

We have covered the preceding passages in which the angel Gabriel announced to Zechariah the coming of the messenger who would prepare the way for the Messiah (Malachi 3:1<sup>i</sup>). Six months later Gabriel told Mary that she would be the mother of the Messiah. Gabriel gave Mary a sign to encourage her faith. He told her that her elderly cousin Elizabeth was going to have a child. That was miraculous because of Elizabeth's age. It was a confirmation to Mary because it declared that God can do anything (1:37<sup>ii</sup>), even cause a virgin to give birth to the Messiah. Mary would have been eager to see this miracle and talk with Elizabeth about what it all meant.

*<sup>39</sup> In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah,* Luke 1:39 This pregnancy late in Elizabeth's life was like the miracle that God had done with the Abram and Sarah (Genesis 18:11-12<sup>iii</sup>). But an even greater miracle had taken place in Mary. Though she believed it, she hastened to see the confirmation. If Elizabeth truly was pregnant, then she had evidence that the miracle in her was true as well. And who else could she talk to about such an amazing thing? Who else would believe her?

The normal age of betrothal was between twelve and fourteen years of age. Imagine a girl of that age traveling eighty to a hundred miles on a four or five-day journey on her own. Maybe someone else from Nazareth was headed that way. We don't know, but even if it was so, it was quite a journey of faith. It was urgent that she see this miracle.

*<sup>40</sup> and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup> And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit,* Luke 1:40-41 It is impossible for us to completely relate to what these two women must have experienced. Both had received a miracle. The destinies of their babies were intertwined. One would announce the coming of the other. It was what Israel had waited and prayed for over the centuries now coming to pass in the wombs of these two seemingly insignificant mothers. If Satan was roaming the earth trying to find the women who would give birth to these two babies he wouldn't have looked twice at these two women. One was too old and the other almost too young and certainly insignificant in a worldly sense.

When Mary greeted Elizabeth, the baby in Elizabeth's womb leaped. The Greek word describes jumping or skipping for joy (John 3:29<sup>iv</sup>). Suddenly Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Have you ever met a Spirit filled believer for the first time and just knew this person was your spiritual brother or sister even if there was a language barrier? That is just a slight hint of what these two women experienced.

While the world went on its daily routine and everything seemed the same as the day before, something that would alter the future of mankind was quietly taking place in this humble home. The mother of the Messiah had met the mother of the Messiah's forerunner. The Holy Spirit filled Elizabeth to make an announcement that would echo throughout eternity. Isn't it marvelous how our all-powerful God works through the insignificant and by-passes the mighty and honored in this world (1 Corinthians 1:28<sup>v</sup>)?

It makes me wonder what world shaping things are going on completely unnoticed right now. **Never underestimate the effects from simple obedience in little things.**

A six-month-old fetus experienced emotion and reacted to the sound of a mother carrying a four or five-day old zygote in her womb. What does this tell us about abortion? Our culture lies to us and tells us these are merely potential human beings. They used to even say they felt no pain. Ultrasound forced them to quit telling that lie. Now they just don't tell the whole truth. Everything is done to make the mother feel abortion is the right thing to do. Look at the current outrage over the remote possibility that abortion might no longer be convenient with the new Supreme Court Judge. If the culture has deceived you, God knows, and He welcomes repentance and completely forgives. Here in this passage is the truth of the matter, and this world finds it to be intolerable. What a war is fought over life itself! It should open our eyes to the spiritual battle in the invisible realm.

*<sup>42</sup> and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!"* Luke 1:42 God assignments are a blessing, and each one we receive is a blessing. This was a unique blessing, and one that came at quite a cost. I imagine future believers sought her out to find out more about Jesus. Yet, I know Mary would be shocked to find people praying to her or considering her a co-redeemer as many in the Catholic Church do.

