

The Mind of Christ and the Mind of the World

Synoptic Gospels, St John the Theologian, St Paul, St James and St Peter

Excluded verses – all those references where “mind” is neutral or where “word” is neutral or positive.

The Mind of Christ

1. For who has known the **mind** of the LORD that he may instruct Him?”¹ But we have the **mind** of Christ. (1 Corinthians 2:16)
2. ... do not be conformed to this **world**, but be transformed by the renewing of your **mind**, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Romans 12:2)
3. But their **minds** were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. (2 Corinthians 3:14)
4. ... whose **minds** the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. (2 Corinthians 4:4)
5. ⁵ Let this **mind** be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. (in full Philippians 2:5-18)

The Mind of the World

1. Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this **world** and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. (Matthew 13:22)
2. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole **world**, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matthew 16:26)
3. So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this **world** are shrewder in their generation than the sons of light. (Luke 16:8)
4. Now is the judgment of this **world**; now the ruler of this **world** will be cast out. (John 12:31)
Compare because the ruler of this **world** is judged. (John 16:11)
5. And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the **world** but to save the **world**. (John 12:47)
6. the Spirit of truth, whom the **world** cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. (John 14:17)
7. Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the **world** gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. (John 14:27)

¹ Isaiah 40:13

8. I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this **world** is coming, and he has nothing in Me. (John 14:30)
9. If the **world** hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you. If you were of the **world**, the **world** would love its own. Yet because you are not of the **world**, but I chose you out of the **world**, therefore the **world** hates you. (John 15:18-19)
10. Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the **world** will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. (John 16:20)
11. These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the **world** you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the **world**. (John 16:33)
12. I have given them Your word; and the **world** has hated them because they are not of the **world**, just as I am not of the **world**. (John 17:14)
13. Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this **world**. If My kingdom were of this **world**, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here." (John 18:36)
14. And do not be conformed to this **world**, but be transformed by the renewing of your **mind**, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Romans 12:2)
15. Where *is* the wise? Where *is* the scribe? Where *is* the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this **world**? (1 Corinthians 1:20)
16. Now we have received, not the spirit of the **world**, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. (1 Corinthians 2:12)
17. For the wisdom of this **world** is foolishness with God. (1 Corinthians 3:19a)
18. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the **world**. (Galatians 4:3)
19. But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the **world** has been crucified to me, and I to the **world**. (Galatians 6:14)
20. Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the **world**, and not according to Christ.
21. ... teaching us that, denying ungodliness and **worldly** lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age ... (Titus 2:12)
22. Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the **world**. (James 1:27)
23. Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the **world** is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the **world** makes himself an enemy of God. (James 4:4)
24. For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the **world** through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning (2 Peter 2:20).
25. Do not love the **world** or the things in the **world**. If anyone loves the **world**, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the **world**—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the **world**., and the **world** is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. (1 John 2:15-17)
26. Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore, the **world** does not know us, because it did not know Him. (1 John 3:1)

27. They are of the **world**. Therefore, they speak *as* of the **world**, and the **world** hears them. (1 John 4:5)
28. For whatever is born of God overcomes the **world**. And this is the victory that has overcome the **world**—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the **world**, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 John 5:4-5)

Biblical Analysis by Author

Scriptural References are indicated by (NUMBER) for each text in each of the 2 sections

Mind

St Paul has three major themes in respect of "Mind": -

- (A) Christians have the mind of Christ by renewing their minds in Him.
- (B) Resistance to Christ is a spiritual blindness of the mind.
- (C) The "mind of Christ" is revealed in His self-emptying humility, obedience and sacrificial love, manifested especially in His death for all on the Cross.

St. Paul does not simply state that all Christians have the mind of Christ (1) as if that was realised in full at, for example, conversion or baptism. He reminds his hearers that they must continually renew their minds by active cooperation with God, fulfilling His "good, acceptable and perfect will." (2)

There are two senses of blindness in the mind St Paul identifies in his Second Letter to the Church and Corinth.

The first concerns the Old Testament righteous who eyes were necessarily veiled from the glory of God on Mount Sinai so that they might not be blinded by direct exposure to His glory ... ahead in time that is of the Word's Incarnation (3). If the Jews are still veiled, St Paul goes on to explain a second more serious blindness on their part.

