

A Historical Study On The Book Of Luke
Teaching #12: The Motivation For Mary's Praise – Part One
(Luke 1:39-55)

Let's pick up in our study of Luke with Mary visiting Elizabeth after the angel Gabriel announced to Mary she would give birth to the Christ, the one to rule on David's throne to establish God's eternal kingdom of peace, righteousness, and justice (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Mary and Elizabeth's Celebration

1. Mary Excitedly Visits and Greets Elizabeth (Luke 1:39-40)

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth.

2. Elizabeth Exclaims Blessings To Mary (Luke 1:41-45)

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!"

Why is Mary blessed among all women?

- Mary is the one who would give birth to the Christ (Christ the Lord – see Luke 2:11) of the Jewish Scriptures.

The Christ is the anointed one of God who, according to the Jewish Scriptures, would come as Savior-King (Christ/Messiah) to save the world from their sins, bringing peace with God, and establishing God's eternal kingdom, bringing peace on earth - a kingdom of joy, righteousness, and justice (Isaiah 9:6-7).

-As **Savior**, the Christ would die for the sins of the world and rise from the dead, bringing peace with God (Isaiah 53).

-As **King**, the Christ would rule the earth with justice, bringing peace on earth (Isaiah 9:6-7).

The Jewish prophets spoke about the coming of the Christ/Messiah and carefully searched the Jewish Scriptures, trying to determine the timing of his arrival.

1 Peter 1:10-11,

*Concerning this salvation [through believing in Jesus], **the prophets** [the Jewish Prophets in the Jewish Scriptures], who spoke of the grace that was to come to you [the coming of the Christ to bring salvation],*

*searched intently [in the Jewish Scriptures] and with the greatest care, trying to find out **the time** and circumstances [when the prophecies would be fulfilled] to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted **the sufferings of the Messiah** [crucifixion] **and the glories that would follow** [resurrection and ascension – see Isaiah 53].*

Below are some of the prophecies and their fulfillments about the coming of the Christ/Messiah.

- A male child coming into the world to crush Satan (Genesis 3:15).
- An offspring-seed of Abraham who would bless the world (Genesis 12:1-7; 13:15; 24:7; 26:3-5; Romans 4; Galatians 3:16, 3:26-29)
- A leader like Moses to lead the people of Israel (Deuteronomy 15:18; Acts 3:22; Acts 7:37).
- A Savior-King (Christ) from the family tree of David who would establish God's kingdom on earth (Daniel 2:44; Revelation 11:15) and whose rule would establish justice, righteousness and peace throughout the whole world (Psalm 2; Psalm 89; Psalm 132:11; Acts 4:23-26; Isaiah 9:1-7; Luke 1:26-33; Jeremiah 23:5-6; 33:14-16; Zechariah 9:9-10).
- The King would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2-5; Matthew 2:3-6).
- The Spirit of the Lord will upon him to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Isaiah 62:1-2; Luke 4:16-21).
- The Messiah/Christ would be led like a lamb to the slaughter as a sin offering to justify many, bringing peace with God (Isaiah 53; Acts 8:26-35; Romans 3:21-24; 5:1-2).
- The Messiah/Christ would rise from the dead (Isaiah 53:11; Psalms 16:8-11; Acts 2:25-36; Acts 13:34-36).

Why are Mary and Elizabeth so passionate about the coming of the Christ/Messiah?

Finally, after around 4000 years since the first prophecy (Genesis 3:15) was made about a male child coming into the human race, born of a woman, to crush the head of Satan, it was revealed by the angel Gabriel that the woman to give birth to this child would be Mary.

Around 2000 BC, God selected Abraham to be the Father of the nation of Israel (Genesis 12:1-3), from which the Christ would be born (see Galatians 3). For 2000 years, Jewish women wondered who would be the one who God would bless (favor-grace) to bring the Christ into the world.

Elizabeth and Mary were taught the Jewish Scriptures from childhood by their parents and in their hometown synagogue. The prophecies of the Christ contained in the Scriptures were studied and taught in homes and synagogues. As a result, most of the Jewish people longed for the coming of the Christ and the day of his birth.

