

Message #6**Luke 1:39-56**

Not long ago I read an article whose title caught my eye. The article was entitled: “Surprising A Pregnant Lady With A Baby Shower Is the Most Terrible Idea.” The article proceeded to say that often a pregnant woman is too tired or too emotional or too sick to enjoy such a thing. So having a surprise shower is not the best of recommended ideas.

When a woman gets along a few months into her pregnancy, she typically doesn’t want a bunch of surprise company coming to her house. She is not up to normal cleaning and cooking and having extra guests in the house is not the best of ideas.

In the case of Zacharias and Elizabeth, in her pregnancy, he probably wasn’t much help around the house and he couldn’t even talk. So when Mary decided to pay an unexpected visit to their house, it was most definitely an interesting moment. In fact, as you will see this was a very Spirit-led moment.

There are many things that people do and say who claim they are led by the Spirit of God. People do and say all kinds of things and claim the Holy Spirit is filling them and leading them. But when you stack that up against a passage like this that truly does show the work of the Holy Spirit, things don’t quite measure up.

When we look at this opening chapter in Luke, we cannot help but see that Luke emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit in things pertaining to Jesus Christ (Luke 1:15, 35, 41, 67). As a medical doctor, Luke knew the supernatural activity involved in this. Things that were happening and things people were saying truly were the work of the Spirit of God. That is the only way it could be explained. What Theophilus would have seen when he read this and what we see is that:

EVERYTHING SURROUNDING THE MIRACULOUS PREGNANCY AND BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST WAS ORCHESTRATED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD AND HONORED HIM AS THE LORD GOD AND SAVIOR.

Luke was carefully tracking the movement of Mary. We are convinced that he got these things directly from Mary herself. He documented everything. What is clear from this passage is that Mary’s baby had a great superiority to Elizabeth’s baby. Elizabeth’s baby will actually exalt and honor Jesus Christ while in his mother’s womb, before He is born. As we analyze this section, there are two main actions we may observe:

ACTION #1 – Mary travels to visit Elizabeth. 1:39-45

For Mary to make this trip from Nazareth to the hill country in Judah was a major step of faith, which, according to **verse 45**, is what prompted this trip, she believed God. This is something Mary believed she should do. According to **verse 39**, after Gabriel left, she headed out to go to Zacharias’ and Elizabeth’s house “in a hurry.” Those words indicate she went with speed and focus.

The hill country around Jerusalem was located approximately 75-90 miles from Nazareth. The trip would take three to four days and there is nothing in the text that indicates anyone else even went with her. This is important. She had no contact with Joseph during this time for at least three months (v. 57) and we aren't even sure if she had a chance to tell Joseph she was going. This certainly establishes her virginity in her pregnancy.

This was a long and lonely trip, but Mary did it because the angel had revealed that Elizabeth was now in her sixth month of pregnancy (1:36). So by the time Mary gets there, Elizabeth is well into her sixth month.

Since the Holy Spirit was involved in all of this, we may assume that this trip is Spirit-led (1:35). So what the Spirit of God did was lead Mary to go visit and fellowship with someone else who was also empowered by the Spirit of God.

Now as soon as Mary got to the home of Zacharias and Elizabeth, she greeted Elizabeth (v. 40). It is possible that Zacharias was not home because the specific focal point of her greeting is to Elizabeth.

Luke uses a word for “greet” that would suggest Mary was happy to see her and she verbally greeted her (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, pp. 64-65). As soon as Mary greeted Elizabeth, there were three immediate results:

Immediate Result #1 - Elizabeth's baby leaped in her womb. 1:41a

We know from Luke 1:15 that this leaping in the womb was a work of the Holy Spirit. The problem here is that Zacharias cannot tell Elizabeth this because he could not speak.

Let's remember that Luke is a medical doctor and he knew about normal movement of a baby prior to its birth. Babies at times move in the mother. In fact, one doctor said that at six months a mother should feel a baby kick about 10 times a day.

