

Six Great Truths about Jesus

by

Major General Sir Laurence New

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Six Great Truths about Jesus - Part 1

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In the Seventies, during a tour with the Embassy in Tel Aviv, I served three successive ambassadors. The first, a Churchillian figure, was in the last three months of his term; the second a gentle, very bright man who had been at Oxford with many of the Israeli leaders and intellectuals drowned off Caesarea shortly after taking up his post; the third was a thrusting high-flying career diplomat who went on to be the High Commissioner in Australia. They were entirely distinct but they had one prime characteristic in common – each was meticulous in mastering his brief. When they were charged with a message to be conveyed from the British Crown to the Israeli leadership to which they had been accredited, they spent many careful hours making certain that they had the facts and the nuances absolutely right; they also watched purposefully for the right opportunity to convey that message. This was especially true when it was a message that the Israelis didn't much want to hear.

Paul tells us that we should be like that; we too are ambassadors with a message. Paul says, "It is as if He [Jesus] were making His appeal through us", 2 Cor 5:20. How meticulous are you and I in preparing for the opportunity to convey the message of reconciliation from the King of Kings to the people to whom we have been accredited?

When they had the opportunity to be ambassadors Paul and Silas were ever-ready. We read in Acts 16:30 that the jailer in Antioch asked them "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They answered simply but profoundly in just fifteen words "**Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your whole family.** Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house". There is the test. When you and I are given the opportunity to witness are we ready to **speak the words of the Lord ?**

In this article and those in following editions of News & Views, I would like to look with you at each of six great truths that we are required to believe about Jesus. The "world" isn't very keen to hear them, and will instinctively be inclined not to believe what we say. They will never believe without the work of the Holy Spirit; but our part, our responsibility, will be to master our brief and look for the opportunity to pass it on.

The first of these great truths which we must be ready to explain is that Jesus was not the son of Joseph. He was not the product of a handsome young engaged couple allowing their love for each other to get out of hand. That is what most people, then and now, would choose to believe; but it is not true. What is the evidence?

a. The clearest of the Old Testament prophecies concerning Jesus' immaculate conception is that of Isaiah - "The Lord Himself will give you a sign: the VIRGIN will be with child and will give birth to a son and will call Him Immanu El – with us God". Micah prophesied that the child would be born in Bethlehem and Jeremiah prophesied that all the children of Jesus' age would be slaughtered by Herod.

b. The Gospels insist that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary. Luke in his gospel spells it out Chapter 1:26 – 38. Matthew in his gospel also makes it unmistakably clear in Chapter 1:18 and 19. "Before they came together Mary was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit".

c. The Anglican prayer book sums up the evidence in the words "He was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, was made man".

d. Some of those to whom we might speak are more inclined to believe historical records other than the Bible. In this context it is interesting to note that the Koran insists that Jesus was born of a virgin without a human father. No such claim is made for Mohammed.

e. We should note finally and crucially that Jesus Himself was in no doubt that His conception was not only immaculate but timeless. In disputing with the Jews in the Temple precincts Jesus said "Before your Abraham was, I am". John 8:58. See also John 1:1.

This is the first unique truth about Jesus – unique because no other man was ever born without a human father. The evidence is clear in prophecy, in Jesus' own testimony and in the deliberate choice of Christ's champions down the ages to die rather than deny His immaculate conception. Modern men and women won't easily accept it. We must earn the right to tell them by prayerful mastery of our brief, and trust by our prayers that the Holy Spirit will bring conviction.

As we shall see in the next article, the second great truth about Jesus follows from and relies directly upon the first. Both were essential if Jesus was to die in our place.

Six Great Truths about Jesus - Part 2 **by Major General Sir Laurence New**

In the first of these articles we saw that as Ambassadors for Christ we are partners with the Holy Spirit. We have not only to live lives that are seen to be consistent with our faith, we have also to be able to explain the truths about Jesus to those to whom we have earned the right to speak. The first of these foundational truths is that unlike any other man who ever lived Jesus was, as the Book of Common Prayer so aptly puts it, “Conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, made man”. It is an inescapable truth, which Jesus clearly believed Himself, and which Mary and Joseph knew to be a fact, that He had been immaculately conceived. I want now to look at the Second Great Truth about Jesus – **His Deity**.

