

The question arises as to what woman would qualify for this duty? It turned out to be Mary, the espoused fiancée of Joseph of the Galilean city of Nazareth.

Luke 1:26 - Now in the sixth month [of Elizabeth's pregnancy] the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth,

Luke 1:27 - to a virgin [παρθένος, *parthénos*] engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

v. 28 - And coming in he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."

Why was Mary "favored" to be the incubator for the biological life of the Messiah and not someone else?

In order to provide the Messiah with the same perfect humanity bestowed upon Adam at his creation in Eden, the plan of God decreed a woman would be selected that would qualify in several ways.

1. She must be a Jew who is a virgin.

Isaiah 7:14 - "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin [עַלְמָה ('*almah*): young woman; LXX: παρθένος, *parthénos*: virgin] will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel [God with us]. (Compare with Luke 1:27)

2. Obviously, she must be engaged to be married, but the marriage not yet consummated.

Matthew 1:18 - Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed [μνηστεύω, *mnēsteúō*] to Joseph, before they came together [συνέρχομαι, *sunérchomai*: sexual intercourse] she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.

The word "betrothed" is *mnēsteúō* and is defined by this excerpt:

Betrothal was esteemed a part of the transaction of marriage. Among the Jews the betrothal was so far regarded as binding that, if marriage should not take place, owing to the absconding of the bridegroom or the breach of contract on his part, the young woman could not be married to another man until she was liberated by a due process and a paper of divorce. The formality of betrothal is not entered on till the marriage is considered reasonably certain and measurably near. The betrothal parties were legally in the position of a married couple and unfaithfulness was “adultery.”¹

3. The woman must be genetically in the line of Judah, the tribe from which all of Israel’s kings are drawn including the Messiah.

Genesis 49:10a - “The scepter [rulership] shall not depart from Judah [the line of royalty], nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet [the descendants of Judah], until Shiloh [שִׁילֹה *Shiloh*: “to Whom it, the scepter, belongs”] comes [2d Advent] ...

4. The woman must also be a descendent of the House of David in fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant:

2 Samuel 7:16 - (Nathan the prophet) “Your house [David’s royal line] and your kingdom [Israel] shall endure before Me forever; your throne [authority and rulership] shall be established forever [עוֹלָם *‘olam*: for eternity].” (Compare Luke 3:23-31: the genealogy of Mary back to Nathan, son of David.)

5. Her espoused husband must also be genetically in the line of Judah and the House of David:

Luke 2:4 - Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house [through Solomon] and family [tribe of Judah] of David,

v. 5 - in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child.

6. The delivery of the Holy Infant must occur in the city of Bethlehem:

¹ George B. Eager, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, gen. ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), 3:1997-98.

Micah 5:2 - (The Lord) “As for you Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.”

Luke 2:6 - And it came about that while they [Joseph and Mary] were there [Bethlehem: see, Luke 2:4], the days were completed for her to give birth.

v. 7 - And she gave birth to her first-born son; and she wrapped Him in burial cloths and laid Him in a feeding trough ... (EXT)

7. A woman who meets all these qualifications must appear at a precise point in human history referred to by Paul as “the fullness of time”:

Galatians 4:4 - When the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law.

8. Qualifying under all these prophetic stipulations resulted in Mary being described by Gabriel in Luke 1:28 as the “favored one,” the perfect passive participle of the verb **χαριτιόω**, *charitíoō*, a derivative of **χάρις**, *cháris*, which speaks of the bestowal by grace of divine favor and therefore a blessing from God.

perfect: Intensive: implies a process, but as having reached its consummation and existing in a finished state. The point of completion is always antecedent to the time implied. It places emphasis upon existing results, a strong way of saying that a thing *is*.

passive: Mary received the action of being favored from God. Other than being a believer, Mary had no special qualification beyond those related to prophecy that caused her to be selected.

participle: Indicates that God decreed the gracious act in eternity past to be certainly future.

9. Mary's blessing was obviously unique. But she was the recipient because she met certain qualifications at a precise moment in time that satisfied the divine requirements of prophecy.
10. Therefore, Mary was blessed as the divinely selected woman to provide the biological life of the miraculously conceived Messiah of Israel.

PART 2: Witnesses

1. Two or Three Witnesses

In 1987 Dr. John Eidsmoe wrote a book that presents the Christian heritage of the United States through an analysis of its Founders and foundational documents. His presentation cites quite a number of biblical principles that were incorporated into our nation's legal system. Here is an excerpt from his book that is pertinent to our study.

Rights of Criminal Defendants:

In giving right to the accused, the Jewish system of justice was one of the most advanced in the world. Israel had an orderly multi-tier system of justice, with Moses as the Supreme Court. Judges were commanded to be honest, to refuse bribes, and not to show favoritism. A person was presumed innocent unless at least two witnesses testified against him, and the penalty for perjury was severe.²

The requirement for the testimony of two or three witnesses is well-known and understood to be biblically based. It finds its origin in the Establishment Code of the Mosaic Law:

Deuteronomy 17:6 - "On the evidence of two witness or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness."

19:15 - "A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed."

Thus, one of our most revered legal codes finds its origin in Scripture. This requirement of two to three witnesses is used to establish truth in many categories of investigation.

