

Framework and Logic of the World

In order to understand the context I am about to provide, it is necessary to understand how I think, what I call the framework and logic of the world. It would be impossible and a waste of time to directly jump to the next chapters, so I would be very grateful if you read this part before you move on.

FRAMEWORK 1

In South Korea, students typically begin learning the peninsula's earliest history with the mythical founding of Go-Chosun in 2333 BCE. According to the *Samguk Yusa*^{*}, Hwan-in, the “Lord of Heaven”, permitted his son Hwan-ung to descend from the sky to Taebaeksan (now Mount Paektu which is on the northern border of North Korea sharing with mainland China) with 3,000 followers, among them three heavenly ministers of clouds, rain, and wind. There, Hwan-ung taught humans laws, medicine, agriculture, and moral codes.

One day, as Hwan-ung was walking in the woods, he met a tiger and a bear. The tiger and the bear begged Hwan-ung they wish to become human. Hwanung told the bear and the tiger that if they secluded themselves in a dark cave for one hundred days, never letting in a ray of light, and lived only on mugwort and garlic, they would be transformed into human beings. The tiger and bear both follow Hwan-ung's words, yet the tiger runs away from the cave on the 20th day, being sick of not getting sunlight and the vegan diet. The bear makes it through, and on the 100th day the bear becomes a female human. Hwan-ung marries this now lady-formerly-bear, named “Oong-nyeo” which literally means bear woman. They have a child, named Dan-gun. In 2333 BCE he established Gojoseon in the northern Korean peninsula (today's North Korea–China border region). The date of Dan-gun's ascension (October 3), is celebrated each year as Gaecheonjeol (개천절), literally “Opening of Heaven Day” or “Revealing of the Sky.” This is

^{*} The *Samguk Yusa* was written in the late 13th century, around 1281, by the Buddhist monk Iryeon during the Goryeo dynasty. It is NOT the most modern, scientific based writing.

the beginning of the first nation in the Korean Peninsula, “Go-Chosun.” Dan-gun himself called it Chosun, though historians refer to this early state as Go-Chosun (“Ancient Chosun”). The date of Dan-gun’s ascension (October 3), is celebrated each year as Gaecheonjeol, literally “Opening of Heaven Day” or “Revealing of the Sky.”

FRAMEWORK 2

In Korea, there aren’t a wide variety of last names. However, you can pre-date your first ancestors to a very long time ago. Our family origins begin with founders who pop out of eggs, glow in the dark, or stride down from clouds, and those origin scripts still stamp today’s phonebooks with a handful of colossal surnames.

Take Go. Goguryeo’s founder Jumong hatches from an egg after his mother is impregnated by a beam of sunlight; every Go clan that followed claimed his skylit shell as proof of heavenly mandate. South of Goguryeo was Silla. The man who founded Silla was Park Hyeokgeose: a boy inside an egg that shimmers like polished copper, cracks open beside a sacred well, and immediately radiates light so bright the villagers drop to their knees. From that cracking egg comes every Park (Korean, obviously) you know today. Same as Go.

The most common last name, Kim, sprouts two branches, both Amazon Prime box-fresh from the heavens.

Around 65 CE (the 9th year of King Talhae’s reign) a strange cry echoed west of the Silla capital. Talhae dispatched his minister Hogong to Sirim Forest. There, hanging from an ancient branch, was a small golden chest bathed in light; beneath it a white rooster kept crowing. The chest was brought to court and, when opened, revealed an infant of unusual radiance. Delighted, the king adopted the child and named him Kim (which means “gold”) Alji (read phonetically as “Alti/Alji,” often means “clever” or “bright”) which means “the wise one born from gold.” Sirim Forest was renamed Gyerim (“Rooster Grove”), and “Gyerim” even became an early poetic name for Silla itself. Although Alji never ruled, his descendants, starting with King Michu (262-284 CE), turned the Kim clan into Silla’s longest-serving royal house, a lineage millions of Koreans still trace today.