Some elements of the Church cannot accept Jesus’ deity. They argue that he was merely **the greatest man who ever lived**. Indeed those otherwise admirable Jehovah’s Witnesses will present you with a book so titled when they come to your door. Paul, with his brilliant trained and inspired brain, rejects any claim that Jesus was merely the greatest man who ever lived. He insists that **God was in Christ reconciling the World to Himself**, 2 Cor 5 :19.

The Gospel writers also will have none of it. John points to Christ’s own prayer....“Glorify me in your presence Father with the Glory I had with you before the world began”, John 17 :5; to His insistence “I and the Father are one”, John 10:3; to His claim “The Father is in me and I am in the Father”, John 10:38; and to His assertion “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father”, John 14:9-10.

It is true that Christ’s godliness made Him the most powerful **preacher and teacher** of all time. The Sermon on the Mount is surely one of the most profound series of truths ever taught. Even His enemies wondered at His power of his speech and his teaching. It is true that Jesus was the most **outstanding healer of all time** – Jairus’ daughter, Lazarus, the Centurion’s son, the sick man let down through the roof, the lame man at the Pool of Bethesda, the blind girl, the man at Gadera so filled with demons that he was called Legion. The Gospels record countless such healings. It is clear also that He was a **superb strategist**, devoting hours to the training of his apostles, preparing them to be the leaders of the young church. **But none of this is enough.**

Christ’s claims about Himself leave no room for escape. Suppose a man was to stand before you and say:

“I and the heavenly father are one. Do you want to find God; then come through me for I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but by me. Are you anxious sometimes about death? I am the resurrection and the life. If you believe in me you will never die to all eternity. I have the right to forgive your sins; one day I am going to come back to this world to judge all people of all time including you; and what happens to you for all eternity depends upon your response to my words...” and suppose as he was speaking someone was to come forward to kneel in front of him, raise his arms and say “My Lord and My God”; what would you think if, as you watched, you saw him not only accept the man’s worship but rebuke him gently for being so slow to believe ?”

All of these claims that Jesus made about Himself force any honest observer to choose one of only three possibilities; Jesus was either:

A fraud (and His apostles and witnesses with Him) or

A raving megalomaniac (which the evidence simply doesn’t support) or

The Messiah, to which all the Old and New Testament evidence points.

There is one further compelling piece of evidence which supports the claim of Christ's deity. In face of unremitting temptation of the most subtle kind **Jesus was sinless**. Isaiah foretold this, Isaiah 53:9; the Angel Gabriel told Mary that her Son would be "without fault"; the Gospels and the Epistles bear out this unique feature of His earthly life.

In witnessing to those who ask, we can as Christ's ambassadors assert with total confidence that Jesus was **God in Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life. His deity was and is beyond doubt.**

In Part Three we will be reminded that without these solemn truths Jesus could never have died in our place.

Six Great Truths about Jesus - Part 3

by Major General Sir Laurence New

In the first and second of these articles we saw that as Ambassadors for Christ we have not only to live lives that are seen to be consistent with our faith, we have also to be able to explain the truths about Jesus to those to whom we have earned the right to speak. We have also to recognise that whereas we can lead someone to the foot of the cross we can never bring them to new birth; that is the work of the Holy Spirit whose servants we are.

In Part 1 we rehearsed the evidence for Jesus' Immaculate Conception; in Part 2 we saw the evidence for His Deity. In this third article we will see that without both of these unique qualities Jesus could not have died in our place. How can we present this deep mystery to those to whom we have been called to speak?

Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury in the eleventh century, wrote, "I do not seek to understand so that I may believe, but rather I seek to believe so that I may understand. What is more, I judge that unless I believe I will never understand". As we try to explain this third great truth, that Jesus died in our place, we must make use of this profound observation.

Why did Jesus have to die? If I may put it irreverently, the Creator has always had a problem in relating to His creatures. How can Holy God be reconciled to un-holy man? How can Holy God go on smiling on men and women who continue to ignore Him? No wonder we feel remote from Him. The great prophet Isaiah put his finger on the problem - "It is not that He is deaf; it is our sins which have separated us from Him", Isaiah 59:1-2. Under the First Covenant this separation was mitigated by the sacrificial system based on the Tabernacle and (later) the Temple as laid down in Numbers chapters 15, 28 and 29. The offerings, many of which involved the shedding of blood, climaxed in the Day of Atonement during which the scapegoat was driven out into the wilderness. These forms of reconciliation were acceptable to God; but after many decades God let it be known through the prophet Jeremiah "I tire of these sacrifices; henceforth I will give them a new covenant. It will not be like the old covenant. I will put my law in their minds and write it in their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people" Jeremiah 31:31-33. Paul insists that under this new contract between God and his People Jesus Himself would replace the sacrifices, most noticeably the lamb; reconciliation would be achieved henceforth by Jesus on the cross.

