

WATCHING THE SKY

[Jesus] was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

—Acts 1:9

INTRODUCTION

It's hard to wait patiently for a day that you want to come quickly, isn't it? Like your birthday. Or the first day of summer vacation. Or Christmas! When a day like that is approaching, you just can't wait for it to get here. But what should you do while you're waiting? Should you just sit around, twiddle your thumbs, and stare at the clouds? How can you make the best use of the time you have between now and the special day you're looking forward to? Well, today we're going to talk about Advent, which is the time of year when people of faith begin to anticipate the coming of Christmas. We're going to discuss what they do during that time. We're also going to talk about a *very* special day, a day Christians have been eagerly looking forward to for over two thousand years—ever since Jesus left his disciples and went up to heaven. That special day is the day when he will come back to earth!

Today's devotion is based on Acts 1:9, which says, "[Jesus] was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight." The devotion is called "Watching the Sky."

DEVOTION

Andre and Elena lay on the grass, watching the clouds. "That one looks like a castle," Elena said, pointing.

Andre cocked his head. "Nah, I don't get it."

Elena rolled her eyes. "Well, what do you see?"

"A ship! It has three sails," Andre said, pointing at another cloud.

Elena stared at the cloud. "Doesn't look like anything to me."

Andre put his hands under his head. "That's because you have no imagination."

Glaring at him, Elena said, "What do you mean? I just imagined a fortress. That beats a boat!"

Laughing, Andre said, "Uh-oh, my ship just ran into your castle. Now the whole thing looks like a snowman."

Elena looked up. "You're right! Ooh, it reminds me of Christmas."

Think about how you long for Christmas during Advent season. It seems that day will never arrive. But you know it will! That's the way it was for God's people before the first Christmas, as they waited for the Messiah to come. And that's the way it's been ever since Jesus left. The present time is a kind of Advent season. Even though it sometimes seems Jesus will never return, one day soon he will.

WORDS TO TREASURE

*They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven,
with power and great glory.*

—Matthew 24:30

QUESTIONS

1. What kinds of things does your family do during Advent to get ready for Christmas? Which of those things do you think is the most fun? Which is the most meaningful to you in terms of reminding you what the Christmas season is all about?
2. What do you think it was like for God's people before the very first Christmas, when they were waiting for the Messiah to come? What do you think they were doing during that time? What were they thinking about? How were they feeling? In what ways was that time similar to the present time, when God's people are waiting for Jesus to come back?
3. What kinds of things do you think Christians should be doing as we wait for Jesus' return? Should we be sitting outside all day, staring at the clouds and watching for him? Or does he have more important things for us to do? What did he say just before he left?

For a clue, either have children look up Acts 1:8, which says, "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth," and Matthew 28:19–20, which says, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you," or read these passages to them. Besides fulfilling the Great Commission, Christians are to live holy lives until Christ returns and minister to people in need.

4. Nobody knows exactly when Jesus will return, so what should you do about any sinful habits you may have right now?

Answer: Confess them and repent of them. Ask God for help in this.

5. Do you think we should only think about important events like Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection on holidays such as Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter? How can we remind ourselves, all year long, about these great events and what they mean for our lives?

One answer is: read about them regularly in your Bible, any time of year—and when you do, think about what they mean to you.

Consider spending some time playing a game or doing an exercise to help children memorize the "Words to Treasure" Scripture verse.