

“THE LAST ADAM, A LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT”: STARTING POINT FOR UNDERSTANDING THE BOOK OF ROMANS

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INTRODUCTION

No one can deny that the Apostle Paul is most influential among the apostles for the formation of the basic theology of Christianity.² Even though Bultmann said anthropology was the core of Pauline theology,³ Paul's Christology is the starting point for understanding it. As it is general, no one area of theology can be separated from other areas. It is more inter-related in the case of Pauline theology. To understand Pauline theology, not only anthropology but also Christology must be dealt with first, as the starting point. In fact, they are inseparably mingled in one body of Pauline theology. For example, Adam-Christology itself is related both to Christology as well as to anthropology. Since Jesus, who was God, became a human being, the Incarnation is the key idea to relate God and man in Jesus.

The Gospel that Paul had proclaimed can be found throughout his epistles. The Gospel that Paul wrote (Rom 1: 16-17; Gal 1: 7, 8) is unique, compared to the gospels written by the four Gospel writers. Jesus is the main theme in all of the Pauline epistles, as in any other writings of the Bible. The portrait of Jesus that Paul wants to show throughout his writings has some similarities to, as well as distinctions from, that of other writers. Similar to other New Testament writers, Paul calls Jesus “the Son of God,” “the messiah,” and “Christ.” Among

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²James D. G. Dunn who calls Paul “the first Christian theologian” explains his role in Christian theology as follows: “There were a good many apostles, prophets, and pastors in the earlier Christian churches. But from the first Christian generation we have only one firsthand testimony, the theologizing of only one man – Paul the apostle, who had been Saul the Pharisee. Only with the letters of Paul can we be fully confident that we are in touch with the first generation of Christianity and of Christian theologizing as such.” *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 2.

³“Every assertion about God is simultaneously an assertion about man and vice versa. For this reason and in this sense Paul's theology is, at the same time, anthropology.” Rudolf Bultmann, *The Theology of the New Testament I* (London: SCM/New York: Scribner, 1952), 191.

the many terms that Paul uses in referring to Jesus in his writings,⁴ the most distinctive title is “the last Adam.” This idea could be related to the other distinctive titles of Jesus in Pauline writings, such as “the image of the invisible God,” and “the first born over all creation” (Col 1:15). Herman Ridderbos points out that this concept is related to the idea of “the First born from the dead (Rom 8:29).⁵

“The last Adam” concept works to bridge the realm of his anthropology to the realm of Christology as well as to the world of Pauline soteriology.⁶ Paul’s “Adam-Christology” sheds lights for better understanding of Jesus’ relationship with humankind in the sense of new creation. The best example of this principle can be found in the Book of Romans. An analytical study of the Book of Romans in the light of Adamic Christology will clear the way to Pauline theology with the help of the phrase of “Adam, a life-giving Spirit” in the Book of First Corinthians. This Corinthian passage is a key concept for understanding both the Book of Romans and the whole theology of Paul. Since both Epistles were written in his third missionary journey, it gives better understanding if we study both Epistles together. Most discussions are focused on the passages from the Book of Romans (5:12-21) and from the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians (15:20-57).

POSSIBLE INFLUENCES ON THE ADAMIC CHRISTOLOGY OF PAUL

Similar to what all the other orthodox Jews did in his time, Paul must have drawn most of his idea of Adamic Christology directly from the Old Testament. The fact that Paul drew his idea of Adam theology from Genesis 1-3 is obvious from the Old Testament text itself. Even though some parts of Genesis passages have some room for interpreting

⁴George Eldon Ladd illustrates five terms for the person of Jesus Christ; he called Jesus as Christ, not in the sense of title but as a proper name; He called Jesus as Messiah; and then as the Lord (*Kyrios*) which shows his confession to Him and his special relation with Him; Paul even calls Jesus as “the Son of God” who came in this world as the son of David who was designated as the son of God leading others to be the sons of God; lastly as the last Adam which this paper is going to discuss. *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), 408-22.

⁵Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), 81f.

