

Revelation: The Structure of Representations (from Luke 1)
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From Luke 1:1-25. REVELATION: THE STRUCTURE OF REPRESENTATIONS
PART 1: EXACT TRUTH v.1-4.

#1. According to this text, there are two prerequisites to arrive at "exact truth" v.4. One is to achieve unity between the mind of God --> and the human mind. The other is to drive a kind of wedge between man and nature. Both of these are the dual and necessary functions of revelation.

#2. Proof of this is borne by the exchange between Gabriel and Zacharias that day in the temple while at the altar of incense v.11.

#3. The Angel Gabriel, a true spirit being, suddenly appeared to Zacharias as he offered service at the altar. What Zacharias had never seen, he saw.

#4. Gabriel reported that "the petition" (v.13) of Zacharias had been heard and that Elizabeth would bear a son. He was astounded. The reason was "they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both advanced in years" v.7.

#5. This son would be "great in the sight of the Lord" v.15. Zacharias was expected to believe this good news (v.20); but he did not.

#6. Belief would have put Zacharias in a state of unity with the mind of God. In order for him to believe all that was revealed, he would have had to put into question his trust in the natural. "Zacharias said to the angel, 'How will I know this for certain? For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years'" v.18.

#7. It is a sustained truth everywhere in Scripture that belief in the Word of God necessarily drives a kind of wedge between the mind of man and the natural order. Adam and Eve had the same immediate incline toward the natural (Genesis 3.) Abraham faltered precisely at this incline (Genesis 16.)

#8. Zacharias had difficulty with "exact (revealed) truth". That was a direct effect of not allowing unity of perception with God to drive a wedge between revelation and the experience of nature.

From Luke 1:1-25. REVELATION: THE STRUCTURE OF REPRESENTATIONS
PART 2: INDISPENSABLE POLARITY v.5-25.

#1. This text displays the genius of the Almighty. Revelation performs two functions by which one may apprehend "exact truth" v.4.

- (A) It creates a unity between the mind of God and the human mind.
- (B) And it necessarily drives a wedge between man and nature.

#2. These two dynamics reflect an *indispensable polarity*. Here is why. Once the unity between the mind of God --> and the mind of a man is in place, then, one will understand the natural order from that revealed perspective. There is no constraint imposed upon faith. It will put the wedge between man and nature in place. But if no wedge is placed then one will comprehend revelation from the standpoint of the natural order and one's experience of it: Zacharias' perspective.

#3. That is a big problem. It inhibits trust in God and His Word. The churches, some scholars and many believers are leveraged by what may be called *the historical problem*.

#4. The theory is that the Bible is antiquated to the degree that no reader can, with certainty, gain reliable truth from it. The idea is widely held.

#5. Under the umbrage of the historical problem, there is no motive to read the Bible. And so many of us do not.

#6. The destructive assumption is that human reason and man's affinity with the natural order is the only real source of meaning.

#7. The problem, we are led to believe, is the ancient Text. It is historically, culturally and linguistically too removed from our day. We have swallowed the bait.

From Luke 1:1-25. REVELATION: THE STRUCTURE OF REPRESENTATIONS PART 3: THE POWER OF GOD IN ABSENTIA.

#1. If the Word of God is not used to develop a unity of mind between God --> and man, then, no wedge will be driven between man and his experience of the natural order.

#2. This is not a new problem. Its first instance in time is found in Genesis 3. Later Abraham took the Hagar option (Genesis 16) because his understanding of the promises of God rested upon his experience of nature and its ways.

#3. In that, Abraham was disobedient to God. This is now the contemporary reading of the Bible. We are reading the Scripture and often hearing it preached from the perspective of common sense and the various levels of human lived experience. Human rational capacity and our experience is the privileged starting point for all things.

#4. Luke 1:1-25 contends that such an assumption and a practice is wrong. Gabriel's appearance to Zacharias was intended to challenge any comprehension of revelation based on human reason, wisdom and experience.

#5. Quite to the contrary, Gabriel expected the revelation given to Zacharias would serve as the new perspective on nature and the Lord's relation to it. This polarity is essential to the growth of real faith.

#6. "The angel answered and said to him, 'I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news' v.19.

#7. The relation of God --> to nature is the exercise of His power. Zacharias did not believe that. For him the power of God over nature was in absentia. This is what we, too, have come to believe.

From Luke 1:1-25. REVELATION: THE STRUCTURE OF REPRESENTATIONS
PART 4: ELIZABETH v.24, 25.

#1. Nature makes exorbitant claims on all of us. The demands of the natural order are almost impossible to ignore. Human reasoning is not unaffected by nature's imposing status in the human circumstance.

#2. Pursuant to the revealed will of God (v.13), Elizabeth "became pregnant" v.24. That state of affairs should have increased all known natural hazards. How is Elizabeth to comprehend the natural order of things? Did she think that faith and nature were two separate and independent spheres of interest?

#3. Because of her biological conditions of advanced age and barrenness (v.7), Elizabeth knew that *the parameters of nature had been greatly exceeded*.

#4. This woman concluded that she could not represent, even this very personal physical state of being, only in natural and experiential terms. "This is the way the Lord has dealt with me in the days when He looked with favor upon me, to take away my disgrace among men" v.25.

#5. Elizabeth did not deny natural reality. What she denied, by faith, was that nature was, in any way, independent of the power of God.

#6. Her pregnancy was the temporal effect of "the way the Lord has dealt with me". Zacharias' wife understood the natural order in terms of revelation. Neither nature nor her pregnancy were independent of the will of God.

#7. To the contrary, her physical state of being was waiting through many years to be quickened by the purpose of God. Nothing could stop it because of God's "favor upon me".

#8. Nature cannot and does not determine the reach of revealed meaning.

From Luke 1:1-25. REVELATION: THE STRUCTURE OF REPRESENTATIONS
PART 5: COROLLARY CONFRONTATION v.7-13.

#1. Zacharias and Elizabeth were called to and were put in position to *confront nature and natural forces, while standing on the foundation of revealed meaning*. They were going to have a

son, in spite of nature's objections v.13-17. In other words, there is always a state of contradiction between revelation and our experience of the natural order.

#2. Luke tells us that the unity of mind between the God of revelation --> and the believer determines the structure of representations regarding the natural order. Those representations always contradict the primacy of the experience of nature in human affairs.

#3. The Bible is replete in its presentation of the character of faith. Biblical faith concerns much more than differences between competing doctrinal positions. More than that, throughout Scripture, the practice of personal faith directly confronts our experience of nature.

#4. This state of contradiction is noticeably missing in the contemporary appreciation of the Word of God.

#5. There can be only one viable explanation for this. The preferred starting point for all reasoning must be capitalized by constraints posed by the natural order.

#6. Zacharias was, initially, prepared to believe the witness of Gabriel, providing there was an accommodation with nature. "Zacharias said to the angel, 'How will I know this for certain? For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years'" v.18. And then there is this, "...you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time" v.20.

#7. Zacharias, a priest, had to rethink the place of revelation in temporal and material existence. The Almighty sets the course.