The other Kim branch comes from Suro Kim. Kim Suro's origin story is pure stagecraft, and it worked. In 42 CE, say the Samguk Yusa and the now-lost Garakgukgi, nine village chiefs gathered on Gujibong Peak to pray when a gold bowl wrapped in red cloth spiraled down on a purple cord from the sky. Inside lay six golden eggs. After twelve days the shells split, revealing six towering boys. The first stood up, announced Heaven's command, and took the name Suro (which means "firstborn"). He crowned himself king of Geumgwan Gaya (literally "Gold-Crown Gaya") and adopted the surname Kim ("gold"), while the other five brothers became rulers of satellite Gaya states. Even lesser-known Ijinasi of Daegaya strolls out of one of those six shells as if the sky were a giant incubator. Now let me explain what I am trying to get across in these Framework 1 and 2.

Framework Analysis

Nobody in Korea takes the "son of god" or "opening of heavens" as a historical, factual text, thinking "yes, Hwanung literally ran a 100-day vegan detox clinic for bears". Nobody believes that "Oong-nyu" was actually a bear who turned into a woman. The same goes for Kim Alji's golden chest and Kim Suro's six sky-eggs. They are political manifestos dressed up as bedtime tales.

This is for multiple reasons. First, you can't scientifically explain these processes. If I lock up a bear in a cave and gave it veggies for 100 days, I'm pretty sure it will die of malnutrition, not getting a hot future wife for me. I can't fly an airplane into the heavens to meet the 3 gods that Dan-gun brought and ask if they can snow one day to get snow day. Not a single human is known to be born in an egg—we're mammals.

But there are parts that are scientifically challenging that people believe in. I'm no Christianity expert, but there are people who do believe that Jesus walked on water, gave food to thousands of people using only five loaves and two fish. The biggest difference comes from how historians have interpreted these legends, backing up with historical evidence.

Many historians now locate Dangun's tribe in the Liaodong–Manchuria corridor, the northwestern edge of the Korean peninsula extending into today's Liaoning Province of China.

Before Dan-gun came, there were 2 main tribes: a tribe who worshipped bears as their gods and another tribe that worshipped tigers as their gods. Dan-gun's tribe allied with the bear tribe and defeated the tiger tribe. This is what the legend of Dan-gun marrying a former bear, current woman Oong-nyu.

The three gods Dangun brought each symbolized a critical leap forward: mastery of agriculture, ritual control over the weather, and the use of bronze. By contrast, the peninsula's earlier communities, what archaeologists call the polished-stone cultures (Jeulmun (c. 8000 – 1500 BCE) and early Mumun pottery periods), relied on ground-stone tools, cord-marked pottery, and animistic totems carved in wood and bone. Bronze appears centuries after the 2333 BCE founding date, but when archaeologists find bronze mirrors in tombs, they trace them to the Liaodong trade network that later influenced early Korean polities. They venerated bears, tigers, rivers, and mountains as living spirits (animism), organized themselves around clan totems (totemism), and consulted shamans (shamanism) to mediate with unseen forces.

Dangun's people, however, pioneered the jehsa ceremony. Led by the chief, a jehsa gathered the whole tribe before a laid-out table of food offerings and bronze mirrors, invoked the sky-gods, and pleaded for rain, sunshine, or mild winds. When drought threatened the crops, Dangun would call another jehsa until the clouds answered. This ritual survives in modified form among modern Korean families, a living echo of those first sky-calling rites. Remember that “jehsa” when we turn to family practices in the next chapter.

These historic analyses are only available thanks to the ruins that archaeologists have discovered. The oldest bronze materials pre-date up to Dan-gun's era, and they aren't only limited to military equipment. One of the most important uses of bronze was the mirror, which was used during the jeh-sa. There are dozens of pieces of evidence of all the different spiritualities that existed before Dan-gun, categorized in “Animism, Totemism, etc”. It is believed that these tribes did not have as big of a size as Go-Chosun, and they also didn't survive as long.

Regarding the first Go being born from an egg, historians believe that this means a symbolic assertion of heavenly mandate to legitimate his rule and unify rival clans. It was a story made for peasants to believe that this man is divine, so that they would obey without questioning.

What about the chest and rooster in the story of Kim Alji? Modern historians see the whole scene as a kind of symbolic political message. A box of gold represents both heavenly approval and real-world wealth: powerful symbols if Silla was trying to welcome a skilled group of immigrants known for their metalworking. Some scholars even link the name “Alji” or “Alti” to the Altaic word *altin*, which means “gold.” The rooster, crowing at dawn, fits into a wider pattern of sun-worship seen across Eurasia and signals that this child’s arrival marks a new beginning for the kingdom. By adopting the child rather than claiming him as a royal heir, King Talhae could bring this gold-carrying outsider into the royal bloodline without upsetting the older Park and Seok families. At the same time, he could still claim that the kingdom’s right to rule came from the heavens, not just family connections. In the end, Kim Alji’s origin story was not really about how babies are born. It was a way to announce a new political alliance, dressed up in divine symbols. That message helped Kim kings rule Silla for almost six hundred years.

