

A Study on the Adam Christology in the Gospel of John and the Possibilities of Ecological Ethics

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<Abstract>

This study explores the potential for an “Adam Christology” in the Gospel of John and its implications for an ecotheological ethic. The prologue (John 1) employs creation words (ἐν ἀρχῇ, λόγος, ζωή, φῶς) that closely mirror Genesis 1, situating Jesus within the origin and purpose of creation. Narrative elements in John 19–20—such as the “garden” (18:1; 19:41; 20:15), “Behold the man” (19:5), and the “gardener” (20:15)—exhibit structural parallels to Genesis 2–3, highlighting Jesus’ death and resurrection as a turning point of a “new creation.”

Through analysis of the Greek text and narrative structure, this article argues that John’s Adam Christology portrays Jesus as the one who, through obedience and life-giving ministry, overcomes Adam’s failure and inaugurates a new humanity. This Adam Christology also bears

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ecothological implications: interpreting Jesus as the “new Adam” extends his death and resurrection to the restoration of the whole of creation. John’s cosmic Christology transcends an anthropocentric salvation, envisioning reconciliation between humanity and the whole of creation. John’s Gospel thus proclaims both the beginning of creation in Christ and its eschatological consummation—a new creation and the renewal of the created order—opening up a horizon for an ecotheological reading of Adam Christology and offering a theological basis for ecological ethics in an age of climate crisis.

***Keywords**

Adam Christology; Garden (κῆπος); Logos; Ecotheological ethics; New Creation.

1. Introduction

“Adam Christology” refers to the theological framework that understands Jesus Christ as the “Second Adam” or “Last Adam.” This concept is explicitly presented in the Pauline epistles, particularly in Romans 5:12–21 and 1 Corinthians 15:21–49, where Christ is portrayed as the solution to the problem of sin and death introduced into the world through the first Adam. Through this contrast, Jesus is revealed as the representative of a new humanity and the restorer of creation.¹

How, then, is Adam Christology reflected in the Gospels, particularly in the Gospel of John? Scholars such as Raymond E. Brown,² Craig S. Keener,³ and Carlos R. S. Siliezar⁴ argue that although the Gospel of John does exhibit connections to the Genesis narrative, it does not support an Adamic Christological reading. According to these scholars, the creation imagery found in John’s Gospel serves merely as a literary device and does not align with the Pauline Adam Christology.

¹ The following books offer an in-depth examination of Adam Christology in the Pauline letters: Gordon D. Fee, *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007); Yongbom Lee, *The Son of Man as the Last Adam: The Early Church Tradition as a Source of Paul’s Adam Christology* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2012); Nicholas T. Wright, *Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992).

² Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John* xiii-xxi (London and New York: Doubleday, 1970), 806.

³ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 1077.

⁴ Carlos R. S. Siliezar, *Creation Imagery in the Gospel of John* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), 174–90.

Nevertheless, recent trajectories in Gospel scholarship have sought to reexamine the potential for Adam Christology within the Gospels. While the Synoptic Gospels do not explicitly articulate an Adam Christology, various motifs suggest an implicit engagement with Adamic themes. For instance, Richard Bauckham contends that the accounts of Jesus' baptism and wilderness temptation may subtly allude to the testing of Adam and Christ's role as the representative of a renewed humanity, thus warranting consideration of an Adamic Christological interpretation.⁵ Joel Marcus, referencing Genesis 1:26–28, argues that in the temptation narrative of the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is portrayed as the Second Adam who has been granted dominion over the entire world. Through this, he becomes the instrument through which God's reign is ultimately realized across the earth.⁶ Brandon D. Crowe contends that the genealogies in Matthew and Luke, along with the Son of Man Christology (cf. Matt 26:64; Mark 14:62; Luke 22:69), demonstrate a strong connection to the Last Adam Christology. Furthermore, he argues that the portrait of Jesus in the Gospel of John—particularly in his obedience to the will of God—exhibits Adamic Christological dimensions.⁷ Mark Makowiecki argues that although Irenaeus's "new Adam" doctrine is substantially dependent on Pauline letters, the Fourth Gospel also presents an Adam Christology, as Jesus is

⁵ Richard Bauckham, *Living with Other Creatures: Green Exegesis and Theology* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2011), 130.

⁶ Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 170–71.

⁷ Brandon D. Crowe, *The Last Adam: A Theology of the Obedient Life of Jesus in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 23–54.

portrayed as one who recapitulates Adam's life and death, particularly when viewed through an intertextual chiasmic pattern.⁸ Haesaeng Kwon, while not explicitly asserting that the Gospel of John presents an Adam Christology, examines the recent scholarly trends on this subject within New Testament studies. He contends that the Johannine account of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection strongly evokes the atmosphere of Genesis, and that this Genesis motif undergirds the new-creation significance of Jesus' death and resurrection.⁹

This study seeks to trace the implicit Adam Christology within the Gospel of John and to explore its creational and ecological ethical implications. To this end, the research undertakes a comprehensive analysis of literary correspondences, theological motifs, and symbolic associations. Focusing particularly on John's prologue (1:118) and chapters 19–20, this study aims to elucidate the structural and theological interconnections between Jesus and Adam.

