

A Revealed Covering Language and the Experience of Time Dilation  
From Luke 1  
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Part One

- 1) This passage occurs just before the birth of Jesus, involving an aged priest Zechariah and his aged wife Elizabeth. They are upright, but too old and barren for children.
- 2) Zechariah's turn to serve to burn incense in the temple came, and a crowd gathered outside. Suddenly an angel appears to him, and he is gripped with fear.
- 3) What has happened is that the eternal has inserted in a unique way, and he was overwhelmed. Gabriel, now on earth, also stands in the presence of God which means though he appears in time, he is not fixed by it.
- 4) His message to Zechariah is that biology, also, is not fixed by time. These two very old people will have a son.

Zechariah is faced with unbelief. He has to decide which language he will use to "cover" the situation.

- 1) He can use the natural, aboriginal language: He is too old, and such a thing is outside his personal experience or that of anyone he knows. Such language is rooted in time, experience and nature.
- 2) Or, he can "cover" the situation with the language revealed by Gabriel: God is directly related to space, time, and history. His power is over all these things, and He alone can correctly define those terms.
- 3) These two covering languages exist side by side in most individuals. The first is natural and intuitive. The other is singular and demands to be exclusive of the other.

Zechariah had to shift. But at first, it seemed like "too much." We often feel the same way. It is hard to fit a Gabriel and his words into our natural language. In fact, the words of Gabriel *won't* fit within the natural language, not comfortably or statistically.

- 1) Zechariah can't believe at first. "How can I be sure?" he asks. There is a "no-fit" relationship between the natural and the revealed covering language provided by Gabriel.
- 2) Zechariah's pre-existing covering language requires faith to make that shift. Anyone with a precondition of natural covering language will have to shift from it to the belief that God is directly related to space, time and history: in the here and now for him; and for us.
- 3) If we don't use revealed covering language for events in time and space, we will always revert to the old, natural covering language. It would seem sufficient and explanatory.
- 4) However, the angel's message drags Zechariah outside the old language covering. He comes to understand that God is moving these events around according to His superior understanding of what is needed in history. No human being is "driving" this trajectory.

- 5) We, similarly, under the supervision of the God of time, space and history, do not drive events. We can't allow such a notion to enter our language.

What Zechariah heard was scandalous to people of his time, and ours. The core message: God is directly involved, and this revealed covering language brings a sense of finality.

When we fail in faith, it is because of this finality related to covering language. The focus of all belief is a covering language. We believe the natural language is sufficient because we don't believe that God is directly involved in time, experience, and nature itself.

## Part Two

- 1) Our natural inclination is to see time as somewhat elastic, moving forward, dilating to include the events in it, ever spreading out. With this dilation, we mark a distinction between past, present and future.
- 2) We can see an example of this dilation with the way people related to the Word of God given at Mt. Sinai. With the passage of time, people believed they grew away from the promises of God. The idea of time distance from those promises made the promises harder and harder to believe.
- 3) Case in point: When the people in the Exodus came to Rephidim, the further they perceived they were from water and other resources, the more distant the promises seemed.
- 4) Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 16 had a similar promise of a child, and the passage of time seemed to make that promise distant. Unlike Zechariah, there was a long lag between God's announcement and the actual promised event. They decided they would be the driving force, and that led to the disastrous decision to involve Hagar in "driving" the promise to fulfillment.
- 5) Second Peter 3 shows that people use covering language ("scoffing") in questioning the promises of God. "Ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation" (v.4). They saw time dilating, actually diluting and negating the promises of God.
- 6) Gabriel's words to Zechariah came up against his unbelief. Zechariah couldn't see how the past would inform him to believe that in the present, God would act and in the future a son would be born. Gabriel, in contrast, viewed the birth not only as a single event, but across the life span of a man, John.
- 7) Thus it is not time that dilates, but rather the Word or promise of God that dilates into the future. While the dilation of time seems to "synch" with natural covering language, such a concept conflicts with the revealed covering language.
- 8) Gabriel's words had an unspoken prohibition. His covering language implied, "Do not think that time, in your experience, can tell you the truth about the situation I'm talking about."

In the case of Abraham and the delay of the fulfillment of the promise of a child, and in the case of Zechariah, there was a lacuna, or "lag" in when anyone would know the promise was coming

true. A lacuna is a blank spot in a manuscript. Zechariah had to wait through the lacuna until what Gabriel called “the proper time” – a point at which the promises would literally materialize.