⁶Bultmann agrees that anthropology and Christology and soteriology cannot be separated, “Thus, every assertion about Christ is also an assertion about man and vice versa; and Paul’s Christology is simultaneously soteriology” (*Ibid.*, 191).

differently concerning God's specific intention, purpose, and goal in creation narrative, one thing clear to us is the position of Adam in the history of humankind and in the history of salvation. Adam was the first human being created by God according to His image and became the proto-ancestor of all human beings. Also, the term *adam* is widely used throughout the Old Testament in the sense of "humankind, human being." What he did in the Garden of Eden affected all human descendants, as well as their history, by drawing sin and death into this world. Comparing the first Adam and Jesus, as the second Adam, is natural analogy, without being influenced by any other means.

However, other influences have been suggested. One suggested influence to this Pauline concept is Judaism. Oscar Cullmann identifies this Adamic Christology of Paul to the "Son of Man" Christology. Cullmann says that is why Paul had never used the term "Son of Man" for referring to Jesus in his writings.⁷ These two different terms developed from the same christological idea.⁸ According to Cullmann, Judaism felt the need to deal with the idea of a perfect first man.⁹ Also, this idea can be related to the divine Man, the *barnasha*, with the time of creation. The first man was created according to the image of God. However, because of the Fall, the first Adam cannot be identified with the divine Man. To overcome this difficulty, two possibilities have been developed: "One possibility was to place no special emphasis on the identification of the divine Man with the first man; the other was to place no emphasis on the fall of Adam."¹⁰ This attempt can be found in the writings of post-biblical Jewish tradition. The Book of Enoch takes great care to explain the origin of sin. In a summary of the world's history from creation to the establishment of the messianic kingdom, it does not say any word about the sin of Adam.¹¹ Ben Sira takes the same position. Even though ben Sira recognizes that humans are all too sinful

⁷G. E. Ladd, 422.

⁸Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), 144ff.

⁹*Ibid.*, 144. Cullmann points out the dilemma that the Jews faced: "Since the original speculation had done so, they felt the need to identify the Heavenly Man and the first man; but since according to the Old Testament Adam sinned, such an identification seemed impossible. The biblical account reports that the first man is the one who robbed man of his divine character, and that just because of him it became necessary for the Heavenly Man to restore men to the identity for which God had created them" (*Ibid.*, 145).

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 145.

¹¹Concerning more explanations see O. Cullmann, 145f. Cullmann says, "This is certainly not accidental. There is a clear tendency to exempt Adam from the first sin. Enoch uses a different Genesis story, that of the fall of the angels in Gen. 6, to explain the origin of evil" (*Ibid.*, 146).

and mortal (17:25-18:14), yet “human condition is not traced back to a primeval act of disobedience and consequent punishment.”¹²

Many scholars suggest Philo’s influence on the ideas of Paul. Philo tried to identify the Heavenly Man and the first man, while at the same time retaining the account of Adam’s fall. He accomplished this task with his special method of exegesis, or rather arbitrary eisegesis of Genesis 1:27 and 2:7. He interprets two different creations of Adam by God. Adam in Genesis 1:27 is the Heavenly Man, made in the image of God, who comes from heaven and possesses the fullness of the Holy Spirit. He is the perfect man that God intends, the divine prototype of man. However, Adam in 2:7 deals with the creation of another Adam, made not in the image of God and coming not from heaven but from the ground. This Adam commits sin and becomes the source of all sin in the Bible. The first Adam, the ideal Heavenly Man, disappears from the story after Genesis 1:27. This theory was accepted by later rabbinical writers.¹³

FIRST ADAM IN PAUL

This Adam-Christ typology is peculiarly Pauline and plays a sufficiently important role in his Christology. We may find similar figures in many other religions; but none of them, either Hellenistic or Jewish or Oriental in concept, gives any hints for understanding the Pauline concept of Adamic Christology. As Donald Guthrie points out, even the glorious *Urmensch*, which contains all souls within himself, a kind of ideal Adam does not support the Messiah who is to come.¹⁴ Even comparing the Pauline Christology of Adam to the Jewish view and to that of Philo of Alexandria, Paul’s approach is wholly different. For the Jewish teachings and that of Philo, Adam’s preoccupation with the glorious physical status before his sin is more important rather than the status restored after his sin.¹⁵

¹²James D. G. Dunn, 84-85.

