

AN ELABORATION ON THE NEW MAN ACCORDING TO EPHESIANS 4:20-24 AND THE TRIPLE PLANETARY CRISIS

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to comprehend the concept of the New Man according to Ephesians 4:20-24 and the Triple Planetary Crisis today in all its aspects, Christian eco-theology and its role in Christian understanding, and the implementation of the concept of the New Man for the Triple Planetary Crisis. Hence, the research was focused on environmental sustainability by integrating religious values and ethics, which could produce applicable solutions in society. In relation to this matter, exploring the meaning of the biblical text of Ephesians 4:20–24 and connect it to the reality of the planetary crisis was conducted accordingly. In addition, it also focuses on interpretation rather than numerical measurement. The result reveals that the implementation of the new man concept based on Ephesians 4:20-24, in relation to the Triple Planetary Crisis, is considered appropriate to be explained as a channel that can help humans, especially Christians, to see how beautifully God created this universe. Furthermore, it reaffirms how God's work on earth to restore and redeem humanity from sin excludes no one. Paul emphasizes in his letter that the new man must take on a new identity in Christ. This identity will be possessed by every Christian once they have shed their old selves, which are still under the bondage of sin. Therefore, the Bible serves as the foundation that enables humanity to understand God's love for this world. By knowing God and His love, humanity will be able to love everything they encounter around them. The human nature that often glorifies itself should no longer be the way of life for every person in Christ. The glory of God must be the standard for human way of life.

INTRODUCTION

In Christianity, humans are the image and likeness of God or the only creation that is like God (Tristanto, 2015; Verdianto, 2022). This implies that humans have authority over nature and are responsible for other creations. It also implies that just as God created nature with all its functions, humans must also preserve nature with all its functions. With this reasoning, it is very easy to say no to such questions. Humans have not fully respected or even established a relationship with nature. For example, deforestation in the Amazon has caused forest damage in the first four months of 2023, reaching 1,203 km² (de Souza et al., 2025; Suharko, 2024). The percentage of this data suggests that environmental damage is caused by human behavior or habits. According to the United Nations (UN), the crisis on Earth is categorized into three parts called the “Triple Planetary Crisis” – three planetary crises – which refers to three major problems that are occurring and clearly visible on Planet Earth, namely climate change, loss of biodiversity, and pollution and waste (Kameri-Mbote et al., 2023; Liu & Scott, 2025). These crises can be felt in everyday life, such as complaints about rising temperatures, water scarcity, rising sea levels, floods, melting polar ice caps, and the decline in biodiversity, water pollution, air pollution, soil pollution, and waste. The global ecological crisis currently faced by humanity, referred to by the United Nations (UN) as the Triple Planetary Crisis, encompasses climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste (S. Seck, 2022; S. L. Seck, 2023). These three

crises are interconnected and threaten the sustainability of life on Earth. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP, 2022) report emphasizes that climate change exacerbates species extinction, while pollution worsens ecosystem degradation, leaving humanity facing complex and multidimensional ecological threats.

This presents a tendency for the church to provide relevant answers. One perspective that has developed is eco-theology, which is an effort to read and interpret the Christian faith by paying attention to the relationship between humans, God, and creation in a holistic manner. Eco-theology emphasizes that the cultural mandate in Genesis 1:28 is not a legitimization of the exploitation of nature, but rather a call to care for, protect, and preserve creation. The church and believers are reminded to reject the narrow anthropocentric paradigm that places humans as absolute rulers, and instead adopt a theocentric-ecological perspective that affirms humanity's interconnectedness with all of creation. In Christianity, the criterion for whether an action is permissible or not is mentioned by the verse "whether the action glorifies God or not! Whether it aligns with God's will or not!" (John 11:4; Romans 11:36). The glory of God is revealed in Christ when He came into the world to bring salvation to humanity. That is, life from eternal death (Hebrews 10:20). Christianity identifies itself as followers of Christ. Christ who was born, lived, died, and rose again to redeem humanity from sin (1 Thessalonians 5:9). This salvation is granted to humanity, and if humanity accepts it, then the old self truly dies and the new self is born (Ephesians 2:15). The existence of the new self signifies that the process of death and rebirth occurs, where the previous state of death (separated from God) is transformed into life (united with God) (Wilbourne, 2016).

Moreover, Ephesians 4:20–24 offers a relevant anthropological vision, namely the concept of the "new man." (Palys Jr, 2023) The Apostle Paul emphasizes a transformation of identity that leaves behind the old self, controlled by desires that lead to destruction, and puts on the new self, created according to God's will in righteousness, holiness, and justice. This concept of the new self is not merely about moral and spiritual renewal but also has ethical implications for human relationships with one another and with creation. From an eco-theological perspective, the new humanity according to Ephesians 4:20–24 can be understood as a subject called to live in ecological awareness, social justice, and liberating spirituality. This means that the renewal of humanity in Christ must be reflected in an environmentally friendly lifestyle, responsibility for the preservation of the earth, and a commitment to addressing the triple planetary crisis. Thus, the concept of the new humanity is not merely a spiritual doctrine but also a practical foundation for addressing today's ecological challenges. Based on the above discussion, this study seeks to explore the concept of the new humanity according to Ephesians 4:20–24 from an eco-theological perspective and examine its implications for the triple planetary crisis. Its primary objective is to formulate a theological understanding that can serve as the basis for Christian ethics in addressing the global ecological crisis, while also promoting a more sustainable, just, and sustainable lifestyle.

