

December 25, 2022

"Mary Rejoices"
Lesson 4 of Unit

Luke 1:46-55

Intro

Our study goes backward time-wise from our previous lessons. We have been looking at Jesus' coming by looking at Zechariah and John the Baptist. Today our Scripture passage comes from Mary's response to what Gabriel told her about her upcoming pregnancy. Though not specifically called a song, many look at this passage as similar to the songs of Moses and Miriam in Exodus. It is filled with praise. It is also similar to Hannah's prayer in I Samuel in its ideas and praise.

Read Luke 1:46-55

1. vs. 46: This song begins with praise, much like the Lord's Prayer does
 - Her soul "glorifies the Lord", indicating the entirety of who she is
 - She glorifies the Lord for choosing her to be a part of what He is doing
 - She doesn't know all of what this means yet, indicating her strong faith

2. vs. 47: Here Mary refers to her "spirit"
 - This is typical Hebrew writing to refer to the same thing in different words/phrases
 - This adds emphasis to what is being said
 - The two things aren't different here
 - She acknowledges God as Savior
 - He has rescued Israel multiple times in their history so far
 - This situation will involve a final, spiritual, rescue for all mankind

3. vs. 48a: Part of the reason for Mary's praise in vs. 46-47 is given here
 - God has paid attention to someone who has no right to claim His attention
 - Mary acknowledges her low situation (the word humble here refers to this)
 - God pays attention to all in His kingdom, even the "lowliest"
 - Mary's total situation is indeed "humble"
 - She is young, unmarried, and pregnant
 - She is from Nazareth, held in low regard by other Jews
 - Israel has frequently been under foreign rule, as they are now
 - God uses people who have a humble attitude to do His work
 - Mary placed herself in obedience to Him
 - "Behold the maidservant of the Lord"
 - "Let it be to me according to your word"

4. vs. 48b-49: Mary recognizes how she will be seen in the future
 - People will call her "blessed"
 - Not for anything she has done
 - She was chosen to carry the Christ child
 - A blessing totally unexpected and unlooked for!
 - God did this great thing for her, and she praises Him for it

Mary describes God as “holy”

God is morally perfect, at all times morally pure and upright

Such a contrast to sinful humanity!

Yet he calls us to become like Him and walk in moral perfection

5. vs. 50: In the previous verse, Mary describes what God has done for her

Here the focus changes to His mercy “to those who fear Him”

God is merciful to those who come to Him in humility, fearing His holiness

Not only will this apply to those who come to Him—

Mercy comes to those in succeeding generations who do the same

6. vs. 51: Mary continues her praise by noting a contrast in people’s attitudes and behaviors

Vs. 50 speaks of God’s mercy to those who fear Him

This verse says He scatters those “who are proud in their inmost thoughts”

These people disregard God and His authority

They rely on themselves: their ability, their power, their name

Note that it’s not just outward actions and words that show pride

These people are prideful “in their inmost thoughts”

God knows what they are thinking, even if the outside person seems humble

Mary’s song here shows prideful people as enemies to God

He will scatter them

7. vs. 52: This verse finishes the idea of how God deals with the proud

“He has brought down rulers from their thrones”

Even the greatest/mightiest in human terms is accountable to God

Great rulers to fail to acknowledge God’s hand are brought down

But God “has lifted up the humble”

God treats those who are humble as greater than kings and rulers

He lifts them up—gives them blessings and hope the proud don’t receive

8. vs. 53: God here accounts for the needy, but the rich don’t

God meets the needs of His people, and expects those with means to assist in this

When the rich and powerful meet only their own needs, God sends them away “empty”

People who are proud and selfish are not reflecting God’s standards

9. vs. 54: Mary’s song here highlights a key aspect of God’s relationship to His people

He is merciful to his servant Israel

Israel was created by God to be His servant

Israel is to be “a light to the Gentiles”

Israel is the means through which salvation comes to the world

God never forgets His promises to His people

He never forgets what He promised to Abraham

He will use Israel to bring salvation to all

Even when Israel (and we) have been unfaithful, God is merciful

He provided salvation for those who would receive it

10. vs. 55: Mary's song finishes with a recognition of the fulfillment of God's promise
God promised Abraham his descendants would be a blessing to all the earth
Jesus, a descendant of Abraham, will be the ultimate blessing to the world
Previously, to be descended from Abraham meant you were part of God's family
Now, faith in Jesus, Abraham's descendant, becomes the definition of belonging to God

Application: This passage reminds us that being proud of what one has accomplished does not lead to or define salvation. Frequently God uses the humble and insignificant in this world to carry out His will. God will humble those who exalt themselves, and exalt those who humble themselves.

Prayer: Father God, we recognize the need to be humble before You, to fear Your holiness and majesty. Help us to continually humble ourselves before You so that you can use us to accomplish Your plans for this world. In Jesus' name, Amen.