44. The verb table in the back of the *Great Tibetan-Chinese Dictionary* (p. 3147-3194) lists over 70 such pairs of verbs that share at least one stem.

⁷⁵ Goldstein, *Essentials of Modern Literary Tibetan*, p. 96.

⁷⁶ Goldstein, *Essentials of Modern Literary Tibetan*, p. 126.

⁷⁷ Goldstein, *Essentials of Modern Literary Tibetan*, p. 231.

⁷⁸ Goldstein, *Essentials of Modern Literary Tibetan*, p. 175.

⁷⁹ Goldstein, *Essentials of Modern Literary Tibetan*, p. 98.

⁸⁰ Goldstein, *Essentials of Modern Literary Tibetan*, p. 130.

⁸¹ This word is also used in the Lhasa variety of spoken Tibetan with a somewhat different meaning - see Barte and Droma, p. 157.

⁸² See Tournadre and Dorje, p. 331.

⁸³ Goldstein, *Essentials of Modern Literary Tibetan*, p. 233.

9. Getting Ready to Read

9.1 Why I Can't Read Tibetan (or Why I Get Frustrated When I Try) : Have you ever tried *la la*? No, this isn't another grammatical particle, it's a kind of cheese made by Tibetan nomads. They take a long string of cheese about the thickness of your little finger, and hang it out to dry in long loops, like a very long string of wet spaghetti draped over a laundry line. Eventually, the cheese hardens and becomes very firm, like dry spaghetti, only much thicker and stronger. Some time ago a friend gave me some fine, aged *la la* to eat. But it was so thick and hard that there was no way to break it in pieces to put in my mouth. I thought, 'There's no way I can eat this'. Then he showed me that if I took the end of a ribbon of *la la* and put it between my back teeth, and vigorously worked the other end up and down, eventually a bite-sized chunk would break off. In the end I came to appreciate the fine, mozzarella-like flavor of *la la*, and now I take it with me as food for long trips.

A first look at a page of Tibetan (like the sample text below) can be a lot like trying to eat *la la*. It can give you that 'I could never read this' feeling. But it doesn't have to be this way. A few simple steps can convert a confusing page of mysterious symbols into delicious bite-sized chunks.

སྐབས་མགོན་ཡེ་གྲུ་ལ་གདོན་འདྲེ་སྐོད་པའི་རྣམ་མཐུ་ཡོད།

༡) དེ་ནས་ཁོང་ཚོ་གོང་ཁྱེར་ཀ་པར་ན་རྣམ་དུ་བྱོན་མ་ཐག་པའ་གསོའི་ཉིན་མོར་ཡེ་གྲུ་ལ་རྩ་དུ་པའི་འདྲུ་ཁང་དུ་
 ཐེབས་ཏེ། ཚོས་བསྟན་གནང་བ་རེད། ༡༢ ཁོང་གིས་དེ་ཚོར་ཚོས་བསྟན་སྟངས་ནི་ཡ་རྩ་དུ་པའི་ཚོས་བྲིམས་ལ་མཁས་
 པའི་མི་དང་མི་འདྲ་སྟེ། དབང་ལུན་ཞིག་གིས་གསུངས་པ་དང་འདྲ་བར་འདྲུག་པས། དེ་ཐོས་པ་ཐམས་ཅད་ཡ་མཚན་ཚེན་
 བོར་སྐྱེས། ༡༣ དེའི་སྐབས་གདོན་འདྲེས་ཟིན་པའི་མི་ཞིག་འདྲུ་ཁང་ནང་ལ་ཡོད་དེ། ༡༤ དེས་སྐད་ཆེན་པོས་ “གྲེ་ན་
 ཅ་རེལ་བ་ཡེ་གྲུ། ང་ཚོ་ཁྱེད་དང་དོན་གང་ཡོད། ཁྱེད་ཀྱིས་ང་ཚོ་མེད་པ་བཟོ་བར་ཐེབས་སམ། ཁྱེད་སུ་ཡིན་པ་ངས་ཤེས་
 གྱི་ཡོད། ཁྱེད་ནི་དགོན་མཚོག་གི་སྐྱེས་བུ་དམ་པ་དེ་ཡིན་” ཞེས་བཤད། ༡༥ འོན་ཀྱང་ཡེ་གྲུས་གདོན་འདྲེ་དེར་བཀའ་
 གནང་ནས་ “ཁ་ཚོག་སྟོན། མི་དེའི་གཟུགས་ནས་ཐོན་ཞིག་” ཅེས་གསུངས་པ་དང་། ༡༦ མི་དེ་གཟུགས་ཐོག་པ་ལྟར་ས་
 ལ་འགྲེལ་ནས་ཁོས་སྐད་ངན་ཆེན་པོ་བཏོན་ཞིང་གདོན་འདྲེ་དེ་མིའི་གཟུགས་ནས་ཕྱིར་ཐོན། ༡༧ མི་ཐམས་ཅད་ཉ་ལས་ཏེ།
 ཕན་ཚུན་གཅིག་གིས་གཅིག་ལ་སྐད་ཆ་དྲིས་ནས་ “འདི་ཅི་ཡིན། འདི་བསྟན་པ་གསར་པ་ཡིན་ནམ། ཁོང་གིས་དབང་ཆ་
 ཆེན་པོས་གདོན་འདྲེ་ལ་ཡང་བཀའ་བཏང་གནང་སྟེ། གདོན་འདྲེས་ཀྱང་ཁོང་གི་བཀའ་ལ་ཉན་པར་བྱེད་” ཅེས་བཤད།
 ༡༨ དེ་མ་ཐག་རྩ་ཁོང་གི་སྟོན་གྲགས་ག་ལེལ་གྱི་ས་ཕྱོགས་གང་སར་བྱུང་བ་རེད།