But the word Luke uses is not kick; it is the word “leap.” This word “leap” (σκιρταω) indicates that this was a rare, joyous leap or movement. The same word is used in Luke 6:23 and there it speaks of a unique joyous reaction in view of heaven. The word seems to imply that the baby did not just turn or kick; it actually jumped (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 409).

Now what exactly prompted this leaping movement? It is the presence and voice of the one who would give birth to Jesus Christ, who was already being formed in Mary's body.

Immediate Result #2 - Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. **1:41b**

Now Elizabeth's baby was already filled with the Holy Spirit (1:15), but now Elizabeth herself was filled with the Holy Spirit. Just the very presence and voice of Mary caused Elizabeth to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Elizabeth had nothing to do with the action. But Elizabeth was in the presence of the one woman who would give birth to the Son of God and the Spirit of God was right there.

Immediate Result #3 - Elizabeth spoke, led by the Spirit. **1:42-45**

This must have been quite humiliating for Zacharias if he were there. He has to sit there and be quiet because he can't say a word and he is now going to listen to his wife speak, led by God's Spirit.

Now the Spirit gave Elizabeth revelatory understanding of Mary even before Mary opens her mouth to tell her what happened. Mary said "hello" to Elizabeth and Elizabeth verbally responds to her led by God's Spirit:

(Verbal Response #1) - You are the most blessed woman on earth. **1:42a**

As far as we know at this point, Mary had not even told Elizabeth she was pregnant. This teenaged girl walks into Elizabeth's house and Elizabeth says Mary, you are the greatest woman on this earth. The word "blessed" (*ευλογεω*) means to praise and reverence God because He has given His grace blessings to Mary, a teenaged girl (*Ibid.*, p. 187). Among all the women in the world, in God's mind, you are the most blessed woman ever.

(Verbal Response #2) - Your baby inside you is the most blessed child to this world. **1:42b**

Mary has not told her she is pregnant and Elizabeth says your baby will be the greatest grace blessing ever born.

(Verbal Response #3) - You have honored me by your very presence because you are the mother of my Lord. **1:43-44**

Elizabeth is saying Mary, you are the mother of "my Lord" who is the Sovereign God who rules over everything. Your baby is the one who can save me. **Elizabeth is honoring Jesus as her Savior and Lord while in is in Mary in His embryonic state.**

The word "Lord" is a favorite proper noun that Luke uses. This word is used 166 times in the synoptics (Matthew, Mark, Luke) and Luke uses it 95 times. Luke uses the noun "Christ" some 13 times, which refers to the fact that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah. But the noun "Lord" he often uses to establish that Jesus is the Sovereign Lord God who is ruler and Savior. Elizabeth was overwhelmed that Mary was even in her house. This is all Spirit-led. She viewed Mary's presence at her home as being something special and sacred.

Elizabeth does not try to upstage Mary by saying well I, too, will have a baby and am just as important as you are. She realized the importance of this moment.

(Verbal Response #4) - You are blessed because of your faith. 1:45

Elizabeth uses a different word for “blessed” than in **verse 42**. This word has to do with great happiness and joy. Elizabeth said you are the most blessed and happy woman on earth because you have believed God’s Word. What was Mary’s faith? It was a faith that believed the Word of God. Those who believe God’s Word and take it literally are the most blessed and happy people on this earth.

ACTION #2 – Mary verbally responds to Elizabeth. 1:46-56

Mary is a teenaged girl who went to visit Elizabeth and Elizabeth had this amazing reaction to her. This must have been overwhelming for Mary. Just a few days before this, an angel showed up and told her amazing things and now Elizabeth is praising God and her for showing up at her house. **I want you to remember that what you are about to read and see comes out of the mouth of a teenaged girl.** There are primarily two responses:

Response #1 - Mary’s soul exalts the Lord. 1:46b

The word “exalt” (μεγαλυνη) means to exalt, extol, magnify God at a “mega” level, the highest and greatest level there is (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 281). This response is called the “Magnificat” because that is the Latin word translated exalt, which is the first word of the Latin text. So this response has been titled Mary’s Magnificat. But really it is God’s exaltation, not Mary’s.