The background of this research can be understood through the following dimensions: firstly, the theological dimension. The concept of the new humanity in Ephesians reveals God's salvific work, which is not only focused on individual salvation but also on the restoration of creation as a whole (cosmic reconciliation). Thus, the renewal of humanity in Christ cannot be separated from the responsibility to care for the earth as part of God's creation. Secondly, the ethical dimension, the triple planetary crisis reveals the failure of modern human ethics, which tends to be oriented toward consumption, exploitation, and short-term interests. Consumerist and anthropocentric lifestyles further exacerbate environmental damage. In this context, the concept of the new humanity becomes an ethical call for Christians to live with ecological awareness, abandon old destructive patterns of life, and build just relationships with fellow human beings and with nature. Thirdly, in terms of contextual dimension, it is not only a global issue, but also a reality in Indonesia. Floods, landslides, forest fires, marine pollution, and deforestation are concrete examples of environmental degradation that directly impact small communities and vulnerable groups. Therefore, this research has contextual relevance: how can the church and theology make a tangible contribution to shaping a new humanity that cares for the integrity of creation within the Indonesian context.

By looking at these three dimensions, the background of this research is not only based on the empirical conditions of a world experiencing a triple planetary crisis, but also stems from Christian faith that affirms that human renewal in Christ is the path to renewed relationships with others and with

creation. Therefore, this research is urgently needed as part of theology's contribution to resolving the deepening planetary crisis. The perspective that should be expressed by those who know God is to preserve nature as fellow creations that have been renewed. Not to destroy or neglect it. With such an understanding, the author attempts to explain how the concept of the new humanity based on Christian eco-theology should serve as a guide for human lifestyle and its relationship with nature, harmoniously coexisting as fellow creations of God who have been reborn, under the title of the article "The Concept of the New Humanity According to Ephesians 4:20-24 from an Eco-Theological Perspective and Its Implementation in Addressing the Triple Planetary Crisis."

From this analysis of the gap, this study seeks to investigate several aspects, including: the existence of a perspective that understands safety only in personal terms, only in the private dimension, not in the communal or even cosmic dimensions; the concept of a new human being that is counter-essential in today's understanding; the lack of respect for nature as fellow creations of God; and the destruction of nature caused by greedy human actions. Therefore, the objectives of this study are to identify the concept of the New Man according to Ephesians 4:20-24, understand the Triple Planetary Crisis in the present day with all its aspects, and identify Christian eco-theology and its role in Christian understanding, as well as the implementation of the New Man Concept for the Triple Planetary Crisis.

GENERAL INTERPRETATION OF EPHESIANS 4:20-24

The Author of the Letter to the Ephesians

The Epistle to the Ephesians is one of the letters in the New Testament that belongs to the group of prison epistles, along with Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. This letter is believed to have been written by the Apostle Paul while he was in prison in Rome around 60–62 AD. However, some modern interpreters question the attribution of authorship to Paul due to differences in language style, structure, and vocabulary compared to his other letters. Nevertheless, the early church tradition continues to acknowledge Paul as the author, and this view remains widely held within conservative theological circles to this day. This indicates that although the authorship of this letter remains a subject of debate—whether it was Paul or someone else—many believe that Paul was the one who wrote it. Certain stylistic elements characteristic of Paul's writing strengthen the assumption that he was the author. To this day, this letter is recognized by some churches as part of Paul's epistles.

Portrait of the City of Ephesus

The city of Ephesus at that time was one of the centers of trade, culture, and religion in the region of Asia Minor, now known as Turkey. Ephesus was the largest city in the Roman province of Asia and became the political, economic, and religious center of the region. Located on the shores of the Aegean Sea, Ephesus had a strategic port and served as a meeting point for trade routes from the Middle East to Europe. Due to its strategic location, Ephesus became a cosmopolitan city inhabited by Greeks, Romans, Jews, and various peoples from the East. It is also known as the city that was the center of worship of the goddess Artemis, whose temple was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Because of this, the pride of the city is the Temple of Artemis, called Diana in Latin. The worship of Artemis was so strong that when Paul preached the Gospel, he faced fierce opposition from the silversmiths whose businesses depended on the sale of statues of the goddess (Acts 19:23-41). The city had a reputation as a center for writings or spells believed to have supernatural power. The Acts of the Apostles records that many Ephesians who converted to Christ burned their magic books as a sign of repentance, with a value of 50,000 pieces of silver (Acts 19:19).

From this, it can be seen that religious life in Ephesus was a mixture of idol worship, magical practices, and syncretistic beliefs that blended Greek-Roman elements with local beliefs. It was in this context that Paul delivered his gospel message emphasizing Christ's supremacy over all spiritual powers and authorities. Therefore, the socio-religious environment of Ephesus posed a great challenge to the early Christian church. They lived amid a tide of syncretism, a mixture of Jewish teachings, Greek philosophy, and Roman pagan beliefs. Therefore, Paul's message in the letter to the Ephesians about the supremacy of Christ over "all rulers, authorities, powers, and kingdoms" (Eph. 1:21) is highly relevant to this context. Paul wanted to emphasize that the Christian faith cannot be syncretized with local beliefs, but must stand on the confession that Christ is Lord over the entire cosmos.

Characteristics of the Letter to the Ephesians

The Epistle to the Ephesians has a unique character compared to Paul's other epistles. This epistle does not discuss specific internal issues of the church as in Corinth or Galatia, but focuses on a deep theological exposition of God's plan of salvation, the unity of the body of Christ, and the call to holy living. Many scholars view it as a circular letter intended to be read in various churches throughout Asia Minor, not just the church in Ephesus. The distinctive features of this letter are:

1. The High Tone of Prayer and Praise, which is the opening section of the letter (Eph. 1:3–14) and consists of one long sentence in Greek, reflecting Paul's overflowing praise to God.
2. The Cosmic Vision of Christ, where Christ is presented as the center of God's plan to unite all things, both in heaven and on earth (Eph. 1:10).
3. Minimal Personal Rebuke – Unlike Paul's other letters, which rebuke specific issues within the church, Ephesians is general in nature and can be applied in various contexts.