I will never forget the first time I saw this deep truth explained in terms that I could believe and understand. We were in a packed York Minster and David Watson was speaking. He held his left hand palm upwards. On it he placed a large black note book. He pointed to a light suspended above the pulpit - "That light represents God and this hand represents us; we cannot enjoy the light, we cannot be illumined by it, we cannot be encouraged, held back, inspired by it, because there is a barrier between us and God, the barrier of un-confessed and un-forgiven sin represented by this book". It was a crystal clear illustration of the diagnosis of our problem first spelt out by Isaiah - "It is not that God is deaf; it is our sins which have separated us from Him". But then David, again quoting Isaiah, illustrated the solution of the problem: "But He has laid on Him the iniquity of us all", Isaiah 53:6. As he reminded us of this prophecy David transferred the barrier from his left hand and laid it on his right hand, representing Jesus on the cross. "Look at us now" he said, "there is no barrier between us and God. We can hear him, speak with Him, be directed and held back by Him, we can laugh with Him and weep with Him. But lest you should think this too easy, too much like cheap grace, look at the price which was paid by Jesus. Despite knowing always that He must die in our place as the sacrificial lamb Jesus was utterly shocked to find that He was totally cut off from the Father on the cross; the barrier was now upon Him; He had become sin. His separation was shocking, total and unique. Search the scriptures and the history of the Church and you will find no other case of a champion of God being forsaken by God at the point of his severest trial; not Stephen, the first martyr, nor much later Bishop Latimer. As the flames began to scorch his body the Bishop

called out to his fellow sufferer at the stake “Be of good cheer Master Ridley, and play the man. We will this day in England light such a candle as I pray will never be put out!” But for Jesus that sacred stream of communion which had always been there suddenly wasn’t. He was completely and utterly rejected by God. Mercifully his separation was not only shocking, complete and unique; it was finite. Just before He died Jesus called out “It is finished”,

John 19:30. The Greek word is tetelesti, a commercial term meaning paid for, receipted, settled. Some of the disciples were slow to understand that Jesus had paid completely, once and for all, the price of our separation from God. Paul understood and spelt it out: “God was in Christ [on the cross] reconciling the World to Himself”, 2 Cor 5:19.

We must note one final point. A contract has to be both offered and accepted. The new contract “Ha Brit ha ghadasha” between God and us His followers has no effect unless it is accepted by each of us individually. “God so loved the world that he gave His one and only son, so that whoever believes on Him shall not perish but have eternal life”, John 3:16. We must not only believe in order that we might understand; we must accept in order that we might have life.

In the fourth article we will see the evidence that Jesus really did rise from the dead.

Six Great Truths about Jesus - Part 4 by Major General Sir Laurence New

In Part 1 we rehearsed the evidence for Jesus' Immaculate Conception; in Part 2 we saw the evidence for His Deity. In Part 3 we saw that these qualities made it possible for Jesus to die in our place. Now in Part 4 we examine the evidence for and against the central truth of what happened on the Third Day.

In the 1950s and 60s there was a British TV personality called Professor Joad. He was erudite, eloquent and sharp, but he was uncertain of his faith. He was often featured on panel games and appeared regularly on the very popular programme "Any Questions". One day he was challenged: "If you could ask any question of anyone alive or dead, who and what would it be?" After a moment's thought he answered, "The person would be Jesus Christ and the question would be, **did you or did you not rise from the dead?**"

Of course he was right; it is the most important question anyone can ask. Why? Because if Jesus did not rise from the dead our whole faith is built on a lie; the apostles were liars; saints down the ages have died for a lie; Jesus did not conquer sin and death; our hopes of eternal life are false; our church, the AMCF, Accts MMI and our Armed Forces' Christian Union are all based on a lie.

Paul stressed in the fifteenth chapter (especially verses 12–58) of his first letter to the Church in Corinth that the truth of the resurrection was central to our faith "**Without the resurrection our preaching and our beliefs are meaningless.**"

Sir Edmund Clarke, one of Britain's greatest jurists wrote "In any court of mine the evidence for the resurrection would be accepted as overwhelming."