9.2 How to Approach a Text: Just as with a whole string of *la la*, an entire page of Tibetan is indigestible if taken in all at once. The key is to break it apart into useable bits.

9.2.1 Get Acquainted: To get started, take a short section of text that you can manage. Read it through aloud to the best of your ability, several times, whether or not you understand what you are reading. If possible, have your language helper read it to you. Then look it over and see if you can get a feeling for what it might be about. Try to get the meaning of one or two syllables in the title. Look or listen for syllables you already know. Check for any syllables that seem to occur more than once.

For example, if we read through the sample text above, we notice that there are some words that appear over and over again. The term གདོན་འདྲེ། or གདོན་འདྲེས། appears six times, ཡེ་ཤུ། four times, and the personal pronouns ཁོང་། ཟླེད། ང་ཚོ། seem to be pretty frequent, too.

9.2.2 Identify Key Words: These are words that occur often enough in a text that they seem to have something to do with what it means. For example, in this text we saw that the term གདོན་འདྲེ། appeared six times and the term ཡེ་ཤུ། four times. Now if we look up གདོན་འདྲེ། in the dictionary and find out that it is a common term for 'demon', and we already know that ཡེ་ཤུ། is the word for 'Jesus', then we have a pretty good idea that this story has something to do with Jesus and evil spirits. Looking for **key words** gives us an idea of what the passage is about and makes it easier to read, too. This is our first bite-sized chunk.⁸⁴

9.2.3 Watch the Punctuation: Punctuation is your friend - it's the text's way of dividing itself into meaningful bits. Here are some features to look for.

9.2.3.1 Verse Numbers: Fortunately, Bible texts come already divided into verses - our sample text has eight of them, numbered from twenty one to twenty eight. Some texts have double verses such as 15.42-43. These occur where it is easier for the translators to make one Tibetan sentence out of two English ones. Very occasionally there are triple verses as well.

9.2.3.2 Quotation Marks: Not all texts have these, but a look at our sample text shows that there are three sets - in verse 24, verse 25, and verse 27. So now we know that there is dialogue in our text. This means we should watch for other features associated with dialogue, such as quotation particles (ཞེས། in verse 24, ཅེས། in verses 25 and 27) and verbs of speech such as འགྲུབ། (verses 24 and 27) and གསུངས། (verse 25). Don't worry if you aren't familiar with these verbs now, the point is to show you the method, not to teach vocabulary.

9.2.3.3 Foreign Word Markers: These are the little round circles called *nga ro* or *bindu* that appear underneath the first syllable of words that come from a non-Tibetan language.⁸⁵ These are your friends because they highlight words that you probably already know, and most of them give you some approximation of the way they should be pronounced. In our sample text there are 9 foreign word markers underneath the words ཡེ་ཤུ (Jesus - 4 occurrences), ཀ་ཕར་ན་རུམ། (Capernaum), ཡ་རུ་རྒྱ། (Jew - 2 occurrences), ར་ཙ་རེལ། (Nazareth), and ག་ལིལ། (Galilee). These give us important clues about the people and places featured in the text.

