

I Believe

If your small group isn't meeting this week, we encourage you to go through the devotional study guide with your family. This could be a wonderful time to consider Jesus' uniqueness and the glory of God from different age perspectives. As a family, consider God's glory in our lives today.

Step 1

Was Jesus just one of many who could have been the Messiah?

There are 127 Old Testament verses which make personal Messianic predictions. Rabbinical writings have identified 456 Old Testament passages which refer to the Messiah and Messianic times.

If Jesus doesn't fulfill each of these prophecies, we should NOT worship Him because he couldn't be the Christ.

But if he does fulfill them, Jesus should blow your mind, receive your highest worship, and command your first obedience.

For He is both Lord and Christ.

Mathematically speaking, the odds of one person fulfilling just eight of the messianic predictions is one chance in one hundred million billion. If you took one hundred million billion silver dollars, they would cover the state of Texas to a depth of 2 feet. Now imagine one of those silver dollars was marked with an "X" and a blindfolded person wandered the entire state to choose one coin. **What are the odds he/she would pick the marked silver dollar?** These are the same odds that one person could have fulfilled merely eight of the Old Testament prophecies!

Jesus himself set the high standard of not simply fulfilling 8, 15, or even 50. The one who had to be the Messiah, (who we could be certain was God with us; Jesus, the Christ) would have to fulfill ALL the Old Testament prophecies.

DISCUSS the following questions:

Why are the specifics of the prophecies concerning the Messiah significant?

Why do you think there were so many prophecies (especially since the odds were astronomical for someone to fulfill just 8.)?

We've discussed the complexity of our God and the paradoxes found in the Christian faith -- God is One, God is Three in One. Jesus is God, Jesus is man. God has no beginning and no end. We come to the conclusion that we understand we can't understand! Yet this same God of paradox and mystery outlines the coming Messiah in great detail.

Why do you think that is? What does that say about the importance of recognizing Jesus as the Christ?

Step 2

READ 1 Kings 8:10-11, 2 Chronicles 7:1-3, and 2 Chronicles 6:18.

CONSIDER and DISCUSS as a group the scene when God's glory filled the first temple. **What is most striking to you in the description of that scene?**

What do the scriptures say about the priests who were trying to perform their services? What would it be like to be surrounded by smoke so dark and thick?

God's Shekinah glory represents His presence. In the first temple, thick smoke represented the presence of God and filled the temple.

READ Haggai 2:6-9.

What could be greater than the Shekinah glory of God filling the first temple? What do you think the people might have imagined?

Step 3

READ Malachi 3:1-4, Luke 2:22, 25-32, Luke 19:45-48, and John 1:14-18.

Glory came the second time in an unusual way - through incarnation.

The glory of God came in the form of Christ.

REFLECT on the story of the birth of Jesus (refer to Luke 2:1-40).

As a group, **DISCUSS** the differences in the presence of God filling the first temple and in the Incarnation.

What similarities do you see? In what ways were they different? Do you think those present when God's presence filled the first temple could have missed it? Why? Why not? What about the birth of Jesus? Do you think the people in Bethlehem or the inn keeper may not have recognized God's glory and missed it? How about those in the temple when Jesus, God Himself, entered? Did they recognize the glory of God? In what ways does God show up today that we may not see? What causes us to miss the glory of God or for it to go unrecognized in our lives today?

PRAY together:

Heavenly Father, this Christmas we praise You for Your glory and Your presence which is displayed in Your Son, Jesus Christ.

Open our eyes to see Your glory today in our lives and in our world.

We believe and declare that He is the Messiah, the Christ, and Your One and Only. We believe He came from God, was born of a virgin, lived a perfect life, taught the wisdom of God, and fulfilled prophecy according to the Scriptures. Jesus was beaten, crucified, and buried to provide forgiveness for our sins. He rose again, established His church, and went back to heaven. When the time is right and all things are fulfilled, He will return full of glory and we will live in the fullness of His presence.

He is a righteous judge and will establish justice throughout the earth. His kingdom will have no end.

Lord Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, fill the temple of our hearts with Your glory and Your presence. Help us recognize Your glory and Your decision to dwell in and through us. May our hearts overflow with Your light and love. Transform us into a reflection of the glory of God, the Son; the One and Only who came down from heaven.

In Jesus' name. Amen.