How strange therefore that many theologians, some leaders of the Church and even some Bishops doubt the reality of the resurrection. Strauss, the influential German theologian, claims that it was simply a wish-fulfilling hallucination among his followers - "It was their love that resurrected Jesus."

Since the resurrection is so central a truth we need to look carefully at four pieces of evidence:

1. The body had gone. There can be no doubt that it had gone. The guards were bribed to say that it had been stolen. But there were only two groups of suspects with a credible motive – **His enemies and His friends**. If **His enemies** had stolen the body they would have paraded it, to dispose once and for all of His claim that He would rise on the third day. But they didn't because they couldn't. **His friends** would have had an impossible task stealing His body. At the express wish of the Chief Priest and the Pharisees, Pilate had ordered "Make the tomb as secure as you know how." The guard had been doubled. The stone had been put firmly in place and sealed. Moreover the comments of Jesus' followers "You killed Him, but God raised Him and we are witnesses" are not the words of men trying to conceal a fundamental lie.

Other attempts to explain the absence of the body have been:

The wrong Tomb. Perhaps Mary could have gone to the wrong tomb in the early morning light, but not Peter and John and certainly not Joseph of Aramathea whose tomb it was!

The Swoon Theory. The idea here is that Jesus didn't actually die on the cross but swooned. In the cool of the tomb he regained consciousness, took off his spice-laden bindings, moved the stone and emerged! This theory would never carry any weight with a jury. The Romans were very good at putting men to death. When the sword was thrust into Jesus' side warm red blood would have flowed if He had still been alive; but it didn't. Instead blood and water flowed – clot and serum – a sure indication that the heart had ceased to function. Besides, when the women took his body to lay it in the tomb they would have noticed his breathing however shallow. Finally, Jesus had been beaten within an inch of his life even before being crucified. No jury could be persuaded that he could have recovered his strength in the tomb sufficient to free Himself from a hundredweight of spices and bindings, move the sealed stone and have emerged without being seen.

2. The second piece of evidence, which we tend to overlook, bears this out: **The Body had gone but the grave clothes had not.** When Peter and John reached the tomb they looked in. Peter entered first and saw the binding and strips of linen. But then John **“went in, saw the grave clothes and believed,”** John 20:3-8. What was so special about the grave clothes that helped John to dismiss his doubts about the resurrection? John records it in detail. The grave clothes were undisturbed the head linen being separate. It was the custom to bind the body and the head separately leaving the neck uncovered. Both sets of linen had simply collapsed – “folded”. Jesus had not had to unwind Himself or been unwound as had Lazarus in his resuscitation; Jesus’ body had been transmuted through the linen. **It was not resuscitation it was resurrection.** John saw this in an instant and believed the only possible explanation – **Jesus had risen from the dead as He had said He would.**

3. **The third piece of evidence is that Jesus appeared on at least ten occasions.** First He appeared to Mary Magdalene at the entrance to the tomb and then Peter. Then to the two disciples on the road from Jerusalem down to Emmaus. They were so excited and convinced that they walked the ten miles uphill to Jerusalem in the dark to tell the disciples. He then appeared to the ten disciples in the Upper Room and some days later to the eleven (including Thomas this time). He then appeared to about five hundred in the Tiberias region and to James, His brother who had had an understandably difficult time believing that his step-brother was the Messiah. Next He appeared to Peter and his fellow fishermen on the shore when they returned from an abortive night’s fishing. He appeared to many of His disciples at the time of His Ascension; and finally He appeared to Saul on the rode to Damascus. These alleged appearances face us with a further credibility test. Were they plain lies? If they were inventions one has to say that they bore the mark of a diabolically clever con trick. The language used to describe them is artless, the accounts have the ring of truth; all the accounts have a consistency; if they were lies then we cannot trust anything that any of the apostles said or wrote. The doubters have not claimed that they were lies, but that they were genuine wish-fulfilling hallucinations. “It was their love that resurrected Jesus,” claimed Strauss. This theory falls down on several scores. An expert witness would testify to a jury that group hallucinations are effectively unheard of and never involve any physical manifestation, such as inviting Thomas to place his hands in Jesus’ side, nor of cooking and eating fish on the Tiberias shore. As for “wish-fulfilment” the disciples were so far from expecting Jesus to rise from the dead that they refused at first to believe the clearest evidence that He had risen. No a jury would not for a moment accept the hallucination theory and nor should we. This leaves only one other possibility – that they were true. The Fourth and final piece of evidence bears this out.