The question among the Jewish women was:

- **Who would be the blessed woman to give birth to the Christ?**
- **What woman would be favored or graced by God to give birth to the Christ?**

In the town of Nazareth, the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, telling her she would be the one to give birth to the Christ, the Savior-King.

Mary is the graced one!

This is why Mary and Elizabeth were **filled with overflowing joy** as they celebrated the soon birth of the Christ, and this is also why they were **filled with understandable humility** as they pondered their part in the Christ's birth.

What does God sending the Christ as Savior-King tell us about God?

- God has a plan to **reconcile** the world to himself and to **restore** the world to its goodness.

Through Jesus, God has **reconciled** (removed the sin barrier when Jesus took our sins to the cross) the world to himself – no counting our sins against us (2 Corinthians 5:18-21). Through faith in Jesus, we receive forgiveness (Acts 26:18; 13:38-39; 10:43) and are reconciled to God (are in relationship with God).

Through Jesus, God will **restore** the world to goodness when Jesus returns to rule as King from Jerusalem (Acts 1:6-7; 9-11; 3:20-21).

- God is fulfilling his plan through people, such as Elizabeth and Mary, and throughout history.
- God's continues to fulfill his plan as more and more people hear and respond the good news of his grace, freely given to us in Christ, by placing their faith in Jesus (Romans 3:21-24).
- God brings goodness into the world as believers allow the goodness of God to flow through us to others.
 - **Galatians 5:22-23** – goodness is a fruit of the Spirit; as we relate to God know he is good then his goodness will flow from us to others.
 - **Galatians 6:9-10** - don't grow weary in doing good, do good to everyone.
 - **Romans 12:12** – overcome evil with good.
 - **Ephesians 2:10** – God has prepared good works for us to walk in – as we walk through each day when can do good for others.
 - **Titus 2:11-14** – as we await the return of Jesus, we can do good works in this world.

With the background about the:

- **Expectancy** of the coming of the Christ among the Jewish people
and the
- **Wonder** among the Jewish women concerning who would give birth to the Christ...

...let's look at the praise of Mary toward God as the one who was blessed, favored, and graced by him to be the Jewish woman to give birth the Christ/Messiah.

Mary's Praise (Luke 1:46-55)

And Mary said:

"My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors."

Two Motivations For Mary's Praise

Motivation #1: Mary praises God because of what he did for her. (Luke 1:46-49)

Motivation #2: Mary praises God because of what he did for others. (Luke 1:50-55)

As we examine Mary's praise, we will learn her praise is filled with words and phrases from the Jewish Scriptures.

It is vital that we read Luke, and all of the Bible, through the lens of the culture, date, and covenant (testament) of the events being written about. It is also important to know the date of the writing.

Doing this will help us:

- **ACCURATELY** understand the Bible
- and
- **AVOID** misapplying the Bible

When we read the book of Luke (as well as Matthew, Mark, and John), we must remember it is immersed in First Century:

- Jewish Culture
- Jewish Customs
- Jewish Communication, and the
- Jewish Covenant of the old testament of law

By remembering this, we will be less likely to read into the book of Luke our own understandings and applications that miss how the original Jewish audience understood and applied what is contained in the book of Luke.

We must also remember that Luke wrote to confirm for Theophilus the validity of the events concerning Jesus (Luke 1:1-4).

So two good questions to ask throughout Luke may be:

Question #1: How did what I am reading confirm for Theophilus the validity of the life, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus?

Note: We are reading exactly what Theophilus read.

Question #2: How did it strengthen his faith?

Remember, Luke is researching the accounts of the life of Jesus by interviewing first hand eyewitnesses. He then organizes his research into book form and presents it to Theophilus for the strengthening of his faith.

It is highly probable Luke personally interviewed Mary, which explains why we have such details about her encounter with Elizabeth and such details about the other accounts surrounding the birth of Jesus, such as when he was taken to the temple to be circumcised in accordance with Jewish law (Luke 2).

