



Learning Together in Christ  
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## The Baptised Christian: God's Word in the World

The Baptised Christian: Baptism configures us to Christ, incorporates us into the Body of Christ and forms us into God's holy people.

The meaning of 'World' in the New Testament

The Gospel of John uses the Greek word *kosmos* 78 times, Matthew, Mark & Luke combined use *kosmos* only 14 times; Paul uses it 47 times. John uses the word in four distinct ways

'World' in John's Gospel is used to mean:

1. *The whole creation*, for example as in the prologue John 1:1-18

"In the beginning was the Word...He was in *the world* and *the world* came into being through him and *the world* did not know him.."

John specifies that God created all things in and through the Word which became flesh in Jesus. *The world*, which in this sense means *the whole universe, is entirely good*.

This positive meaning precedes and undergirds all other meanings

'World' in John's Gospel is used to mean:

2. The world is *the theatre of human history*.

In his final prayer at the last supper, Jesus does not pray that God take his disciples out of *the world*, but that God guard them from evil (John 17:15) as they continue to work in the *world* i.e. *human history*.

The *world* is *humanity's natural home*. We are part of this world and are to participate in the cosmic process and human enterprise. *This world is good*.

'World' in John's Gospel is used to mean:

3. John uses world to refer to *the human race*:

"God *so loved the world* as to give the only Son so that all who believe in him may not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16

God loves all that God has created and particularly *the human race made in the image and likeness of God and called to a free and loving relationship with God for time and eternity*.

This meaning of the term "world" is also entirely positive.

'World' in John's Gospel is used to mean:

4. John sometimes uses "world" as a synonym for *evil*.

The world Jesus teaches is in the grip of a *personal agent whom he calls "the devil" (8:44), "Satan"(13:27), "the prince of this world"(14:30)*.

Jesus says that he and his disciples are not of *this world* and are therefore the object of this world's hatred and persecution (17:14).

*This evil world has been overcome by him (16:33)*.

### 'World' in John's Gospel

Jesus is not speaking of four different realities. *These are four different takes on the one reality*

How are we to explain this infection of God's good creation by evil?

How are we to act in relation to it?

Sandra Schneiders looks to the parables in the synoptic gospels to answer these questions. Jesus uses parables to teach us how to live in the world as members of the household of God, the reign of God.

### Good and Evil in the World

Jesus uses the parable of the "weeds and the wheat" in Matthew 13: 24-30 and then interprets it himself.

It is not possible to simply pull up the weeds. Good and evil are not two separate realities. The world is one reality in which good and evil are pervasively and intimately intertwined. Every person, every institution, every system is a complex reality in which good and evil struggle for dominance. This goes on for the whole of history.

The followers of Christ are called to live in the world, to renounce Satan and to choose to live in his reign.

See Romans 7: 17-23

On the eve of his passion Jesus prays:

"As you [Father] have sent me into the world,  
so I have sent them into the world"

On Easter night the Risen Jesus says to his disciples:

"As the Father has sent me,  
so I send you." John 20:21

### Being Sent into the World

The commission in John is not to go into the whole world and *preach* the word as in Mark 16:15 or Luke 24:47. It is not to *teach* the word as in Matthew 28:19-20. It is not to be witnesses to Jesus, as in Acts 1:8.

In John's gospel,

Jesus commissions his disciples to be in the world as he was in the world  
-- to be the "Word in the world"

The Word of God sent into the world is not, in the first instance, *a message*.

It is Jesus, the Word of God, incarnate and risen.

Christians are to *be God's living Word in the world*.

### God's Word in the World

**As a Baptised Christian, in 2011, in Adelaide, what does it mean to be The Word in the World?**

## **Creation, Incarnation, Resurrection**

In their experience of the Risen Jesus, the first Christians came to believe that in him the fullness of the divinity was present – “My Lord and My God!” John 20:28.

Belief in the Incarnation of God in Jesus, fully manifest in the Resurrection, is at the heart of Christian faith.

The mystery of the Incarnation reveals that divinity is both one with us and indeed one of us, whose presence transforms the world.

As a consequence, our humanity, personal and corporate, divinised in Christ, is the locus and instrument of God’s saving and liberating work in the world. We are to be *word in the world* as Jesus was.

### **The Word in the World**

For the Christian, Incarnation means involvement in human history, in its processes, its challenges, its successes and disasters, its destiny.

Involvement in history is intrinsic to our spirituality as Christians. It is what it means to *be* word in the world as Jesus was.

The incarnation reveals that every pebble, every kangaroo, every person is unique, every ethnic group and race, every religious tradition with its specificity is like the particular individual, Jesus of Nazareth, a locus of revelation – a place where God is revealed.

Jesus used various images of the metaphor of mutual indwelling to communicate this way of being.

God in Jesus, Jesus in us, we in one another, and all of us in God.

“Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?...or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God and that you are not your own?”

1 Cor 6:15, 19.

Christians who take seriously our identity as the body of Christ, who by his Resurrection is alive and present in us and through us in the world, know that we are always acting “*in persona Christi*”.

This is a reality that arises from our baptismal union with the risen Jesus who indwells us as Spirit.

Our Christian faith in the Incarnation and Resurrection makes everything that we do different because we live not as mere human individuals but Christ lives in us. (cf Gal 2:20).

Christians are the ongoing presence of the Word in the world.

All creation is drawn into fullness of life for eternity within the differentiated unity of the Triune God.

**Source: Sandra M. Schneiders “The Word in the World” PACIFICA 23 (OCTOBER 2010) pp. 247-266**

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