*<sup>43</sup> And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? <sup>44</sup> For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.* Luke 1:43-44 Elizabeth and all Israel were longing for the coming of the Messiah. Elizabeth knew by the Holy Spirit that Mary was carrying the One. She considered it a great honor that the mother of the Messiah would visit her. She also declared something that is often overlooked. Elizabeth knew Mary's womb contained her Lord! Elizabeth's Lord is the eternal God of Israel. She is agreeing with Isaiah's prophecy that the Messiah is Almighty God (Isaiah 9:6<sup>vi</sup>). His presence is in Mary, and Mary's God given assignment to raise Him is what made her special. John jumped for joy which made Elizabeth know it was the Messiah in Mary's womb. The Holy Spirit interpreted that leap, for Elizabeth knew John was filled with the Spirit even from the womb. That is why his response to Mary's voice spoke volumes (1:15<sup>vii</sup>).

*<sup>45</sup> And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."* Luke 1:45 Mary was also blessed because she believed what was spoken to her would come to pass. This is an important point! Faith in the Word of God brings a blessing. While we don't have the unique blessing of having her assignment, we can have the blessing of believing God's Word (John 20:29<sup>viii</sup>).

*<sup>46</sup> And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, <sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,* Luke 1:46-47 Mary had the confirmation she sought. These two women shared a secret that would change the world. In the little town of Ein Karen the seeds of a revolution that would sweep the earth with hope and life had found one another. The presence of the Holy Spirit must have been so overwhelmingly joyful that they felt their

hearts would burst, and indeed, Mary's did burst into a song of praise, called the *Magnificat*, Latin for "to magnify." It is so well structured and so sublimely theological that skeptics try to attribute it to the early church. Naturally they discount the work of the Holy Spirit speaking through Mary (2 Peter 1:20-21<sup>ix</sup>) and neglect the fact that she would have known the similar song of Hannah (see 1 Samuel 2), the mother of Samuel, as well as many of the psalms that were regularly sung in the synagogue.

She began where we should all begin, magnifying the Lord and rejoicing in God our Savior (Psalm 34:3<sup>x</sup>). To magnify the Lord with our soul means to think on His wonderful attributes and the great things He has done and give expression to it. When we magnify something, we enlarge it to see the details we had not seen before. We can't make God bigger than He already is, but we can look more closely to see things we had not previously appreciated. For example, we praise God for our salvation, which to us is mainly that we have been made right with God. Looking more closely we see a myriad of other wonderful benefits of salvation. Our life now has a purpose. We have a spiritual family that can relate to the miracle in us just as Mary and Elizabeth could relate to the miracle in one another. Our minds are being renewed. We have escaped the pattern of destruction the enemy of our souls had kept us in. I could go on and on. Take time to meditate on God's Word and works and magnify Him!

Mary's spirit rejoiced in God her Savior. While her mind, heart, and emotions were meditating on the wonder of the Lord and His goodness, her core, her innermost being, the intangible part of her that would endure when her body ceased to function, the depths of her being rejoiced in God her Savior. This tells us that Mary had the deep joy that only comes from the indwelling Holy Spirit. She knew God was the Savior of her soul, and she rejoiced in Him and in what she was slowly beginning to realize as His mighty power in her.

*<sup>48</sup> for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;* Luke 1:48 She rejoiced specifically in the fact that God would choose an uneducated peasant girl of no special standing from a little unsophisticated village (1 Samuel 1:11<sup>xi</sup>). Rejoice children of God that you can't be too lowly for God to choose you (Matthew 5:3<sup>xii</sup>). Where did we ever get the idea that God can only use seminary graduates, or that you have to know all the answers before you can share your faith, or that you have to have an incredible prayer life before God can direct you? Study, knowledge of the Word, and prayer are all important, but never forget Mary, and that God is near to the brokenhearted (Psalm 34:18<sup>xiii</sup>). What a humble simple girl and what a high and holy calling. Humility is essential if you would learn God's ways and be blessed. Yes, God can use even you and me for His glory. It is God that works in you both to will and to do His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13<sup>xiv</sup>).

Those who are in Christ are blessed! We are blessed in this life with spiritual riches and the fruit of the Spirit. And we have abundant blessings waiting for us (Matthew 25:34<sup>xv</sup>). That is why we too should be a rejoicing people.