We are examining the motivation for Mary's praise toward God in Luke 1:46-55. Mary likely recounted her praise to Luke.

Motivation #1: Mary praises God because of what he did for **her**. (Luke 1:46)

Mary begins her praise to God with two words...**My soul**.

My soul is how the Jewish people would refer to the deep, inner longings, feelings, and emotions within them.

- The phrase **my soul** is used about 110 times in the Jewish Scriptures (Genesis - Malachi).

In **1 Samuel 1:15**, Hannah stated, *"I was pouring out **my soul** to the LORD."*

In **Job 7:11** (see also Job 10:1), Job says, *"Therefore I will not keep silent; I will speak out in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of **my soul**."*

- The phrase **my soul** is used about 28 times in Psalms.

In **Psalms 6:3**, David writes, *"**My soul** is in deep anguish. How long, LORD, how long?"*

In **Psalms 23:1-3**, David writes, *"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want [my needs are provided for]. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores **my soul**."*

The Psalmist writes in **Psalms 42:1-4**, *"As the deer pants for streams of water, so **my soul** pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me all day long, "Where is your God?" These things I remember as I pour out **my soul**..."*

David writes in **Psalm 103:1**, “Praise the LORD, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.”

- The phrase **my soul** is used by Jesus 2 times (Matthew 26:37-39; Mark 14:34; John 12:27)

Jesus says in **Matthew 26:38-39**, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.” Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup [Jesus is referring to the cup of the new testament when he would pour out his blood for the forgiveness of sins. The cup is the painful persecution of Jesus before the cross and the painful death of Jesus on the cross to establish of the new testament of grace in his blood] *be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.* [It was the will of God – see Hebrews 10:9 – to establish the new testament of grace in the blood of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus was petitioning the Father for another way to establish the new testament other than through the painful crucifixion he would experience.]”

As we examine the Jewish Scriptures use of the words my soul and how Jesus used the words my soul, we learn that my soul is how the Jewish people would refer to the deep, inner longings, feelings, and emotions within them.

Mary was very familiar with the Jewish Scriptures and its many uses of the phrase my soul.

As a teenage girl, Mary would have heard the phrase my soul from her parents and many of the other Jewish people in her community and local synagogue. Now she is using the phrase my soul to describe the overflowing, internal joy she is feeling because God, in his mercy, selected her to give birth to the Christ of the Jewish Scriptures.

Mary verbally expresses her internal joy in **Luke 1:46**, when she says,

My soul glorifies [Greek word is *megalunó*, meaning to magnify, to enlarge...it is where we get the word **mega** from such as megaphone] *the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior...*

The original Greek manuscripts reads this way: *And said Mary, “Magnifies the soul of me the Lord.”*

So is Mary saying:

- *the Lord magnifies my soul*
- or
- *my soul magnifies the Lord*

Luke 1:46 is consistently translated as either *praises, glorifies, exalts, or magnifies*. The correct translation is *magnifies*.

Some translations read, such as the NIV:

And Mary said, "My soul glorifies [the Greek word, *megalunó*, is **not** glorifies...it is magnifies] the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.

The accurate translation is **magnifies**.

First, let's examine *the Lord magnifies my soul*.

In the original Greek, it is possible Mary is saying *the Lord magnifies my soul*.

It is the Lord who is doing the magnifying.

Therefore, **Luke 1:46** could be translated as...

Mary said, "The Lord magnifies my soul."

It is much like in Psalm 23:3 when David wrote, "*He [the Lord, my Shepherd] restores [refreshes] my soul.*"

David's soul was not restoring the Lord, but it was the Lord who was restoring David's soul (an internal refreshing by the Lord who was David's shepherd).

It could be the same in **Luke 1:46**.

It is not Mary's soul that is magnifying the Lord; rather, it is the Lord who is magnifying Mary's soul, meaning the Lord is filling Mary's heart with overflowing joy because she will give birth to the long-awaited Messiah/Christ (Savior-King).