4. **Those who met with the Risen Lord were changed.** Four examples will suffice. It was the fact of the resurrection that changed Peter from a cringing insistence that he had never met the Lord into a bold and inspired public speaker who led thousands to a vibrant faith. It was the resurrected Lord who changed James, His brother, from persistent agnostic into a powerful leader of the early church, the first President of the Jerusalem Council. It was the resurrection that caused doubting Thomas to proclaim “My Lord and My God” and to become one of the most effective apostles. It was the risen Lord who changed Saul, a passionate enemy of the “Followers of the Way” into Paul, the greatest advocate of the faith which he had tried so urgently to destroy. Finally it was the resurrection that changed the Sabbath into Sunday.

We have now reviewed four of the six great truths about Jesus, His Immaculate Conception, His Deity, that He died in our place, and that He really did rise from the dead. In our next study we must rehearse the empowering truth that He is at work among us today by His Holy Spirit.

Six Great Truths about Jesus - Part 5 by Major General Sir Laurence New

The fifth great truth about Jesus is that He is at work among us today by His Holy Spirit. In Part 1 we looked at the evidence for Jesus' Immaculate Conception; in Part 2 the evidence for His Deity; in Part 3 we saw that these qualities made it possible for Jesus to die in our place. In Part 4 we examined the evidence for and against the truth of the Resurrection. Up to this point we have been observers, analysts of the truth about Jesus; but in this fifth and penultimate part we are faced with a choice, whether or not to respond to His commission in Matthew 28:11–20, to work as His ambassadors - “**with all power... go.. make disciples.. all your days**”.

Jesus makes it clear that without the **power** of His spirit we can do nothing, (John 15:5). Yet for so many **the Holy Spirit is the neglected member of the Trinity**. Why should this be? There appear to be four principal reasons:

- a. the work of the Holy Spirit can be **disturbing**;
- b. the leading of the Holy Spirit can be **difficult to discern**;
- c. His work among us is **diabolically opposed** by Satan;
- d. there is some key **disagreement** among the followers of Jesus.

Let us look briefly at each one of these.

a. **The Work of the Holy Spirit can be Disturbing.** The evidence is that churches that have entered into a deeper experience of the Holy Spirit have likened it to an office desk when the windows have been thrown open; all the neatly arranged piles of paper tend to be blown from the desk on to the floor. This is an appropriate analogy because the Hebrew word for the Spirit – ruach – is also the Hebrew word for wind. Many church goers instinctively avoid having the pattern of their church life disturbed in this way. There is consequently a strong temptation to resist the entry of the Holy Spirit. Indeed a cynic has said that without the Holy Spirit at work in many churches ninety nine percent of their activities would be completely unaffected ! When the Director of the Ecclesiastical Insurance Society was asked what exactly it did he replied “We insure churches against acts of God!” Perhaps they have done too good a job.

b. **The Leading of the Holy Spirit can be difficult to discern.** It is very tempting to seek to do the Lord's work without reference to Him. We have all experienced church committees where after only the briefest of opening prayers we have pressed on with pre-conceived ideas to plan events in our own strength. The temptation is especially strong for leaders, trained to assess the factors, choose a course of action and communicate our plan with great confidence. Of course our human planning can lead to an apparently efficient event; it may look good; but there will be no fruit; it will amount to nothing in spiritual terms. It takes time to discern the leading of the Holy Spirit, time in sincere prayer and expectancy. This is the genesis of “Pray and Plan”.

c. **The Work of the Holy Spirit among us is diabolically opposed.** The disturbing aspects and the difficulties referred to above are deliberately magnified and compounded by Satan. We read in 1 Peter 5:8 that the devil is “prowling around like a roaring lion seeking whom he can devour”. Satan would much prefer us to remain quietly lethargic; but when He senses that he can no longer hold us back, he tries to press us forward so hard that we go overboard, extreme to the point where we offend our fellow Christians and onlookers by our zeal. The clearest example of this is in the public use of tongues; in its place and handled sensitively with interpretation it is a beautiful outpouring of the Holy Spirit, but handled immaturely or improperly it can cause the deepest affront. We are wise to exercise caution as we enter the spiritual world; Satan is in his element in the supernatural arena of the occult, horoscopes, tarot cards, ouija boards, satanism and drugs. The Bible gives us many examples of the supernatural in the hands of evil men and women, and by contrast many compelling

examples of His disciples casting out demons (Acts 16:16-18). The ability to discern between the spirits is a vital gift of the Holy Spirit in any group or church.