By now we know that the words ཡེ་ཤུ and ག་རོན་འབྲེ། are key words (Get Acquainted, Step 1), we know that the text has something to do with Jesus and one or more evil spirits by looking up ག་རོན་འབྲེ། in the dictionary or asking our language helper (Identify Key Words, Step 2), and we know from the punctuation that it is a Bible text (verse markers) that contains dialogue (quotation marks) and involves Jesus, a Jew or something Jewish, and that the places Nazareth and Galilee are somehow important (Watch the Punctuation, Step 3).

9.2.4 Check the འདེ། Remember that a འདེ། is a short vertical line marking off a section of text. *Shads* are there for a reason - they break a sentence into meaningful units. In most cases, everything to the left of a འདེ། (back to the space following the previous *shad*) is one meaningful part of the sentence.⁸⁶ For example, in our sample text, verses 23, 26, and 28 have just one such piece, verses 21 and 25 have two, verse 22 has three, and verse 24 has a grand total of five. The actual number isn't important. What's important is that by looking for འདེ། (or their equivalents)⁸⁷ you are breaking the text into smaller, more digestible pieces in a way that makes sense according to the rules of Tibetan grammar.

9.2.5 Look for Particles and Give Them a Break: Just as འདེ། break the text into meaningful smaller units, particles break the text to the left of a given འདེ། into units that are even smaller and easier to understand. For example, take the first long string of syllables to the left of the first འདེ། in verse 21. Looks pretty scary, doesn't it?

༡། དེ་ནས་ཁོང་ཚོ་གྲོང་ཁྱིམ་ཀ་ཕར་ན་རུམ་དུ་བྱོན་མ་ཐག་ངལ་གསོའི་ཉིན་མོར་ཡེ་ཤུ་ཡ་རུ་རྒྱ་པའི་འདུ་ཁང་དུ་ཐེབས་ཏེ།

Now let's identify all the particles we've learned about:

༡) དེ་ནས་ཁོ་ཚོ་གོང་ཁྱེར་ཀྱང་ལྷ་ས་ན་ལུ་སྲུང་བྱེད་མ་ཐག་ངལ་གསོའི་ཉིན་མོ་ཡི་ཤུ་ཡ་རྩ་དྲུག་པའི་འདུལ་བྱེད་ཐབས་ཉི།

This breaks a long string of syllables into the following eight meaningful units. The words have been separated by spaces, as in English, so that you can see them more clearly.

Unit	Particle Meaning
1. དེ་ ནས་	1. from (time)
2. ཁོ་ཚོ་ གོང་ཁྱེར་ ཀྱང་ལྷ་ས་ན་ལུ་ སྲུང་བྱེད་	2. locative case particle: place
3. སྲུང་བྱེད་ མ་ཐག་	3. time expression: as soon as
4. ངལ་གསོའི་ འི་	4. connective case particle
5. ཉིན་མོ་ ར་	5. locative case particle: time
6. ཡི་ཤུ་ཡ་རྩ་དྲུག་ པའི་	6. connective case particle
7. འདུལ་བྱེད་ བྱེད་	7. locative case particle
8. ཐབས་ ཉི།	8. gerundive (continuative)

This looks a lot less scary than the long string of syllables that we started with. If you don't know the meaning of all the words at this point, don't worry. The main point is that you know to look for the particles, and to break the string of syllables at that point to divide a sentence into its smallest meaningful units. These units can be read much more easily than long strings of text.

But what about words? Even after we've broken a syllable string into bits like the eight pieces shown above, how do we know where one ends and another begins? This question bothers even people who make Tibetan dictionaries.⁸⁸ Unfortunately, there is no easy way to recognize words other than by lots of reading practice. If you are studying Central Tibetan, a series of readers is available in which the words are already separated for you, so that you can practice reading without spending hours looking in the dictionary.