With its neat structure and rich themes, the letter to the Ephesians not only provides a solid theological foundation for believers, but also practical guidance for living out their faith in a complex world.

Structure and Interpretation of the Letter to the Ephesians

The main theme of the letter to the Ephesians is unity in Christ. Paul emphasizes that salvation is given by God's grace alone, not because of human works (Eph. 2:8-9), and that Christ has united Jews and non-Jews into one new people. This unity is not merely social, but spiritual and cosmic, encompassing the restoration of all creation under Christ's authority. Thus, the letter has implications not only for personal life, but also for the church and even for humanity's relationship with the universe. The letter to the Ephesians has a structured composition and can be divided into two major sections: (1) the doctrinal section (chapters 1–3) and (2) the practical section (chapters 4–6). This division is consistent with Paul's writing style, which often begins his letters with a theological exposition before moving on to practical application. In the doctrinal section, Paul emphasizes the identity of believers in Christ, while in the practical section, he explains how that identity should be manifested in daily behavior. This is important to note and understand as the foundation for the way of thinking of someone who has accepted Christ.

The relevance of the letter to the Ephesians today is very strong. The modern world faces challenges of social fragmentation, identity crises, and moral degradation that threaten human life. The Church is called to be a witness to the unity and love of Christ, embodying the values of the Gospel in various cultural and social contexts. Additionally, the message about the "new self" in Ephesians 4:24 serves as a crucial foundation for shaping Christian ethics that address the crises of humanity and the environment. Ephesians 4:20–24 offers a relevant paradigm of transformation to address the root causes of these issues. Paul emphasizes that believers are called to "put off the old self" and "put on the new self" created according to God's will in true righteousness and holiness. This process involves the renewal of the spirit and mind (v. 23), which in the context of eco-theology can be interpreted as a paradigm shift in viewing the relationship between humans and creation. This means that Christian faith is not only focused on the salvation of the soul, but also includes responsibility for the preservation of the earth as part of God's mission (*missio Dei*). From a structural perspective, the letter to the Ephesians is divided into two major sections: first, the doctrinal section (chapters 1–3), which explains spiritual blessings, the plan of salvation, and the mystery of Christ; second, the practical section (chapters 4–6), which emphasizes the application of these teachings in daily life, including Christian ethics, family relationships, and spiritual warfare. This division reflects a balance between faith and action, between sound theological understanding and a lifestyle consistent with God's calling.

The Doctrinal section presents a cosmic vision of God's work of salvation in Christ. Paul begins his letter with a spiritual blessing in the first chapter, praising God for election, redemption, and sealing by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:3–14). Then Paul's prayer for the church emphasizes a deep understanding of the hope of God's calling, the riches of His glory, and the power at work in believers (Eph. 1:15–23). Chapter 2 compares the condition of humanity before and after salvation, from "death because of transgression" to "life with Christ" by God's grace (Eph. 2:1–10). Paul also emphasizes the unity between Jews and Gentiles, who in Christ have become one new people (Eph. 2:11–22). Chapter 3 introduces the mystery of Christ that is now revealed: that the Gentiles are also heirs of God's promise. Paul describes himself as a servant of the gospel sent to proclaim this mystery, concluding

with a prayer that the church may be filled with the love of Christ that surpasses all knowledge (Eph. 3:14–21).

The Practical Section (Ephesians 4–6) shows how theological truth should influence daily behavior. Paul begins with a call to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the body of Christ (Eph. 4:1–6) and explains the role of each spiritual gift in building the church (Eph. 4:7–16). Next, Paul emphasizes the transformation of identity from the old self to the new self (Eph. 4:17–32). This new life is marked by honesty, love, hard work, edifying speech, and forgiveness. Chapter 5 outlines life in love and light, including Christian household ethics (Eph. 5:21–33). Chapter 6 focuses on the relationships between children and parents, servants and masters, and spiritual warfare. Paul concludes his letter with an exhortation to put on the full armor of God to resist the schemes of the devil (Eph. 6:10–20).

The Church Fathers read Ephesians 4:20–24 as a post-baptismal teaching process that emphasizes the shedding of the old self and the orientation toward a new life. Baptism is seen as the actual moment of “putting off” and “putting on” that Paul mentions here. In this understanding, the Church Fathers argue that this passage is not merely a moral metaphor, but a sacramental reality that transforms the ontological status of humanity. This emphasizes a genuine renewal rather than merely a slogan, as a baptismal tradition that has been practiced generation after generation without any renewal in all aspects of life. Overall, understanding the letter to the Ephesians not only helps us understand Paul's theology, but also provides practical guidance for building a community of faith rooted in love and truth. This is in line with Paul's own goal, which is for believers to “grow in every way toward him who is the head, that is, Christ” (Eph. 4:15). Paul emphasizes that Christ's existence must be evident in the lives of believers.

EXEGESIS OF EPHESIANS 4:20-24

Genre, General Concept and Interpretation

The genre of this text is a letter. Ephesians is part of Paul's collection of letters. As a letter, it includes an opening greeting, expressions of thanksgiving, a doctrinal section, a section of practical advice, and a closing. Ephesians 4:20–24 is part of the practical advice section (paranesis). This is consistent with the typical structure and style of a letter. The concept that becomes apparent when reading this text carefully is how Paul distinguishes between the condition of the old man and the new man. This concept is emphasized as a parameter that can distinguish between the lifestyles of those who know God and those who do not. Those who have accepted God in the work of salvation through Jesus Christ are those who have put off the old man who is still in the bondage of sin (transformation).