Mary was truly blessed and those in every generation since have recognized the truth of her prophetic words. *Brown notes that the Vulgate's faulty translation gave rise to the medieval idea that "Mary had every gift, not only spiritual but secular, even above those given to angels," thus giving rise to the idea of Mary being a dispenser of grace, resulting in prayers being offered to her. The ultimate extension of this thinking came on December 8, 1854, when Pius IX declared the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, teaching that "From the first moment of her conception, the Blessed Virgin Mary was, by the singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, and in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of mankind, kept free from stain of original sin." That doctrine is a sad, totally unjustified distortion. Mary would have been scandalized at the thought. Karl Barth aptly responds, "Can such a figure meet with worse misunderstanding than that which happened to her in the Catholic church?"*<sup>axvi</sup>

*49 for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.* Luke 1:49 This is the reason she was blessed. It was that the mighty God (El Gibbor - Isaiah 9:6<sup>xvii</sup>) for whom nothing is too difficult did great things for her. The One whose name is holy had done one of the greatest miracles of the ages. The Word had become flesh in the multiplying cells in the womb of Mary. That is the greatest of miracles. Gabriel declared that the one in her womb will be called holy (1:35<sup>xviii</sup>), and here she declares God's name is holy! If the holy Word was incarnated (John 1:14<sup>xix</sup>) then all the miracles that He performed and the marvelous words He spoke are the result of this miracle. God stepped out of eternity and into His creation and became one of us.

*50 And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.* Luke 1:50 Mary continues with the reason she rejoices in God her Savior by pointing to His abundant mercy to all generations that fear/revere Him. That mercy was never seen more clearly than in the reason for the incarnation, for the baby in her womb had come for purpose of giving His life as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28<sup>xx</sup>), for those in the past who looked forward in faith to God's provision for their sins, and for us who look back to the work accomplished on the cross.

*51 He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; 52a he has brought down the mighty from their thrones* Luke 1:51-52a I don't know if Mary knew that "his arm" is a metaphor for the Messiah, but the Holy Spirit who inspired her certainly did. The Suffering Servant Song of Isaiah tells us the revealing of the arm of the Lord is the Messiah and asks to whom has He been revealed (Isaiah 53:1<sup>xxi</sup>)? The baby in her woman has appeared throughout the history of the Jewish people, sometimes as the Angel of the LORD, sometimes in human form, and even as a rock from which living water flowed in the wilderness (1 Corinthians 10:4<sup>xxii</sup>).

He has indeed scattered the proud, the kings and generals who thought they could easily conquer the Jewish nation. Those proud rulers thought their gods were mightier than Israel's God, but they soon learned that was not the case. Their armies and people scattered when God's arm was raised against them.

*52b and exalted those of humble estate; 53 he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.* Luke 1:52b-53 By contrast with bringing down the mighty, God has raised up the humble, like the shepherd boy David, and women in the Old Testament who were thought to be barren, but whom God made the mothers of men whom Israel would forever honor (Psalm 107:40-41<sup>xxiii</sup>). She is speaking of those in the past but also of herself. She was amazed that God would bring the Savior into the world through one so lowly as herself.

The hungry have been filled with good things. Jesus would later declare that those who hunger and thirst after righteousness would be filled (Matthew 5:6<sup>xxiv</sup>). It reminds me of the lepers who, during Syria's siege on Jerusalem, went out of the city knowing they might be killed. They were willing to risk it to keep from starving. Upon arriving they found the tents abandoned and an abundance of food. The lepers were the first to be filled and carried off gold and silver (2 Kings 7:8-9<sup>xxv</sup>). What an illustration of the sinner desperately turning to God for mercy and finding more than he ever hoped.

*But the rich He has sent away empty!* Herod the Great was the king during the time of our text. When Mary sang her song that region saw him as the mightiest person in the land, but he was suffering from paranoia and burdened with guilt. Hallucinations haunted him. He died a wretched mess a short time later. He was put in a magnificent tomb at the site of one of his architectural wonders, but within a century the tomb was smashed to pieces and his palace used to hide rebels.