9.2.6 Put the Meanings Together: Now if we look again at our eight pieces, notice that each piece ends in a boxed particle whose function suggests its meaning. In the first unit, the sequential particle ནས་ comes after the demonstrative pronoun དེ་ - together the two mean literally 'that from' in a time sense, i.e. 'then' or 'and then'. In the second unit, the locative (7th) case particle སྲུང་བྱེད་ attached to the place name Capernaum, gives the meaning 'in'. In the third unit, the time expression མ་ཐག་ (which isn't really a

particle since it has a meaning of its own), is joined to the verb 'come', and has the meaning 'immediately' or 'as soon as' someone came. In the fourth unit, the particle འི་ is in the connective (6th) case which gives the idea of possession or belonging. It is attached to the noun meaning 'rest', and so here could be translated literally as 'rest's'. In the fifth unit, the ལ་དོན། particle ར་ is a locative (7th) case particle for time, attached to the word meaning 'day', suggesting the meaning 'on that day'. In the sixth unit, the connective (6th) case particle འི་ appears again with the meaning of possession or belonging, attached to the word 'Jew', so giving the meaning 'Jews' as in 'belonging to two or more Jews'. In the seventh unit, the locative (7th) case particle རྗེ་ appears after the word 'assembly hall', suggesting 'in or to the assembly hall'. And finally, in the eighth unit, the gerundive (or continuative) particle ཉེ་ attached to the honorific verb ཐེགས། tells us that this is not the end of the sentence, but that more is to come.

We can put all these meanings together like this:

Unit	Unit Meaning
1. དེ་ རྣམ། that	1. then
2. ཁོང་ཚོ་ གྲོང་ཁྱེར་ གཞུང་ལ་ རྗེ་ རྗེ་ they town Capernaum	2. they town Capernaum to
3. ཐོན་ མ་ཐག། come as soon as	3. came as soon as
4. རལ་གསོ་ འི་ rest	4. rest's
5. ཉིན་མོ་ ར་ day	5. day on
6. ཡེ་ཤུ་ ཡ་རུ་དྲ་བ་ འི་ Jesus Jew	6. Jesus Jews'
7. འདུ་ཁང་ རྗེ་ assembly hall	7. assembly hall to

8. རེབས་ རྟེན།
came

8. came / coming and

Or, more fluently, 'Then as soon as they came to Capernaum, on the Day of Rest Jesus went to the Jews' assembly hall and'. This could also be translated, 'As soon as they arrived in Capernaum, on the Sabbath, Jesus, going to the synagogue,' - (said or did something else).

At this point you're probably wondering if you have to go through this very detailed process for every sentence you read. The answer is that, just as in English, practice quickly makes much of this process automatic. The steps are set out here because **they always work for every Tibetan sentence, every time**. So once you have learned them, you can fall back on these steps whenever you have a difficult passage.⁸⁹

9.3 Summary: How to Approach a Tibetan Text

1. **Get Acquainted with the Text:** Read it through several times even if you can't understand all of it. Ask your language helper to read it for you aloud, several times if necessary. Look and listen for syllables that seem to appear frequently.
2. **Identify Key Words:** Ask your language helper or look in a dictionary to make sure you've got the meaning of words that seem to occur frequently.
3. **Watch the Punctuation:** it's your friend! Look for quote markers and foreign word markers - they tell you about dialogue and key people and place names.
4. **Check the འདེད།** see how they break a verse into meaningful units.
5. **Look for Particles and Give Them a Break:** Identify every particle and break the syllable string at that point. This shows you the relationship among the smallest units of the sentence.
6. **Put the Meanings Together:** The function of each particle, together with the meaning of each word (from the glossary) tells you what each piece means.

9.4 **Exercise:** For practice, take the following text and apply the rules above. Don't worry about word meanings, just try to identify as many features as you can.

༡ དེ་ནས་ཡང་ཁོང་ལ་སུ་ཚུང་བ་ཉ་བེལ་སྐྱེས་སྟེ། ཉ་བེལ་གྱིས་ལུག་རྗེ་བྱས་པ་དང་། ཀ་ཡིན་གྱིས་ཞིང་
ལས་བྱས། ༢ རུས་འགའ་ཞིག་གི་རྗེས་སུ་ཀ་ཡིན་གྱིས་ཞིང་གི་འབྲས་སུ་ནས་ཡ་མེ་དགོན་མཚོག་ལ་མཚོན་པ་ཞིག་སྟེ།

⁸⁴ Note that any Biblical text may have both key words and **key terms**. A key word is one that occurs frequently in a text and which gives you some idea of what the text is talking about. For example, the key words in Luke 10.30-37 are neighbor, priest, Levite, and Samaritan. Unless you know the meaning of these terms, you will miss the point of the story even if you understand the other words like robber and innkeeper. On the other hand, a key term (also known as a key spiritual term) is a spiritually significant word like Holy Spirit, love, redeem, sin, etc. These are the key words of the overall Gospel message.