The cult of Artemis still bound the Ephesian church, Paul urged the Ephesian church to boldly break the spiritual ties that bound them to Artemis. From the perspective of the new humanity, the dominant government should no longer be the standard for communal life, congregational life, and individual life. However, Paul does not abolish government; rather, the worldly approach must be replaced with love and service. This becomes a new identity, not for personal gain but for the glory of God. When writing this letter, the concept of the new man that Paul taught was a call to fight spiritually against destructive cultural influences, a call to live differently in the midst of the great currents of the times. If in the letter to the Ephesians man is characterized as greedy and exploitative, then the concept of the new man presents a way of life that respects and cares for the earth as part of worshipping God.

NEW HUMAN IDENTITY PARAMETERS

Paul describes the new human being as living “according to God's will in righteousness and holiness” (Eph. 4:24). Righteousness (*dikaiosynē*) in the context of ecotheology can be understood as ecological justice that regulates the relationship between humans and nature in a fair manner. Holiness (*hosiotes*) refers to separating oneself from consumptive and destructive lifestyles that harm the earth. The ethics of the new humanity toward nature include: valuing biodiversity as part of God's greatness, reducing one's ecological footprint through a simple lifestyle, and restoring damaged ecosystems as an expression of loving service. Thus, the broken relationship caused by sin is renewed when humans live as new beings who understand that all creation has intrinsic value before God, and not only humans are renewed but all creation becomes new, meaning that all creation must be cared for and preserved as it should be, in accordance with the character of Christ. Therefore, this parameter serves as a guideline for living with a new identity, as someone who lives in truth for God. In

the Bible, the Earth (*erets* in Hebrew) is not merely a physical planet, but the home of all life that God created and sustains. Genesis 1:1 states, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," which declares that the earth exists because of God's will, not by chance. The earth is not only a physical habitat, but also a space for spiritual relationships. In the Old Testament, the Garden of Eden was where God walked with humanity (Gen. 3:8), and in the New Testament, Jesus came to Earth to redeem humanity (John 1:14). This clearly aligns with the earlier statement that the Earth is an integral part of God's love that never ceases.

CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF ECOLOGY

Christian concern for ecological issues has grown significantly in the 21st century, especially amid growing global awareness of the triple planetary crisis—climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss (Akoto, 2025; Miao & Nduneseokwu, 2025; Sadowski, 2025; York, 2022). In the past, environmental issues were often viewed as matters of science or public policy rather than an integral part of faith. However, developments in modern theology, particularly eco-theology, have encouraged the church to recognize that humanity's relationship with nature is an important dimension of the Christian calling. In this context, Christians' understanding of ecology has undergone a significant shift: from a passive and anthropocentric stance toward an awareness of ecological repentance, which calls every believer to strive to care for and preserve the earth as an expression of obedience to God.

Christian ecological awareness did not arise instantly, but rather through a long process. Initially, most Western Christian traditions were influenced by the dominant interpretation of Genesis 1:28, "subdue the earth," which was often understood as legitimizing the exploitation of nature. However, this narrative has undergone a shift in meaning, moving from "dominate" to "cultivate and care for" (Gen. 2:15), thus positioning humans as servants of creation, no longer as absolute rulers. This has been emphasized, but in reality, it has yet to be fully realized. There are several obstacles that limit ecological implementation, namely:

1. Dualistic theology that separates the spiritual and material worlds, so that environmental issues are considered secular.
2. Lack of ecological literacy among clergy and congregations.
3. Economic constraints: Decisions that are more financially beneficial often sacrifice sustainability commitments.
4. Denominational differences: Some churches prioritize environmental issues, while others view them as secondary to evangelism..

The concept of the new humanity in Ephesians 4:24 views humanity as created according to God's will in truth and holiness, which truly demands total transformation, including in the way humans relate to creation (Nyamuda & Boaheng, 2025). The challenges mentioned above demonstrate that, to this day, few Christians recognize that humanity's relationship with nature is part of obedience to God, as outlined in the cultural mandate (Gen. 1:28), which is reinterpreted as a call to cultivate (*abad*) and care for (*shamar*) the earth (Gen. 2:15). This change should also be influenced by the awareness that the Bible describes the earth as God's creation that is "very good" (Gen. 1:31), and that environmental degradation is the result of human sin that has gone beyond bounds. Therefore, ecological responsibility cannot be separated from the church's mission in the world.

METHOD

Methods have characteristics that distinguish them from mere habits or improvisation, namely: first, they are planned and consciously designed before implementation. Second, they are systematic, with regular and logical stages. And third, they are efficient, making optimal use of resources (time, energy, costs). Lastly, it is replicable, meaning it can be repeated by other researchers with similar results. A method serves as a guide to ensure research stays on track, as a quality control mechanism for data, ensuring that the collected data is valid and reliable. And as a bridge between theory and field reality, ensuring that research questions are answered accurately. Thus, in scientific research, a method is like a "roadmap" guiding researchers from the starting point (research question) to the endpoint (accountable conclusions).

In theology, the qualitative approach has been applied since the beginning of modern biblical studies, especially in the form of historical and hermeneutical interpretation. With the development of eco-theology, this method has been used to connect biblical teachings with contemporary

environmental issues, such as climate change, pollution, and the loss of biodiversity (Jennings, 2018). This is because qualitative research is a research method that emphasizes a deep understanding of phenomena through the interpretation of meaning, experience, and social, cultural, or spiritual contexts. The underlying philosophy of this approach is rooted in the understanding that reality cannot be measured solely through quantitative means but must also be understood through human experience, texts, and social interactions. Therefore, when researching the meaning of a biblical text that is a historical document, this method and approach are appropriate and will yield results consistent with the problem at hand, emphasizing the interpretation of meaning.