d. **Disagreement among the followers of Jesus.** Fourthly there is a lack of agreement about how a deeper experience of the Holy Spirit's work is entered into. Some insist that it is by a "second blessing" while others, including Paul, hold that **at conversion** we are born again through an irrevocable and unrepeatable act of God which includes "receiving the Holy Spirit" (Acts 19:2). Yet even John Wesley, already a committed and effective preacher and minister of many years standing, tells in his writings how after a deep experience of the Spirit he "exchanged the faith of a servant for the faith of a son." If it is not to cause division this aspect of the Holy Spirit at work among us calls for clear teaching, personal study and much prayer.

If then the Holy Spirit at work among us brings disturbance, difficulty and disagreement, and makes us more vulnerable to attacks from Satan, would it not be better for us to try to manage without the Holy Spirit? As we have already seen this is not an option for us - "**Apart from Me you can do nothing**". The risk is especially dangerous where Christians, by witnessing, face persecution. To be persecuted for acting in accordance with the Holy Spirit is one thing; to be persecuted for witnessing other than as led by Him is quite another.

So let us look finally at what happens when the Holy Spirit is allowed to be at work powerfully among us as individuals and as a church.

At the **individual** level we should expect to see increased evidence of the **fruit of the spirit**: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness; faithfulness, gentleness, self control (Gal 5:22-23). The Holy Spirit helps us individually to believe and understand (John 16:13), to worship, to listen, to discern, to decide, to obey, and to be effective witnesses.

At the **collective** level, in a church or group of Christians we should expect to see gifts of the Spirit given to members **as the Holy Spirit chooses exclusively for the building up of the body or church**. "He equips us as He judges necessary with wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, distinguishing between the spirits, tongues, and interpretation of tongues" (1 Cor 12:7-11). "He enables some to be apostles, teachers, helpers, administrators, pastors, servers, encouragers, leaders and givers of hospitality"(Ephesians 4:11). Often these qualities are more evident in an informal group of Christians, for example a house group, than in a formal church. Sadly, in many churches that are either exclusively **altar-centred** or **pulpit-centred** these gifts tend to be neither discovered nor used. It has been said that most churches are like a big football match in which 22,000 spectators in desperate need of exercise watch 22 players in desperate need of rest doing everything! Without harnessing the unique gifts of the congregation it is no wonder that so many churches have an exhausted inner core and a largely uncommitted outer core. Our Lord, Head of the Church, clearly never intended it to be like that.

So if we are like the disciples in Acts 19:2, lacking in the power of His Holy Spirit and therefore ineffective, how do we invite the Lord to empower us as His ambassadors. First we must be sure that we ourselves are born again, as Jesus put it to Nicodemus, (John 3:3). **Individually**, if we are already committed followers of Jesus we have to ask that the Lord will enable us to "go on being filled by His Holy Spirit" every day. **Collectively** we must develop the attitude of praying purposefully together before entering into any Christian planning, however small.

The Lord does not break promises; He can be relied upon to do what He said "You will receive the Holy Spirit...the promise is for you and your children... for all whom the Lord will call"(Acts 2:33-39).

How can we conclude? The fifth great truth about Jesus is that He is at work among us today by His Holy Spirit. **Without Him we can achieve nothing; equipped by Him and working under His direction we can be used by Him to build up His church, His body on earth.** Our churches can be

alive again, bringing men and women to a strong faith, so that they in turn can help others to believe. That is the stuff of revival.

In the sixth, and final, part of this series we shall be reminded that at the Day of Judgement we, as followers of Jesus, will have to account to Him for our stewardship of His commission.