⁸⁵ Again, do not confuse these little circles underneath the line with similar circles which may appear above it (though not in this book). The under-the-line ones are foreign word markers; the over-the-line ones are abbreviations for the letter ཨ'.

⁸⁶ This may not be the case if the sentence contains a detailed list punctuated with shads, as in Jesus' catalogue of human evils in Mark 7.21-22.

⁸⁷ The suffix letter ཨྱ may appear without a shad, and be followed only by a double space. For analysis purposes, this is the equivalent of a shad.

⁸⁸ Look at the Grammatical Introduction to Melvyn Goldstein's *The New Tibetan-English Dictionary of Modern Tibetan*, page xiii to see some of the challenges faced by Tibetan dictionary makers.

⁸⁹ In the real world, Tibetan sentences may have idioms, metaphors, ellipsis, implicit elements, and higher levels of meaning which will defy a purely grammatical analysis such as the one suggested here. But the basic approach outlined in this chapter will work with **any** Tibetan sentence once you take these factors into account.

Part Two

Appendix 1: Foreign Nouns and Loan Words

Names of People		Place Names	Names of Things
<p>ཡེ་ཤུ། Jesus</p> <p>ཡེ་ཤུ་འི་རིའི་སི་ཐོ། Jesus Christ</p> <p>ཡ་རུ་དྲ་བ། Jew</p> <p>པེ་ཏྲོ། Peter</p> <p>ཡེ་ཤུ་གི་ཡེ་ཤུ་མེ་མོ་ཡམ། James (Yacob)</p> <p>ཡོ་ཏྲ་ན་ན། John (Yohanan)</p> <p>ཨེ་ལི་ཡཱ། Elijah</p> <p>མོ་ཤེ། Moses</p> <p>ཡུ་དྲ་དབྱི་སི་ཀར་རེ། Judas Iscariot</p>	<p>པི་ལ་ཏུ། Pilate</p> <p>བར་ཨབ་བ། Barabbas</p> <p>ཨོ་སེབ། Joseph</p> <p>མག་དལ་མ་མིར་ཡམ། Mary Magdalene</p> <p>ཡ་ཀོབ་ཀྱི་ཨ་མ་མིར་ཡམ། Mary the mother of James</p> <p>ས་ལོ་མེ། Salome</p>	<p>ག་ལི་ལ། Galilee</p> <p>ག་ལི་ལ་ཡུལ། Galilee-country</p> <p>དབྱི་སི་ལེ། Israel</p> <p>ཨ་རི་མ་ཐ། Arimathea</p>	<p>ལི་ནོན། linen</p>
		Quotations from Aramaic	
		<p>ཏ་ལི་ཐུ་ ཀུ་མི། <i>Talitha Kumi</i></p> <p>ཨེ་ལོ་ཨེ ལ་མ་ཤ་བག་ཐ་ནི། <i>Eloi Lama Sabachthani</i></p>	

Appendix 2: Table of Action Verbs


Abbreviations:

v.a. = voluntary verb
v.i. = involuntary verb





T = transitive
I = intransitive





hon. = honorific

Present	Gloss	Past	Future	Imperative	a/i	T/I
𑀓						
𑀓	steal	𑀓𑀲𑀭𑀸	𑀓𑀲	𑀓𑀲𑀭𑀸	va	T
𑀓𑀲	carved/dug	𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀸	𑀓𑀲𑀲	𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀸	va	T
𑀓𑀲𑀭𑀸	urge	𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀭𑀸	𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀭𑀸	𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀭𑀸	va	T
𑀓𑀲𑀲	satisfy	𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲𑀸	𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲	𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲𑀸	va	T
𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀸	put on	𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲𑀸	𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲	𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲𑀸	va	T
𑀓𑀲𑀲	arise	𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲	𑀓𑀲𑀲		vi	I
𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀸	verbalizer (hon.)	𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲𑀸	𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲𑀸	𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲𑀸	vi	T
𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲	save	𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲𑀲	𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲	𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲𑀲	va	T
𑀓𑀲𑀲	to be afraid	𑀓𑀲𑀲	𑀓𑀲𑀲		vi	I
𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲	expel	𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲	𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲	𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲	va	T
𑀓𑀲						
𑀓𑀲𑀲	spread	𑀓𑀲𑀲	𑀓𑀲𑀲		vi	I
𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲𑀸	know (hon.)	𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲𑀸	𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲𑀸	𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲𑀸	va	I
𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲	carry	𑀓𑀲𑀲	𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲	𑀓𑀲𑀲	va	T
𑀓𑀲𑀲	be filled	𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲	𑀓𑀲𑀲		vi	I
𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲	carry	𑀓𑀲𑀲	𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲	𑀓𑀲𑀲	va	T
𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲	lead, take, lead away	𑀓𑀲𑀲	𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲	𑀓𑀲𑀲	va	T
𑀓𑀲						
𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲	to wear	𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲	𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲	𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲	va	T
𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲𑀲	spread	𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲𑀲	𑀓𑀲𑀲𑀲𑀲		vi	I

མྱོད།	release	མྱོད།	མྱོད།	མྱོད།	va	T
བགྱིད།	do	བགྱིས།	བགྱི	གྱིས།	va	T
འགོལ།	hang	བགལ།	དགལ།	ཁོལ།	va	T
འགོག	stopped up	བགག	དགག	ཁོག	va	T
འཕྱུར།	be changed	ཕྱུར།	འཕྱུར།		vi	I
འབྱེལ།	fall	འབྱེལ།	འབྱེལ།	འབྱེལ།	vi	I
འཕྱོ	go, elapse	ཕྱོ།	འཕྱོ	ཕྱོ།	va	I
འཕྱོངས།	die (hon.)	ཕྱོངས།	འཕྱོངས།		vi	I
ཕྱིག	wait	བཕྱིགས།	བཕྱིག	ཕྱིགས།	va	T
ཕྱིག་ཕྱུར།	change	བཕྱིག་ཕྱུར།	བཕྱིག་ཕྱུར།	ཕྱིག་ཕྱུར།	va	T
ཕྱིག་བས།	overshadow	བཕྱིག་བས།	བཕྱིག་བས།	ཕྱིག་བས།	va	T
ཕྱིག་ཕྱོ	wrap, roll	བཕྱིག་ཕྱོ	བཕྱིག་ཕྱོ	ཕྱིག་ཕྱོ	va	T
ཕྱིག་ཕྱོག	call out	བཕྱིག་ཕྱོགས།	བཕྱིག་ཕྱོག	ཕྱིག་ཕྱོགས།	va	T
						
ཆགས།	become	ཆགས།	ཆགས།		vi	I
འཆར།	rise	འཆར།	འཆར།		vi	I
འཆི།	die	འཆི།	འཆི།		vi	I
འཆོས།	treat	བཆོས།	བཆོས།	ཆོས།	va	T
						
མཇལ།	meet (hon.)	མཇལ།	མཇལ།	མཇལ།	va	T
འཇགས།	get calm	འཇགས།	འཇགས།		vi	I
འཇིགས།	be afraid	འཇིགས།	འཇིགས།		vi	I
འཇུག	enter	ཇུགས།	འཇུག	ཇུགས།	va	I

འདུག	put	བཟུག	གཞུག	ཚུག	va	T
འཇོག	put, place	བཞག	གཞག	ཞོག	va	T
ཉན།	listen	མཉན།	མཉན།	ཉོན།	va	T
ཉོ།	buy	ཉོས།	ཉོ།	ཉོས།	va	T
གཏུག	touch	གཏུགས།	གཏུག	གཏུགས།	va	T
ལྟ།	look	བལྟས།	བལྟ།	ལྟོས།	va	T
སྤྲ།	give	སྤྲ།	སྤྲ།	སྤྲ།	va	T
སྤོན།	teach, show	བསྤོན།	བསྤོན།	སྤོན།	va	T
ཐང།	get through, save from	ཐང།	ཐང།		vi	I
ཐོས།	hear	ཐོས།	ཐོས།		vi	I
མཐོང།	see	མཐོང།	མཐོང།		vi	T
འཐོབས།	obscured	འཐོབས།	འཐོབས།		vi	I
འཐོན།	come/go	ཐོན།	འཐོན།	ཐོན།	va	I
འཐོབ།	get, obtain	ཐོབ།	འཐོབ།		vi	I
འདའ།	die	འདས།	འདའ།		vi	I
འདུ།	gather	འདུས།	འདུ།	འདུས།	vi	I
འདོན།	make come out	བཏོན།	གཏོན།	ཐོན།	va	T
འདྲི།	ask	དྲིས།	འདྲི།	དྲིས།	va	T

