

The Magnificat

Mary, the mother of Jesus, travels far away to the hill country to visit her relative, Elizabeth, the mother of John, and here the destinies of the two boys intertwine. This is a marvelous scene of God's richest blessings to man and both women rejoice in God's supernatural intervention in the lives of one another. Mary and Elizabeth belong together at this point and Mary is eager to see what Gabriel had revealed to her while Elizabeth rejoices in the deep significance of God's gift to Mary. Both pregnancies were humanly impossible, but God has proven once again that what is impossible for man is **not impossible for God**. While the LORD has overcome the barrier of barrenness multiple times within the history of redemption, never has He produced a child within the womb of a woman like Mary – *ex nihilo* – out of nothing. Truly, a new creation is taking place and the whole world will never again be the same. Within Mary's virgin womb, the firstborn of the new creation has now begun and Elizabeth, filled with Holy Spirit, joyfully proclaims that Mary is the mother of her LORD – the mother of God (v. 43). For Mary and Elizabeth, the promised Messiah has arrived, but as we will all soon discover, there is much more taking place now that God has arrived on this desperate scene. Ever since the beginning of redemption when God promised Adam and Eve,:

Genesis 3:15 ¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

every young Hebrew girl has longed to be the bearer of the Promised Deliverer/Savior of sinful, broken man. Elizabeth testifies at Mary's appearance that she is "blessed among women" (v. 42) and she is blessed, who believed that there would be a **fulfillment** of what was spoken of the LORD (v. 45). It is this phrase that we want to pursue diligently this morning – she believed there would be a **fulfillment** of what was spoken of the LORD.

The immediate reference, revealed to Elizabeth by the Holy Spirit coming upon her, would be what the angel revealed to Mary in vv. 26-38 and how Mary faithfully received the angel's message as opposed to Zechariah's unbelief. But even what was revealed to this young teenager by Gabriel was foretold by the prophets thousands of years before Mary was born and God is now fulfilling in her that which was promised long ago. Elizabeth recognizes that God declares:

Isaiah 46:9-10 for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, ¹⁰ **declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done**, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,'

Elizabeth recognizes that what God has done in Mary's virgin womb is not merely a fulfillment of what was promised only days before, but the fulfillment of what God has been doing from the beginning of the creation of our world.

With Elizabeth's acknowledgment of Mary's blessedness, Mary sings, "My soul magnifies the LORD!" (v. 46), from which we get the title of this new Christian canticle, the *Magnificat*. We often hear in the worship wars today in American Christianity of the "praise song." It is entirely appropriate that all music before God be filled with praise to God but here you find Holy Spirit inspired pure praise music. Her song is filled with allusions to the Old Testament, especially those promises of God to the exiled people of a new exodus and a new Savior (v. 47) who will come to deliver Israel from their enemies. It is clear that Mary has memorized an enormous amount of Scripture which fills her singing before God. Mary's song parallels beautifully Hannah's song when God filled her barrenness with the child of hope, Samuel, who will come to prepare the way for Israel's previous deliverer – King David. Hannah also magnifies the LORD because through Samuel's anointing of David, God will bring salvation to Israel (1 Sam. 2:1).

Hannah acknowledges the uniqueness of the Savior of Israel (2:2) who will come to bring the proud and arrogant enemies of God's people low and exalt His humble servants to sit upon thrones (2:3-10). Hannah speaks of God's faithfulness to Israel. God has filled her barren womb with Samuel and Samuel will be sent ahead as a forerunner of the messiah – God's anointed king – who will bring peace to Israel. But King David will only be able to bring temporary peace, a peace that will come to an end within his own reign. Though David will be unable to bring about permanent peace and rest to God's people, the promise will not end with him. Under his reign, God will promise Israel a greater deliverer to come from David who will:

2 Samuel 7:11-16 make you [David] a house. ¹² When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴ I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, ¹⁵ but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away

from before you. ¹⁶ And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever."

What God promised David is now being fulfilled in Mary's body and this is what she believed and why Elizabeth calls her blessed of the LORD. God is not only giving David a son, but his son will be David's LORD. God is not only giving Mary a son, but her Son will be her LORD, God her Savior (v. 47).