⁸ Mark Makowiecki, "Irenaeus and the Adam-Christ Typology in the Gospel of John," *Themelios: An International Journal for Students of Theological and Religious Studies* 49, no. 2 (2024): 323–33.

⁹ Haesaeng Kwon, "New Creation Motif in the Gospel of John: Signs, Cross and resurrection, and Temple," *Korean Evangelical New Testament Studies* 17, no. 4 (2017): 154–58.

2. John's Prologue (1:1–18) and the Creation Story: The Significance of “In the Beginning”

The prologue of the Gospel of John (1:1–18) commences by tracing the narrative of the Gospel back to the origins of creation through literary and theological parallels with Genesis 1. Notably, John 1:1–5 deliberately evokes the structure and language of Genesis 1, presenting the story of Jesus Christ not simply as a historical biography but as the centerpiece of a cosmic creation narrative. By closely echoing the Septuagint's expression “ἐν ἀρχῇ” from Genesis 1:1, John summons the reader to the moment of creation and inaugurates a theological shift centered on the concept of the ‘Word’ (λόγος).¹⁰

The terms “Word” (λόγος), “life” (ζωή), and “light” (φῶς) mentioned in John 1:3–5 resonate profoundly with the thematic elements of Genesis 1. For example, the recurring phrase in Genesis 1, “And God said” (εἶπεν ὁ Θεός), forms a direct parallel with John 1:3's assertion that “all things were made through the Word.” This correspondence highlights how, within the framework of traditional Jewish-Hellenistic thought, where God's word functioned as the instrument of creation, John presents Jesus Christ as the ultimate agent of creation.¹¹ However, John does not simply reference the origin of creation; he also reveals its historical trajectory and teleological

¹⁰ This study employs the Nestle-Aland 28th edition for the Greek texts. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical quotations are my own translations, informed by the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

¹¹ Siliezar, *Creation Imagery in the Gospel of John*, 28–42.

direction. The terms “life” (ζωή) and “light” (φῶς) function not as mere natural elements but as central concepts symbolizing redemptive revelation and eschatological reality throughout the Gospel of John. The triadic structure in John 1:1–3—“In the beginning was the Word” (Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος), “and the Word was with God” (πρὸς τὸν θεόν), and “the Word was God” (θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος)—discloses the ontological status of the λόγος, portraying the Word as distinct from yet sharing the same divine nature as God. The subsequent declaration in 1:3, “All things came into being through him,” situates Jesus at the origin of creation and proclaims him as the divine agent of the creative work.¹² John’s Christology is thus closely intertwined with creation theology, presenting Jesus not only as the messianic-eschatological redeemer but also as the one who reveals the foundation and telos of the created order. Consequently, the prologue of the Gospel of John functions as a theological declaration that both recalls the origin of creation and unveils its divinely intended purpose (τέλος). Whereas Genesis articulates the origin of the material world, the Gospel of John introduces the concept of a “new creation” centered on Jesus Christ. This new creation is not a mere repetition but is depicted as an eschatological event that consummates creation through the impartation of life (ζωή), light (φῶς), and Spirit (πνεῦμα).¹³

¹² John Painter, “Rereading Genesis in the Prologue of John?” in *Neotestamentica et Philonica: Studies in Honor of Peder Borgen*, ed. David E. Aune, Torrey Seland and Jarl Henning Ulrichsen (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 179–81.

¹³ Edward W. Klink III, “Genesis Revealed: Second Adam Christology in the Fourth Gospel,” *Bulletin of Ecclesial Theology* 5, no. 1 (2018): 27–28.

John 1:1–5 deliberately evokes the structure and language of Genesis 1:1–5 but does not merely recall the past act of creation; rather, it introduces a new theological turning point within that narrative. While Genesis portrays God’s declaration of the created world “good” (cf. Gen 1:10, 12, 18), the Gospel of John depicts “darkness” (σκοτία) as the prevailing reality enveloping the created order.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it
καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει, καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν
(John 1:5)

Here, darkness refers not solely to a physical phenomenon but rather to a spiritual condition marked by the absence of God’s presence and life. This concept parallels Genesis 1:2—“darkness covered the face of the deep”—indicating that creation still requires God’s active involvement for its consummation. John draws on the core concepts of “life” and “light” from Genesis but transforms them into theological symbols of redemption, resurrection, and the ultimate new creation.