Six Great Truths about Jesus - Part 6 by Major General Sir Laurence New

In Part 1 of this series we looked at the evidence for Jesus' Immaculate Conception; in Part 2 the evidence for His Deity; in Part 3 we saw that these qualities made it possible for Jesus to die in our place. In Part 4 we examined the evidence for and against the truth of the Resurrection. In Part 5 we looked at the work of Jesus among us today by His Holy Spirit. In this sixth and final part we look at Jesus solemn words. **“The Father has entrusted all judgement to me, the Son.”**

If our names are written in the book of believers referred to constantly in the Bible e.g. Luke 10, Phil 4 and Heb 12, our immediate destiny at death is paradise with Jesus. This is explicit in Christ's promise to the thief on the cross, in his words to the disciples in John 14:2 “I go to prepare a place for you” and implicit in all Paul's writings, for example Philippians 1:23. If our names are not written in the book we are at our death denied access to paradise. The parable of Lazarus and the rich man makes this abundantly clear. Luke 16:26 states, “Between you and us a great chasm is fixed so that no one can cross”. That much is very clear. In this article we are not talking about our **immediate** destiny but rather about our **ultimate** destiny, about Christ's role as judge which he will perform at His second coming. It is very good news for followers of Jesus but chilling news for those who are not.

“The Father has entrusted all judgement to me, the Son.”

John records these solemn words of Jesus in his Gospel, John 5:22. The scriptures insist that Jesus will come again and that His glorious appearing will usher in **two quite separate and opposing sets of events:**

1. Christ's Actions concerning His followers, those still living at the time of His second coming and those who are already with Him in paradise.

a. Jesus will bring the living and the dead believers together and thus the **Church Terrestrial** and the **Church Celestial** will be visibly united in His presence, 1 Thess 4:14 & 17. Moreover, He will take His church to be with Him for ever. Those still alive will, like those already in paradise, be delivered from the presence and power of sin. Christ will be glorified in His Saints in accordance with His High-Priestly prayer, “That they may be with Me where I am, to behold My glory”, Col 3:4.

b. Then Jesus will **bless us together**. This will be a solemn re-enactment of Old Testament times when once a year the High Priest emerged from the Holy of Holies in the Temple, from the presence of God, and blessed the people. Christ our great High Priest will replicate this at His second coming in glory. Also He will bless us “in like manner as He was seen to go into Heaven at His ascension.” Acts 1:11, Luke 24:50-51. We shall all be blessed and delivered from the power of sin once for all. Jude 24.

c. We will stand individually before the judgement seat (Bema) to give account of our lives and to receive reward for faithful service, Rom 14 and 2 Tim 4. There is no question of eternal condemnation for the believers. Our Lord has promised this, John 3:16 and 5:24 and it is explicit in Romans 8:1-4. “There is now therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ....”

d. He will change us into His likeness, presenting us faultless to the Father in our resurrection spiritual bodies to be with Him to all eternity. Rom 8; Phil 3; Col 1 and 3; 1 John 3; Eph 5 ; Jude 24; Rev 14.

2. Christ's Activity concerning those who during their lifetime, by their words and attitude, have deliberately rejected Christ as their saviour.

a. Christ will execute judgement upon all who during their earthly life **chose not to have Jesus as their master**, Luke 19:14; 2 Pet 4:17, Rev 20:11. “Whoever does not believe stands condemned already”, John 3:18, condemned to a Christ-less eternity.

b. He will make His voice heard by the dead whose names are not in the Book of Life, those who do not know Him and disregard the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ; **for them no place with Him will be found for all eternity**, Rev 20:11-15.

c. This can all be summed up in the awful words **“The wrath of the Lamb”**. Rev 6:16.

We may be tempted to ask “What about those who have never heard?” We are assured unequivocally that Christ’s judgement will be just. We need not be concerned about the fate of those who have had no opportunity to hear the Gospel or to respond to the evidence of the Lord’s kingship; we can rely totally on Jesus being a just judge, Rom 3:21-31, 1 John 1:8 et seq, Rev 16:7. But this does not for a moment excuse us from the great commission to witness “in season and out.” Mat 26:18 – 20.

Conclusion.

What does this sixth truth say to us today?

First that we must be certain that our own names are in the Book of life, that we ourselves have crossed over from “death to life”, 1 John 3:14.

Second that we must witness to and warn others, for we are told by Paul that we are ambassadors for Christ. It is as if He were making His appeal through us”, 2 Cor 5:17-21; and 1 Peter 2:9

Third. Since we have a specific commission to share these truths we will be required to account for our witness as Christ’s ambassadors **when we appear before Him as Judge.**