

Commentary on Luke 1:46-55

By L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Series*) for **Sunday, December 25, 2011**, is from **Luke 1:46-55**. Five **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse by verse [International Bible Lesson Commentary](#) below. The **Study Hints for Thinking Further**, which are also available on the [Bible Lesson Forum](#), will aid teachers in class preparation and in conducting class discussion. For additional **International Bible Lesson Commentaries**, see the complete and comprehensive [International Bible Lessons Commentary Index](#). The weekly [International Bible Lesson](#) is posted each Saturday before the lesson is scheduled to be taught at <http://InternationalBibleLessons.org> and in [The Oklahoman](#) newspaper.

International Bible Lesson Commentary

Luke 1:46-55

(Luke 1:46) And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord,

After Mary learned she would give birth to the Messiah, she travelled to visit Elizabeth, who would give birth to John the Baptist. She went to visit Elizabeth when Elizabeth was 6 months pregnant and stayed for 3 months. They would be of help to each other, for John was Elizabeth’s first child and Mary was pregnant with her first child, Jesus. Mary learned more about the miraculous conception of John, and Mary told Elizabeth about the angel who appeared to her. After they met, the Holy Spirit inspired Mary to offer this song of praise. Some traditionally have called this song “The Magnificat” : Latin for “magnifies” and the Canticle of Mary. The Holy Spirit gave her an enlarged view of God and His loving purposes.

(Luke 1:47) and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

Mary bowed before God as her Lord when she received the angel’s message. She rejoiced in God because she knew she needed a Savior from sin too (though some churches teach that Mary never sinned throughout her entire life). Though Mary lived right and could be considered righteous, she knew she was not sinless and needed a Savior. She would always need God the Father and God’s Son, Jesus the Messiah, to be her Savior. God also saved her from disgrace and poverty (after the angel told Joseph that Jesus had been conceived by the Holy Spirit). Mary probably had the traditional conception that the Messiah would save her and her people from the slavery of Roman oppressors. She may have also meant this when her spirit rejoiced in “God my Savior,” but the Holy Spirit over time revealed more than this through Jesus’ ministry and the Bible.

(Luke 1:48) for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

Mary was humble. She was not from a wealthy family. She lived in a small town, Nazareth, in Galilee (an area many Jews despised). She acknowledged that even though she was of low estate that God had treated her with divine favor by choosing her to give birth to God's only Son, Jesus the Messiah. She also spoke a prophecy about herself and how she would be regarded in the future. Even today, more than 2,000 years later, people call her blessed.

(Luke 1:49) for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

Mary called God her Lord and Savior; the expression of her faith and desire to obey God. She serves as an example for everyone, and upon reflection all believers can say the Mighty One has done great things for me. She recognized the Lord as the Mighty One, and humbly praised God in total amazement that He had done many great things for her. Through the gift of Jesus Christ, God has done great things for multitudes of people around the world. She affirmed what the Bible teaches about God; that God is holy and what he does is holy, pure, right, just, and loving. God always expresses His love with holiness and purity.

(Luke 1:50) His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

Through faith in Jesus the Messiah, Who was born of the virgin Mary, even we can receive mercy, forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life, even generations after His coming. Fear means reverent obedience, with an understanding of the consequences of disobedience. Fear can also move us to seek the mercy of God.

(Luke 1:51) He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

The Holy Spirit inspired Mary to proclaim what God has done in the past and will do in the future. God, who created all things by the Word, has the strength to do whatever He needs to do. Historically, God defeated the proud kings and armies that attacked Israel, and God would do the same with Rome after a time. God also confused the thoughts in their proud hearts so they would do things that would humble them, which scattered and weakened them.

(Luke 1:52) He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;

Mary knew that God would bring down the powerful, because she knew the history of Israel and the history of some of the nations around them that had fallen to the mighty Roman armies. She also knew that the Messiah, the King of Israel, would lift up the lowly as the Ruler of His people and the conqueror of the

enemies of her people. Mary knew from the defeat of Pharaoh in the day of Moses and the taking possession of the Promised Land by Joshua that God had defeated many powerful pagan kings and met the needs of His people. Jesus lifted up the lowly fisherman and tax collector to be His disciples and apostles, and He healed the leper and raised the dead. Someday, every world leader will bow before Him.

(Luke 1:53) he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

Jesus preached and filled the crowds with good teachings and truth as He spoke with an authority unlike any they had heard. He filled some of the crowds with fish and bread after He had taught them, for His teaching was more important than physical food and was given to those who valued His teaching so much they stayed to listen to Him for long hours at a time. Jesus said it was hard, but not impossible, for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven, and during His ministry most of the rich and powerful ignored Him (until they killed Him).

(Luke 1:54) He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,

Mary recognized the proper relationship between God and Israel, and the promises God had made to her people. He was the Lord of the whole community of Israel, and Israel was His servant. She acknowledged that Israel had sinned against the Lord as a nation many times, and that as His servant they did not deserve or merit His care; however, God is a God of mercy as well as justice and holiness; therefore, God sent the merciful Messiah to save them.

(Luke 1:55) according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

God sent Jesus to Earth, not because we deserve His being sent by God, but because God made a promise to Abraham and his descendants forever, and this promise relates to our needing a Savior. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Mary's song traced the conception of Jesus in her womb to the promise of God that the whole world would be blessed by His descendant, by the Seed who would bring the blessing of salvation from sin and the gift of eternal life.

Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. How can a magnifying glass help you? How can the Bible serve as a type of magnifying glass? How can your soul magnify the Lord? How can your magnifying the Lord help others?
2. Why does Mary rejoice in the fact that God is her Savior (see Luke 1:47)?

3. How might you explain Mary's prophecy in Luke 1:48 in such a way that you could show someone that God fulfills prophecy, even today?
4. In what ways does Mary talk about the mercy of God? According to Mary, what type of people will receive God's mercy? Why do you think these types of people will receive God's mercy? Do you qualify?
5. Why do you think Mary mentions God's promise to Abraham?

Write your comments, suggestions, and thoughts on the [Bible Lesson Forum](http://biblelessonforum.com/) at <http://biblelessonforum.com/>. Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson* at [International Bible Lessons](http://internationalbiblelessons.org) at <http://internationalbiblelessons.org>.

— © Copyright 2011 by L.G. Parkhurst, Jr. Permission Granted for Not for Profit Use.