The symbolism regarding Kim Suro’s birth is loud but coherent. Gold/metal signals the Gaya league’s iron-working wealth; red cloth and sunrise timing pull in sun-cult imagery; the six eggs neatly map onto the “Six Gaya” politics the confederacy was trying to weld together. By claiming he had no human parents, Suro erased any rival bloodlines and presented his kingship as a direct assignment from Heaven. It made him politically untouchable in a frontier region surrounded by competing local chiefs.

The legend then folds in foreign diplomacy. At sixteen, a ship with Princess Heo Hwangok of “Ayuta” (many historians link the name to India’s Ayodhya) docks at Gaya. She says Heaven ordered her to marry Suro. Modern scholars treat her arrival as a maritime-trade memory: Gaya’s iron ingots reached Japan, and Indian Ocean goods were filtering up the China coast, so a royal marriage myth dramatizes long-distance commerce and confers exotic prestige.

So, like Kim Alji's rooster-lit chest, Kim Suro's six-egg origin story is not about zoology. It is a political message wrapped in symbolism of Heaven's approval, a tribal alliance, and a trade route announcement all combined into one.

These interpretations aren't "rude" or "denying my origin". It would be misleading for me to believe that Hwan-ung actually rode a cloud from heaven down to earth in the Korean peninsula. It would be misleading to believe that his wife was actually a bear and became human by doing a vegan diet in a cave. That is definitely not the point that my ancestors wanted to get across. If they come back to life in 2025, they would be relieved to know that nobody is actually interpreting their story as "oh, back in BC 2333 if you go in a cave and do a vegan diet for 100 days, you could turn an animal into human". It would be quite absurd to convince someone that this is factual, and if someone is gullible enough to do it in the modern day, he probably would try to do it to his own pet in a random cave. The "literal text" doesn't have any weight, as it is a story that our ancestors made up for multiple reasons, mainly as a political toolkit.

This is the end of the "training" you need to read the next chapter. Now you have the tools to understand how I think, and the conclusions I have come to.

Christianity

Until 2023, I thought that all Christians were mentally ill. The Christians I interacted with went to church because they wanted to go to heaven. They were afraid to go to hell. They convinced me that I must do the same, because they didn't want their friend to go to hell, because I didn't go to church. As a 21st century man whose major is physics, I thought the antonym of science was Christianity.

Christians told me that this Jesus guy walked on water, gave his body and blood to his friends to eat, the first woman was born from a man's rib bone, and that snakes talked at that time. In addition, people used to live hundreds of years, and God created everything. Nobody could give me a scientifically acceptable, sane-sounding answer to "so who created god?" The most basic questions were not answered in an understandable and logical manner. On top of that,

they would point fingers at me as if I'm the man who killed Jesus. I just don't believe in the same fugazi that you do, bro. It's not that serious.

It was around May of 2023 when I came to realize that the Bible might just be in the same format as these myths and legends that were taught in history textbooks in Korea. I was spending time reading Herman Hesse, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Jordan Peterson. Things started making sense. If the Bible is taken as a “book of stories and myths that have underlying messages”, not a “factual history book of humanity”, I could completely understand it.

I haven't read the Bible verse by verse, and I'm pretty sure that I know less than 5% of the Bible. If you are Christian, the words I have just said and will be saying might anger you, but please show mercy and follow along with me because I have a message specifically for you, and a thank you note as well. If you consider yourself an atheist, I hope these words enlighten you to understand Christians: they're not insane. In any case, you can consider me a lunatic and completely disregard my words. If that happens, I apologize and thank you in advance for spending your precious time reading this.