Response #2 - Mary’s spirit rejoiced her God and Savior. 1:47

Carefully observe in **verse 46** that Mary has a soul and in **verse 47** she refers to the fact she has a spirit and obviously she has a body. We believe that a human is Tripartite, comprised of a body which is that which has a world-consciousness; a soul which is a God-consciousness and a spirit that is a self-consciousness. Mary’s entire person is rejoicing.

The verb “rejoice” speaks of greatly rejoicing and exulting in the Lord. **Now carefully notice Mary is rejoicing because she realizes that she will give birth to One who will be God and her Savior. Mary viewed herself as a sinner who needed a Savior.**

The doctrine of the “Immaculate Conception” that says that Mary was sinless is completely refuted here by her own statement. Xavier Leon-Dufour, a Catholic Theologian, wrote: “The mystery of virginity implies the total purity...making Christ holy and spotless. This is what gives meaning to the immaculate conception of Mary.”

The problem with this is that Mary realized she was a sinner who needed this God/baby Savior.

It was not a sinless condition of Mary that produced the Holy Son of God; it was the Spirit of God that produced the Holy Son of God. Only a sinner needs a Savior and Mary needed a Savior just like every other sinner. In fact, later in this book, when people are elevating Mary, Jesus Himself corrects them on this very point (Luke 11:27-28).

Now Mary gives a series of reasons why she exalted God and rejoiced in God. Everything in this list has to do with the baby to whom she would give birth:

(Reason #1) - Because God saw me as a humble bond servant. **1:48a**

The words Mary uses here are not designed to honor her own humility; the words indicate that she saw herself as a nobody. She saw herself as a nobody socially, politically, religiously and personally. She is admitting that she held a low position in life, but God had specifically seen her and chosen her.

(Reason #2) - Because all generations of people will call me blessed. **1:48b**

Mary realized that this baby would affect all generations and all generations would connect that baby to her.

(Reason #3) - Because the Mighty God has done great things for me. **1:49a**

The original text indicates Mary is praising God because His Divine dynamic power, might and strength had done something great and stupendous for her and to her.

(Reason #4) - Because the God who has done great things for me is holy. **1:49b**

Mary realizes the amazing grace of all of this. God has a holiness she does not have. She is a sinner. But God, in all of His majestic holiness, has done an amazing thing for her.

(Reason #5) - Because God's mercy is upon generation and generation of those who fear Him. **1:50**

Mary realizes the merciful impact that this baby would bring to the entire world. His mercy would extend far beyond Mary. It would be granted to all who would fear and believe in Him. All had better fear God because God can send them to hell. But God's mercy offered this baby as a means of salvation.

(Reason #6) - Because God has done mighty things with His powerful arm. **1:51a**

Mary reminds all who read this that God has done powerful things in times past. This reality of the delivering power of God in retrospect points to what this baby can do in the future.

(Reason #7) - Because God has scattered those who are proud in their hearts. **1:51b**

These next remarks that Mary makes would guarantee her that she would not win a popularity contest or get some honorable baby shower from the high and mighty and wealthy political and religious leaders. God does not bless the proud, He destroys them.

(Reason #8) - Because God has brought down rulers from their throne. **1:52a**

Those who refuse to honor God and honor Jesus Christ will be toppled and overthrown.

(Reason #9) - Because God has exalted those who are humble. **1:52b**

Mary uses the exact same word here that she used for herself. God delights in taking those who are nobodies and elevating them to great positions of power.

(Reason #10) - Because God will fill the hungry with good things. **1:53a**

Those who trust God and depend on God will be given many good things by God.

(Reason #11) - Because God will send away the rich empty-handed. **1:53b**

Those who did not honor God, but they honored their money will have zero.

(Reason #12) - Because God has helped Israel. **1:54-55**

He has helped Israel because of His mercy. He is a God who remembers the promises He made to Abraham and He will fulfill every one of them through Mary's baby.

According to **verse 56**, Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months and then went back home. It appears from verse 57 that she left before John was born.

What we learn is that Mary was not anywhere near Joseph from the time Gabriel appeared to her until the time she left this house three months later.

What a story. This baby in His embryonic state is our Savior. If you will humble yourself and believe in Him, He will save you.