

International Bible Lessons Commentary

Luke 1:46-56

International Bible Lessons
Sunday, December 8, 2013

L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

The **[International Bible Lesson](#)** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, December 8, 2013**, is from **Luke 1:46-56**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary* below. **Study Hints for Thinking Further**, a study guide for teachers, discusses the five questions below to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion; these hints are available on the *International Bible Lesson Commentary* website. The weekly *International Bible Lesson* is posted each Saturday before the lesson is scheduled to be taught and in *The Oklahoman* newspaper.

International Bible Lesson Commentary

Luke 1:46-56

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

When Mary greeted Elizabeth, she told Elizabeth that her unexpected visit involved her new relationship to the Lord. Mary had come to her because of what the Lord had said and done for her through the words of the angel and the overshadowing power of the Holy Spirit; therefore, her soul (or her mental abilities and powers) now had a greater or larger understanding of how magnificent the true God is. Now, she wanted to share her greater knowledge of the Lord with Elizabeth. To magnify an object with a microscope or a telescope does not change the object we enlarge. When we enlarge an object, we can see it better and understand more about it, and we can then teach others what we have learned. When Mary magnified the Lord, she did so because God had enlarged her understanding of the Lord; so, she could now help others learn more about the Lord through her words that magnified the Lord. Her words in no way changed or distorted the true nature and character of God; rather, her words revealed that God had given her a better understanding of the true God and His purposes. She saw God in greater detail.

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

Mentally, Mary understood some new truths and part of the future that God planned for His people through her Son. She understood better than she had ever understood before, because of the direct revelation to her from the angel and the miraculous conception of Jesus through the work of the Holy Spirit; therefore, her spirit rejoiced in

God her Savior. Her spirit was the point of contact between herself and the Spirit of God. The Apostle Paul wrote that the Holy Spirit bears witness to our spirit that we are children of God (Romans 8:16). Mary's spirit rejoiced because the Spirit of God had revealed to her that she needed a Savior, that God was her Savior, and that she would give birth to the Son of God, the Savior of the world. Created in the image of God and as a child of God spiritually, Mary would physically give birth to the only begotten Son of God. Through faith in Jesus, many would be adopted into God's family.

(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 declared with humility that she did not know of any personal qualities she had as reasons for God selecting her to serve Him. God had His own reasons for selecting her to perform a once in a lifetime task in the world and to bear His only begotten Son. God had prepared her and selected her for reasons of His own. God selected her and revealed to her that everyone from that time forward would call her blessed. Her statement was a prophecy that God inspired her to share, and her fulfilled prophecy is a fact that we can verify more than 2000 years later — God fulfilled His word through her in many ways.

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

At this point in Mary's praise of God, the "Mighty One" is an appropriate name or title for God. God had done for her what had never been done before, and God had done so in holiness. "Holy is His name" describes the essential reality of God's character; so, the Holy Spirit conceived Jesus in Mary's womb and Jesus was a holy child of God. Jesus was not conceived as the Greek and Roman "gods" of mythology or modern fiction supposedly conceived children that were half god and half human. Holiness is at the heart and foundation of God's character and behavior. God always does what is morally right, and God did not violate His moral law in the conception of Jesus.

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

Mary knew that she did not deserve God's selection of her to be the mother of the Messiah. Rather, she believed and the Holy Spirit inspired her to declare that her selection was the result of our Holy God extending grace and mercy to her and to every person who fears or has reverence for God in their hearts. Respect for God (and sometimes fear of the consequences of disobeying God) has led many to seek God's forgiveness and mercy as their Savior. From the beginning, God has shown special mercy to those who respect Him as their holy God. God is truly God our Savior.

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

Mary praised some of the qualities of God that God had demonstrated in the past from generation to generation. God had shown His strength in the Israelites' exodus from Egypt through the leadership of His prophet Moses. God had shown His strength through King David, the king after God's own heart (who wanted to know God's will so he could do God's will). God had shattered the proud as they sought to conquer or enslave others; such as, Pharaoh in Egypt or King Ahab and Jezebel in Israel. Mary foretold that Jesus would show the strength of God in defeating God's enemies. Jesus cast out demons and led some of the enemies of God to salvation; such as, the Apostle Paul. God's Son would scatter the proud, whose actions would demonstrate their true thoughts (such as the true thoughts of the religious leaders who crucified Jesus). Jesus will show the world the strength of God's arm when He comes again as Lord of lords.

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

Some of God's leaders in the past had brought down the powerful from their thrones (King David defeated many enemies of God's people). Some had lifted up the lowly; such as Elijah when he helped the widow at Zarephath (see 1 Kings 17). As others had done before Him, the Messiah who would soon be born would bring down the powerful from their thrones who in their pride defied or disregarded God, God's laws, and God's will for His people. The lowly would be blessed and made happy as they opened their hearts to receive His grace, mercy, forgiveness, and love. Jesus the Messiah would lift up the lowly to serve God; people who had once fished for fish would learn to fish for people. Despised sinners would be transformed and become the Messiah's disciples.

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

As Mary foretold the future of the Messiah, she did so with the certainty that the future had already been accomplished by Jesus; such was the faith that the Holy Spirit inspired within her to confess. Bible students can remember how the people were amazed when Jesus taught with authority unlike others; how Jesus fed 5000 with five loaves of bread and two fish from a little boy's lunch. They can remember how Jesus felt sad when the rich young man turned away from Jesus rather than obey Him and follow Him.

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

God made a covenant promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God remembered that promise when in mercy God led the Israelites out of Egypt and into the Promised Land. He led them out, not because they deserved to be freed from slavery, but because of His mercy and His past promises. God remembered His mercy from generation to generation as He worked through judges, kings, and prophets to save His people from various forms of slavery or sin. Now, in remembrance of His mercy, God would help

Israel again through the Messiah that the Holy Spirit had conceived within Mary. Jesus would be their Savior, and the Savior of the world.

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

God had promised that all the nations of the world would be blessed by the descendants of Abraham. His mercy was not limited to the nations of Israel or Judah. God called the descendants of Abraham to share God’s mercy with all people everywhere, but where they failed God would succeed through their descendant, Jesus. Jesus, Messiah and Savior and a descendant of Abraham, came to extend the offer of God’s mercy and forgiveness with all people – through faith in Jesus anyone can be saved from their sins and inherit everlasting life.

(Luke 1:56) And Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

Luke concluded Mary’s words with the note that she probably remained with Elizabeth until John the Baptist was born. Carrying the baby Jesus within her womb, Mary went back to her own home because she was not yet married to Joseph – only pledged to be married to Joseph. Her report to Joseph about her visit to Elizabeth and John’s birth to Zechariah and Elizabeth in their old age would encourage both of them that God was with them as they agreed to share life together as the parents of Jesus.

Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What truths in Luke 1:46-56 have been magnified for you as you have studied this lesson so you understand these truths of God better?
2. When someone first realizes that God is their Savior through Jesus, what new reasons do they have for rejoicing in God?
3. When someone has followed Jesus as their Lord and Savior for a long time, what additional reasons might they have from experience for rejoicing in God?
4. What type of person does Mary say God will be merciful toward?
5. What are some of the actions God will take to help those He will be merciful toward?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson*.
 – © Copyright 2013 by L.G. Parkhurst, Jr. Permission Granted for Not for Profit Use.