In the context of theology, the qualitative approach emphasizes reading and interpreting biblical texts not merely to ascertain historical facts, but also to explore spiritual values, ethics, and theological meanings that are relevant to human life today. ^2 This approach is in line with the hermeneutical principle that texts must be understood in their original context and connected to the context of modern readers.

This research focuses on environmental sustainability by integrating faith and ethical values, which can then produce solutions that can be applied in society. The focus of this research is to understand the meaning of the biblical text (Ephesians 4:20–24) and relate it to the reality of the planetary crisis. This research also focuses on interpretation rather than numerical measurement. The data used are biblical texts, theological literature, eco-theology, and academic or church reports related to the ecological crisis. The primary approach used by the researcher is library research, as the study involves collecting data from theological books, biblical commentaries, academic journals, environmental reports, and church documents.

The main approach used by the researcher is Library Research, which involves collecting data from theological books, Bible commentaries, academic journals, environmental reports, and church documents. This biblical exegesis is important for analyzing the original meaning of Ephesians 4:20–24, including its historical, social, and theological background. This exegesis method may include analysis of the Greek language, the context of the Epistle to the Ephesians, and the relationship of this verse to the themes of creation and human renewal.

In addition to the literature review approach, the eco-theology approach is also important so that researchers can connect the results of exegesis with environmental theology (eco-theology) to answer how the concept of “new man” influences attitudes toward nature and the Triple Planetary Crisis. With a comprehensive qualitative approach, this research not only accurately interprets the biblical text but also makes a practical contribution to building ecological awareness based on the Christian faith.

The steps taken in this study are as follows:

1. Identifying the research problem. This is done to determine the focus, for example, the application of the new human concept in facing the planetary crisis.
2. Data collection. Data collection in this study primarily involved literature reviews, text analysis, and understanding ecological reports based on literature from the period 2018–2025. Data analysis was also conducted by analyzing texts with a focus on major themes such as historical-grammatical analysis of the Greek language and the original context.
3. Theological-thematic. This step involves the researcher identifying the main themes and their relevance to contemporary issues.
4. Synthesis and interpretation. At this phase, the researcher begins to connect the meaning of the text with real-world practices and eco-theological theory.
5. This is the final stage, where the researcher compiles the research findings into an academic narrative, including footnotes, citations, and diagrams if necessary.

By combining exegetical studies and eco-theological perspectives, this research makes a twofold contribution. First, it deepens theological understanding of the new humanity and renewal of life according to the Bible. Second, it provides a basis for practical action by churches and congregations in facing global environmental challenges (the Triple Planetary Crisis) and minimizing the growing crises on earth.

FINDINGS

It revealed that applying the concept of the new humanity in Ephesians 4:20–24, when read through an eco-theological perspective, can provide a strong ethical and theological framework for the

church and Christians in responding to the Triple Planetary Crisis (climate crisis, pollution, and loss of biodiversity). Furthermore, by examining and delving into the meaning of the new humanity, there are several important aspects that can be applied to human life, particularly within Christianity.

Theological-Spiritual Dimension

The theological-spiritual dimension is the main foundation for understanding and implementing the concept of the new man as described by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:20–24. In this text, Paul emphasizes three transformative steps that every believer must experience. First, putting off the old self, which is corrupted by deceitful desires (verse 22). Second, being renewed in the spirit of your mind (verse 23). And third, putting on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness (verse 24). Theologically, this process is not merely a change in behavior, but a metanoia characterized by a fundamental shift in life orientation, from self-centeredness to God-centeredness (Ismail, 2023). This means that every dimension of life, including humanity's relationship with nature, becomes part of the new order of creation. This dimension cannot be separated from creation theology, which affirms that all of creation has intrinsic value. Ephesians 4:24, when read together with Genesis 1:26–28, forms an eco-theological framework that sees the new humanity as the *imago Dei*, reflecting God's creative, sustaining, and just character—in relation to nature. A new human being whose spirit has been renewed will understand that caring for the earth is part of the sacred calling, just as important as loving one's neighbor. In this sense, ecological action becomes an expression of faith, not an optional add-on.

Theological-Spiritual Connection with the Ecological Crisis

The Triple Planetary Crisis, which encompasses the climate crisis, pollution, and loss of biodiversity, is essentially a spiritual crisis before it is an ecological one. This crisis stems from the “old human” paradigm that views nature solely as an object to be exploited for economic gain and personal ego. In this paradigm, nature loses its status as part of God's good creation (Genesis 1:31) and is treated as a commodity, not a community. Paul, through Ephesians 4, urges the faithful to abandon this old way of thinking. Spiritual renewal leads to the understanding that the earth and all its contents belong to God (Psalm 24:1), so humans are stewards, not absolute owners. With this awareness, every ecological action becomes an expression of worship and obedience, not merely social activism..

Transformation of Identity and Life Orientation

The theological-spiritual dimension requires a reidentification of the human self. If in the old human identity was built on domination, accumulation, and self-fulfillment, then in the new human identity is built on service, sacrifice, and preservation of creation. This change is ontological (concerning the nature of existence) and teleological (concerning the purpose of life). The ontological change makes humans aware that they are an integral part of creation, connected to all living beings. The teleological change directs the purpose of life no longer toward conquering nature, but toward preserving the harmony of creation as part of God's mission (*missio Dei*).

The Consequences of Spirituality on Concrete Action

Spirituality built on this theological dimension results in actions rooted in spiritual motivation. Without a theological-spiritual dimension, the church's ecological movement tends to be fragile, easily retreating when challenges arise. However, when the congregation sees the care of the earth as part of the sanctification of life, then the action becomes consistent and sustainable. For example, GMIT in East Nusa Tenggara incorporates tree planting into its baptismal liturgy, where each family whose child is baptized is required to plant at least three trees as a symbol of the growth of faith and contribution to the earth (Bunga, 2022). This practice has endured for over a decade because it is grounded in faith, not merely social awareness.

