

Foreword to the Inaugural Issue of the *Journal of Biblical and Ancient Studies (JBAS)*

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It is a privilege to offer a few words on the occasion of the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Biblical and Ancient Studies (JBAS)*, an initiative published under the auspices of the Johannine Literature Studies of Korea (JLSK). As a non-Korean scholar and observer from outside this particular academic context, I extend my sincere congratulations to the founding editors and contributors who have brought this endeavour into being.

Launching a new academic journal is no small undertaking, particularly in a field as historically dense, methodologically diverse, and institutionally complex as biblical and ancient studies. The appearance of JBAS testifies to both scholarly ambition and a desire for international engagement. It aims to provide a platform for research on the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and related ancient texts written in classical languages—including, notably, Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, Akkadian, Coptic, and several East Asian languages such as Korean, Japanese, and Chinese. This linguistic and cultural range already signals an intention to foster dialogue across both traditions and geographies.

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At the same time, it must be said that JBAS, like all emerging journals, faces the challenge of establishing its voice and scholarly credibility. Its potential lies in whether it can consistently combine rigorous academic standards with a broad, inclusive vision. The balance between being locally rooted and globally competitive is not easily achieved. It requires long-term editorial focus, a wide network of contributors and readers, and above all, the courage to pursue original research while remaining grounded in critical discipline.

It is, therefore, encouraging to see that the first issue makes a thoughtful and deliberate start. The three inaugural essays set a tone that is both reflective and aspirational. Jörg Frey, in *“New Testament Scholarship Today: Its Challenges and Tasks,”* offers a wide-ranging and candid assessment of the state of the field. From his European perspective, Frey outlines both the legacy and limitations of modern biblical scholarship, emphasizing that critical study of the New Testament is historically contingent, culturally embedded, and always shaped by its institutional settings. He traces the field’s evolution—from its Enlightenment roots and ecclesial entanglements to its present pluralism and global diversification—and reflects on the tension between academic freedom and ecclesial relevance. While he affirms the gains of multi-perspectival, interdisciplinary approaches, Frey is also clear-eyed about the risks of fragmentation and ideological misuse. His essay resists programmatic certainty and instead invites a theologically attentive, critically engaged, and culturally self-aware conversation. In this sense, his contribution both sets a high standard for the kind of work JBAS might foster and rightly cautions against presuming too much from any single institution or publication.

Sukmin Cho's essay, "*Selection and Focus, Expansion and Integration in Biblical Studies*," offers a reflective account of the journal's institutional and intellectual origins. Drawing on a decade of work within the Johannine Literature Studies of Korea, Cho argues that meaningful scholarship in biblical studies must begin with carefully chosen focal points—what he calls "selective depth"—even within a field as vast and complex as biblical and ancient studies. His essay highlights the group's sustained focus on Johannine literature, including the Gospel of John, the Johannine epistles, and Revelation, while also advocating for an expanded scholarly horizon that integrates the wider textual world of antiquity: from the Dead Sea Scrolls to early patristic writings. Cho envisions JBAS not simply as a publication outlet, but as a platform for international scholarly exchange—one that both honors the specificity of its founding focus and welcomes the collaborative integration of diverse voices, disciplines, and linguistic traditions. His essay therefore provides a programmatic vision for the journal: rigorous in its depth, yet open to dialogue and expansion.

The special theme article, "*A Study on the Adam Christology in the Gospel of John and the Possibilities of Ecological Ethics*," by Hyunte Shin, offers a theologically creative and textually grounded exploration of the Gospel of John's potential contribution to ecological ethics. Shin identifies John's creation motifs that echo Genesis 1 and argues that narrative details in John 19–20 structurally parallel Genesis 2–3. These connections support the reading of Jesus as a "new Adam" whose obedient death and resurrection inaugurate a new creation. This "Adam Christology" not only reconfigures human identity in relation to Christ but also suggests a cosmic reconciliation that extends to the whole of creation. Shin's proposal transcends anthropocentric soteriology and lays the foundation for an

ecotheological ethic rooted in Johannine theology—one urgently needed in the context of today’s ecological crisis.

Taken together, these three essays provide more than thematic orientation. They outline a scholarly posture that JBAS seems keen to cultivate: one that honours traditional methods while remaining open to new questions and interdisciplinary collaboration.

The general articles in this issue further illustrate the range of the journal’s ambition. Seung Ho Bang offers an archaeological-redactional analysis of the Gideon narrative in Judges, while Suyeon Kim explores witness motifs within Luke–Acts. Wooil Moon’s comparative study of Logos and Mosaic traditions highlights theological and philosophical resonances across literary corpora, and Sung-Kwon Yim’s work on the Septuagint Psalms demonstrates how Greek renderings of Hebrew texts carry distinct theological implications.

These studies differ in focus and methodology, yet they exhibit a shared commitment to careful textual work, historical attentiveness, and interpretive depth. In that sense, they reflect the kind of intellectual pluralism that biblical and ancient studies today demand. The combination of textual, literary, theological, and archaeological approaches—especially when applied across canonical and non-canonical corpora—can foster rich conversations not only within the academy but also between disciplines, cultures, and traditions.

Still, this kind of interdisciplinary and interlingual work raises important methodological responsibilities. As I have emphasized elsewhere,¹

¹ Cilliers Breytenbach, “The Task and Future of New Testament Studies” (lecture, Presbyterian University & Theological Seminary, Seoul, May 17, 2023); and “The Task

interpretation—or exegesis—must begin with disciplined attentiveness to the text itself. Whether one approaches biblical writings or ancient texts from a philological, theological, or socio-cultural angle, the goal remains to reconstruct the communicative intent embedded within these historically situated sign-systems. This requires a rigorous engagement with grammar, genre, intertextual allusions, and the common cognitive and cultural background of the original audiences.

Such interpretive work is not neutral; it is shaped by scholarly traditions and theoretical frameworks. Yet, it must resist the temptation of reading ancient texts primarily in the light of modern questions. The responsible use of exegesis, in theological, and other academic and public contexts, depends on distinguishing between interpretation of and use of a text, between reconstructing meaning and mobilizing it for contemporary agendas. As Umberto Eco once noted, interpretation must be guided by the internal logic and constraints of the text before it can be put to use.

A journal like JBAS has an important role to play in fostering such clarity. If it succeeds in nurturing high-quality research that is methodologically transparent, historically informed, and hermeneutically aware, it may well become a meaningful voice in the international scholarly conversation. But

and Future of New Testament Studies,” *HTS Teologiese Studies* 79, no. 2 (2023): a9319, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v79i2.9319>. Eun-Woo Lee, ed., *The 122nd Anniversary of the Founding of Presbyterian University & Theological Seminary, the 23rd International Academic Conference: "The Future and Challenges of Bible Education"*, hosted by the Institute of Biblical Studies (Seoul: Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary Press, 2024), 35–59. ISBN 978-89-7369-017-6.

such a role cannot be assumed; it must be earned over time, through the steady publication of original, reliable, and relevant research.

For that reason, I applaud this first step and wish the editors and contributors perseverance and scholarly courage as they chart a course forward. May JBAS continue to cultivate an academic space where deep textual knowledge meets thoughtful interpretation, and where scholarly traditions from East and West can enter into constructive dialogue—not just in principle, but in practice.

I close with sincere congratulations and cautious optimism.

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