in him was life, and the life was the light of all people
ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν, καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων (John 1:4)

I am the light of the world.
Ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου (John 8:12)

Such statements imply that life and light are not conditions for existence but serve as mediums of God’s personal revelation and salvation. The key verb in John 1:5, κατέλαβεν, can be translated either as “overcome” or “comprehend,” and John exploits this semantic ambiguity to unveil the physical opposition between darkness and light as well as the failure of recognition. This verse is intricately connected to the overarching theme in the Gospel of John, namely, the conflict between Jesus and the world (cf. John 3:19–20; 12:35), and it indicates that the Light who came into the world was not received by the darkness.¹⁴ This conflict becomes explicit in John 1:11:

He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him.
εἰς τὰ ἴδια ἦλθεν, καὶ οἱ ἴδιοι αὐτὸν οὐ παρέλαβον

In this verse, John engages in a wordplay that exploits the grammatical gender of a single term. Here, ἴδια (neuter plural) refers to “his own things” or “his own possessions,” denoting the world that belongs to Jesus (the Word/Logos), while ἴδιοι (masculine plural) designates “his own people,” specifically Israel. This nuanced wordplay highlights the separation and conflict between Jesus—the Creator—and his world. Moreover, this verse reveals a tension that extends beyond the mere Creator–creature relationship, exposing the personal dimension of belonging and rejection. Jesus is rejected by the very world and the people he brought into being, a

¹⁴ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 75–76.

rejection that underscores the broken relationship between creation and redemption alike.¹⁵

3. Flesh (σάρξ) and the Second Adam: Intertextuality between Genesis and John

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

Καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ Πατρός, πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας (John 1:14)

John 1:14 proclaims the incarnation of Jesus Christ as a redemptive-historical turning point. The statement, “And the Word became flesh and lived among us,” establishes a clear intertextual connection with the narrative of Adam’s creation from the dust in Genesis 2:7. Here, “flesh” (σάρξ) does not solely denote human existence (ἄνθρωπος) in a generic sense; rather, it signifies the comprehensive state of fallen human nature. This reveals that Jesus entered into the very condition of created human existence. Although Jesus and Adam have fundamentally different origins, they share a unique, comparable status in terms of “manhood.” The Gospel of John portrays the event of the Word becoming flesh (John 1:14) as Jesus “becoming a living being,” which closely resonates with Genesis 2:7

¹⁵ *BDAG*, 467.

(LXX), where God forms Adam from the dust and breathes into him, making him a “living being.” The verb ἐγένετο (‘became’) appears in both passages, while the Genesis account uses ‘a living soul’ (ψυχὴ ζῶσα), suggesting existential parallelism, indicating that both Jesus and Adam exist as “living humans” in an existential sense. Yet, their ontological origins are fundamentally distinct: Adam is “the first man from the earth, made of dust” (1 Cor 15:47), a creature, while Jesus is “the second man is from heaven” (John 3:13; cf. 1 Cor 15:47), the Creator God who assumed flesh and entered into human existence (John 1:3, 14). Thus, while Jesus differs from Adam in origin, he also shares the same human nature. This relationship permits an analogical comparison but also entails an essential distinction.

Irenaeus, likewise, in his reading of the Johannine account of the incarnation, affirms that the Word (Logos) assumed a body like that of Adam, so that He might abolish sin through the very flesh in which sin had come to exercise its dominion.¹⁶ This statement reflects a theological logic grounded in the conviction that, just as the fall of humanity occurred in the flesh, so too must redemption be effected within the same human flesh. Irenaeus thereby underscores that the incarnation of the Logos constitutes a concrete reenactment of Adamic existence, thus laying the ontological foundation for redemption.

¹⁶ Makowiecki, “Irenaeus and the Adam-Christ Typology in the Gospel of John,” 325.

Similarly, the first-century Jewish philosopher Philo described the Logos as a divine rational principle involved in the act of creation.¹⁷ Drawing upon the wisdom traditions of Genesis and Proverbs, Philo conceived of the Logos as the “archetype of other things”¹⁸ and the “intelligible cosmos,”¹⁹ at times even ascribing to it the status of the “Image of God,”²⁰ thereby attributing to it a distinct divine hypostasis. His conceptualization of the Logos is deeply intertwined with the personified Wisdom of Jewish sapiential literature (e.g., Prov 8:22–31) and the theological role of the Torah. In particular, in *De Opificio Mundi* (“On the Creation of the World”), Philo portrays the Logos as a divine being who actively participates in God’s creative work. However, the Gospel of John develops the concept of the Logos in a manner that is decisively distinct from that of Philo. Whereas Philo presents the Logos as a symbolic and philosophical principle functioning as the archetypal reason,²¹ John bears witness to the Logos as