Ethical-Moral Dimensions

The concept of the “new man” outlined in Ephesians 4:20–24 places spiritual transformation as the foundation for behavioral and value renewal. Its ethical-moral implementation begins with the awareness that renewed faith must bear tangible fruit in relationships with fellow human beings, creation, and the Creator. Its movement is twofold: rejection of the old destructive patterns (putting off the old self) and the embodiment of new patterns that are just, holy, and true (putting on the new self).

Firstly, from an ethical perspective, “shedding the old self” means deciding to stop engaging in behaviors that consciously or unconsciously harm life. In the context of the Triple Planetary Crisis, this includes stopping excessive consumption, avoiding products or policies that damage the environment,

and rejecting false justifications that cover up ecological damage. Ethics here serves as a boundary that protects shared life. Ethically and morally, shedding the old self also means abandoning habits that accelerate the pace of global warming. Within the framework of eco-theology, this action is not merely a lifestyle change but an ecological conversion—the awareness that human actions have moral consequences for all of creation. Secondly, the morality of “putting on the new self” is manifested in the formation of virtues such as simplicity, justice, humility, and solidarity. These virtues form the basis for decision-making that not only avoids evil but proactively pursues good. For example, choosing diets and lifestyles that are healthy for the earth and humanity, or supporting public policies that restore ecosystems. Thirdly, the truth in Ephesians 4:24 ties ethics to verifiable facts. In practice, this means being honest about scientific data on the planetary crisis and using it to guide moral action. A church, school, or faith community living in truth will not ignore evidence of climate change, deforestation, or pollution, but will use it as the basis for repentance and action.

The concept of the “new man” in Ephesians 4:20–24 demands concrete ethical-moral application in various areas of life. The principle is a change of heart and mind that produces new behavior in harmony with God’s will, social justice, and the preservation of creation. The following are applications in several areas of life:

1. **Consumption and Lifestyle:** Embracing the “new humanity” means rethinking consumption patterns. Specific examples include reducing the use of single-use plastics, purchasing locally produced eco-friendly products, and avoiding energy waste. The church can lead by example, such as holding services without plastic bottles, using renewable energy for church facilities, or organizing bazaars featuring organic products.
2. **Education and Faith Formation:** The ethical-moral values of the new human can be applied through church education curricula or Christian schools that integrate eco-theology materials. Children and congregants are taught to connect their faith with ecological responsibility, such as maintaining school gardens, sorting waste, or adopting green spaces in the surrounding environment.

On the issue of biodiversity, biodiversity loss is one of the three main pillars of the Triple Planetary Crisis that directly threatens the balance of the Earth’s ecosystems. From a theological perspective, this crisis is not merely a biological issue but a moral crisis because it violates God’s mandate to humanity to “care for and cultivate” the earth (Genesis 2:15) and contradicts the call to become new creatures according to Ephesians 4:20–24. This section seeks to emphasize that the new humanity lives “according to God’s will in true righteousness and holiness.” God’s will encompasses all of His creation, not just humanity. Therefore, destroying biodiversity means opposing the principle of the sanctity of life and divine truth.

In the context of biodiversity loss, the old mindset is one that views nature as merely an economic resource without intrinsic value. Excessive exploitation such as illegal logging, wildlife trafficking, and overfishing reflect a misguided desire, namely greed and indifference towards other creatures. The renewal of the mind in this passage of Ephesians means shifting the perspective from a utilitarian view (nature is only useful if it benefits humans) to a theocentric view (nature is valuable because it was created by God). In this perspective, every species has intrinsic value, regardless of its direct benefit to humans.

Social-Practical Dimensions

The biblical view of creation does not stop at the theological or conceptual level, but demands concrete social implications. Understanding the cultural mandate (Gen. 1:26–28; 2:15) and the vision of creation’s restoration in Christ (Col. 1:20; Rev. 21–22) calls Christians to play an active role in caring for the earth. From a social-practical perspective, ecological responsibility is not merely an individual calling but also a shared agenda of the faith community, manifested in church policies, public participation, and lifestyle changes.

Ecology as Part of Social Justice

Environmental damage never affects everyone equally. Poor and vulnerable groups are often the main victims, because their livelihoods are highly dependent on natural resources that are easily disrupted by ecosystem degradation. For example, fishermen on the north coast of Java have experienced a decline in their catch due to marine pollution and coastal erosion.⁷ From a biblical perspective, defending the poor and oppressed is an integral part of faith (Prov. 31:8–9; Isa. 1:17).

Thus, Christian involvement in environmental stewardship is also a form of social justice advocacy—ensuring that the earth remains habitable for all, especially those who have no bargaining power in the global economic system. As highlighted by Eko Saputra in *Theology and the Environmental Crisis* (2021), ecological injustice is part of structural sin, so the church is called not only to encourage congregations to plant trees but also to advocate for public policies that prioritize environmental sustainability and the well-being of the poor.

The Church as an Agent of Social-Ecological Change

The church is not only a place of worship, but also a center of social transformation. This understanding is in line with Jesus' description of his disciples as “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world” (Matthew 5:13–16). In an ecological context, salt prevents decay and light shows the way. The church is called to salt the world with environmentally friendly practices and to illuminate society with a living testimony that respects creation.