My Opinion on Christianity

Jesus was born from a Virgin. This is the Christian version of the “first last name of Go from egg” story. It shows that this man was “divine”. Jesus lived a pretty rough life. He had to go through constant ridicule, persecution, and ultimately crucifixion. Now I want to reflect back on your own life. Count the days you felt pain. Count the number of harsh and devastating events that happened in your life. It can be anywhere from your dog passing away to being mistreated in work or school. Life itself is unfair. If you're five years old, you might feel this unfairness in a race between friends, where you practiced for hours every day to be fast but you're still slower than your friend who is just born with talent. If you're 18, you might think that you tried very hard in academics but you didn't get into your dream school. If you're 30, you might be noticing that life is a series of painful events: someone who you thought was going to be your wife cheats on you, at work you try extremely hard but a random dude who clearly seems to be a nepo baby gets the raise and promotion, and your dog just died. What would your response to “life” be if you noticed that life is just a series of horrible events?

I believe that the Bible gives people a good guideline. Jesus was an amazing guy, He spread love to the world, he healed sick people and fed the poor. Even when He was mistreated, even when justice wasn't on His side, even when He wasn't getting the credit He deserved, He did not stop to help humanity. Even while He was being crucified, Jesus prayed for those who were executing Him and forgave the repentant thief beside Him. So, let's apply this lesson into our lives. Why don't we live like Jesus? Our lives so far have been very unjust and unfair. It's probably a delusion to believe that our future is going to be completely fair and just. So why don't we live like Jesus? Not only did I start accepting the unjust and unfair nature of life, but I also started becoming open to be a better man to others, even when I was going through harsh times and was heavily mistreated. Then, I realized something. The "heaven and hell" that the Bible refers to is regarding this current life, not a literal location in the afterlife.

When I started "living like Christ", the thoughts that I normally would have had never occurred. I helped people who were in serious competition with me when I was in the army, they received great credit, whereas I was continuously being hazed and bullied by non-commissioned officers. I was always willing to help people who needed and wanted help. I rarely took any credit. It never occurred in my head 'I am doing this, thus I am a better man' or 'Why isn't anyone noticing my efforts?' It just became my personality, and I started noticing things. I could notice a person in a crowd where people would avoid, and I did not hesitate to talk to them, getting to know more about this person. As a photographer, I serve the people by taking photos without financial compensation. My purpose came from making someone's day a little better. The compensation was witnessing their smiles. When I started walking the life guided by Jesus, my life started looking like Heaven, because the negative aspects started to disappear. It was probably still there, but I couldn't see them anymore.

In contrast, when I was being human, before coming to this realization of the message of the Bible, my life pretty much looked like hell. Not a single adult supported me emotionally and believed in me until I came to the US, and natural disasters messed up long-term goals out of nowhere. It was almost like when I felt I was an inch away from success, nature's unfairness kicked that success 100 miles away. I was constantly being destroyed and devastated by life, forced to submit and kneel before it, sometimes crying out, "Why me?", "Was once not enough?" and "Please, just take my life."

To get to the most important point, my definition of God is the extreme limit (infinite) of good. For me, the question “do you believe in god?” means “is there a standard where we can say something is good or bad?” Of course, serial killing and raping is bad. Donating money to charity to stop school shootings and support victims of sexual assault is good. The key question is “what do you mean by God” rather than “do you believe in god” as the latter question naturally needs a clarification of the meaning of “god”.

I want to answer 2 questions that are oftentimes raised. 1. As an atheist, how can I understand “God is the creator”? 2. Why do bad things happen to good people?

In Japan, “月が綺麗ですね” means “the moon is beautiful” in a literal sense. However, it is used to mean “I love you”. In Italian, “Ti voglio bene” is more commonly used than “ti amo” to say “I love you”. “Ti voglio bene” literally means “I wish you well” or “I want good for you,” but in practice it means “I care for you deeply”. In the same framework, “God the creator” can be explained in how you observe the world. In my eyes, I see a beautiful aspect of everything. A spider web that would have freaked me out in the past now looks like a pretty geometry, the beauty of nature. As a Korean, I used to be heavily influenced by the extreme “lookism” culture. Now I can see the pretty parts of everyone, even though it may sometimes not be the physical standards. Doesn’t it only make sense that “god created everything”? Of course, a spider makes the spider web. However, “God created the spider web too” would mean “Even the spider web has its beautiful parts”. God the creator simply means that everything has its beautiful aspects.