² John Eidsmoe, *Christianity and the Constitution: The Faith of Our Founding Fathers*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987), 373-74.

Those who approach the Word of God for guidance must accept without question certain prerequisite principles in order to discover the truths it contains.

VISUAL:
System of Divine
Didactics

First of all there is the principle of the divine inspiration of Scripture: We believe that the Bible contains God's complete and coherent message to man and that, in the original manuscripts, its contents are inerrant and infallible.

Secondly, by placing our faith in the testimony of the Word we may accept with confidence the assertions it contains. Thus, it is from our faith in the authority of the written record that we can come to know truth.

Neither the machinations of men, nor the hypotheses of science, nor the musings of philosophers have veto power over what the written record says. Thus, absolute truth can be established by the witness of Scripture. And further, when there are two or three witnesses presented by the written record, then all doubt is removed from the mind of the submissive student.

To illustrate, let's use the testimony of the Scripture plus the testimony of three witnesses to establish an undeniable truth. First let's go to the Mount of Transfiguration passage in:

Matthew 17:1 - Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter, James, and John, James's brother, and brought them up to a high mountain by themselves.

v. 2 - Then, Jesus was transfigured before them [the visible form which He will possess at the Second Advent]; now His face shone like the sun and His clothes became transparent as light [the uniform of glory which will be conveyed to winners as part of the Fifth Nike Award].

v. 3 - And behold there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. (EXT)

Luke 9:31 - who, appearing in glory, were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

Matthew 17:4 - Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish [and you do], I will make three tabernacles [sacred tents], one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah—"

Matthew 17:5 - While Peter was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them [**the glory of God the Father**]; and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, “This is My beloved Son, with Whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!”

v. 6 - And when the disciples heard this, they fell face down on the ground and were much terrified.

v. 7 - And Jesus came to them and touched them and said, “Get up, and so not be afraid.”

v. 8 - And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus Himself alone.

v. 9 - As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, “Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead.”

In this passage, the written record documents the testimony of God the Father that Jesus is His Son. The Father’s testimony was heard by three witnesses who also beheld the manifestation of the Lord’s Shekinah Glory. One of those witnesses, the Apostle Peter, under the ministry of the Holy Spirit, inserts his own deposition into the eternal record of what he heard that day on the mountain:

2 Peter 1:16 - We have not followed cleverly invented myths when we taught to you the power and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we became eyewitnesses of His majesty.

v. 17 - For when He received from God the Father, honor and glory [**Jesus Christ in His true humanity wore a uniform of honor on His soul and in His eternal status wears a uniform of glory over His resurrection body**], such a voice as this carried to Him by the Majestic Glory, “This is My beloved Son with Whom I am well-pleased”—

v. 18 - Furthermore, we [**Peter, James, and John**] heard this voice which was being transmitted from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

2 Peter 1:19 - And yet we keep on having a more reliable prophetic doctrine [biblical revelation about the 2d Advent and the glory of our Lord is a more reliable source of information than the personal account of three eyewitnesses to the Transfiguration], to which we do well to concentrate (as a lamp shining in a dark place [biblical truth is the lamp shining in the dark place of *cosmos diabolicus*], until the day dawns [2d Advent] and the Morning Star [Jesus Christ returning in His glory] has risen) in your stream of consciousness. (EXT)

Peter, James, and John were eyewitnesses to the glory of Jesus Christ when it was briefly revealed to them on the Mount of Transfiguration. They all three heard the testimony of God the Father Who at that time issued a deposition in which He identified Jesus as “My beloved Son in Whom I am well-pleased.”

The biblical principle of jurisprudence regarding the veracity of evidence states that the corroborated testimony of two or three witnesses establishes the truth of a matter. Nevertheless, Peter emphasizes in this passage that even the testimony of eyewitnesses is not to be held in as high regard as that of the written testimony of the Word of God.

One week prior to the events on the Mount of Transfiguration, the Lord quizzed his disciples about what the latest polls were showing regarding His identity.

Matthew 16:13 - Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He began asking His disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”

v. 14 - And they said [here are the results of the latest Herod Antipas Poll, Matthew 14:1-2; Mark 6:14-15 & Luke 9:7-8], “Some say John the Baptist, and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets”

v. 15 - Jesus said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

v. 16 - And Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ [Χριστός *Christós: Messiah*], the Son of the living God.”

Matthew 16:17 - And Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bariona [**son of Jonah**], because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father Who is in heaven." (See 2 Peter 1:17)

Peter got the right answer. Jesus is not a resuscitation of John the Baptist, or Elijah, or Jeremiah. He is the "Son of the living God." Did Peter learn this right answer from his own mental dexterity? No. He learned it from the testimony of the "Father who is in heaven."

And when did Peter learn that Jesus is the Christ? Gradually since he was an eyewitness to the Lord's works. There is a steady series of miracles and healings performed by the Lord beginning in Matthew 8 with the cleansing of a leper all the way through chapter 15 and the feeding of four thousand people with a few small fish and seven loaves of bread.

Peter was personally involved in two of these miracles, the healing of his mother-in-law in Matthew 8:14-17 and his brief walk with the Lord on water in Matthew 14:29.

The Lord also gave verbal testimony to His unique identity as well. For example the multitudes asked him in:

John 6:28 - "What shall we do so that we may work the works of God?"