

Character Builder 您好嗎？

The basic unit of the Chinese language is the *zi* (字), i.e. a Chinese word. Each *zi* has a written form (called a character, made up of strokes), a sound (made up of consonant and vowel) and a meaning (or multiple meanings). When we speak or write Chinese, we string *zi* together to form terms, phrases and sentences.

In Putonghua (the spoken form of Modern Standard Chinese) each *zi* is pronounced in one of four tones:

1st tone: 1 = diacritical mark — pitch: 5 to 5, highest prolonged

2nd tone: 2 = diacritical mark / pitch: 3 to 5, middle to high

3rd tone: 3 = diacritical mark U pitch: 2 to 1 to 4, low to lowest to high

4th tone: 4 = diacritical mark \ pitch: 5 to 1, highest to lowest)

To pronounce each *zi* below, follow its pinyin and the given tone number. Light-sound words, which have no definite pitch, carry no diacritical mark and are marked by 0.

This week: Words about Genesis



Putonghua pronunciation: *shi4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *sai3*

Meanings: world, generation

世 has physical/temporal meaning: 世界 (*shi4 jie4* = world-territory = world), 世代 (*shi4 dai4* = world-generation = epochs/generations).

基督教 (*Ji1 Du1 jiao4* = “Christus”/“Christ”-transliterated-religion = Christianity) adopted god 耶和華 (*Ye1 He2 Hua2* = “Yahweh”/“Jehovah”-transliterated), 神話 (*shen2 hua4* = god-talk = myths) from 猶太教 (*You2 Tai4 jiao4* = “Judah”-transliterated-religion = Judaism). Christian Bible’s first book “創世紀” (*chuang4 shi4 ji4* = create-world-record/period = Genesis) describes 神創造天地 (*shen2 chuang4 zao4 tian1 di4* = god-start-make-sky-land = God created heaven and earth).

Buddhists scorn 塵世 (*chen2 shi4* = dust-world = dirty/vulgar/transient world), believe Buddha’s teachings enfold 大千世界 (*da4 qian1 shi4 jie4* = big-thousand-world-territory = thousand X thousand X thousand worlds = boundless universe).