So why do bad things happen to good people? The pre-assumption is that ‘if God controls this world, why does he let good people get murdered, raped, and not all criminals being justly prosecuted’? My personal instinct lies in “because nobody and nothing is controlling the world, the world isn’t anybody’s video game, it’s just reality and independent of each other”. Again, my personal belief is more on “God” as the “extreme limit of good” rather than this “powerful being who is in charge of everything”. But if you think about it, God in my definition is the one who stops anyone from killing. I have a clear moral standard where it guides me to the conclusion that one is better than the other. I know that killing “isn’t good”, which means “god guides me not to kill”. Those who believe in God, who have a standard for what is good and what is bad, they

cannot kill or rape. If there are people who claim to “know how to tell what is good from bad” and still commit horrible crimes hurting people, they clearly do not know themselves.

My interpretation of the Bible is that it is a great book with great messages. There are some parts that I want to extend from here. First, let me emphasize “my interpretation”. My interpretation is that the core of the Bible is to live like Jesus. This means that even when life, nature, destroys me, I will never stop seeking to help others. Even if someone slaps me in the face, I would not be mad, and I would willfully give him the other side of my cheek to slap me until he is satisfied (metaphorically, not literally). There is also the core value: the golden rule. “Act upon others as you desire to be treated”. I want to dig into this value as the core message is great, but it oftentimes leads to harmful actions.

In Buddhism, the core is “All pain derives from some sort of desire”. This is worth investigating. If “I want you to go to heaven”, that is a desire. This desire literally brings some sort of pain to an atheist friend, as it is desiring my friend to start doing something or believing something that genuinely doesn’t align with his life. This aspect of Buddhism leads to one of its core values, “Don’t act on others how you don’t want to be treated”. If you were Catholic, would you want a Mormon knocking on your door telling you to convert? Would you like Scientologists telling you that you are oblivious of the truth and that you have to start believing in their beliefs? Probably not.

If your rebuttal is “but I’m right and other beliefs are wrong!”, I would kindly say that that isn’t the point. The point is, your loved one, your friend, your neighbor, is now having a worse day than he was because of you, regardless of the truth. This is where I wanted to go to my conclusion: What would Jesus do?

What would Jesus do

Let’s say I am a devoted Catholic. I have my best friend, Alex, who goes to an Episcopalian church. And I am clearly not happy about this, because that’s not the REAL Christianity, and I really would like Alex to end up in heaven. One day, I decide that I am obligated to tell Alex that he is not doing the right thing, that he belongs to the Catholic Church,

and to come to mass with me. Because that is what I would have liked, to be led into the truth, the REAL Christianity. Didn't Jesus say to act upon others how I would like to be treated? Well, I would have liked to surrender myself to the Catholic Church, no matter what it takes. Now, I am walking towards Alex and open my mouth. Then suddenly, Jesus comes down from heaven right between me and Alex. What would Jesus say? Would he tell me that I'm doing an absolutely noble job by trying my best to bring him into the REAL faith?

I don't think so. Although expecting what Jesus would think or do is itself a sensitive topic, my point is to focus on oneself. I have witnessed multiple times, where a Christian pointed fingers at another Christian telling him he's not "Christian" or his actions or words are "not right according to the Bible". A great example is regarding abortion. I know multiple Catholics who would criticize Protestant Christians who support abortion, that "it's not what God would want!". My point is, if your belief aligns with not having an abortion, don't get one. You don't own your neighbor's womb. Keep it to yourself. Before you point fingers and correct people, reflect on yourself 'am I following Christ's words'? Because we are human, we have natural faults. A true Christian, follower of Christ, would never say 'since I am 100% fulfilling what Christ told me to do, let me pick on people who had abortions and call them murderers!'. Why don't we use the Bible, words of Christ, to become better people ourselves, rather than a standard to judge others? Do you really think the Bible was written so that you can judge people? The man who told an angry crowd, "Let the one without sin cast the first stone," and then forgave the woman everyone else wanted to condemn?

I have seen altar servers, Chaplains, Reverends, Priests, who do the same. Their standard of "good" is themselves. They define "good" as "agreeing with my words" or "not bothering me" rather than "Words of Christ". It isn't surprising when they disguise an opinion or speech into "Words of Christ" but is actually their human desire. Is there even a point in "Who is a better Christian"? It's not a competition, everyone who follows Christ's words are the son of God, and you share the same core beliefs, even though you might disagree on the tiniest details. You all believe in Jesus, and God.