To Greek word for magnify is *megalunó*. This is the word Mary used.

Megalunó means to enlarge or increase in greatness, such as with a magnifying glass.

It is possible that Mary is saying the Lord God is enlarging her internal joy by filling her with continual joy because she will give birth to the long-awaited Christ.

I am sure Mary had experienced many of the emotions of the soul described in the Jewish Scriptures. Maybe her soul needed to be restored and refreshed like David's soul. Maybe her soul had been downcast, discouraged, and filled with anxiety, as many of the Jewish people were, as they awaited, under Roman occupation and control, the arrival of the promised Messiah. We get a glimpse of this discouragement in Luke 24 with the two men on the road to Emmaus (prior to talking with Jesus) and a glimpse of joy in Luke 2 with Anna and Simeon.

It is possible the news from Gabriel about the coming of the Christ, the Messiah, had filled Mary with joy. As a result, she rejoiced in God her Savior because her soul, her inner being, was filled with joy.

Now let's look at the other possible translation: *my soul magnifies the Lord*.

With this translation, it is Mary who is magnifying the Lord, showing the Lord's greatness.

Mary's soul is rejoicing greatly in the Lord God her Savior.

She recognized, like all of the human race, she needed a Savior (see John 4:42; Romans 3:23; 5:12-21).

Mary had continual joy (rejoices) overflowing from within her to God her Savior.

The words **God** and **Savior** are used together throughout the Jewish Scriptures.

For a few examples, see 1 Chronicles 16:35; Psalm 24:5; 25:5; 65:5.

Other examples are:

Psalm 42:5

*Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, **my Savior and my God.***

Isaiah 45:21, which reads,

*And there is no God apart from me, a righteous **God and a Savior**; there is none but me.*

Paul and Peter both used the words God and Savior together.

Paul used God and Savior in: 1 Timothy 1:1; 2:3; 1 Timothy 4:10; Titus 1:3-4; 2:10, 13-14; 3:4

Titus 2:10-11

*...in every way they will make the teaching about **God our Savior** attractive. For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people.*

Titus 2:13-14

*while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of **our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ**, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.*

Titus 3:4

*But when the kindness and love of **God our Savior** appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.*

2 Peter 2:1

*Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who through the righteousness of **our God and Savior Jesus Christ** have received a faith as precious as ours:*

Paul and Peter, like Mary, were both Jewish. Therefore, they were very familiar with the combined words of **God our Savior**. They, too, like Mary, would have read about *God our Savior* in the Jewish Scriptures as well as heard about *God our Savior* in the Jewish communities and synagogues they were raised in as children.

We are examining Mary's motivation for her praise to God while with Elizabeth.

Motivation #1: Mary praises God because of what he has done for **her**. (Luke 1:46-49)

Motivation #2: Mary praises God because of what he has done for **others**. (Luke 1:50-55)

Let's return to **Luke 1:46-49** as we continue to examine:

Motivation #1: Mary praises God because of what he did for her. (Luke 1:46-49)

My soul glorifies [magnifies] the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for [because] he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name.

Mary's motivation for rejoicing is seen in and after the word **for**, when she says,

...for [because] he has been mindful [to look upon with special attention] of the humble state [condition] of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name.

Mary rejoices because:

1. God has been mindful of her humble state, his servant. (Luke 1:48)

- Mary did not see herself as more special than the other Jewish women but as a servant of God who considered it an honor to be used by God to carry out his plan. God looked upon her with special attention (mindful) when he chose her to give birth to the Christ.
- Mary was not boasting that God chose her because of her merits, but she was praising God because he chose her because of his mercy.
- Mary was astonished that God would choose her to give birth to the Christ.

Mary also rejoices because,

2. God had done great things for her (Luke 1:49).

- He graced Mary by selecting her to be the mother of Savior-King, the Christ/Messiah.
- All generations will call Mary the blessed one, the favored one, the graced one.

Before the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, all of the previous generations wondered who the blessed one would be. Now all future generations know that Mary is the blessed one, the one God favored or graced because of his mercy.

