

Why did God choose Mary?

“In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, to a virgin named Mary” (Luke 1:26-27, NLT). These words are familiar to most of us as part of what we call the Christmas story. Gabriel brought to Mary the news that she had “found favor with God” and would give birth to a son to reign forever on David’s throne (Luke 1:30-33). In passages that weave together like a tapestry, we discover that God had reasons for choosing the times, places, and people involved in His redemption plan (Ephesians 1:9-11). This article will explore some of the reasons that God chose Mary to be the mother of the Messiah.

1. Mary was of the right lineage. Luke traces Mary’s lineage through David, Boaz, Judah, Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham. Her son would be qualified to bear the title Son of David and be the righteous “Branch” that was to come from David’s family (Isaiah 11:1).

2. Mary was engaged to a man whose heritage would require him to visit Bethlehem at just the right time. Micah 5:2 foretold the birthplace of the Messiah, pinpointing Bethlehem in Judah. Many virgins may have known God’s favor and may have descended from King David’s line, but not many would also be in the small town of Bethlehem when it was time for the Messiah to be born.

3. Mary was a virgin. It was critical that the mother of the Messiah be a virgin in order to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14: “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.” Matthew reminded his readers of that prophecy, which was crucial in verifying Jesus’ identity (Matthew 1:23). She could not be married, or the world would assume Jesus had an earthly father. She could not have a bad reputation, or no one would have believed her story about a virgin birth, not even her

own family. The virgin birth, in bypassing a human father, circumvented the transmission of the sin nature and allowed the Messiah to be a sinless man.

4. Mary was from Nazareth. Prophecies given hundreds of years before Jesus' birth declared that the Messiah would be of little reputation (Isaiah 53; Zechariah 9:9; cf. Matthew 2:23). To be called a Nazarene or a Galilean was something of an insult in those days (see John 1:46). Had Mary been wealthy, socially prestigious, or from an affluent city, Jesus could not have easily connected with lowly people, the ones He'd come to save (Luke 19:10; Mark 2:17). But because He was from Nazareth, Mary's hometown, the humility and commonness prophesied about Him was fulfilled.

God may have had more reasons for choosing Mary of Nazareth, but we will have to wait until we get to heaven to find out what they are. Mary was just a person God used for His purposes. Because of certain misunderstandings about Mary, it is important to note that she was not chosen because she was more holy than other people. The angel's address to her as "highly favored" and "blessed" (Luke 1:28, NKJV) is a reference to the uniqueness of her pending task, not to any level of virtuousness she had attained.

Mary was surely a godly woman, but that is not the point. Gabriel's emphasis was on her privilege, not her piety. She had "found favor with God" (verse 30), but that says more about God's goodness than Mary's. She was the recipient of God's grace, His undeserved favor.

Mary gives us an example of total devotion to the Lord in her answer to the angel Gabriel: "I am the Lord's servant. May it be unto me as you have said" (Luke 1:38). May we have the wisdom and grace to answer God's call, whatever it is, the way Mary did.