*54 He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, 55 as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.* Luke 1:54-55 God had sent men of God to lead Israel against their enemies, and prophets to turn them back to God. *Now* He was helping the Israel of God by sending the Messiah, just as He promised throughout their history. He promised the patriarchs that He would bless the world through One who would come from their line (Genesis 12:3<sup>xxvi</sup>; 22:18<sup>xxvii</sup>). I imagine Mary was amazed at the words coming from her own lips.

*56 And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home.* Luke 1:56 Mary must have stayed to help with the delivery. What fellowship they must have had. They surely speculated on the future of these two babies in their wombs and praised God for choosing them. I wonder if they had access to an Isaiah or Malachi scroll and studied to see what lay ahead for them and what it would mean to the world.

Now we know what it means. It means God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16<sup>xxviii</sup>). What a humble beginning to an event that would change the destiny of mankind and open the door of salvation for all who will enter in! I hope you can magnify the Lord with Mary and rejoice in the God of your salvation because you know Jesus as your Savior. I hope you realize how lowly we all are and how God exalts us in Christ when we come to experience His mercy. If you haven't, you can experience these miracles today by asking Jesus to forgive you of your sins and be the master of your life. Then you will sing a new song too!

## Questions

- 1 Why did Mary make haste to go to Elizabeth?
- 2 How did Elizabeth know that Mary was the mother of the Messiah?
- 3 Who did Elizabeth declare Mary's child to be?
- 4 Why was Mary blessed?
- 5 How did Mary start her song? What can we learn from it?
- 6 What was Mary's blessing?
- 7 Whom did she declare is holy?
- 8 Why does God exalt the humble?
- 9 What happens to the proud?
- 10 How was God helping Israel and what promises were remembered?

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### **i Malachi 3:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> "Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.

### **ii Luke 1:37 (ESV)**

<sup>37</sup> For nothing will be impossible with God."

### **iii Genesis 18:11-12 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah. <sup>12</sup> So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?"

### **iv John 3:29 (ESV)**

<sup>29</sup> The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete.

### **v 1 Corinthians 1:28 (ESV)**

<sup>28</sup> God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are,

### **vi Isaiah 9:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

### **vii Luke 1:15 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.

### **viii John 20:29 (ESV)**

<sup>29</sup> Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

### **ix 2 Peter 1:20-21 (ESV)**

<sup>20</sup> knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.

<sup>21</sup> For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

### **x Psalm 34:3 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together!

### **xi 1 Samuel 1:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> And she vowed a vow and said, "O LORD of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head."

### **xii Matthew 5:3 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

### **xiii Psalm 34:18 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.

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xiv **Philippians 2:13 (ESV)**

13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

xv **Matthew 25:34 (ESV)**

34 Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

xvi Hughes, Kent, Preaching the Word – Luke, Volume I: That You May Know the Truth.

xvii **Isaiah 9:6 (ESV)**

6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

xviii **Luke 1:35 (ESV)**

35 And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.

xix **John 1:14 (ESV)**

14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

xx **Matthew 20:28 (ESV)**

28 even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

xxi **Isaiah 53:1 (ESV)**

1 Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

xxii **1 Corinthians 10:4 (ESV)**

4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.

xxiii **Psalms 107:40-41 (ESV)**

40 he pours contempt on princes and makes them wander in trackless wastes;

41 but he raises up the needy out of affliction and makes their families like flocks.

xxiv **Matthew 5:6 (ESV)**

6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

xxv **2 Kings 7:8-9 (ESV)**

8 And when these lepers came to the edge of the camp, they went into a tent and ate and drank, and they carried off silver and gold and clothing and went and hid them. Then they came back and entered another tent and carried off things from it and went and hid them. 9 Then they said to one another, "We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news. If we are silent and wait until the morning light, punishment will overtake us. Now therefore come; let us go and tell the king's household."

xxvi **Genesis 12:3 (ESV)**

3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

xxvii **Genesis 22:18 (ESV)**

18 and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."

xxviii **John 3:16 (ESV)**

16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.