A similar situation in the past would be the crusaders. Killing in the name of Christ is not what I would have expected from Christians. Although there may be a valid point of "it was to

survive the Ottoman Empire's attacks", do you genuinely believe that if Christ were there, he would have led the army to attack, kill and destroy towns to get rid of the threat? The man who sacrificed himself to take away the sins of the world would lead an army to actively take away people's lives, loved ones, in the name of LOVE? (I definitely see the argument of defense, but attacking in the name of defense, to get rid of the threat, doesn't seem "Christian")

I want to conclude my view on Christianity. First, I am grateful for the people who wrote the Bible because it contains extremely valuable messages. I am also grateful for the ones who brought me closer to God, an initiation to the faith. If Christians did not exist in this world, I would not have lived a more peaceful life. I would argue that Christians do more good than harm to this world. Their main value is to spread love, and their intentions are for the better. If one scolds you for not singing along during chapel, it's probably because they want you to go to heaven. And I would like to take that positive intention to heart rather than focusing on the negative action of scolding. Now that I see this intention behind their actions, I appreciate it, even though at face value it is often not the most welcoming experience. Their intentions are genuinely pure. At the same time, I want to ask everyone: why fight? You can disagree, but there is no reason to actively fight against anyone for anything. If one decides not to go to church, just think "he doesn't want to go to heaven, his loss", because you will never gain anything from fighting him to make him believe in your values. If one decides "I am going to have an abortion", just let them have one: it's not your womb. Because what would Jesus say? What would he do? Did Jesus ever criticize anyone for any of their beliefs? Don't you want to live like him? If your logic is that he said never to kill lives, just remember that he wasn't aware of the abortions in 2025, what they look like and why they happen.

All in all, I appreciate Christians. Personally, the Catholic community has been very welcoming, and they have been very open to the genuine questions I had. They have brought me into a stage in life where I can confidently say that I try to live according to Christ's words. They have given a new purpose in life for me, so I want to end this on a note to all the Gaucho Catholic members who brought me closer to God.

Nietzsche's Interpretation

This part is a bonus, my interpretation of Nietzsche's interpretation. Nietzsche is famous for his quote "God is dead", yet he's not the first one to say this. A similar concept was already introduced by Hegel previously. What Nietzsche means by "God is dead" may seem like criticizing Christianity at its superficial phrasing, yet I believe that Nietzsche was actually reiterating what Christ had warned of being careful of.

Before modern days, the Church served as multiple roles in this world: a school, hospital, a government, even a winery. In other words, the Church centralized power and organized the world, and without it, it would have been a disaster. But then, humanity progressed, and we came up with governments separated from religion, hospitals separated from the church, and schools for education separated from the church. Yet, humans were sticking to the "superficial" face-values of the church. In Nietzsche's eyes, the times of the church being ubiquitous was over. The church had served its purpose, and now it was time for the church to decrease in power, for people to realize this and move on. However, Nietzsche observed that the church was trying its best to survive, not admitting that its time is over and trying to fight its fate. Nietzsche labeled this as a great metaphor "God is dead". If I were to add a line, it would be "Why are you trying to resuscitate him?" How I understand Nietzsche is that he observed that people were still supporting the church, even though it was clearly logical that the church is outdated. The church's core value is to spread Christianity, which clearly isn't sustainable in a government, hospital, or school anymore. Then, it is about spreading love, preaching Christ's words, but it would be delusional to argue against science and interpret the Bible as a factual, historical text. To Nietzsche, people were slowly fading away from the core value of Christianity. God was dead to him. People were practicing idolatry in his eyes, one thing that Jesus told people to be aware of. To his eyes, people forgot about the true purpose of Christianity, serving God: they were serving a wooden cross and sculptures, forgetting the intrinsic and core value of Christianity.

Can Christians truly criticize Nietzsche? The man who followed Christ's words? My opinion is that for the long run, Nietzsche actually saved Christianity from its downfall, as he is the one who brought me into Christianity, and I am surely not the only one with this experience.

(You may notice that there are some hints of Albert Camus in my writing, and you are very correct if you were suspecting it because I have been influenced by Camus as well.)

Confucianism – Killing Confucius

Confucius did not wake up one morning with a ready-made plan for a perfect society. He was a weary junior official picking through the ruins left by the Zhou dynasty, an empire whose fall had plunged China into centuries of civil war. Bandits prowled the roads, farms were often set on fire before the crops could be gathered, and villagers were dragged into one army after another. In that chaos his love of ritual and hierarchy was not a grab for power; it was damage control. Early Chinese writers spoke of two guiding ideas. Li means the ceremonies and rules that teach respect. Ren means the warm-hearted care we owe other people. To Confucius, Li and Ren were sandbags that could hold back the flood of violence.