But the allusions to King David fill not only Gabriel's pronouncement to Mary but the entire scene surrounding Mary's visit to Elizabeth. While Elizabeth reacts to Mary's visit, the baby John leaps for joy at the presence of His LORD even as King David leaped for joy before the ark of the covenant as it was transported to the city of David (cf. **2 Sam. 6:16**). As God's presence drew near to city where God had placed His name, David was filled with joy and danced before the presence of the true King of Israel.

God's promise is now being fulfilled in Mary's womb. As Mary has pondered Gabriel's proclamation she begins to unfold what God has done for her and through her, what God is doing for His people. Mary uses the language of "God's arm" (v. 51) which looks back to God's power in delivering Israel from the clutches of Pharaoh in the original exodus (cf. **Ex. 6:1-6**) but also is used by the prophets to speak of the new deliverance through a new exodus of Israel from exile (cf. **Ezek. 20:23; Isa. 51:5**). God's mighty arm is about to deliver Israel once again in the ultimate exodus of final and complete victory over their ultimate enemy: death. No other savior has ever done or ever will do again, what God is about to do through the birth of Mary's Son.

Mary also speaks of "God's remembrance" of His mercy (v. 54), which was promised to Abraham and his descendents forever. Mary rehearses God's promises throughout the history of redemption and weaves them together here to testify to God's faithfulness to Israel. She personifies Israel in Israel's "humble estate" (v. 48), which is now being looked upon by God's mercy to reverse the fortunes of God's people. In both His power towards Israel's enemies and His mercy toward Israel, God will now scatter the proud (v. 51) and strip the mighty of their strength (v. 52). The proud – the godless have no fear of God (v. 50) – they are neither hungry (v. 53) nor afflicted (vv. 48, 52) [contrast the Beatitudes; **Matt. 5:3-6**]. The arrogant are filled with anger towards God – they show no reverence for His HOLY name. They curse His name; they use His name in vain. Confident in their own achievements, they exalt themselves above others and have no need for God. In reversing the fortunes of Israel, God will also reverse the fortunes of the proud enemies of God's people. God doesn't show mercy to all; to some He shows justice.

God has promised this help to Israel not because they are worthy but because He remembers His promise and now He has intervened to deliver them:

Isaiah 41:8-13 ⁸ But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend; ⁹ you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, "You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off"; ¹⁰ fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. ¹¹ Behold, all who are incensed against you shall be put to shame and confounded; those who strive against you shall be as nothing and shall perish. ¹² You shall seek those who contend with you, but you shall not find them; those who war against you shall be as nothing at all. ¹³ For I, the LORD your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, "Fear not, I am the one who helps you."

Mary sums up the Mighty Acts of God in v. 49, He "has done GREAT THINGS" for me and "HOLY is His name." His name is HOLY because there is no god like God. He is HOLY; He is MIGHTY! The Holy One of Israel has drawn near to His oppressed people. The sun has risen upon those who sit in darkness (vv. 78-79). He has come to invade the shadow of death, break its chains upon His people, and give to them eternal life. But that mercy is not for Israel alone but for all who fear the HOLY ONE, from generation to generation (v. 50). This morning if you recognize your humble estate before God, mourn over your sins, and hunger for righteousness then God has sent His Son not only to Mary, not only to Israel, but to you! It is the HOLY ONE who comes to show you mercy. You better hope He shows you mercy, because you cannot stand before the HOLY ONE in your sinful estate. His mercy is not for everyone. His mercy is upon those who fear His HOLY NAME, who mourn over their sins before Him, who hunger for His righteousness which is given freely to those who rest in Jesus. He has come into this world to help you through Jesus Christ His Son because He has remembered His mercy which He promised to show to Abraham and his descendents and through him to all the nations of the world.

Truly as we now look at the blessed baby – the Holy One of Israel – God our Savior - in Mary's womb, our soul magnifies the LORD with our dear sister in Christ – we have come today to adore His HOLY NAME (to revere His HOLY NAME) from our soul – the very core of our being - our spirit rejoices in God our Savior for He has done GREAT THINGS for you through Jesus Christ His Son!

Amen!

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