¹³Oscar Cullmann, 148-59. Concerning the following rabbinical writers, see James Dunn, 87-90.

¹⁴Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1981), 334.

¹⁵For details, see Guthrie, 334.

The Old Testament Background of the Book of Romans

In a sense, the Book of Romans is one of the most “Old Testament oriented” books in the New Testament. All of the theology that Paul is spreading in this book is based upon the Old Testament. This book starts with mentioning the Old Testament even when he presents the main topic of his writing. God has revealed His righteousness through His Son, Jesus Christ, which is “the Gospel.” The revelation of Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Testament (1:3, “Holy Scriptures”) promise given through his prophets. This is true not only of the beginning, but also Romans ends with a doxology which contains the promise and its fulfillment in the revelation of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament: “according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings” (16:25-26). In this sense, the Book of Romans is a book worthy to be called an “Old Testament-sack.” It contains many “Old Testament-based” explanations to verify his theology of “justification by faith in Jesus Christ.”

Not only in the greeting, but also the following chapters are all related to Old Testament themes. After introducing himself as an apostle of the gospel, he explains, or rather defines, the gospel (1:1-17). “The Gospel” is the main theme of this Epistle. Since the Reformers and their followers have suggested the main theme of the Book of Romans to be “justification by faith,” many other views have been suggested, such as “the righteousness of God,” even “the Gospel.”¹⁶ In a sense, “the Gospel” can be defined by combining the two previous major views and is summarized in the key verse of the Epistle (1:17): Man can be “*justified by believing*” “*the righteousness of God*” revealed in Jesus Christ, which is “*the Gospel*.”

The following passage (1:18-32) shows the universality of sin among human beings —i.e., the need for salvation. Even in describing the sin nature of human beings, some scholars relate this passage to the

¹⁶Concerning the theme of the Epistle, Douglas J. Moo explains it in his NICNT commentary, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996). The previous studies on the theme of the epistle have some limitation. Moo agrees with the view that “the Gospel” is the theme that can cover the whole discussion and material in this epistle (pp. 22-28). Concerning “the righteousness of God” as the main theme of the Epistle, see, Peter Stuhlmacher, “The Theme of Romans,” in the book, *The Romans Debate* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1977,1991), edited by Karl P. Donfried.

Old Testament setting: the creation and Fall of Adam, as well as to the fall of the Israelites in the wilderness.¹⁷ It is clear that in this passage Paul is mentioning the “fall” of the individual human being. Paul is clearly alluding to the Fall of Adam, because the main theme of this passage is “Creator-creation relationship,” and Adam is the first person who broke this relationship. Also, this passage relates God’s first commission to the first ancestors, as well as the purpose of creating human beings (Genesis 1:26,28).¹⁸ Changing God’s glory into the image of created beings, which God commanded human beings to rule over, can be found in the wilderness wanderings of the Israelites following the Exodus.¹⁹

Other allusions to the Old Testament in this epistle have been discussed in writings about the second chapter. This chapter deals with the relationship of the law and salvation. Verse 24 is a quotation from Isaiah 52:5 or from Ezekiel 36:20. These Old Testament verses refer to the Babylonian exile of Judah or to Israel’s sojourn in Egypt and the Assyrian oppression. In this sense, it is clear that the second chapter must be interpreted in relation to the history of Israel.²⁰

Abraham and David are the key figures of chapter four. The meaning and the significance of Abraham and David are crucial for understanding the Epistle. The Second Adam came as the son of David and son of Abraham. As N. T. Wright says, “Ch. 4 is not simply an example of Christian faith before Christ, nor a mere proof from scripture of the abstract doctrine of justification by faith.”²¹ With the unchangeable covenant of God, these two figures are the bridges between the first Adam and Christ, the second Adam. Witherington suggests that a reader should read “Rom. 3:21-4:25 in light of Genesis 15-17, where *the subject of faith being reckoned as righteousness also arises*.”²² It is a matter of “the righteousness of faithful God,” who

¹⁷Cf. M. D. Hooker, “Adam in Romans 1,” *NTS* (1959-60), 300. Also see D. J. W. Milne, “Genesis 3 in the letter to the Romans,” *Reformed Theological Review* 39 (1980): 10-12.

