

**Gracia a Vosotros ::** *desatando la verdad de Dios, un versículo a la vez*

## **Mary's Magnificat**

Scripture: 1 Samuel 1:11; 1 Samuel 2:1–10; Luke 1:41–55

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Imagine how Mary must have felt when she was told by an angel that she would be the parent of the long-awaited Messiah—that she'd be responsible for raising and nurturing her Savior. How do you think you'd respond?

You'd no doubt find the responsibility overwhelming and intimidating. You might be instantly overcome with worry. You might even attempt to respectfully decline the position altogether.

That's why Mary's response to the angel's prophecy in Luke 1:28-35 is so remarkable. She was just a young woman—a girl, really—but she reacted with the grace, wisdom, and spiritual maturity of a seasoned saint.

## **Meeting with Elizabeth**

Mary, filled with joy and bubbling over with praise, hurried to the hill country to visit her relative, Elizabeth. There's no suggestion that Mary was fleeing the shame of her pregnancy. It seems she simply wanted a kindred spirit to share her heart with. The angel had explicitly informed Mary about Elizabeth's pregnancy. So it was natural for her to seek out a close relative who was both a strong believer and also expecting her first son by a miraculous birth, announced by an angel (Luke 1:13–17). While Elizabeth was much older—maybe even in her eighties, and had always been unable to conceive—and Mary was at the beginning of life, both had been supernaturally blessed by God to conceive. It was a perfect situation for the two women to spend time rejoicing together in the Lord's goodness to both of them.

Elizabeth's immediate response to the sound of Mary's voice gave Mary independent confirmation of all that the angel had told her. Scripture says,

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. And she cried out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord." (Luke 1:41–45)

Elizabeth's message was prophetic, of course, and Mary instantly understood that. Mary had learned from an angel about Elizabeth's pregnancy. Nothing indicates that Mary had sent word of her own circumstances ahead to Elizabeth. Indeed, Mary's sudden arrival had all the hallmarks of a surprise to her relative. Elizabeth's knowledge of Mary's pregnancy therefore seems to have come to her by revelation—in the prophecy she uttered when the Holy Spirit suddenly filled her.

## Mary's Psalm of Praise

Mary replied with prophetic words of her own. Her saying is known as the *Magnificat* (Latin for the first word of Mary's outpouring of praise). It is really a hymn about the incarnation. Without question, it is a song of unspeakable joy and the most magnificent psalm of worship in the New Testament. It is the equal of any Old Testament psalm, and it bears a strong resemblance to Hannah's famous hymn of praise for the birth of Samuel. It is filled with messianic hope, scriptural language, and references to the Abrahamic covenant:

My soul exalts the Lord,  
And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.  
For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondservant;  
For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed.  
For the Mighty One has done great things for me;  
And holy is His name.  
And His mercy is upon generation after generation toward those who fear Him.  
He has done mighty deeds with His arm;  
He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart.  
He has brought down rulers from their thrones,  
And has exalted those who were humble.  
He has filled the hungry with good things;  
And sent away the rich empty-handed.  
He has given help to Israel His servant,  
In remembrance of His mercy,  
As He spoke to our fathers,  
To Abraham and his descendants forever. (Luke 1:46-55)

It is clear that Mary's young heart and mind were already thoroughly saturated with the Word of God. She included not only echoes of two of Hannah's prayers (1 Samuel 1:11; 2:1–10), but also several other allusions to the law, the psalms, and the prophets.

Those who channel their religious energies into the veneration of Mary would do well to learn from the example of Mary herself. God is the only One she magnified. Notice how she praised the glory and majesty of God while repeatedly acknowledging her own lowliness. She took no credit for anything good in herself. But she praised the Lord for His attributes, naming some of the chief ones specifically, including His power, His mercy, and His holiness. She freely confessed God as the one who had done great things for her, and not vice versa. The song is all about God's greatness, His glory, the strength of His arm, and His faithfulness across the generations.

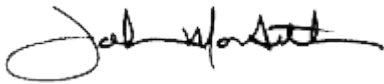
Mary's worship was clearly from the heart. She was plainly consumed by the wonder of His grace to her. She seemed amazed that an absolutely holy God would do such great things for one as undeserving as she. This was not the prayer of one who claimed to be conceived immaculately, without the corruption of original sin. It was, on the contrary, the glad rejoicing of one who knew God intimately as her Savior. She could celebrate the fact that God's mercy is on those who fear Him, because she herself feared God and had received His mercy. And she knew firsthand how God exalts the lowly and fills the hungry with good things, because she herself was a humble sinner who had hungered and thirsted after righteousness, and was filled.

It was customary in Jewish prayers to recite God's past faithfulness to His people (Exodus 15; Judges 5; Psalm 68; 78; 105; 114; 135; 136; 145; and Habakkuk 3). Mary followed that convention here in abbreviated fashion. She recalled how God had helped Israel, in fulfillment of all His promises. Now her own child would be the living fulfillment of God's saving promise. No wonder Mary's heart overflowed with such praise.

## **Mary's Legacy**

Mary herself never claimed or pretended to be anything more than a humble handmaiden of the Lord. She was extraordinary because God used her in an extraordinary way. She clearly thought of herself as perfectly ordinary. She is portrayed in Scripture only as an instrument whom God used in the fulfillment of His plan. She herself never made any pretense of being an administrator of the divine agenda, and she never gave anyone any encouragement to regard her as a mediatrix in the dispensing of divine grace. The lowly perspective reflected in Mary's Magnificat is the same simple spirit of humility that colored all her life and character.

It is truly regrettable that religious superstition has in effect turned Mary into an idol. She is certainly a worthy woman to emulate, but Mary herself would undoubtedly be appalled to think anyone would pray to her, venerate images of her, or burn candles in homage to her. Her life and her testimony point us consistently to her Son. He was the object of her worship. He was the one she recognized as Lord. He was the one she trusted for everything. Mary's own example, seen in the pure light of Scripture, teaches us to do the same.



(Adapted from [\*Twelve Extraordinary Women\*](#).)

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