

Prayer

Lord Jesus, although You are the Eternal One, the great I AM, You humbled Yourself to be born of a virgin in a little town called Bethlehem. Although You made and own all things, during Your earthly ministry You sought ownership of nothing. You sought the company of those considered to be unimportant little people so that You might share with them Your big truth. You walked the way of a Servant-without-limit. Your throne was a cross. Your resurrection was the greatest Good News the world has ever heard and will ever hear. Help us to rejoice in Your words of forgiving love as we journey through life, and inspire us to wait with joy to hear Your words of welcoming love on that Last Day. In Your precious Name we pray. Amen.

PICTURE TALK

The Nicene Creed contains the following words:

*And I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only begotten Son of God,
begotten of His Father before all worlds...*

*And was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.*

ILLUSTRATION 20A

Lower section

Make use of the symbols to explain:

- ◆ Jesus, as God, is without beginning and without end.
- ◆ Jesus, the King of the universe, took part in the work of creation.
- ◆ Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity, united His Godhead with humanity when He was conceived within the Virgin Mary.
- ◆ Jesus the Messiah is both God and man still today, and always will be.

Leaders need to make good use of the notes in the manual which explain the *lower section* of ILLUSTRATION 20A.

Upper section

Explain what the symbols depict about Jesus' life and ministry.

These have been used frequently in previous illustrations, and are explained in the notes in the manual which explain the *upper section* of ILLUSTRATION 20A.

ILLUSTRATION 20B

ILLUSTRATION 20B repeats some of the details included in ILLUSTRATION 20A, but points to some additional profound details in relation to Jesus' ministry and continuing presence.

- ◆ According to Matthew 28:19,20, Acts 1:1-9, and Ephesians 4:10, where did Jesus go to when He "ascended"?

Jesus did not *withdraw* His presence from His people. He merely *transformed* it. Jesus remains among us invisibly, and we live out life before His eyes.

- ◆ Why is it more comforting to think of ourselves as waiting for Jesus "final appearing," rather than for His "second coming"?

Jesus does not dwell merely in a distant corner of the universe. Jesus remains among us as our loving, forgiving, caring, guiding Savior and Lord. His continuing presence is comforting and inspiring.

ILLUSTRATION 20C

Use ILLUSTRATION 20C to explain the meaning of the statements in the Apostles' Creed which refer to the person and work of Jesus Christ, or Jesus the Messiah.

What useful purpose would be served by including in the Creed reference to the additional detail depicted in ILLUSTRATION 20C between the symbol for Jesus' birth, and the symbol for Jesus' scourging?

Those who belong to God's eternal family have the privilege to reflect the heart, mind, and manner of their Servant King in all they think, say, and do.

ILLUSTRATION 20D

ILLUSTRATION 20D depicts Jesus' various roles as Prophet, Priest, King, and Wisdom.

- ◆ The Old Testament prophets were those who spoke for Another, for God. What does John 17:7,8 reveal about Jesus' role as Prophet?

Jesus spoke the words His Father wanted Him to speak, and did the things His Father wanted Him to do.

- ◆ John 1:29 and 1:36 refer to Jesus as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." What terms does Hebrews 9:11-14 use to describe Jesus' saving work?

Hebrews draws on terms depicting the Old Testament sacrificial system to describe Jesus' person and ministry. The former was a repetitious affair. Jesus' ministry was a "once-and-for-all" saving action and offering.

- ◆ In what way was Jesus' kingship radically different from traditional ideas about kingship, John 18:33-19:22?

People associate earthly rulers and kings with palaces, power, and pomp. Jesus never sought to acquire such things, but lived the life of a humble servant, in total submission to the will of His Father, and finally gave away life itself—that others might be blessed eternally.

- ◆ Read 1 Kings 10:23-25, and Matthew 2:1-12. What parallels do you detect? Why would Jesus' words recorded in Matthew 12:42 have caused concern among the teachers of His day?

Events associated with the visits of kings from surrounding nations to Solomon in Jerusalem reflect events in Matthew's description of the visit of the Wise Men to Jesus. Jesus' reference to Himself as "one greater than Solomon" would have greatly perturbed the teachers of His day, Matthew 12:42.