The second blindness comes from the "god of this age" – a euphemism for the world, the flesh and the devil (4). This blindness applies not only of course to those Jews who continue to reject Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God, but also to Gentiles who continue in bondage to the "god of this age."

When St Paul explains what the "mind of Christ" really means, he uses an ancient Christian hymn, quoted in its first part here (5). In this text he shows how the self-emptying humility of Christ in the Incarnation and His voluntary obedience as a servant, giving Himself up for all in His death on the Cross, truly expresses His mind. We learn here, therefore, that the "mind of Christ" is not to be found in cleverness, intelligence or intellectual achievements; nor in being reasonable or logical or slavishly following rules, ideological principles; nor even in conventional moral principles, exalted and consoling thoughts or ecstatic mystical experiences ... but rather in the active Love that is prepared to sacrifice itself for others, (agape). So, the mind of Christ is "cruciform"; the life of Christ is an empty tomb, which is also mine!

World

A universal principle of understanding "world" in the Scriptures is that it has three senses:

- A. Neutral: e.g. "He shall judge the world in righteousness." (Psalm 9:8)
- B. Positive: e.g. "Rejoicing in His inhabited world, and my delight was with the sons of men." (Psalm 8:31)
- C. Negative: "Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?" (James 4:4a)

We are mainly concerned here with the negative sense, better explained by "worldliness" and also an application at the personal level, reflected in St Paul's contrast between "flesh"² and "spirit." (Galatians 5:17). I have retained some positive references where appropriate.

St Paul

As we have seen in the section on "mind", St Paul connects the renewal of the Christian mind to "not being conformed to this world." (14) This world has a "spirit" (16) the elements of which hold people in bondage in a state which is spiritually rebellious or even just ignorant and immature (18). These elements include "philosophy and empty deceit" (20) which are those worldly principles that distract from Christ. Christians on the other hand have received the Spirit of God, freely given (16), whereby they recognise as foolish in God these worldly principles and concerns (15, 17). The true wisdom of God is only to be found in the Cross, scandalous and foolish to the world (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:18-25), but with the power to save and enlighten the mind. This is both our boast (the cross of Christ) and our own self-sacrifice (taking up our own cross and following Christ) prompting and empowering us to live a Godly way of life (19), and not a worldly dissolute one (20).

St John

St John the Theologian is the New Testament writer who most consistently and expansively contrasts worldly living and Christian living with and in Christ. These are some of his major themes:

- (A) The world is under the sway of the "ruler of this world" (*unspecified*) (4), but he is to be "cast out" (strongly implying that this is the devil).
- (B) The "world" can neither give nor receive the "Spirit" or "peace." (6,7)
- (C) The "ruler of this world" is "coming" and "he has nothing in Me" (8) ... a reference to the Passion and of course more explicitly here in the second part to Satan.
- (D) The "world's" hatred of Christ is reflected in its hatred for His followers" (9,12).
- (E) Because the world hates Christ, His death will cause its rejoicing, but this will be short-lived for the disciples' sorrow will be turned into joy in the resurrection (10).
- (F) Christ has overcome "the world." (11) We should be of "good cheer" (Christian joy) (11).
- (G) Christ's Kingdom is "not of this world" (13). If it were, he could not save it (5) (cf. John 3:16).

² "flesh" in St Paul or "carnality" is ungodly thinking, egotism, hedonism, rebellion against God; it is NOT the physical realm *per se*, which is both good and holy in all its aspects.

The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke)

There are scant and few references to the "world" in the Synoptic Gospels. There is a reference in the Parable of the Sower ("the cares of this world" being the weeds) (1). Also, gaining the world may well lead to the loss of one's soul (2). Finally, in the parable of the Unjust Steward, Christ implies (ambiguously perhaps) an approval of the shrewdness of the steward, contrasted with the "sons of light" who might have shrunk from such creative smart pragmatism.(3) Does that raise the question of naivete in some believers? How else then are we to understand Christ's saying that we should be "as wise as serpents" as well as "as harmless as doves"? (Matthew 10:16)

The non-Pauline Epistles (St James and St Peter)

There are just a small number of references in these epistles. St James urges us to keep ourselves "unspotted from the world" (22) and not incur enmity with God by consorting with it (23). St Peter makes a similar point when referring to the pollutions of the world and its entanglements (24).