¹⁷ Gregory E. Sterling, “Different Traditions or Emphases? The Image of God in Philo’s *De Opificio Mundi*,” in *New Approaches to the Study of Biblical Interpretation in Judaism of the Second Temple Period and in Early Christianity: Proceedings of the Eleventh International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated literature*, ed. Gary A. Anderson, Ruth Clements and David Satran (Leiden: Brill Academic Publisher, 2013), 41–56. A detailed study on Philo’s concept of the Logos can be found in Wooil Moon, “A Philosophical Analysis of the Concept of Logos in the Fourth Gospel,” *Korean New Testament Studies* 20, no. 2 (2013): 339–69.

¹⁸ Sterling, “Different Traditions or Emphases?,” 44.

¹⁹ Sterling, “Different Traditions or Emphases?,” 46.

²⁰ Sterling, “Different Traditions or Emphases?,” 47.

²¹ Sterling, “Different Traditions or Emphases?,” 49.

the personal God who became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). In Johannine theology, the Logos is portrayed as the agent of creation, revelation, and redemption. In contrast to Philo's abstraction of the Logos as a metaphysical or cosmological entity, John concretizes the Logos as a historical and personal reality—namely, Jesus Christ. Thus, while the Johannine Logos concept shares a similar Jewish-Hellenistic background with Philo's thought, it radically transforms that conceptual framework by situating the Logos within the theological climax of the incarnation. In conclusion, although Philo's notion of the Logos offers a significant background for understanding the prologue of the Gospel of John, the evangelist transcends that background by rearticulating the Logos as the incarnate Son of God who is manifest within the history of salvation.

John 1:18 explicitly reveals the unique relationship between Jesus and God. The author of the Fourth Gospel, having introduced the λόγος in 1:1, does not simply equate the λόγος with God but distinguishes the relationship by using the phrase “toward/with God” (πρὸς τὸν θεόν), thereby highlighting both a distinction and an intimate personal relationship.²²

Similarly, John 1:14 and 1:18 portray the incarnate Word as “the only-begotten from the Father” (μονογενὴς παρὰ πατρός), that is, “the only-begotten God” (μονογενὴς θεός). This enables the reader to identify Jesus with God, yet the expression “the one who is in the bosom of the Father” (ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρός) underscores both the intimacy between

²² James R. Michaels, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 80.

them and their personal distinction.²³ These expressions should be interpreted as mutually complementary manner. John 1:1–2 emphasizes the unique and intimate relationship between the λόγος and God, a relationship that reflects a status unmatched by any other figure introduced in the Prologue.

For example, John the Baptist (1:6) is described as “a man sent from God” (παρὰ θεοῦ ἀπεσταλμένος), and those who receive the Word become children of God (1:12–13). Yet they remain ontologically distinct from the λόγος, who has been with God from the beginning. While believers are “born of God” (ἐκ θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν), the λόγος alone has eternally existed πρὸς τὸν θεόν (“with God”). Thus, John 1:14 proclaims the λόγος as “the only-begotten” (μονογενής), whose uniqueness is expressed concretely in his relationship with the Father (πατήρ) and in the manifestation of his glory (δόξα). Ultimately, the relationship between the λόγος and God (θεός) is not a matter of simple identity but is disclosed within a personal relational structure between the Father and the Son, thereby clarifying the λόγος’s identity and theological significance.

4. Jesus in the Gospel of John: The Obedient Son of God

One of the most prominent features in the narrative flow of the Gospel of John is Jesus’ complete obedience.²⁴ This obedience is not a personal

²³ George R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (Waco: Word, 1987), 2–3.

²⁴ Donald A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 95.

virtue but functions as an essential component of his salvific mission, closely related to his Christological self-understanding as the One who was “sent” (ἀποστέλλω, πέμπω) by the Father into the world. Jesus was not simply commissioned by the Father; rather, it signifies his being lifted up on the cross, thereby bringing about the salvation of humanity and the kosmos (3:14–16; 12:32–33). Within this framework, the Gospel’s high Christology simultaneously highlights the Son’s self-humiliation and his vicarious mission. In this regard, Andreas J. Köstenberger and Scott R. Swain argue that Jesus willingly laid down his life to resolve the problem of sin (1:29, 34; 8:34–36; 20:23; cf. 16:7–11).²⁵ Jesus appears as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (1:29), an image that conveys the significance of atoning sacrifice in connection with both the symbolism of the Passover lamb and the Suffering Servant of Isa 53.²⁶

How does the Gospel of John specifically reveal Jesus’ missional identity—the intersection of God’s will and Jesus’ work? The first occasion in which Jesus explicitly refers to his works (ἔργα) appears in John 4:34, where he declares: “My food is to do the will (θέλημα) of the one who sent me and to complete his work (ἔργα).” The connection between “food” (βρῶμα) and “will” (θέλημα) recurs in chapter 6, where Jesus makes it clear that the very purpose of his descent from heaven is to accomplish the Father’s will (6:38). Especially in 6:55, where he speaks of his flesh as true food, Jesus emphasizes that his sacrificial death fulfills the Father’s will to

²⁵ Andreas J. Köstenberger and Scott R. Swain, *Father, Son, and Spirit: The Trinity and John’s Gospel* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2008), 160.