¹⁸For more discussion on this, see Douglas J. Moo, 109, note 85. He introduces all the possibilities of this view and concludes that allusion to Gen. 1 is possible but not with Gen. 3.

¹⁹Exod 32:25-28; Deut 9:13-21; 1 Kgs 12:28-30; Neh 9:18; Ps 106:19-23; Acts 7:39-41.

²⁰Akio Ito relates the second chapter of Romans to the covenantal perspective of the Jews and relates verses 7-10, 14-15, and 24 to Deuteronomy 27-30 where God gives promises and curses depending on their response to God’s covenant; “Romans 2: A Deuteronomistic Reading,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 59 (1995): 21-37.

²¹N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 36.

²²Ben Witherington, III, *Paul’s Narrative Thought World: The Tapestry of Tragedy and Triumph* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 42 (underline is added).

made covenants with David and Abraham.

Sin and death, the result of Adam's Fall, are not limited to his descendents only. They are extended to all creation. That is why the whole creation has been groaning in hope "that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God" (8:21). Many scholars try to relate Romans passages to the events of Israel.²³

In this sense, the Epistle of Romans can be summarized as the book starting with the first Adam who brought all the troubles, and how the tragedy could be solved through the second Adam Jesus Christ.

Existence of the First Adam

Truly, Romans is an Old Testament-sack. One of the basic themes in this Old Testament-sack is that of Adam. His appearance in this world and his life, as well as his fall, provide all the explanation on the problems in this world. The sinful nature of human beings caused from the fall of Adam in the Garden of Eden became all the reasons for Christ's incarnation and His ministry on earth. The key to open this "problems-filled-sack of the Old Testament" is the person Adam, both the first and the second. If one can untie the knot of Adam, he can draw out whatever he wants from this sack of Romans.

First of all, Adam is an historical person for Paul. He believes that the story of Adam and Eve is theologically important, but also believes it to be historically true. The first human being created by God, who became the ancestor of all humankind, appears with his own name, "Adam" in Romans 5:14. But he appears as "*one man*," the representative of all humankind, contrasted to the other "*one man*," Jesus Christ (5:12-21). Paul rejects the Gnostic idea that the material world is inherently evil and the spirit is good. Paul believes the creation as it now exists, even though it is groaning under the burden of futility caused by the Fall of Adam and Eve, is basically good.

²³Sylvia C. Keesmaat tries to relate Rom. 8.14-30 to the Exodus event, "Exodus and Romans 8.14-30." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 54 (1994): 29-56. James D. G. Dunn relates not only Romans 3:23 and 5:12-21 to Adam in Gen. 3, but also relates 7:7-13 and 8:19-22 to Gen. 3 (pp. 93-101). N. T. Wright sees Adam in Romans 7:7-12 and Cain in Romans 7:13-25 (pp. 226-30).

The Origin of Sin (Romans 5:12-21)

“The nature of sin,” or “the origin of sin,” is the key theme not only in the Book of Romans, but also in Christian theology itself. Romans 5:12ff provides clear and distinctive explanations on this. This is a clear allusion to Genesis three, where the first parents brought sin into the world. The question is why Paul mentions Adam at this moment. Before this, Adam had appeared but in a hidden form with a veiled face in the previous passages. John C. Poirier’s statement explains the exact reason why Paul draws Adam into his discussion: “Nevertheless, in Romans, the argument for the universality of law is both categorically and discursively prior to the discussion of justification.”²⁴ Without solving the matter of the law and sin, no mention of salvation or justification is meaningful. As the origin of sin is a crucial point of Christian soteriology, Adam is the key figure to explain the nature of sin and human life after it. To confirm this, Paul brings Adam into his discussion at this point. Paul has discussed already about the universal reign of sin over all human beings in the previous passages (1:18-3:20). He is summarizing in the previous verses (5:1-11) of this chapter on the plight of humanity: “We were powerless” and “ungodly” in verse 6; “sinners,” “from God’s wrath” in verse 9; “God’s enemies” in verse 10. It is contrasted to God’s grace. That is, God gave “the Gospel,” which is the theme of this Epistle, or “salvation with the righteousness of God by faith.” It has been revealed through His Son Jesus Christ, and it can be acquired only by faith. Still he needs to confirm to the reader concerning the theological background of “the salvation through getting God’s righteousness by faith.” In the previous chapters, Paul verified that God is righteous; so does the law. Also, he confirmed that this Gospel had never been changed since the time when God called Abraham and made a covenant with him and his descendents. Still, the readers cannot understand the mystery of salvation. How can one man, Jesus Christ, save not one man but every human being who comes to him? It is reasonable that, with one man’s death, another one can be redeemed. But it is not acceptable that all human beings could be saved through only one man’s death.