Let's end this study by examining, what Mary meant by *holy is his name*.

The word name in the Jewish Scriptures means a person's reputation and character.

Proverbs 22:1 says, "A good *name* is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold."

So when Mary says, "*Holy is your name,*" she is referring to the character of God.

She is saying that God's character is holy.

What is the Holy character of God?

It is highly likely that Mary was thinking about Isaiah 57:17 when she stated, "*Holy is your name.*"

Isaiah 57:17 seems to be reflected in her praise.

Isaiah 57:15 (Berean Standard Bible), says,

*For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, **whose name is Holy**: "I dwell in a high and holy place, and with the oppressed and humble in spirit, to restore the spirit of the lowly and revive the heart of the contrite.*

Mary and her family were oppressed under Roman rule and control. Yet they remained humble as they awaited God to send the Christ. Upon the news of the coming of the Christ, Mary was inwardly restored and revived, much like Isaiah 57:15 describes.

God, the one who dwells in a high and holy place, also dwells with the oppressed, the humble, the weak, the discouraged, and those who have a broken, contrite heart.

It is very possible, because of Mary's reference to Isaiah 57:15, that she was weak, discouraged, down, and had a broken, contrite. She could relate to Isaiah 57:5. Though we do not what she may have been experiencing at the time, we do know her soul was revived with Gabriel's announcement, causing her to rejoice in God her Savior.

But still, what does Isaiah and Mary mean by his name is holy?

The Greek word used for the word ***holy*** in Luke 1:49 means to *set apart from the others*.

This mean that there is no one like God. He is the God of goodness, compassion, and mercy.

This is his holy character.

Exodus 33:19

*And the LORD [Yahweh] said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you [Moses], and **I will proclaim my name**, the LORD [Yahweh], in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.*

Yahweh is merciful.

Deuteronomy 4:31 speaks of the mercy of God, the mercy of Yahweh.

For the LORD your God is a merciful God; he will not abandon or destroy you or forget the covenant with your ancestors [the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob], which he confirmed to them by oath.

Yahweh is the God who will not abandon or destroy Israel.

He is the merciful God who will not forget the covenant he made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

This covenant was the covenant God made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob where he would make them into a great nation. We know this nation as Israel. Through Israel, specifically the Christ (Jesus) the nations of the world would be blessed (see Genesis 12:1-3; Leviticus 26:42, 45; Galatians 3).

It is highly likely that Mary is remembering Deuteronomy 4:31 as she speaks forth her praise, declaring God's name as Holy – the **merciful, compassionate** God who helps Israel and **remembers** the promise he made to Abraham and his descendants.

She concludes her praise in **Luke 1:54-55**, by saying God has been merciful to the people of Israel, faithfully remembering them just as he promised. This references back to Deuteronomy 4:31.

Luke 1:54-55

"He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors [Genesis 12:1-3; 15:5; 17:7; 19; Exodus 33:1]."

To fully understand the motivation for Mary's praise, we need to understand her Jewish heritage, her Jewish ancestors, her Jewish Scriptures, and the Jewish promises (covenants) contained in these Scriptures.

Remember, the nation of Israel was under Jewish occupation, rule, and control when Gabriel appeared to Mary and announced to her she would give birth the Christ.

At this point in time, Jewish people were wondering if God had forgotten them and the promises he made to their ancestors. Mary heard discussions in her home and synagogue concerning if God had forgotten Israel and his promises to them. It is possible, with all the Roman soldiers around, that Mary, too, began to wonder if God had forgotten Israel. Although Mary and the Jewish people were expecting the Christ, it had been hundreds of years since they heard from God. Doubt was surely sneaking into their souls.

However, because of Gabriel's announcement to Mary, she declared that God had not forgotten Israel and the promises he made to their ancestors. This announcement produced in her the motivation for her praise.

Next week, we will continue to examine the **Motivation For Mary's Praise** as we study the rest of Mary's praise.

Thanks for being a part of this Bible study!

All verses are NIV unless otherwise noted.

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