²⁶ Keener, *Gospel of John* 1, 453–54.

grant eternal life. Some scholars link this scene to Adam's first sin and the miracle of the manna in the wilderness, suggesting that Jesus' reference to food reverses the curse of original sin and the wilderness symbolism associated with it.²⁷ The motif of fulfilling the Father's work is also found in John 5:30 and 5:36. In 5:30, Jesus declares: "I do not seek my own will (θέλημα) but the will (θέλημα) of the one who sent me," while in 5:36, he proclaims that the Father has given him works (ἔργα) to accomplish (τελειώσω), thereby revealing once again that his mission is not to fulfill his own will but to do the work of the Father.

A crucial passage to consider when examining the relationship between God's will and Jesus' work is John 17:4. Here, Jesus prays, "I have glorified you on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do." This statement appears to indicate that Jesus viewed his mission as already accomplished prior to the crucifixion. Donald A. Carson understands Jesus' declaration, made just before his death on the cross, as a proleptic statement—that is, a forward-looking affirmation of completed mission.²⁸ However, this declaration is not a formal anticipation but signifies a substantive completion, in that the entire ministry up to this point has been the faithful execution of the Father's will. Charles K. Barrett emphasizes

²⁷ Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 113; John R. Fletcher, *Signs in the Wilderness: Intertextuality and the Narrative Imagination in the Gospel of John* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008), 38–41.

²⁸ Carson, *Gospel according to John*, 557.

that the use of the aorist indicative verb ἐδόξασα in John 17:4 underscores the actual past accomplishment of Jesus mission.²⁹

Leon Morris interprets the dual structure in which Jesus has already glorified the Father and will again glorify Him through the cross, connecting this theme with John 12:28.³⁰ This allows for an integrated understanding that Jesus' sign (σημεῖον, 2:11) and his decisive death following the entry into Jerusalem constitute a continuous mission glorifying God's name. John 17:4, together with John 4:34, forms an inclusio structure that links the beginning and completion of Jesus' public ministry to the Father's will and the fulfillment of His work.³¹ Herman Ridderbos argues that, through this structure, Jesus' entire life represents a continuous flow of obedience, which results in the glorification of the Father.³² Furthermore, as mentioned in John 5:36, the "works" (ἔργα) that Jesus received from the Father encompass not simply miracles or teachings but the entire redemptive mission characterized by perfect obedience and atoning sacrifice.

Viewed in this light, John 17:4 serves as a comprehensive declaration evaluating Jesus' entire public ministry. While it does not exclude or diminish the impending crucifixion, it proclaims the essential completeness of the mission already accomplished. Köstenberger and Swain understand

²⁹ Charles K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1978), 504.

³⁰ Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 718.

³¹ Francis J. Moloney, *Love in the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 48–49; Morris, *the Gospel according to John*, 246.

³² Ridderbos, *Gospel of John*, 362–63.

such verses as reflecting the execution of the eternal covenant of salvation (*pactum salutis*) among the triune God.³³ Ultimately, Jesus' obedience in the Gospel of John goes beyond the notion of a mere moral example; it is a central theological theme that reveals His divine identity as the sent Son and the essence of His atoning mission. The fulfillment of this obedience functions as an indispensable element in glorifying the Father throughout His entire life and ministry, including the crucifixion.

5. The Implied Adam Christology in Chapters 18–20: the Motif of the Garden, Humanity, and Resurrection

The Passion and Resurrection narratives in John 18–20 invest the anonymous location of the “garden” (κῆπος) with profound theological symbolism by mentioning it three times (18:1–2; 19:41; 20:15). This setting functions not only as a narrative backdrop but rather as a theologically charged intertext that evokes the Garden of Eden in Genesis 2–3, thereby developing a theological contrast between the “first Adam” and the “second Adam.” This section aims to explore how the Johannine Adam Christology unfolds around the narrative motifs of the “garden” (κῆπος) and the “gardener” (κηπουρός). By tracing betrayal in the garden (18:1–2), death and reconciliation (19:41), and resurrection and new creation (20:15), John's Gospel presents Jesus as the “second Adam” who

³³ Köstenberger and Swain, *Father, Son, and Spirit*, 169–73.