²⁴John C. Poirier, “Romans 5:13-14 and the Universality of Law,” *Novum Testamentum* 38, no. 4 (1996): 348.

The Result of Sin

Paul explains the history, the origin, and the nature of the first sin and its result. Concerning the Fall, Paul does not hold that man was created with sin. He maintains the Old Testament view that man is made in the image of God (1Cor 11:7). Paul believes that it is a historical event committed by Adam with his willful rebellion or revolt, not an “accident.” It is an act of intentional error. Paul’s use of sin has a very complex notion. First of all, he uses “sin” in the singular form.²⁵ In this sense, sin is related to the sin that Adam had committed in history. For him, sin is a personified power: “Sin entered the world” (5:12); “sin ruled in death” (5:21). Sin takes a very active role. By personifying sin, sin became a principle that holds power over the world.²⁶ Sin takes the role of Satan. But Paul uses three more Greek terms for sin: “*parabasis*; overstepping, transgression” and “*paraptoma*; false step, transgression” and “*parakoh*; disobedience.” They are all stronger than “*amartia*.”

Ben Witherington’s statement is meaningful, “Paul believes that primal parents didn’t fall—*they jumped!*”²⁷ Paul knows this and that is why he uses the term “disobedience (*parakoh*)”²⁸ (5:19) and states the result: “Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned” (5:12). This verse clearly mentions that death is not simply the natural consequence of the created state. It is the consequence of the sin done by the first parents.

The Original Sin

An explanation is needed on the procedure of transference of sin and death to all human beings. What does the following statement in Romans 5:12 mean: “In this way death came to all men, **because all sinned**” (*efijwmpantes hmarton*)? Without clear explanations of this question, the need for Savior is blurred as some none-believers criticize

²⁵According to Moo, “Over 65 percent of all Paul’s uses of *amartia* (42 of 64) occur in this passage (5:12-8:13), and all are in the singular (p. 319).

²⁶In this ICC commentary on Romans (I, p. 274), C. E. B. Cranfield defines, the meaning of “world (*kosmos*)” here to be “mankind,” or “human life.”

²⁷Ben Witherington, III, 12 (italics are added).

²⁸*BAGD* defines this Greek word, “unwillingness to hear,” “disobedience” (p. 618).

by saying that “Christianity is a religion that gives a sickness and then gives a medicine for the sickness.” Without understanding the meaning of what Adam did, a person cannot understand the meaning of what Christ did for him. The original sin done by the First Adam cries out for the need of “salvation by faith” or, rather, “the Gospel” by Christ, the second Adam.

The main argument of this parallel between Adam and Christ is to show that, as Christ is alone responsible for our salvation, so too Adam must alone be responsible for our ruin. The key point of this argument is not to verify the universality of sin that we all are sinners because of Adam. It had been verified sufficiently already in 1:18-3:20. Paul wants to say that what matters to us is not individual sin that we commit but the nature of sin, first of all. The development of sin did not depend on how one acted. It has been here already; even “before the law was given, sin was in the world” (5:13). Paul wants to show that the righteousness which we have through Christ is quite independent from our works, and that the guilt which is ours through Adam must also be quite independent from our actual sinning. The key point is not whether one died because of individual sin or because of the sin of Adam, as many scholars are discussing concerning this passage.²⁹ Paul wants to show that the power of personified sin, which rules over all human beings, departs from the relationship to the law (5:13). The two-fold use of the preposition “*dīa*” in verse 12 gives a hint.³⁰ This proposition shows the passages to sin as well as to death. Its emphasis is on the principle or the nature of sin. Adam was the passageway for inviting sin into this world, and sin became the passageway for inviting death. Even as sin rules over the world, so also death rules over the world as a personified entity (5:14). Paul wants to emphasize the solidarity aspect of human beings with Adam both in the relationship with sin and death. In Adam’s sin, all human beings stand condemned, guilty by reason of the sin all committed “in him.” Paul considers all men as “by nature children of wrath” (Eph 2:3). This shows clearly that,

