

The Necessity for our Lord's Virgin Birth

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 enucleates 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 today's 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.¹

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."

Deuteronomy 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.

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

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.

¹ Eidsmoe, John. *Christianity and the Constitution: The Faith of Our Founding Fathers*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987), 373-74.



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. 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 ...

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

Matthew 17:4 Then answered Peter saying to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish [**and you do**], I will make three sacred tents, one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

v. 5 While Peter was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them [**the glory of God the Father**]; and behold a voice out of the cloud which said, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased. You listen to Him!"

v. 6 And when the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were much afraid.

v. 7 And Jesus came to them and touched them and said, "Arise, stop your continuous fear."

v. 8 And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man except Jesus Himself alone.



Matthew 17:9 And as they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them saying, "Tell the vision to no man 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.

v. 19 And yet we keep on having a more reliable prophetic doctrine [**biblical revelation about the Second 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 [**Second Advent**] and the Morning Star [**Jesus Christ returning in His glory**] has risen in your stream of consciousness.

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, saying, "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 [36%], and others, Elijah [28%]; but still others, Jeremiah [9%], or one of the prophets [27%]."

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

v.16 And Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ [Χριστός (*Christós: Messiah*), the Son of the living God."

v. 17 And Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father Who is in heaven."

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 over a period of time as he was an eyewitness to the Lord's miracles. 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 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 They said therefore 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 therefore 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 They said therefore to Him, “Lord, evermore give us this bread.”

v. 35 Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.”

John 6:40 “For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may 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 shall not walk in the darkness. But shall have the light of life.”

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

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

v. 26 and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

John 14:6 “I am the way, 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 essential 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, but then fail to provide the essential importance about its literal application to Mary. Yet the application to Mary requires the strict definition that can be stated for the term virgin:

An absolutely chaste young woman; a person who has not had sexual intercourse.²

Thus, 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, Gabriel said to her, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you."

v. 29 But she was greatly troubled at this statement and kept pondering what kind of salutation this might be.

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;

² Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, eleventh ed. (Springfield: Merriam-Webster, Inc, 2014), s.v. "virgin."



Luke 1:33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end.”

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

v. 35 And 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 offspring shall be called the Son of God.”

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

Matthew 4:16 After being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water; and behold the heavens were opened and He saw the Holy Spirit descending as a dove and coming upon Him,

v. 17 and behold, a voice out of the heavens, saying, “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 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 are 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 the 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 [עַלְמָה ('*almah*)] will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel [עִמָּנוּאֵל ('*Immanu'el*): “God is with us”].”

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, who is a virgin.



NOTE: עַלְמָה ('*almah*). A feminine noun meaning a maiden, a young woman, a girl, and a virgin. Rebekah was understood to be a marriageable young woman by Abraham's servant (Genesis 24:43); as was the maiden described in Proverbs 30:19). The most famous passage where this term is used is Isaiah 7:14, where it asserts an עַלְמָה ('*almah*) will give birth to a son. The author of Matthew 1:23 understood this woman to be a virgin.³

Does the testimony of Scripture give us any guidance as to whether this is accurately translated "virgin" or simply, "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 intercourse**] she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.

v. 19 And Joseph, her espoused husband, being a righteous man [**a man of honor and integrity**], and not wanting to disgrace her, desired to put 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 that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

v. 21 "And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus [**Ἰησοῦς (*Iēsoús*): Savior**], for it is He who will save His people from their sins."

v. 22 Now all this took place that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, [**Isaiah 7:14**] "Behold, the virgin [**παρθένος (*parthénos*)**], 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."

³ Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2003), 840.



Matthew 1:24 And Joseph arose from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took Mary as his wife [maintained status quo through the marriage ceremony],

v. 25 and kept her a virgin [παρθένος (*parthénos*)] until she gave birth to a Son and he called His name Jesus.

The word for “virgin” in verses 22 and 25 is παρθένος (*parthénos*), the same word found in Luke 1:26-27 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, Jesus 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 semen 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 “The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God.”

No male semen, no genetically transferred sin nature. No imputation of Adam's original sin at physical birth. No imputation of Adam's original sin means the impeccable true humanity of the “Offspring.”

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.

However, in the time the Apostle John wrote his first epistle there was a popular heresy promoted by a group of false teachers who are correctly classified as Proto-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" is in its beginning or early stages of development. Thus, 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:

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.⁴

Those who bought into this idea had formally attended the churches to which John wrote. 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 ...

1 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 true antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.

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

⁴ Hodges, Zane C. Hodges, *The Epistles of John: Walking in the Light of God's Love*. (Irving: Grace Evangelical Society, 1999), 34–35.



1 John 2:27 And 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:

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.

Zane C. Hodges offer this synopsis:

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?⁵

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:

John 19:30 When Jesus, therefore, had received the cheap wine, He said, "It is finished now with results that go on forever." And He bowed His head and dismissed His human spirit.

⁵ Zane C. Hodges, *The Epistles of John: Walking in the Light of God's Love* (Irving, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 1999), 219.