reverses the human fall that began in Eden, thereby reconfiguring the biblical narrative of human restoration through Christ.³⁴

In the Gospel of John, the “garden” (κῆπος) as the site of Jesus’ death and resurrection functions as a symbolic stage that suggests new creation through its intertextual association with the Garden of Eden in Genesis. Unlike the Synoptic Gospels, which situate Jesus’ Passion narrative in geographically specific locations such as Gethsemane or the Mount of Olives (Matt 26:36; Mark 14:32; Luke 22:39), the Gospel of John records that Jesus was arrested in a “garden” (18:1, 26), and that he was buried and resurrected in that same garden (19:41).³⁵ This series of garden-related references may be interpreted as reflecting John’s theological intention to connect the Genesis creation narrative with the Jesus event.³⁶ However, in other passages of the Septuagint, particularly Ezekiel 36:35, the Garden of Eden is indeed rendered with the term κῆπος.³⁷ Moreover, in the translation of Aquila, minuscule 135—known for consistently rendering

³⁴ Klink, “Genesis Revealed,” 37–40.

³⁵ Joachim Schaper, “The Messiah in the Garden: John 19.38–41, (royal) Gardens, and Messianic Concepts,” in *Paradise in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Views*, ed. M. Bockmuehl and G. G. Stroumsa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 17–27; Evelyn C. Hoskyns, “Genesis I–III and St John’s Gospel,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 21, no. 83 (1920): 215.

³⁶ Siliezar, *Creation Imagery in the Gospel of John*, 187.

³⁷ The Old Testament contains numerous reuses of the Garden of Eden motif, a complete listing of which is provided in Troels E. P. Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden: Genesis 2–3 and Symbolism of the Eden Garden in Biblical Hebrew Literature* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 305–454; Siliezar, *Creation Imagery in the Gospel of John*, 181.

the same Hebrew term with the same Greek term—the garden in Genesis 2:8 (κῆπον) and 3:1 (κῆπου) is translated with inflected forms of the word κῆπος.³⁸ This indicates that the terminology employed in John’s Gospel does not categorically exclude the Garden of Eden, but rather demonstrates that a symbolic interpretation is possible within the diversity of biblical language. John Suggit suggests that, in New Testament literature, παράδεισος is typically used to denote the heavenly paradise of the eschatological future (Luke 23:43; 2 Cor 12:4; Rev 2:7). Accordingly, he suggests that κῆπος may have been the more appropriate term to designate an earthly garden.³⁹ Taking these linguistic and contextual considerations together, it can be argued that the Gospel of John conveys a symbolic message through the garden (κῆπος) where Jesus’ death and resurrection took place, presenting the Jesus event as the inauguration of a new creation. Furthermore, Joachim Schaper points out that κῆπος frequently appears in the Old Testament in connection with royal “private gardens” or “royal tombs” (e.g., 2 Kgs 21:18, 26; Neh 3:16), suggesting that John’s depiction of the garden as the location of Jesus’ tomb implicitly alludes to Jesus’ royal status. According to Schaper’s analysis, while both κῆπος and παράδεισος can refer to a royal garden, παράδεισος primarily evokes an ideal paradise characterized by natural landscapes, whereas κῆπος is more suited to denote a concrete and historical place, especially a royal tomb or

³⁸ Frederick Field, *Origenis Hexaplorum Quae Supersunt* (Piscataway: Gorgias Press LLC, 2012 [reprinted from the 1875 Oxford edition]), 13, 16.

³⁹ John Suggit, “Jesus the gardener: the atonement in the Fourth Gospel as re-creation,” *Neotestamentica* 33, no. 1 (1999): 166–67.

garden.⁴⁰ Consequently, the mention of the “garden” (κῆπος) as the place where Jesus was crucified and buried in John 19:41 carries significance beyond mere background description. It can be understood as a reconfiguration of the garden motif as a symbolic space that connects creation and redemption, Adam and Christ, the first man and the true King. In the first garden, Adam rebelled against God’s will, whereas in the second garden, Jesus fully submits. Judas, like Adam, succumbs to Satan’s temptation (John 13:27) and betrays Jesus, paralleling the narrative of Eve’s temptation by the serpent in Genesis 3. However, unlike Adam’s failure, Jesus asserts control over the situation through his self-identifying declaration “I am” (ἐγώ εἰμι, John 18:5–6) in the garden, progressing decisively toward God’s redemptive plan. Thus, the garden is redefined not as a site of recurring fallenness but as a place of overcoming the fall and preparing for redemption.