ILLUSTRATION 20E

Why should we find Jesus' words to Philip very comforting, John 14:8–11?

The character of the “invisible God” who made and owns the universe is not a mystery. Jesus revealed the heart and character of His Father through all that He was, said, and did. As Jesus dealt with people during His ministry, so God deals with us today.

ILLUSTRATION 20F

Use **ILLUSTRATION 20F** to explain the significance of Paul's words in Ephesians 1:20.

When Paul speaks of Jesus being at the “right hand of the Father,” the reference is not to *locality* but *authority*. God's will is that humanity know and reflect Jesus' mind and manner in all actions. Humanity either *conforms* to God's will (and is blessed, God's way), or rebels and goes its own way (Satan's way)—and *crumbles*.

ILLUSTRATION 20G

Use **ILLUSTRATION 20G** to explain what Paul means when, in Ephesians 1:22, he says that God “has put all things under Jesus' feet.”

- ◆ According to **ILLUSTRATION 20G**, points 1–6, what powers and authorities has God placed under Jesus' feet?

See points 1–6 in the manual. The powers of sin, law codes, judgment, the demonic, so-called “heavenly powers” (as some people understand them), death.

- ◆ What comfort do Paul's words give us?

We know who has the “final say” with regard to the use of the created order and the path of history. We know what will work (God's good and gracious will, revealed in Jesus), and what will not work (Satan's *lying* will).

- ◆ To what mission do Paul's words call us?

Paul's words call us to know and conform to the good and gracious will of God, revealed in the Person and ministry of Jesus, the saving, servant Messiah.

BEGINNING TO DIG

- 1 If someone were to ask you, “Who is this Jesus you believe in?” what would you say?

In the person of Jesus, God clothed Himself in flesh, and lived a saving, servant life on dusty Planet Earth to draw people into an eternal relationship with Himself. By God's forgiving grace, through faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord, we already possess eternal life.

- 2 If that person were to ask you, “Where is Jesus now?” what answer would you give?

Jesus, as the God-Man, fills every corner of the universe. In Him, we live and move and have our being.

- 3 In what way was Jesus' life a living display of God's wisdom?

Jesus carried out His ministry among a people who had numerous “wisdom writings”—writings which offered guidance concerning how to think and act *wisely*. Jesus not only talked about “wisdom”—His servant life was, from beginning to end, a *living display of wisdom in action*.

- 4 To understand how Jesus related to people during His earthly ministry is to understand how Jesus relates to us today. Refer to five events in Jesus' ministry which help us understand how Jesus relates to us today.

- ◆ He dealt kindly with those looked on as untouchable outcasts, Matthew 8:14
- ◆ He forgave people, Mark 2:1–12; note verses 5 and 12; Luke 7:48–50.
- ◆ He cared about those who were hungry, Mark 8:1–10; note 8:2,3.
- ◆ Jesus related positively and kindly to women, Mark 5:25–34.
- ◆ He gave help and hope to those dealing with death, Luke 7:11–17.

- 5 How do you react to the following statement, and why?

Jesus' message and ministry constitute the only “peace plan” for the world that will really work.

Unfortunately, some people think of Jesus Person and ministry in distant terms—as though Christianity has to do only with a life to come, a world beyond this world. Although Jesus dealt with issues relating to the life to come, He also focused on life in the here-and-now. If all people understood Jesus, believed in Jesus, and devoted life to following Jesus, life on Planet Earth would be very different indeed. Use **ILLUSTRATION 3D**, **ILLUSTRATION 13C**, and **ILLUSTRATION 17D** with this question.

DIGGING DEEPER

- 1 In what way did Jesus the Messiah establish an “upside-down,” “back-to-front” kingdom? Refer to Philippians 2:4–11 as you formulate your answer.

Paul's words in Philippians 2:4–11 are inspiring, to say the very least. While earthly kings traditionally seek power, pomp, prestige, prominence, and prosperity, Jesus took upon Himself the form of a servant and became obedient even unto death—even to the point of giving away life on a cross. And His Father gave Jesus a resounding, endorsing “Yes!” vote by raising Him from the dead and declaring Him King of the Universe, and Lord of time and eternity.