

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?"

v. 29 - Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."

v. 30 - So they said to Him, "What then do You do for a sign that we may see and believe You? What works do you perform?"

v. 31 - "Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.'"

v. 32 - Jesus then said to them, "Truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven.

v. 33 - "The bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven and gives life to the world."

v. 34 - Then they said to Him, "Lord, always give us this bread."

John 6:35 - Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst."

John 6:40 - "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day [the resurrection]."

John 8:12 - "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."

John 10:9 - "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture."

John 11:25 - "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies,

v. 26 - and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"

John 14:6 - "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."

Jesus Christ has been identified as the Messiah through the testimony of the written record and through several sources. God the Father in Matthew 17:5 identified Jesus as, "My beloved son in Whom I am well-pleased."

There were eyewitnesses to that event: Peter, James, and John. And we have reviewed Peter's testimony in 2 Peter 1:17-19. And even before witnessing the Transfiguration, Peter had accurately identified Jesus as, "the Christ, the Son of the living God."

There is yet another occasion in which Jesus is described as being the "Son of God." It is the revelation to Mary by the Archangel Gabriel that she will bear the biological life of the Messiah:

Luke 1:26 - Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to the city in Galilee, called Nazareth,

v. 27 - to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

God the Father has sent out the highest ranked angel in the Angelic College of Heralds to communicate top-level knowledge to a woman named Mary who is classified as a virgin. The Greek word for this status is:

παρθένος (parthénos) - “virgin”

Most commentaries give “virgin” as a general definition and then begin to tap dance in the carpet about its literal application to Mary. I won't bore you with their rationales and conclusions. But let it be understood that the application to Mary is the strictest definition that can be drawn for the term virgin:

A virgin, maiden. Particularly in the sense of one who has not known a man (Luke 1:34).¹

So Gabriel is sent to communicate extremely important information to Mary who is a virgin and engaged to a man named Joseph. Both are in the line of David.

Luke 1:28 - And coming in, he [**Gabriel**] said to her, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.”

v. 29 - But she was greatly perplexed at this statement and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was.

v. 30 - And Gabriel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God.

v. 31 - “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.

v. 32 - “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David;

v. 33 - and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end.”

v. 34 - Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?”

v. 35 - The angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.”

¹ Spiros Zodhiates, gen. ed., “παρθένος,” in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, rev. ed. (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993), 1119.

Another testimony by yet another witness, this time by none other than God the Father. This is exactly the title used by the Father at the baptism of Jesus in:

Matthew 3:16 - After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him,

v. 17 - and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”

From these several passages we have discovered numerous depositions from various witnesses that confirm in the immutable record of God’s Word that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God.

Yet there always remain those who want more, such as the disciples in:

John 6:30 - They said therefore to Him, “What then do You do for a sign, so that we may see and believe You?”

There are many “signs” that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. According to Peter, none of these signs is of greater significance than the fact that the Scripture confirms in no uncertain terms Who Jesus is. Yet, if one looks for a sign then the virgin birth of our Lord is a dramatic and awesome testimony to the uniqueness of His birth and proclaims Him to be the Messiah, the Son of God.

The Prophet Isaiah made it clear that the Messiah would be born of a virgin:

Isaiah 7:14 - “Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.”

Here we see the Hebrew word for “virgin”: **עַלְמָה** (*‘almah*).

A problem emerges from this translation for the word can be used in the Hebrew language as a technical word for “virgin,” but it also represents a young woman, one of whose characteristics is virginity.

So, does Scripture provide us guidance on whether we translate *‘almah* as “virgin” or “a young woman of marriageable age”? The archangel Gabriel comes to our rescue. Not only did he inform Mary that she was chosen to incubate the biological life of the Messiah, her betrothed husband, Joseph, was also informed in:

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

v. 19 - And Joseph, her husband, being a righteous man [**a man of honor and integrity**], and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly [**privately dismiss her with a bill of divorcement**].

v. 20 - But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord [**Gabriel, see Luke 1:28**] appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David [**line of Solomon**], do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child Who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

v. 21 - “She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins.”

v. 22 - Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

v. 23 - [**Isaiah 7:14**] “Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which translated means [**Isaiah 8:10**], “God with us.”

v. 24 - And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife,

v. 25 - but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.

The word for “virgin” in verses 23 and 25 is **παρθένος parhénos**, the same word found in Luke 1:27, and it refers to an absolutely chaste young woman; one who has not had sexual intercourse.