²⁹Cranfield (pp. 274-81) introduces six possible interpretations on the meaning of the phrase “because all sinned.” The difference depends on the identity of the antecedent of the relative pronoun. The key issue of the interpretation is whether the sinning here is referring to the sin of Adam or to one’s own sin as the result of Adam. Cranfield concludes it to be each individual’s sin, even though he holds a definite conclusion. Roman Catholic, as well as some Protestant, scholars take some kind of “solidarity” idea, following Augustine’s view of it: “All sinned in Adam” (Donald Guthrie, 211).

³⁰If we include the compound form with verb and preposition, four-fold usages can be found.

not because of individual sin but the moment when Adam committed the first sin, sin as a principle came into this world and rules over it (1 Cor 15:22). This clear teaching about “original death” requires a corresponding teaching of “original sin.”³¹ The exact intention of Paul on this passage can be clear by the comparison with what Jesus did for human beings. Studying the related passages will give us better understanding on this comparison.

THE SECOND ADAM? OR THE LAST ADAM?

Jesus followed in the footsteps of the first Adam, yet refused to fall and fail; rather, He started a new humanity. In the sense that He became a human being and suffered and died as the first Adam, He is the second Adam. There is a theological difference in the lives of the two *Adams*. The death that the first Adam died is from his disobedience, but the death of the second Adam is from His obedience to God to take away the consequences of the first Adam, and opens the passageway to eternal life for those who are “in Christ.”³²

The Second Adam, the Progenitor of All Human Beings

The main backbone of Roman’s (5:12-21) paragraph-structure is “just as . . . so also” (*w&per . . . kai ou&tw&s*) comparison (vv. 12, 18, 19, 21), as well as “not like . . . how much more” (*ouc w& . . . ou&tw&s*) contrast (vv. 15-17). These comparisons show the similarities and distinct differences of the first Adam and the second Adam, Jesus Christ.

In the previous passages, there is a distinction between Jews and Gentiles. However, the situation was totally changed after God poured His grace out to human beings through the Son Jesus Christ. There is a striking contrast between 1:18-4:25 and throughout chapters 5-8: a transitional and summarizing phrase (“having been justified by faith” at 5:1); a shift in style (from second person singular to first person plural, from a polemic tone to a more “confessional style”); relative frequency

³¹See, Moo, 316-29.

³²Ridderbos emphasizes the relationship of the first Adam and the second Adam in Colossians 1:15: “Paul applies the same ‘Adamic’ categories (Image, Firstborn) with which he describes Christ’s significance in eschatology’ to his place in ‘protology’ as well” (p. 82).

of key words (33 occurrences of “faith” and “believe” in 1:18-4:25 and only three uses in chaps. 5-8; 24 times of “life” and “to live” in chaps. 5-8 but twice in the first structure).³³ The main focus of this passage is not in the first Adam but in the second Adam. The whole Book deals with Jesus Christ, God’s righteousness that has been revealed. The first Adam has been introduced suddenly as a type (Rom 5:14), to show the significance of what the second Adam did for us. However, without mentioning the first Adam, who reveals the nature of sin and death, the nature of salvation could not be understood apart from the theological background of the deeds of the second Adam. Christ needs to start all over again; in this sense, Christ is the New Adam³⁴ who begins “new creation” “in Him”(2 Cor 5:17). He became a new progenitor of a new race of human beings as “the *one man*.”³⁵ He gives the new image of God (Col 1:15) in the place of the first Adam, who lost the image of God: He was created in the likeness of God but gave a son “in his own likeness, in his own image”(Gen 5:1, 3). In a sense, He is “the true first Adam” who started the new things first, as He is identified as “the first fruit” (15:20) of the resurrection and “first born” into the new humanity. However, He is more than the first, more than the second. He is the Last Adam.