སྒྲོད།	sit	བསྐྱད།	བསྐྱད།	སྒྲོད།	va	I
						
གནང།	give (hon.)	གནང།	གནང།	གཞོངས།	va	T
						
སྒོད།	abandon	སྒྲངས།	སྒྲང།	སྒོདས།	va	T
སྒྲོད།	give	སྒྲོད།	སྒྲོད།	སྒྲོད།	va	T
						
ཐིགས།	open up	ཐིགས།	ཐིགས།		vi	I
ཐེབས།	come/go (hon.)	ཐེབས།	ཐེབས།	ཐེབས།	va	I
						
བྱེད།	do	བྱས།	བྱ།	བྱོས།	va	T
འབབ།	fall	བབ།	འབབ།		vi	I
འབུལ།	offer (hon.)	ཐུལ།	དབུལ།	ཐུལ།	va	T
འཕེབས།	to lower	ཕབ།	དབབ།	ཕོབ།	va	T
འབོད།	call	བོས།	འབོད།	བོས།	va	T
འབྲུག།	annoint	བྲུགས།	བྲུག།	བྲུགས།	va	T
འབྱུང།	become	བྱང།	འབྱུང།		vi	I
འབྱེད།	to open	བྱེ།	དབྱེ།	བྱེས།	va	T
འབྱོན།	come (hon.)	བྱོན།	འབྱོན།	བྱོན།	va	I
འབྲི།	write	བྲིས།	བྲི།	བྲིས།	va	T

ལྷོད།	soak	ལྷོདས།	ལྷོད།	ལྷོདས།	va	T
						
ཚར།	to be finished	ཚར།	ཚར།		vi	I
འཚོལ།	seek	འཚོལ།	འཚོལ།	ཚོལ།	va	T
						
མཛད།	do (hon.)	མཛད།	མཛད།	མཛོད།	va	T
འཛིན།	take, seize	བཟུང།	གཟུང།	ཟུངས།	va	T
འཕྱལ།	enter	འཕྱལ།	འཕྱལ།	འཕྱལ།	va	I
འཛོམ།	gather	འཛོམས།	འཛོམ།	འཛོམས།	vi	I
ཚོགས།	be over	ཚོགས།	ཚོགས།		vi	I
						
ལུ།	say	ལུས།	ལུ།	ལུས།	va	T
ཞེད།	afraid	ཞེད།	ཞེད།		vi	I
བཞུགས།	stay, was, sit (hon.)	བཞུགས།	བཞུགས།	བཞུགས།	va	I
བཞུད།	set (sun)	བཞུད།	བཞུད།		vi	I
བཞེངས།	rise (hon.)	བཞེངས།	བཞེངས།	བཞེངས།	va	I
						
ཟིན།	catch	ཟིན།	ཟིན།		va	T
ཟེད།	say	ཟེད།	ཟེད།		va	T
གཟིགས།	see (hon.)	གཟིགས།	གཟིགས།	གཟིགས།	va	T

གཟུངས།	sleep (hon.)	གཟུངས།	གཟུངས།		va	I
འ						
འོང།	come	འོངས།	འོང།		va	I
ཡ						
ཡོང།	come	ཡོང།	ཡོང།		va	I
ར						
རལ།	tear	རལ།	རལ།		vi	I
ལ						
ལང།	stand, get up	ལངས།	ལང།	འོངས།	va	I
ལང།	occur	ལངས།	ལང།		vi	I
ལག།	say	ལག།	ལག།	འོག།	va	T
ལུས།	remain	ལུས།	ལུས།		vi	I
འོག།	return	འོག།	འོག།		va	I
ཤ						
ཤེས།	know	ཤེས།	ཤེས།		vi	I
ཤོད།	say	བཤད།	བཤད།	ཤོད།	va	T
བུུ	peel, dig	བུུས།	བུུ	ཤུས།	va	T
ས						
སེམས།	think	བསམ།	བསམ།	སོམས།	vi	T
སེལ།	clear	བསལ།	བསལ།	སོལ།	va	T
སློབ།	arrive	སློབས།	སློབ།		vi	I