This is the testimony that convinced Joseph that he did not need to draw up a bill of divorcement regarding Mary. He loved her, but being an honorable man, he did not want to marry her if she was not a virgin.

The thing, which caused him to believe that she remained a virgin, was the testimony of the Scripture and the two witnesses involved, Gabriel and Isaiah.

In our study, we have seen a tremendous amount of evidence by numerous witnesses whose depositions are recorded in the immutable record of the Word of God. We know, based on what the Bible says, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

In order for Him to be our substitute on the cross, He had to live a sinless life free of spiritual death from birth. Freedom from the imputation of Adam's original sin was contingent upon Him not having a human father. In procreation, the sperm of the human father contaminates the ovum of the mother and transfers the sinful nature to the fetus.

Only through a virgin birth can this transfer of spiritual death be avoided. It was therefore imperative that the conception of the true humanity of Jesus Christ be accomplished by the divine provision of 23 uncontaminated male chromosomes. This miraculous conception is documented in:

Luke 1:35 - Gabriel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God."

No male sperm means no genetically transferred sin nature. No genetically transferred sin nature means no imputation of Adam's original sin at physical birth. No imputation of Adam's original sin means the impeccable true humanity of the "holy Child."

Jesus Christ was thus born with three titles: **(1)** Son of God, which refers to his undiminished deity in hypostatic union. **(2)** Son of Man, which refers to His true humanity in hypostatic union. **(3)** Son of David, which refers to His royal human lineage in hypostatic union in fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant.

The testimony of the Scripture plus abundant witnesses including both God and men attest to our Lord's identity as undiminished deity and true humanity in one Person forever.

2. John's Battle with Gnosticism

At the time the Apostle John wrote his first epistle, there was a popular heresy promoted by a group of false teachers who are generally classified as Gnostics. Our understanding of the heresy of Gnosticism is developed from information that follows the writings of John's epistles. However, there was a contemporary of John's whose fraudulent theology could easily be described as "incipient Gnosticism."

That which is “incipient” relates to the beginning or early stages of an idea’s development. Therefore, the false teachers referred to in First John were most likely Cerinthians, or those who subscribed to the doctrines of Cerinthus /si-rin’-thus/, a late first-century heretic. His theology diminished the personality of our Lord to that of an ordinary man and in so doing discredited the doctrine of the hypostatic union. The impact this man had on the churches of Asia Minor to whom John’s first epistle is written is expanded upon by Zane Hodges:

Cerinthus is said to have held that the man Jesus and the divine Christ were two distinct beings, and that the Christ descended on Jesus at His baptism, but left Him prior to His death. The denial that Jesus was the Christ may have involved the division of His Person into two distinct beings.²

Those who bought into this idea had formally attended the churches to which John writes. Since John feared they would come to influence true believers with their false doctrine, his first epistle seeks to warn them of their error:

1 John 2:19 - They went out from us but they were not really of us ...

John 2:21 - I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth.

v. 22 - Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.

John 2:26 - These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you.

v. 27 - As for you, the anointing which you received from Him [the filling of the Holy Spirit] abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

The Cerinthians were teaching a doctrine that denied the hypostatic union which is correctly defined as:

² Zane C. Hodges, *The Epistles of John: Walking in the Light of God’s Love* (Irving, Tex.: Grace Evangelical Society, 1999), 34–35:

The presence of two natures, undiminished deity and true humanity, in the one person of Jesus Christ. Both natures are inseparably united without loss or mixture of separate identity, without loss or transfer of properties or attributes, the union being personal and eternal.

Dr. Hodges gives us a little more insight:

The Revisionists claimed that Jesus was *not* the Christ (1 John 2:22). [They] regarded the “Christ” as a spiritual being who descended on the man Jesus at His baptism but left Him to die alone. Thus, the work of the cross was not a sacrifice offered up by God’s Son, but the death of a mere man. Therefore, what saving value could it have?³

To make certain that the believers in the church of Asia Minor were not deluded and deceived by the theology of the Cerinthians, John sought to provide for them witnesses that could testify to the principle of the hypostatic union, confirm that Jesus was the Son of God, and that He was a sinless man qualified to die as a substitute for the entire world.

John chose to use terminology that he used in his Gospel to describe the uniqueness of the death of Christ. On that occasion, John uses a medical witness to confirm the Lord’s physical death:

³ Hodges, *The Epistles of John*, 219.