Move forward 2025 centuries. Korea in 2025 has flexible displays, instant opinion polls on phones, and women launching satellites. Yet on major holidays we still see an old scene inside many homes. Men relax in the living room watching baseball and talking about politics. Women shuttle between kitchen and dining table like pit crew members at a race. The ceremony is called jeh-sa, an ancestral rite, but the routine looks more like a labor contract written in soy sauce on steel bowls.

Would the historical Confucius applaud this play of unequal work? It is very hard for me to imagine. He spent his life urging rulers to lead by moral example. In Analects 2.3 he scolds Duke Ai for ignoring starving citizens, and he praises anyone who shows Ren regardless of rank. Filial duty (duties as the children of parents and descendants of ancestors) was meant to protect the weak, not invent new chains for them. If Confucius entered a modern apartment in Busan during Chuseok and saw daughters-in-law stirring stew while sons scrolled stock apps, he might quote himself: "When the ruler is upright, everything falls into place without commands." Then he would add, "And when the husband is upright, he washes the dishes without being asked."

Li for Confucius was never frozen choreography. It was a living grammar of respect, always ready to evolve with society. Zhou elders bowed facing east because they saw sunrise as

a message from Heaven. Today we know the sun is an ordinary star. Copying the bow without updating its meaning betrays Confucius' own line, "I transmit; I do not invent." Transmitting means listening for the core signal, clearing away the static, and sending a cleaner version forward. It does not mean copying forever.

In Confucian thought, there are five key human relationships: between ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife, elder and younger siblings, and friend and friend. These relationships are meant to structure a harmonious society. However, people often quote these five relationships to defend patriarchy, especially focusing on the part that places the husband above the wife. They skip line one of the same rule, which says the husband must be good and fair. In 5th century BC Lu, good and fair meant providing food and basic safety. In 21st century Korea it must include equal emotional labor, equal opportunity, and the freedom for a woman to drive a Boeing 747 instead of a frying pan. If the stronger side fails its duty, the hierarchy collapses by Confucius' own measure.

Another point that is often lost. Confucius was a travelling teacher who accepted students from any background, which shocked the noble families of his era. He would have supported universal public education, open hiring, and peer-reviewed research. His program was empirical. Study the early Zhou, find what worked, and repeat it. That is the scientific method written on bamboo slips. Modern genetics has shattered the idea that talent flows only through a male bloodline, so he would update the curriculum at once.

Why then does jeh-sa still follow the old script? During the Joseon dynasty neo-Confucian scholars turned ritual into a tool that kept power inside yangban (rich, bourgeois) families. The state enforced separate seating and color-coded hanbok as social badges. By the late 19th century industrial labor pulled men out of the home, leaving the kitchen as the last arena where women could display filial devotion. The rite froze in that single photograph. The freezer is still plugged in.

If we follow Confucius' own logic the verdict is simple. A rite that breeds resentment instead of harmony breaks Ren. A hierarchy propped up by unpaid invisible labor breaks Li. The ghost of Confucius would thank you for showing him the modern hanok apartment, then close

the rice cooker, invite everyone to the same table, and pour makgeolli (Korean traditional carbonated alcohol) for the aunt who marinated the beef. He would say, “Stop using my name to defend idleness”.

Killing Confucius therefore means freeing him from the wax statue in the family shrine. We do not burn the Analects; we read them with a scientist’s eye. We keep the insight that personal virtue ripples outward, but we reboot the program on present hardware. Confucius version 2025 would praise parental respect expressed through health insurance, climate policy, and a shared recipe app, not through gendered exhaustion in a two square meter kitchen.

Nietzsche declared God dead because people worshipped the husk and ignored the kernel. I announce the funeral of Confucius for the same reason. The living Confucius appears whenever a son-in-law dices onions beside his mother-in-law and whenever siblings share the cost of a memorial park subscription rather than disputing who hosts the incense during the jeh-sa. When ritual serves the people, not the other way around, Ren stands up, dusts off his sleeves, and smiles. That is the rebirth, not the death, of Confucius.