Some churches in Indonesia have already taken these steps, such as the Javanese Christian Church (GKJ), which launched the “Green Church” program in 2023 with practical measures like using solar panels, managing organic waste, and providing environmental education for its congregation. Such actions demonstrate that the Bible does not teach a faith detached from the earth, but rather a faith that is grounded in it. Ephesians 4:24 speaks of the “new self,” demanding renewal not only in inner attitudes but also in daily habits. In an ecological context, a consumerist lifestyle that wastes energy and produces excessive waste is a form of disobedience to the cultural mandate. The church needs to teach spiritual discipline with an ecological focus, such as reducing the use of single-use plastics, prioritizing environmentally friendly transportation, or supporting sustainable products.

Ecological issues are transboundary in nature, requiring interfaith cooperation. The biblical view that the earth belongs to God (Ps. 24:1) encourages Christians to collaborate with anyone who shares the same commitment to environmental sustainability. In the context of Indonesia's diversity, this cooperation can build social harmony while strengthening positive impact. Referring to the biblical framework, these social-practical actions are not merely optional programs, but part of God's mission (*Missio Dei*). In John 3:16, God's love is not only directed toward humanity but toward the “cosmos” (the world). The preservation of creation is participation in God's work of salvation that encompasses the entire universe. Therefore, the church and Christians must not delay the implementation of these practical steps. The longer action is ignored, the greater the damage will be, and the more difficult the restoration efforts will become.

DISCUSSION

The Bible as God's Voice to the World

For Christians, the fundamental question is: how does the Bible view creation and how should believers respond to it? This issue is not merely a social or political matter, but a matter of faith that touches on the core of humanity's relationship with God, with one another, and with creation. Unfortunately, the long history of Christian theology shows a tendency to separate spiritual salvation from ecological responsibility. This is evident in the view that sees the material world as merely a temporary place that will be left behind when eternal salvation is achieved. Yet, from the beginning, Scripture has emphasized that humans were created not only to live on earth but also to care for and manage it wisely. Genesis 1:26–28 records God's mandate to humanity to “rule” over all creation. The word “rule” (*radah* in Hebrew) in this text does not mean to exploit, but to manage responsibly as God's representatives on earth. Furthermore, Genesis 2:15 states that humans were placed in the Garden of Eden to “cultivate” (*abad*) and “keep” (*shamar*) the garden. These two verbs indicate that the cultural mandate is a call to work for the sustainability of creation, not its destruction.

In the light of the New Testament, Christ's work of redemption not only restores humanity spiritually, but also restores all of creation. Colossians 1:20 states that through Christ, God “reconciled all things to himself,” both those on earth and in heaven. Revelation 21–22 describes the final vision of God's plan, namely a new heaven and earth where all creation is restored. This means that salvation in Christ has a cosmic dimension, and ecological restoration is part of God's comprehensive mission.

The core of Christian belief comes from the Bible, which is of utmost importance. If the Bible is ignored, the church and the Christian faith will surely suffer. The supreme position of the Bible is reflected practically in the lives of believers (Barr, 1997). One's view of the Bible also influences how

one uses it to gain knowledge of God's will. The Bible comprehensively contains all the foundations of eternal activity in this world, from creation to the end of the world. It also contains knowledge about God, His nature and works as revealed in the world, and even God's will for human life (McDowell, 2002). The trend in modern theology—if it can still be called theology—tends to exalt creation rather than glorify the Creator, and the influence of rationalism is rapidly penetrating Christianity.

This does not mean that Christianity must reject everything that does not conform to human reason, nor does it mean that Christian faith should simply believe without thinking rationally. Nowadays, few people believe in the total depravity and corruption of humanity. Anyone who speaks of human “free will” and insists that humans have the power to reject the Savior in His Word, the Bible, is merely proclaiming self-immunity regarding the actual condition of fallen humanity. Few truly believe in the absolute sovereignty of God. The Bible is the manifestation of God's will. God's Word is intended for humanity, and therefore, the Bible uses human language. For, by nature, humanity cannot reach God's intellectual level. Because of this, God descends to humanity's level and communicates in a way that can be understood.

Hence, it is why the Bible contains so much anthropomorphism, which is the representation of God in human form. It is God's decisions as revealed in the Bible that serve as the benchmark for responsibility and determine the duties of the Christian faith. The Bible is the primary source for Christians to understand God's will for human life and all of creation. It contains moral, ethical, and spiritual principles that guide believers toward renewal of life, including in their relationship with the environment. The concept of the new humanity as described in Ephesians 4:24, “and put on the new self, created according to God's will in true righteousness and holiness,” does not only speak of the personal spiritual dimension, but also encompasses total renewal that touches on human relationships with one another and with the created world. In an ecological context, the Bible provides a grand narrative affirming that all creation comes from God, is under His care, and will be restored through Christ's redemptive work (Col. 1:16–20). Thus, becoming a new person means living in harmony with God's will in caring for and restoring creation (Noorsena, 2020).

Several passages in the Bible refer to ecology. Genesis 1-2 describes the earth as a good creation and gives humans the mandate to “cultivate and care for” it (Gen. 2:15). The Hebrew terms *abad* (to cultivate) and *shamar* (to care for) indicate a dual responsibility, namely harmony between productivity and preservation. This forms the theological basis that the management of the earth is not unlimited exploitation, but responsible stewardship. Psalm 24:1 states, “The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it.” This verse affirms that humans are merely stewards, not absolute owners. This awareness corrects the modern paradigm that often places humans at the center and as absolute rulers of nature. Romans 8:19-22 reveals that creation “groans” because of the damage caused by human sin. However, through Christ's redemptive work, creation will experience liberation. This verse shows the close connection between human salvation and the restoration of the cosmos.

