

Yung Suk Kim. *Reading Jesus' Parables with Dao De Jing. Appendix: A New Translation of the Dao De Jing*. Eugene, Oregon: RESOURCE Publications, 2018. 67 pages. \$13.00. ISBN 9781532654916.

“Can Eastern classics contribute to biblical interpretation and hermeneutics?” In biblical scholarship, there have been ongoing interests in bringing the Ancient Near East and the Greco-Roman literature together with the Bible in order to bring fresh light on the texts of the Bible. Comparative readings of the Bible with those of the Eastern Asian religious/wisdom traditions, particularly in a book aimed at public audience, are rare. The new book *Reading Jesus' Parables with Dao De Jing* is Yung Suk Kim's answer to the question. He says, “Of course they can.”

In substance, in his recent book, Kim compares and explores Jesus' parables with the Dao De Jing (also known as the Tao Te Ching in Classical Chinese). “The origin and context of the two traditions are certainly very different,” Kim states (pp. 3–4). He continues, “Nevertheless, they have some [things] in common” (p. 4). Both the Dao De Jing's classical texts and Jesus' parables help readers see something different; in fact, the Greek word *parabole*, which the English word ‘parable’ comes from, means “to be cast alongside.” In order to compare and explore these two seemingly different and distant traditions, Kim draws on excerpts from the Dao De Jing's texts and Jesus' parables. He organizes them into five themes that both encapsulate and capture their commonly-but-distinctively touched points of contact and conversation: *impartiality*, *smallness*, *softness/weakness*, *gravity*, and *lowliness*. He offers at the end of his book a new translation of the Dao De Jing and helps readers to identify these five broad themes in this much-loved Eastern classic.

**Impartiality.** Kim juxtaposes the Dao De Jing 5—“Heaven and earth are impartial”—and the Dao De Jing 7—“Heaven and earth are big, lasting long because they do not live for themselves”—with the parables of the Sower, Seed Growing Secretly, and Vineyard Workers (Mark 4:3b–8; Mark 4:26–29; Matthew 20:1–16). He underscores Jesus' teaching on God's impartiality for all, just as nature selflessly gives of itself and its benefits to all.

**Smallness.** Kim reflects on the parables of the Mustard Seed, Leaven, and Lost Sheep (Mark 4:30–32; Matthew 13:33; Matthew 18:12–14) in conversation with the Dao De Jing 52—“To see small is enlightenment”—and the Dao De Jing 64—“A journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step.” He highlights the notion that small things not only have great potential and use but also are precious.

**Softness/weakness.** Kim places the Dao De Jing 8—“Water is the best thing in the world. It benefits all things without competing with them” and the Dao De Jing 40—“Reversion is the movement of the Way”—side by side with the parables of the Father and Two Sons and the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 15:11–32; Luke 18:9–14). Just like water, he reminds readers, it is not really the hard but the soft and weak who are truly strong. The hardened heart loses God's love, but the broken heart finds God's favor.

**Gravity.** The Dao De Jing 25 says, “Reaching far means return,” and the Dao De Jing 26 writes, “Gravity is the root of lightness.” Kim brings these sayings alongside the parables of the Rich Fool and the Unmerciful Servant (Luke 12:16–21; Matthew 18:23–35). He articulates our need to return to calmness from hastiness and thus to turn to the community for mutual care and support.

**Lowliness.** Kim connects the Dao De Jing 6—“The spirit of the valley . . . is called a mystical mother”—and the Dao De Jing 66—“Rivers and seas . . . lower themselves” with the parables of the Rich Man and Lazarus and the Good Samaritan (Luke 16:19–31; Luke 10:30–37). He concludes that the measure of real wealth and success is one’s “service to the lowly people in the valley” (p. 26).

Kim’s book, though brief, has lasting impact because he questions and challenges the cultural norm of today’s society, which is in the most part driven by upward mobility, greed, and competition. Based on the Dao De Jing’s classical texts and Jesus’ parables, he highlights alternative values—downward mobility, giving, and peace. I find Kim’s book worth reading because, first, it gives insights into new ways in which we can read and interpret Jesus’ parables by reading them side by side with the Dao De Jing. Second, his book invites us to live more harmoniously and peacefully in times like this, in which increasingly divisive and violent rhetoric is slipping into social, religious, and political discourse. I wholeheartedly recommend Kim’s book, not only to scholars and students of the Bible, Eastern Asian religions, and the comparative study of religion but also to a more general audience of those who wish to live in peace and harmony.

Hyun Ho Park