- 1) Thus it could be accurately said that time is not spreading out and dilating, advancing; but rather contracting toward “the proper time” for God’s fulfillment of each word. The lacuna is contracting, because the fixed point of fulfillment comes closer with each movement.
- 2) The power of God, then, is pulling the revealed covering language toward “the proper time.”
- 3) When the lacuna collapses, the promise “comes true.”
- 4) God is directly related to space, time, and history – all of which are collapsing. Every day the distance between the revealed language covering and the promise collapses.
- 5) Time, therefore, is not dynamic. It is not causal. The passage of time alone does not cause anything to happen, especially if God has spoken something specific about that thing. Time is inert.

When “the proper time” arrived, Zechariah and Elizabeth welcomed a son.

- 1) Elizabeth said to name him John (because at that point Zechariah could not speak), and Zechariah agreed.
- 2) When Zechariah wrote the name “John,” it symbolized the collapse of time onto that event, as Gabriel had revealed it.

### Part Three

Humanity has a track record of believing that time was dilating.

- 1) In Numbers 13 and 14, Israel believed time was dilating away from God’s promises, but they didn’t realize that it was actually contracting in on them and those promises.
- 2) In John chapter 1, the distance between the promise of a Messiah and their present time led the Jews to not recognize their Savior when He appeared.
- 3) There is a prohibition we must recognize in all revealed covering language. No one is authorized to overlay our experiential impression that time is dilating over the Word, nor over the will, nor over the power, of God.
- 4) Thus there are not an infinite number of possibilities in dilating time. If we believe there are, and that we can “drive” history, this will always lead us to try to take action to “fulfill” our own desires.
- 5) One good reason we shouldn’t assume we can drive history is in James 4—people make plans, but they could die tomorrow.
- 6) Unfortunately, much of what passes for Christian thinking, is swamped by a belief in the dilation of time.
- 7) Revealed language covering is a precondition for mental transformation.

- 8) The lacuna is the place of expanding human potential – not for presumptive action, but for faith and relationship with God. It is also the realm of supernatural activity on our behalf.
- 9) Later Mary and Joseph, given revealed language covering for Mary's pregnancy, would need that understanding for survival in coming events in their lives.
- 10) Perhaps the example of Zechariah and Elizabeth, in letting the revealed language covering define reality for them, would encourage Mary and Joseph when Gabriel spoke to each of them.
- 11) Revealed covering language delivers outcomes, results, and defines experience.
- 12) The power of God, not we, is responsible to produce coherence between the revealed covering language and material reality.

#### Part Four

- 1) Gabriel's words were shocking to Zechariah. That's because he was comfortable between his experience and his words. He wanted to know, "How?" He reminded Gabriel that he and his wife were old. Old people, in his experience, didn't have children. He used his natural covering language to explain that to the angel.
- 2) Time dilation told Zechariah that he could look back on the past, but it was far removed from the present; and the future seemed ever more distant.
- 3) Gabriel wasn't impressed with Zechariah's natural covering language, and shut down all language use by the old man until the lacuna contracted.
- 4) For all human beings, the sense impression of time dilation became a nexus for fear, worry, and discouragement.
- 5) God is calling each of us to an understanding that the lacuna is a time of testing. But the time between those two poles – promise and fulfillment—is collapsing, not dilating.
- 6) Mary's husband Joseph received dreams, and saw that time collapsed toward their fulfillment as he obeyed the instructions.
- 7) In verse 45, Mary received the news of her "impossible" pregnancy quite differently than Zechariah. She believed that what Gabriel said, would be accomplished, and was "blessed" for this. She used revealed covering language to look over the collapse of a lacuna to fulfillment, and this made her joyful, not fearful. Her tongue was not bound but freely gave some of the most rapturous praise in the Bible

#### Part Five

- 1) The concept of time dilating must be removed from our faith and our thinking.
- 2) The sequence would look like this: Revealed covering language forms faith as we accept that God is directly involved in the world and its events; to a lacuna that will inevitably contract; to a fulfillment that will surely take place at its "proper time."
- 3) If we operate on the assumption that time is dilating, we add a problem to the maintenance of our faith. We have to believe that time is non-dynamic.

- 4) We either believe the revealed covering language, or we don't. Either God is directly involved in events, or He is not. The shift to revealed covering language to assess and define reality for each of us won't happen if we don't believe He is involved.
- 5) This goes far beyond the concept of worldview. It provides a form of finality, safety and stability for the Christian.
- 6) Paul's ability to be content in all circumstances was based on revealed covering language. He looked back to the promise of Jesus of daily bread; of tomorrow having enough trouble of its own and thus not to worry; of a contracting lacuna that led to a fulfillment of earthly promises and a glorious heaven.
- 7) Thus, since Zechariah, Elizabeth, Joseph, and Mary were "righteous," then they must have been content, too.