



Be hopeful

Aim of lesson

To think about God's kingdom in the past and how the future kingdom will be so much better.

Bible background

Psalm 72, Isaiah 2, Isaiah 35.

Preparation required

If you didn't teach this class last week, check what material was covered.

Familiarize yourself with the passages in the student's notes so that you are ready to know which ones to suggest they look up. A concordance might be useful if you think you might look up some passages not mentioned in the table.

A whiteboard or flipchart might be useful.

Outline of lesson

Ask the students what they think of when they hear someone speaking about the kingdom of God. Is it something they feel they know about and look forward to, or a bit of a mystery? Do they think about its existence in the past, or is this a new idea?

Then

Remind the class how the people of Israel had grown from one family (Abraham's) to a nation in Egypt from where they had returned to settle in the promised land. Use the timeline to speed this up. Ask about their leaders through this time – Moses, Joshua, the judges and finally how they had asked for a king.

Read Psalm 114:1-2 and Exodus 19:5-6 (they are printed in the students' books). A kingdom needs a king but when the people of Israel left Egypt, they had God as their king. The basis of God's kingdom is given in verse 5 of Exodus 19 – that the people in it obey God's voice and keep his covenant.

Look at the first two maps in the students' books showing how God's first kingdom grew in size. The greatest growth was during the time of King David. Ask the class why they think this was. David was God-fearing and consulted God about his battles with other nations.

Look at 2 Chronicles 9:1-8. When the king and his people obeyed God's voice and kept his covenant the kingdom was amazing! Bring out the phrase in verse 8 - '... the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and set you on his throne.'

Talk about how this kingdom ended when the people turned from God. Bit by bit the land was taken by the surrounding nations, whose gods the people of Israel had followed. First the northern kingdom, then the south, were taken into exile until there was nothing left. After Zedekiah, there was never another king in Israel.

Even after a limited number of people had returned from Babylon they were subject to a series of Gentile rulers, culminating in the Roman empire into which the Lord Jesus was born.

The future

It isn't surprising that the people of Jesus day expected him to be king then and save them from the Romans. We know however that when he comes the second time there is a more amazing kingdom promised than David and Solomon's.

Ask the class to tell you what it will be like. You could use a white board or a large piece of paper and list under two columns 'know' and 'think'. 'Know' would be things like 'there won't be any more crying' because the Bible tells us that, even if they don't know where. 'Think' would be things they aren't sure or about.

Fill in the gaps in their knowledge by looking up the passages in the students' books. They could fill in a summary of what we know from the references or they could write what they would really like.

What I wish for

Finally help the students to make it personal. The ultimate purpose of the kingdom is to glorify God, but there will also be the joy of seeing friends or relatives free from suffering or disability, wars ended, food for all etc.

They could fill in a few things in the wish list that they would really look forward to.

Relevance to our lives

Jesus went through all he did 'for the joy set before him', and 'without a vision the people perish'. The kingdom of the future is our vision.

Help the young people to see that it really will be good. Life may seem to be good for them at the moment and there may all sorts of exciting things to look forward to; they may also be a bit frightened of Jesus' return but God has promised that his kingdom will be better than anything we can imagine.

Extension activities

- Go back to the passage in Exodus 19. Ask the students whether they think of Jesus as King in their lives now? And do they try to obey God's voice and keep his covenant now.
- Look then at the parables in Matthew 13 which start 'the kingdom of Heaven is like ...' What do we learn from these?