

WHAT IS GOD'S KINGDOM?

God's Kingdom means the reign or rule of God. Christians pray for God's Kingdom to come in the Lord's Prayer. Strange – don't they believe Jesus has already set up God's Kingdom on earth? Yes – but the Kingdom is mysteriously growing to fulfilment. One day, Christians believe, the prayer will be answered completely.

Is God's Kingdom about territory and earthly power? No – it is about ruling the hearts and minds of people. When one person freely accepts God's ways in their life, the Kingdom of God is extended a little more. The Kingdom must 'break in' before it breaks out.

What does St Mark's Gospel tell Christians about the Kingdom of God?

It has arrived in the person of Jesus. Jesus opened his preaching by telling people the Kingdom of God was at hand (cf. Mk 1:15).

The Kingdom must be received like a gift rather than demanded as a payment for 'being good'.

It requires a change of heart and life. Jesus told people to repent, to become like little children, and not to let anything get in the way of receiving the Kingdom.

It is mysterious. Jesus uses parables to get across its mysteries.

It is different to what some Jews might have expected – a mighty warrior messiah, a new Israel in which enemies were conquered, and so on.

It is real. The miracles of Jesus show the power of the Kingdom in which evil and suffering would be wiped out.

It faces opposition from the kingdom of death and darkness. Through the resurrection, Jesus has broken the power of sin and death forever.

The Kingdom of God will one day be completely and gloriously shown out.

Activities

- 1** Choosing the best endings, write a sentence each for the questions below.

Jesus began his public ministry by preaching that
A the Kingdom of God is close at hand.
B only the Jews would be saved.
C the Romans were to be vanquished.

The 'territory' of the Kingdom lies
A in Judea.
B in the hearts of people.
C in Galilee.

In order to accept the Kingdom of God
A people need to become Jewish.
B people need to repent and believe.
C people need to have done many good works.

The Kingdom of God is a reality
A only at the end of time.
B only in heaven.
C where God's love abounds.

The Kingdom meets great opposition because
A God is not all-powerful.
B God is not all-loving.
C the world's ways are often evil.

- 2** Some of the statements below are false; rewrite them to make them true statements.

Christians believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the one who establishes God's reign on earth.

The Kingdom of God will be established without opposition.

Christians believe that it is uncertain whether the Kingdom of God will win out in the end.

Miracles have nothing to do with the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God is present in the world but not yet completely manifest (shown out) to all.

Christians believe they can do nothing for the building up of God's Kingdom.

One cannot receive the Kingdom freely: one must earn this privilege.

Many Jews believed in a Kingdom where Israel's enemies would be conquered.