The Last Adam, Who Abolished Sin and Death: 1Cor 15: 20-57

The two main passages for Adamic Christology are Romans 5:12-21 and first Corinthians 15:20-57.³⁶ They are different even though they deal with the same Adamic Christology. In the Romans passage, the emphasis is obedience to the command and abundant providence of God’s grace and gift of righteousness (Rom 5:16). And they even overflow (Rom 5:15) and bring justification that brings life to all men (Rom 5:18). In this sense, the emphasis of the Roman passage is quite different from that of Corinthians. Its emphasis goes together with the main theme of the Epistle, “the Gospel,” the righteousness of God by faith. This kind of flavor comes because of Paul’s purpose for writing

³³See Moo, 290-95.

³⁴The term “New Adam” is borrowed from Ben Witherington: “Jesus is a new Adam, starting a new creation, if in fact he was merely participating in the fallen nature of the old Adam” (p. 139).

³⁵“Adam” in Hebrew.

³⁶Another important passage for Adamic-Christology is Philippians 2:6-11.

this Epistle: To introduce “*the Gospel*,” which is the gift from God that Paul had received (Rom 15:15); a more evangelical purpose is clear to visit Spain via Rome (Rom 15:24). That is why this chapter is full of evangelical flavor; even the theme itself is “the Gospel.”

Paul writes more clearly, or rather from a different perspective in the first Epistle to Corinth on the relationship of Adam to Christ. In the Corinthian passage, Paul identifies Jesus as the last Adam (15:45), as well as the second Adam (15:47). Since the main theme of this chapter is death and resurrection, the core of the Adam-Christ typology in this passage is death and life. In the Corinthian passage, there is no mention of sin, only death. That difference is a result of his emphasis on the resurrection in the chapter. The second Adam idea can be found even in the Romans passage. Jesus is the second human being (Adam) in the sense of representation. The things that cannot be found in the first Adam, the things that he lost in his sin, can be found in the second Adam.

The second Adam is different from the first in essence. The first Adam was from earth and returned to earth, as do all who are in Adam (15:22, 47). But the second Adam is different. He is from heaven and of heaven (15:47).³⁷ He can give life to those who are in Christ (15:48-49). Thus, He is called the “life-giving spirit” (15:45). In this sense, He is called the last Adam, or eschatological Adam (15: 45). That is why this chapter has a flavor of eschatology and describes Christ as the eschatological Adam. He is the end and goal of the whole human race. There will be no more founders of humanity. He abolished sin and death, which remained from the first Adam. He finished all the bad things, and started all the new, good things which will never be changed. In this way, He is the last Adam.

CONCLUSION

Paul describes Jesus as the second Adam who has a living relationship with each believer. In this sense, Adamic Christology is the crucial point to understand Pauline theology. The theme of the Epistle to Romans is “the Gospel” —in other words, “justification by believing in the God’s righteousness which has been revealed in Christ.” To understand the theme of the Epistle, “the last Adam, a life-giving

³⁷This is a clear statement of Paul about the pre-existence of Christ.

spirit,” should be understood. Among the many possible influences on Paul on this Adamic Christology, the Old Testament image from the Book of Genesis is most natural and possible. This Adamic Christology concept provides a key for understanding the Book of Romans. Almost all of the passages of Romans are based upon the Old Testament background, especially related to early human history starting with the first ancestors, Adam and Eve.

To bring the righteousness of God to all human beings, the residual effect of the first Fall by the first progenitor must be taken over and be solved by the second Adam, Jesus Christ. It is the basis for accepting the universality of sin in the world, as well as the universality of the law after sin. Understanding the origin of sin by the first parents and the existence of “the original sin” in human nature is pre-requisite to understanding and accepting the redemption made offered by the second Adam, Jesus Christ on the cross and in the grave. If one understands the similarities and the distinctions between the two progenitors in human history, “the Gospel,” the theme of the Book of Romans can be understood in its full meaning.

In contrast to the disobedience of the first Adam, the second Adam obeyed to bring the perfect solution to all human beings. Adamic Christology is the core concept to keep and to guide the distinctiveness of Pauline theology.