A survey of the Old Testament reveals that the Garden of Eden was established by God (Gen 2:8), and Adam was appointed as its “keeper and guardian” (Gen 2:15). However, as Mary L. Coloe observes, the Garden of Eden is not only depicted as human property but is repeatedly portrayed as God’s garden (Gen 13:10; Isa 51:3; Ezek 31:8). Consequently, the one who tends the garden is ultimately connected to God’s sovereign power and divine rule.⁴¹ Within this traditional framework, the portrayal of the risen

⁴⁰ Schaper, “The Messiah in the Garden: John 19.38–41, (royal) Gardens, and Messianic Concepts,” 17–27.

⁴¹ Mary L. Coloe, “Creation in the Gospel of John,” in *Creation is Groaning: Biblical and Theological Perspectives*, ed. Mary L. Coloe (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2013), 82.

Jesus as the “gardener” carries a dual significance. Jesus stands once again in the garden as the new Adam, representing humanity, while simultaneously appearing as the sovereign Lord who possesses and governs the garden, akin to the Creator God. This parallels the depiction of Adam in Genesis as a royal being created in the image of God, tasked with ruling over the created order (Gen 1:26–28), thereby implying Jesus’ identity and mission as the consummator of the new creation. This theological motif resonates with Pilate’s declarations in John 19, where he refers to Jesus as “Ἴδοὺ ὁ ἄνθρωπος” (Behold the man, 19:5) and “Ἴδε ὁ Βασιλεὺς ὑμῶν” (Behold your King, 19:14). Although these statements may appear to be mere mockery or political maneuvering, theologically they function as revelatory affirmations that Jesus is the true Adam and the rightful King.⁴² Just as Adam in the Old Testament functioned as the representative of the created order, Jesus emerges as the representative of the new creation. Notably, the recurring royal imagery in the Passion narrative—such as the crown of thorns, the purple robe, and the soldiers’ mockery (John 19:2–3)—ironically yet paradoxically affirms His identity as the true King.⁴³ The climax of this narrative is found in the burial of Jesus’ body in the tomb within the garden (John 19:41). This evokes the Old Testament tradition of kings being buried in gardens (2 Kings 21:18, 26; Neh 3:16), symbolizing that Jesus died as the King and was resurrected from that very garden. Consequently, the garden in the Gospel of John functions as a symbolic

⁴² Alan Richardson, *The Gospel according to St. John* (London: SCM, 1959), 197.

⁴³ David M. Litwa, “Behold Adam: A Reading of John 19:5,” *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 32, no. 2 (2010): 139–40.

space linking the Eden of Genesis with the eschatological new creation. At its center stands Jesus, who is not only the new Adam tending the garden but also God Himself, the Creator and Restorer of that garden. Within this dual identity, the title “the gardener” (ὁ κηπουρός) is a misunderstanding on Mary’s part but rather the most theologically precise confession.

6. Adam Christology in John’s Gospel and Its Ecotheological Implications

Although the Gospel of John does not explicitly address contemporary ecological ethics or the care of creation, its message is deeply associated with a theology of creation. Jesus’ incarnation—along with his identity as Creator—attests to God’s profound involvement with the created world, thereby suggesting eschatological implications for the restoration of the cosmos. As this study has demonstrated, the Gospel’s narrative structure discloses a creation–new creation motif embedded within an implied Adam typology, offering a theological foundation upon which a Christian ecological vision may be constructed.

In particular, John 19–20 deploys motifs such as the “garden” (κῆπος), the declaration “Behold the man” (ἰδοὺ ὁ ἄνθρωπος, 19:5), and creation imagery in the crucifixion and resurrection narratives. These elements converge to portray Jesus as the new Adam who redeems the human failure of the first creation and inaugurates its renewal. Unlike the first Adam, who disobeyed God in Eden, Jesus demonstrates complete obedience to the Father’s will—even unto death—within the garden setting (18:1; 19:41; cf. 4:34; 5:19, 30; 17:4). In this light, the Adam Christology in John extends

beyond a soteriological response to human sin and instead articulates a redemptive theology of creation, wherein the relational order among God, humanity, and the created world is reconfigured.

As the last Adam sent by God, Jesus enacts a vocation of self-emptying (cf. John 6:38; 4:34) in order to fulfill the will of the Father. This self-giving mission embodies an ethic of love that extends beyond the self, encompassing both human community and the created order. By doing so, Jesus offers a paradigmatic model of decentered, other-oriented existence. This model is not limited to Christ alone but is explicitly extended to his disciples: in John 17:18 and 20:21, Jesus declares that just as the Father has sent him into the world, so also he sends them.

