THE WORD

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This is how the Christian message is always transmitted, by taking everyday language, everyday images and expressing the truth of the Gospel through them.
Category: Mission

> *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was fully God.*

Why on earth did JohnÂ call Jesus the Word? Why didn't he do something more straightforward like saying "in the beginning was the Messiah"? After all, the Old Testament pointed to the Messiah and that's who Jesus' disciples believed he was. Why did John bring in an entirely new term when there was a perfectly good old one to use?

We can be pretty sure that John's aim wasn't to give Bible commentators the excuse to write erudite articles about neo-Platonism and to give Bible translators palpitations (though he managed both of these). Â John simply wanted to communicate something about Jesus and he chose the term that he believed that would beÂ the best for that purpose.

The Jewish term Messiah and it's Greek equivalent, Christ, are rich terms, they point to Jesus as the culmination of the Old Testament story. However, Matthew had already written an excellent Gospel which pointed to Jesus as the fulfilment of the Old Testament. There was no need for John to repeat what Matthew had already done extremely well.

John chose a term, "the word" or *logos* which he borrowed from Greek philosophy. The "word" means *source* or *origin* or the *essence* or *the heart of the matter* or all of these with a bit more. You can see why I say that he gave Bible translators palpitations. As we mentioned yesterday, John is underlining that the man, Jesus was eternal God and involved in creation. However, my point is not so much what the term logos actually means, but the fact that John took the term from a different world, from the world of philosophy. In order to make a point to his hearers, he took a well known word and used it in a way which breathed new life into it.

This is how the Christian message is always transmitted, by taking everyday language, everyday images and expressing the truth of the Gospel through them. Paul did this in Athens when he took the words of a Greek poet and used them to illustrate the truth of his message (Acts 17:28).

Somewhere along the line, the old pagan midwinter festival wasÂ coopted to tell the story of the birth of Jesus, with traditions like the Christmas tree and carol singing emerging out of pre-existing practices.

Our problem is that the symbols which once communicated the Christian message no longer do so.Â Just as John co-opted *logos*Â to capture the reality of Jesus, we need to find new ways to express the radical nature of the Christian message through our Christmas traditions. Here are a couple ofÂ examples of how that might be done:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dpu3v5uxZTY

I rather like this deconstruction of a modern Christmas icon, the John Lewis advert:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KoxTF_31yyE&feature=youtu.be

I suspect that John would have liked this.