གསུང་།	say, speak (hon.)	གསུངས།	གསུང་།	གསུངས།	va	T
གསོད།	kill	བསད།	གསད།	སོད།	va	T
གསོན།	survive	གསོན།	གསོན།		vi	T

Appendix 3: Helpful Books

Works in English

1. Bartee, Ellen, and Droma, Nyima, *A Beginning Textbook of Lhasa Tibetan* (Beijing, National Press for Tibetan Studies, 2000; ISBN 7-80057-430 X / G.19). The Tibetan title is ལྷ་སའི་རྣམ་ཤེས་ཀྱི་རྩོམ་གཞི་སློབ་དེབ།. An excellent book for complete beginners, with helpful appendices.
2. Goldstein, Melvyn, *Essentials of Modern Literary Tibetan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991; ISBN 0-520-07622-2). The standard work on modern written Tibetan; best for intermediate students.
3. Preston, Craig, *How to Read Classical Tibetan* (Ithaca: Snow Lion, 2003; ISBN 1-55939-178-2). Takes you step-by-step through a Buddhist text in classical Tibetan; best used by advanced students who have already read Joe Wilson's book.
4. Tournadre, Nicholas, and Dorje, Sangda, *Manual of Standard Tibetan: Language and Civilization* (Ithaca: Snow Lion, 2003; ISBN 1-55939-189-8). An in-depth introduction to the Lhasa variety of spoken Tibetan, with 2 audio compact discs. Best for beginners.
5. Wilson, Joe, *Translating Buddhism from Tibetan* (Ithaca: Snow Lion, ISBN 0-937938-34-3). Heavy and technical, but worth reading for the excellent explanations of Tibetan grammar. Best for intermediate to advanced students.

Works in Tibetan

1. ལྷལ་བཟང་འགྲུང་མེད། བོད་ཀྱི་བརྗོད་སྒྲིབ་རིག་པའི་བྲིད་རྒྱན་རབ་གསལ་མེ་ལོང་། སི་ཁྲོན་མི་རིགས་དཔེ་སློན་ཁང་།
1992. ISBN 7-5400-1028-3/J. A very readable book with abundant examples and clear explanations. Well worth reading with a language helper.
2. རྗོ་རྗེ་རྒྱལ་པོ། ལྷམ་རྟགས་ཀྱི་སློང་འགྲུལ་ལེགས་བཤད་འདྲེན་པའི་ཕོ་ཉ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ། བོད་ལྗོངས་དཔེ་སློན་ཁང་།
2000 ISBN 7-223-01248-X/H.14 A mid-literary commentary on the *sum bcu pa* and the *rtags 'jug pa*. Best for those who want to learn Tibetan grammar from a traditional perspective.
3. ལྷོ་བཟང་རྒྱལ་མཚན། གསེར་ཏོག་ལྷམ་རྟགས། མི་རིགས་དཔེ་སློན་ཁང་། (1957, reprinted 1995, ISBN 7-105-02507-7) An older but very detailed explanation of Tibetan grammar, with a set of helpful tables. Best for advanced students.

Other Resources

1. Rhoads, David, Dewey, Joanna, Michie, Donald, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (Second Edition, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999; ISBN 0-8006-3160-9. Written from a liberal perspective, but contains much valuable insight about the literary structure of the Gospel of Mark. Very valuable for gaining a deeper appreciation of this Gospel.
2. Ryken, Leland, *How to Read the Bible as Literature* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1984; ISBN 0-310-39021-4) Ryken is a professor of English at Wheaton College. He has written an excellent survey of literary forms in the Bible that will help anyone get more out of reading the Scriptures generally.
3. Ryken, Leland, *The Word of God in English* (Wheaton, Crossway, 2002; ISBN 1-58134-464-3). Presents a set of criteria for quality Bible translation in English, and critiques currently available versions. Well worth reading.
4. Wessel, Walter W. *Mark in The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Frank Gaebelin, general editor, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan 1984) ISBN 0-310-36500-7. A detailed and worthwhile evangelical commentary on this Gospel.