A: <u>καθὼς</u> ἐμὲ ἀπέστειλας	As you (<i>Father</i>) have sent me
B: εἰς τὸν κόσμον,	into the world,
A: <u>καὶ γὰρ</u> ἀπέστειλα αὐτοὺς	so I have sent them (<i>disciples</i>)
B: εἰς τὸν κόσμον	into the world. ⁴⁴

This pericope implicitly discloses the Father's sending of the Son and explicitly affirms that Jesus, in turn, sends his disciples into the world. This missional dynamic, rooted in the reciprocal relationship between the Father and the Son, recurs throughout the Gospel (cf. 3:16–17; 8:16; 10:36; 12:49; 14:24; 20:21).⁴⁵ Within this theological framework, the disciples are

⁴⁴ Hyunte Shin, "A Study on the Potential of Ethics and Ecological Ethics in the Gospel of John," *Korea Reformed Theology* 82, no 2 (2024): 113.

⁴⁵ Shin, "A Study on the Potential of Ethics and Ecological Ethics in the Gospel of

presented as an extension and embodiment of Jesus' incarnational mission. Jesus establishes his love and obedience—his unreserved commitment to the will of the Father—as the paradigmatic ethical standard for his followers. This ethic transcends interpersonal morality, constituting a kenotic, self-giving love oriented toward the world—a vocation that defines the disciples' missional identity. As they embody this Christocentric ethic, the disciples function as agents of an ecotheological praxis, participating in the divine mission of reconciling and renewing the created order.

Within the narrative of the Gospel of John, the incarnate Logos (1:14) reveals the redemptive grace of God through the crucifixion, thereby incorporating the created order into the broader framework of the divine economy of salvation. Although the Gospel does not contain explicit paraenetic material or direct ecological exhortation, it nevertheless communicates a relational and missional ethic grounded in the person and work of Christ—a theological vision that implicitly embraces the entirety of creation. The disciples' participation in Jesus' paradigmatic life ultimately unveils an ecological vocation, leading all creation to manifest God's grace and glory.

7. Conclusion

Despite the fact that the Gospel of John does not present an explicit Adam Christology in the manner of the Pauline Epistles, it still contains

John,” 114.

implicit elements suggestive of such a theological trajectory. The prologue and conclusion of the Gospel exhibit structural and theological parallels to Genesis 1–3, signaling the inauguration of a new creation through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Within John’s narrative, Jesus is portrayed not only as the redeemer who addresses the problem of sin, but also as the one who restores the primordial order of creation and fulfills its eschatological *telos* (τέλος).

Accordingly, the Adam Christology implied in the Gospel of John reframes human responsibility—not merely as passive reception of redemptive history, but as an active ethical vocation. In this light, discipleship entails an embodied participation in the reconciliation of humanity with the created order. This perspective reorients theological attentiveness to nature and life, positioning human existence at the intersection of creation and new creation. Ultimately, the Gospel of John presents a holistic theological vision in which the new creation in Christ is fulfilled through a reconciled and harmonious relationship among God, humanity, and the entire cosmos.

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<한글초록>

요한복음의 아담기독론과 생태윤리의 가능성에 대한 소고 신현태 *

본 논문은 요한복음에 나타난 ‘아담 기독론’의 가능성과 생태신학적 윤리에 미치는 함의를 탐구한다. 요한복음 서문(요 1 장)은 창조의 기원을 나타내는 표현들(ἐν ἀρχῇ, λόγος, ζωή, φῶς)을 사용하여 예수를 창조의 기원과 목적 안에 위치시킨다. 요한복음 19-20 장에 등장하는 내러티브 요소들—“동산”(18:1; 19:41; 20:15), “보라 이 사람이다”(19:5), “동산지기”(20:15)—는 창세기 2-3 장과 구조적 평행을 이루며, 예수의 죽음과 부활 사건이 ‘새 창조’의 전환점임을 강조한다. 헬라어 본문과 내러티브 구조에 대한 분석을 통해 본 논문은, 요한복음의 아담 기독론이 예수를 아담의 실패를 순종과 생명을 주는 사역을 통해 극복하고 새로운 인류를 시작하는 자로 묘사하고 있음을 논증한다. 이러한 아담 기독론은 또한 생태신학적 함의를 지닌다: 예수를 ‘새 아담’으로 해석하는 것은 그의 죽음과 부활이 단지 인간의 구원을 넘어서 창조 전체의 회복으로 확장됨을 의미한다. 요한의 우주적 기독론은 인간 중심적인 구원을 초월하여, 인간과 모든 피조물 사이의 화해를 상상하게 한다. 그러므로 요한복음은

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그리스도 안에서 창조의 기원을 선포할 뿐 아니라, 종말론적 완성을—새 창조와 창조 질서의 갱신을—함께 증언하며, 아담 기독론의 생태신학적 독해의 지평을 열고 기후 위기의 시대 속에서 생태 윤리를 위한 신학적 기반을 제공한다.

***주제어**

아담 기독론; 정원(κῆπος); 말씀; 생태 윤리; 창조.