

“Magnificat”: Mary Professes Her Trichotomy & Salvation, Luke 1:46–47, cf. Hab 3:18; 1 Sam 2:1, Hannah’s Song; Mary’s True Humility, v. 48 cf. Ps 138:6; Divine Blessings to Mary, v. 49 cf. Pss 71:19; 126:2–3; 111:9; Recognition of God’s Mercy: Eleos & Cheseth: His Unfailing Love, v. 50 cf. Ps 103:7; Messiah’s Control of History, v. 51 cf. Ps 98:1; His Removal of Evil Rulers, v. 51 cf. 1 Sam 2:7–8; Israelites Reject Theocracy for Monarchy, 1 Sam 8:19a–20

Here now is Luke 1:46–55, “Magnificat,” or “Mary’s Song”:

Luke 1:46 - And Mary said: “My soul [ψυχή, *psuchē*] exalts the Lord,

v. 47 - And my spirit [πνεῦμα, *pneuma*] has rejoiced in God my Savior.”

Here Mary acknowledges Jesus as her Lord to whom she is willing to submit as a bondservant while recognizing Him as her Savior. She proclaims her trichotomy by mentioning her soul in verse 46 and her spirit in verse 47; this confirms her salvation.

Mary begins her canticle with a reference to:

Habakkuk 3:18 - I will exult in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.

1 Samuel 2:1 - [Hannah’s Magnificat] “My heart exults in the Lord ... because I rejoice in your salvation.”

Mary is inspired by the writings of the Old Testament most specifically from the Psalms and from the Song of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2:1–10. The similarity of Hannah and Mary’s songs and the presence of other Hebrew songs in Scripture are important to note:

Although 1 Samuel 2:1–10 is a prayer, it is commonly referred to as the “Song of Hannah” because of its lyrical qualities and similarities to other ancient Old Testament hymns (e.g., the Songs of Moses and Miriam, Exod 15:1–18, 21; the Song of Moses, Deut 32:1–43; the Song of Deborah, Judg 5; and especially the Song of David, 2 Sam 22). Robert Lowth, eighteenth-century doyen of Hebrew poetic structure, called it a “thanksgiving ode.” Sigmund Mowinckel called it a psalm of thank offering, stating that it was sung in celebration of victory over enemies. (pp. 578–79)

The Song of Hannah is a royal song of victory/triumph that is to be classified among the other ancient hymns listed above, all of which reflect traditional combat motifs, are composed in the first person singular, and emphasize the Lord’s everlasting and universal power and sovereignty.

It may well be that Hannah’s song is the seedplot for Mary’s Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55). The two hymns begin similarly, and certain themes in the Song of Hannah recur in the Song of Mary. Both Hannah and Mary became pregnant miraculously (though admittedly in quite different ways), in due course each presented her firstborn son to the Lord at the central sanctuary (1:22 and Luke 2:22), and both sang a hymn of thanksgiving and praise (Hannah after the birth of Samuel [1 Sam 2:1–10], Mary before the birth of Jesus [Luke 1:46–55]).¹ (p. 579)

Mary continues with self-deprecation and humble adoration of God’s grace to her:

¹ Ronald F. Youngblood, “1, 2 Samuel,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, gen. ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 3:578–79.

Luke 1:48 - “For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondsman [i.e., **slave woman**, note **Luke 1:38**] / For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed.”

Mary expresses in her song submission to the Father’s plan for salvation and her necessary part in it, recognizing that her submission comes from a super abundance of happiness that future generations will recognize and revere. In this verse she is reminded of her comments to Gabriel in Luke 1, and David’s Psalm 138:

Psalm 138:6 -For though the Lord is exalted / Yet He regards the lowly [שָׁפָל *shaphal*] / But the haughty [גָּבוֹהַ *gavoah*] He knows from afar.

David distinguishes between those with genuine humility – *shaphal* – derived from spiritual maturity, and the arrogant – *gavoah* – who are driven by self-aggrandizement and human viewpoint. Mary expresses willingness to exchange her human freedom for the honor of becoming a slave woman to God for the benefit of the human race, among whom many will regard her as having a super abundance of happiness.

Luke 1:49 - “For the Mighty One has done great things for me / And holy is His name.”

Mary continues to recall the Psalms for her inspiration, two that speak of God’s great things and one that refers to divine integrity. All three Psalms are anonymous:

Psalm 71:19 -For Your righteousness / O God, reaches to the heavens / You who have done great things / O God, who is like You?

Psalm 126:2 -Our mouth was filled with laughter / And our tongue with joyful shouting / Then they said among the nations, / “The Lord has done great things for them.”

v. 3 - The Lord has done great things for us / We are glad.

Psalm 111:9 -He has sent redemption to His people / He has ordained His covenant forever / Holy and awesome is His name.

Mary next refers to God’s mercy, which is grace in action expressed through His personal love for believers who have a reverential respect for Him:

Luke 1:50 - And His mercy [ἔλεος, *eleos*] is upon generation after generation / Toward those who fear Him.

Mary again recalls the Psalms as she makes the point that all those who submit to God as a bondsman will receive His mercy: protection, provision, and guidance:

Psalm 103:17 - But the lovingkindness [רַחֲמֵי *cheseth*] of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting to those who fear Him.

Cheseth is translated *mercy* in the King James Version but lovingkindness is the better translation. It speaks of the unfailing love of God for those who have an enduring devotion and respect for Him.

Luke 1:51 - He has done [the aorist active indicative of the verb ποιέω, *poieō*] mighty deeds with His arm / He has scattered [a-a-i of the verb διασκορπίζω, *diaskorpizō*] those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart.

The verbs of the Magnificat switch at this point to the aorist tense. They are culminative, “often used to stress the cessation of an act or state; it may imply an act was already in progress and the aorist then brings the action to a conclusion.”²

Consequently, Mary through the guidance of the Holy Spirit indicates “how God will act in general for his people as they look to his ultimate deliverance.”³

Again Mary goes to the Psalms to amplify God’s sovereign rule over those who have harmed Israel while having an eschatological flavor in the context of the Messiah’s arrival.

Psalm 98:1 - O sing to the Lord a new song / For He has done wonderful things / His right hand and His holy arm have gained the victory for Him.

Not only has Messiah as Lord of the Armies delivered the Israelites from their oppressors in the past, he will do it again at the ultimate showdown with the forces of evil prior to His establishment of the Davidic kingdom.

Mary next returns to Hannah’s Magnificat to illustrate the Lord’s power in dealing with those who use power to gain control over the Israelites. He pulls down the corrupt and elevates the righteous:

Luke 1:52 - He has brought down rulers from their thrones / And has exalted those who were humble.

1 Samuel 2:7 - “The Lord makes the poor and rich / He brings low, He also exalts.

v. 8 - “He raises the poor from the dust / He lifts the needy from the ash heap / To make them sit with nobles / And inherit a seat of honor/ For the pillars of the earth are the Lord’s / And He set the world on them.”

In Luke 1:52, Mary makes reference to the Lord’s control of history. Originally the Israelites were governed under the theocracy of Jehovah Elohim, Jesus Christ. However, they became rebellious and eventually asked to be governed under a monarchy. The Lord assigned Samuel to warn them that a king would institute dictatorial control over them. To this the people responded in:

1 Samuel 8:19b - “No, but there shall be a king over us,

v. 20 - that we also may be like all the nations, that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.”

² Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 559.

³ “Luke 1:51,” in *NET Bible* (Dallas: Biblical Studies Press, 2001), 1835n31.