

BIG IDEA:

Even as the world falls farther away from God, we are setting the stage for Christ to return.



GETTING STARTED

How far along are you on Christmas shopping?



LOOKING BACK

How have you seen God at work over the last week?

Looking back on Sunday, is there anything that stood out to you, confused you, or challenged you? (See Big Idea)



MY STORY

How do you tie the giving of gifts into the celebration of the birth of Jesus?



DIGGING DEEPER

2 Peter 3:3-4 (NLT) ³ Most importantly, I want to remind you that in the last days scoffers will come, mocking the truth and following their own desires. ⁴ They will say, "What happened to the promise that Jesus is coming again? From before the times of our ancestors, everything has remained the same since the world was first created."

What, if anything, have you heard people say about the return of Jesus?

Peter says that people will essentially argue, "Jesus hasn't made any real difference in the world." How would you respond to this argument?

4

DIGGING DEEPER (CONTINUED)

2 Peter 3:5-7 (NLT) ⁵ They deliberately forget that God made the heavens by the word of his command, and he brought the earth out from the water and surrounded it with water. ⁶ Then he used the water to destroy the ancient world with a mighty flood. ⁷ And by the same word, the present heavens and earth have been stored up for fire. They are being kept for the day of judgment, when ungodly people will be destroyed.

If God doesn't want anyone to be destroyed, why does it happen? (This is a deep question. Give it your best shot, admitting that we can't fully know the mind of God.)

God "wants everyone to repent." What is your understanding of repentance?

2 Peter 3:10-12 (NLT) ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment. ¹¹ Since everything around us is going to be destroyed like this, what holy and godly lives you should live, ¹² looking forward to the day of God and hurrying it along. On that day, he will set the heavens on fire, and the elements will melt away in the flames.

Since everything is going to be destroyed, why does it matter whether or not we live holy and godly lives?

Why would we want to hurry along the day of God?

2 Peter 3:13-15b (NLT) ¹³ But we are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth he has promised, a world filled with God's righteousness. ¹⁴ And so, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to be found living peaceful lives that are pure and blameless in his sight. ¹⁵ And remember, the Lord's patience gives people time to be saved.

"Advent" means a time of expectation and waiting. How is waiting for the return of Jesus today similar to people in Old Testament times waiting for the first Christmas?

5

BRINGING IT HOME

It's often easier to live for today than it is to keep the bigger picture in mind. Christmas is a time to remember that God has a plan that goes beyond today. Enjoy this Christmas season as a time to celebrate what God has already done, and to look forward to a time when He makes all things new.

6

PRAYER REQUESTS