

MAGNIFY THE LORD

What's a magnifying glass for? To make things larger? Or to appear larger? It helps you see things more clearly. As Mary receives a promise to bear the Son of God, she responds by magnifying the mighty, merciful, miracle-working Most High God. Listen as Mary pours out personal praise in Luke 1:39-56, with the key phrase, "*He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name.*"

1- THE LORD CAN DO MIRACLES, as the means of His will, with method and meaning. A miracle is a temporary suspension of physical laws of the universe, so that a miraculous occurrence is not explainable by natural laws. Yet, even God's miracles occur within the frame of ordinary human history. So Mary will have a normal pregnancy, as will her cousin Elizabeth, though they are caused by the hand of God. But Mary's will conceive miraculously by the Holy Spirit, while Elizabeth will do so naturally by Zechariah.

After the angel's announcement to Mary, she visits Elizabeth, who had also received a visitation from God, and is also pregnant. This is an example of the appropriateness of sharing news with one another in Christian fellowship, to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice. As Malachi 3:16 says, "*those who feared the Lord spoke with one another, and the Lord heard them.*" RK Hughes notes, "in Christ, believers are linked with people of mutual belief, mutual experience, mutual hope. We must purposely place ourselves deep within the fellowship of those who also believe God's Word."

2- THE LORD IS MERCIFUL IN HIS GRACE. Elizabeth and Mary were providential blessings to one another, in their mutual joy. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and "*exclaimed with a loud cry, blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.*" This leap was not a normal kick, but an upward vault.

John's leap in the womb was like a calf leaping from a stall (Malachi 4:2). It was evidence of the Holy Spirit, as the angel said in Luke 1:15 "*he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.*" This leap was John's first act of joyfully preparing the way for the Christ, even as in John 3:29 he announces the Lord Jesus Christ and says, "*therefore this joy of mine is now complete.*"

3- THE LORD IS MAGNIFICENT IN HIS WORKS. Both infants give marvelous testimony to the fact that human life begins at conception. John's heart began beating at 3 weeks old. At 6 months he was about 1.5 pounds and 9 inches long, a distinct person with his own DNA, capable of remarkable perception, able to feel joy and to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Elizabeth addresses Mary as "mother" even though she had conceived only days before by the Holy Spirit, and did not show any outward sign of pregnancy. As Job 10 and Psalm 139 testify, human beings "*are fearfully and wonderfully made*" in the womb. If either John or Jesus would have been aborted at this point, it is scientifically obvious that neither were "potential" human beings but distinct human persons, formed in the image of God, by divine design.

Elizabeth, prompted by the Holy Spirit, without information from Mary, says "*blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.*" Elizabeth is a picture of God's people in the Old Testament, awaiting His promise, which is represented by Mary who is pregnant, in the fulness of time. RC Sproul notes, "Elizabeth is old and barren, Mary is young and virginal. Both of them are to bear children; one to be the herald of the King, the other to be the King Himself." And both agree, "*every tongue shall confess Jesus Christ as Lord*" (1 Corinthians 12:3, Philippians 2:11).

4- THE LORD IS MAGNIFIED & EXALTED & extolled in His people by the Holy Spirit. Our words do not make God greater, but we emphasize and lift up the Lord, so that we personally appreciate, reverence, fear and worship Him, as He is. Mary continues her personal reaction to all this divine miraculous activity, in the pattern of a psalm, being thankful. Psalm 103 says "*bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name, forget not all His benefits.*" Mary's words in Luke 1:46-55 are called the "Magnificat," the first of three hymns, including the Benedictus 1:65-79 and the Nunc Dimittis 2:29-32.

Mary exults, "*my soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for He has looked on the humble estate of His servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed.*" Pouring out her soul, Mary responds in gratitude, as the character and actions of God are exalted, praised and proclaimed by His people. "*The Lord*" means the sovereign Most High God who gave her great promises. "*God my Savior*" is the One who can save, and Mary confesses her need for a Savior.

5- THE LORD IN MARY'S HYMN. Inspired and recorded by the Holy Spirit, her words contain remarkable theological content. RC Sproul notes, "The essence of theology is grace; the essence of Christian ethics is gratitude." Mary cries out in gratitude, in everlasting expression of thanksgiving to Almighty God.

JC Ryle observes, "when out of the abundance of her heart her mouth spoke, she gave vent to her feelings in Scriptural language. Moved by the Holy Spirit to praise, she chooses language the Holy Spirit had already consecrated and spoken." What a pattern for us! As Colossians 3:16 says, "*let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, in thankfulness.*" As you reflect on all that God is and has done, humbly and joyfully exalt Him as you express your personal thanks to Him! ☐