Therefore, the biblical understanding of humanity provides a moral and spiritual foundation for addressing the triple planetary crisis (climate change, pollution, and loss of biodiversity). The Church and Christians are called to integrate the Bible's teachings on creation into faith education, promote public policies that favor environmental sustainability, and live a lifestyle that reflects renewal in Christ. This underscores that the Bible does not only speak of individual salvation but also directs believers toward the mission of restoring all of creation. The concept of the new humanity in Ephesians 4:24, when read within the framework of eco-theology, affirms that God's will includes the renewal of humanity's relationship with nature. Thus, becoming a new humanity means becoming stewards of the earth, so that faith and ecology are inseparable.

The concept of the “new man” in Ephesians 4:24 is also very relevant to this issue. Paul advises believers to “put on the new man, created according to God's will in true righteousness and holiness.” If the new man is a person who lives according to God's will, then his attitude toward creation must also reflect that righteousness and holiness. This means that the new man will not neglect or destroy creation, but will care for and love it as God loves the world He has created. However, reality shows that this understanding has not yet been fully lived out by Christians. A study by the Kairos Indonesia Foundation (2022) revealed that most church congregations in Indonesia still view environmental issues as the responsibility of the government or environmental activists, not as part of their calling of faith. Even in many sermons and church teachings, ecological issues are rarely discussed in depth. As

a result, Christians often lack the theological awareness needed to actively engage in environmental stewardship.

The urgency to return to the biblical view of ecology becomes increasingly apparent when we realize that the planetary crisis also tests the integrity of the Christian faith. In Matthew 22:37–40, Jesus formulates the most important law, which is to love God and love one's neighbor. Loving one's neighbor certainly includes caring for the environment that is their living space. Likewise, loving God means respecting His creation. Thus, indifference toward the environment is a form of failure to live out that love fully. Therefore, this study views that understanding ecology according to the Bible, especially within the framework of the concept of the new humanity, is an urgent matter that needs to be explored further. The Church and Christians need to recognize that the call to renew themselves in Christ also means renewing their perspective and actions toward the earth. Without this awareness, the witness of Christian faith will lose its relevance in a world facing an ecological crisis.

Lifestyle Transformation Strategy

Three global crises are expected to continue and cannot be avoided. This is the biggest challenge that will gradually threaten the lives of all living creatures on earth. Currently, the global community, including academics, researchers, businesses, experts, professionals, environmentalists, and policy makers, have been and are focusing on finding solutions by implementing several strategies. Rapid changes in the economic, technological, socio-cultural, market growth, and community empowerment sectors have led to an increase in human needs, followed by large-scale exploitation of natural resources. This section outlines the specific steps to address or minimize the Triple Planetary Crisis. This can be seen and understood as a roadmap for viewing the earth as a reflection of God's love for His creation, and that creation should also love its Creator by caring for what has been entrusted to it. Simplicity and responsible consumption are marked by reducing energy consumption through the use of energy-efficient electrical appliances and turning off electronic devices when not in use. Additionally, conserving water by using it efficiently, repairing leaks, and choosing water-efficient appliances can help mitigate this crisis. Reducing waste accumulation by minimizing the use of single-use plastics, recycling, and composting organic waste.

Another lifestyle that is becoming increasingly popular is individual transportation, which is becoming a trend in this era. This is something that everyone needs to pay attention to. A low-emission lifestyle, in the sense of using public transportation, cycling, or walking to reduce carbon emissions. Environmental education, such as organizing seminars, workshops, and discussions about the importance of environmental conservation, can also be an efficient strategy to minimize this crisis. Even in this era of rapidly advancing technology, using social media and other platforms to spread information about sustainable lifestyles for a healthy planet is also feasible. The transformation of lifestyle towards sustainability is a call of faith for every individual, church, and community. By adopting the principles of eco-theology and applying them in daily life, Christians can contribute to overcoming the global ecological crisis. Through simplicity, ecological awareness, and collective action, we can create a better earth for future generations. And the church plays a strategic role in fostering ecological awareness among its members. Through sermons, education, and social action, the church can encourage its congregation to adopt a lifestyle aligned with Christ's teachings and the principles of eco-theology.

CONCLUSION

The discussion of the concept of the new human and the triple planetary crisis in the light of eco-theology has been explained in detail in the previous sections. Therefore, ecotheology views nature and humanity as equally created by God. Humans have been given the mandate to rule and cultivate it. From this basis, humans often err and begin to think that nature is under human control. This leads humans to freely experiment with nature solely for human satisfaction. Although God has given such a command, the essence contained within it emphasizes that this cultural mandate is a mandate of stewardship, not exploitation. This is clarified in the new identity of humanity, which is called to renew its relationship with creation, not to strengthen its hegemony over it. This is because God is the owner of creation, and humanity is merely a trusted partner. This means that the new humanity must have ecological awareness, living with love, responsibility, and justice toward creation.

The implementation of the concept of the new man according to Ephesians 4:20-24 in relation to the Triple Planetary Crisis is considered beneficial to explain as a lens that can help humanity, especially Christians, to see how beautifully God created this world, even when humanity fell into sin, God Himself came to earth, restoring not only humanity but the entire creation. The concept of the new humanity in Ephesians 4:20-24 affirms and leads readers to reconsider how God's work on earth restores and redeems humanity from sin, leaving no detail untouched. Paul emphasizes in his letter that the new humanity must embrace a new identity in Christ. This identity will be possessed by every Christian who has shed the old self still bound by sin. The chains of sin ensnare humanity, causing them to view everything through a distorted lens, not grounded in God's truth. The Bible serves as the foundation that enables humanity to understand God's love for this world. By knowing God and His love, humanity will be able to love everything they encounter around them. Human nature, which often exalts itself, should no longer be the way of life for every person in Christ. The glory of God must be the standard for human way of life.

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The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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