

## Jesus's Seventh Sign

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Signs / Sign; Johannine Sign; Jesus Raises Lazarus / John 11:1-57

The seventh sign in John 11:1-57 teaches us that Jesus is the Son of God who rules over death and gives life to the spiritually dead.

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## Introduction

The Apostle John wrote *The Gospel According to John*. Jesus had done thousands of miracles. John selected just seven of these miracles, which he called “signs,” to help his readers “believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing [they] may have life in his name” ([John 20:31](#)).

The first half of John’s Gospel deals with Jesus’ ministry and contains the seven signs.

Chapter 11 contains the seventh sign and together with chapter 12, the two chapters form a transition to the second half of John’s Gospel.

The second half of John’s Gospel deals with the final week of Jesus’ life.

Chapters 11-12 are a transition to the final week in Jesus’ life.

So, the first half of John’s Gospel deals with Jesus’ ministry and the second half deals with Jesus’ final week.

Today, we are going to look at Jesus’s seventh and greatest sign, the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

## Scripture

Let’s read [John 11:1-57](#):

**<sup>1</sup> Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. <sup>2</sup> It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. <sup>3</sup> So the sisters sent to him, saying, “Lord, he whom you love is ill.” <sup>4</sup> But when**

**Jesus heard it he said, “This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”**

**<sup>5</sup> Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. <sup>6</sup> So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. <sup>7</sup> Then after this he said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.” <sup>8</sup> The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?” <sup>9</sup> Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. <sup>10</sup> But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.” <sup>11</sup> After saying these things, he said to them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him.” <sup>12</sup> The disciples said to him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.” <sup>13</sup> Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. <sup>14</sup> Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus has died, <sup>15</sup> and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” <sup>16</sup> So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”**

**<sup>17</sup> Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. <sup>18</sup> Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, <sup>19</sup> and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. <sup>20</sup> So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. <sup>21</sup> Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup> But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.” <sup>23</sup> Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” <sup>24</sup> Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” <sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, <sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” <sup>27</sup> She said to him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.”**

**<sup>28</sup> When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.” <sup>29</sup> And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. <sup>30</sup> Now Jesus had not yet come**

into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him.<sup>31</sup> When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there.<sup>32</sup> Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”<sup>33</sup> When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.<sup>34</sup> And he said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.”<sup>35</sup> Jesus wept.<sup>36</sup> So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!”<sup>37</sup> But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?”

<sup>38</sup> Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it.<sup>39</sup> Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days.”<sup>40</sup> Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?”<sup>41</sup> So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me.<sup>42</sup> I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.”<sup>43</sup> When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.”<sup>44</sup> The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

<sup>45</sup> Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him,<sup>46</sup> but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.<sup>47</sup> So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, “What are we to do? For this man performs many signs.<sup>48</sup> If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.”<sup>49</sup> But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all.<sup>50</sup> Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.”<sup>51</sup> He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for

**the nation,<sup>52</sup> and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.<sup>53</sup> So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.**

**<sup>54</sup> Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there to the region near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and there he stayed with the disciples.**

**<sup>55</sup> Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves.<sup>56</sup> They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, “What do you think? That he will not come to the feast at all?”<sup>57</sup> Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him.**

## Lesson

The seventh sign in [John 11:1-57](#) teaches us that Jesus is the Son of God who rules over death and gives life to the spiritually dead.

Let's use the following outline as we examine the seventh sign from the perspective of various participants:

1. The Perspective of the Sisters (11:1-32)
2. The Perspective of the Crowd (11:43-46)
3. The Perspective of the Religious Leaders (11:48-50)
4. The Perspective of Lazarus (11:44)
5. The Perspective of Jesus (11:33, 38)

### I. The Perspective of the Sisters (11:1-32)

First, let's look at the sign from the perspective of the sisters.

Mary, Martha, and Lazarus lived in the village of Bethany, less than 2 miles from Jerusalem.

Jesus loved this family and often stayed with them when he attended the annual feasts in Jerusalem.

One day, Lazarus got dangerously ill while Jesus was in a different city.

So, Mary and Martha sent word to Jesus about their brother Lazarus, **“Lord, he whom you love is ill”** (11:3).

John noted in verse 5, **“Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.”** So Jesus loved the three siblings deeply.

Now when Jesus heard that Lazarus was ill, we would expect that because of his love for Lazarus and also for Mary and Martha, he would immediately drop everything and head straight for Bethany.

But Jesus did not do that.

Instead, when Jesus heard about Lazarus’ illness and the implied request for him to return and heal him, Jesus said, **“This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it”** (11:4).

We know that Lazarus’ illness did lead to death. But it was not his ultimate death.

Jesus knew that Lazarus was going to die and that he was going to raise him back to life again. Moreover, this sign would point to **“the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”**

So, rather than rush back to Bethany, Jesus **“stayed two days longer in the place where he was”** ( 11:6).

It was only then that Jesus said to the disciples, **“Let us go to Judea again”** (11:7).

John wrote in verse 17, **“Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.”**

Why did John mention that Lazarus had been in the tomb for **four days**?

In those days, a person was usually buried on the day he died. So, Lazarus had been dead for four days. One commentator noted, “Later Jewish sources attest the rabbinic belief that death was irrevocable three days after a person had

died” (Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004], 333).

So, by waiting until day four to arrive and raise Lazarus from the dead, no one would be able to say that Lazarus was not dead.

When Jesus arrived at Bethany, Martha went out to meet him. Mary stayed at the house.

When Martha saw Jesus, she said to him, **“Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died”** (11:21).

Martha and Jesus talked a little bit, and I will come back to that in a moment.

After Martha and Jesus talked, she went back to the house and told Mary that Jesus wanted to see her.

Interestingly, when Mary saw Jesus, she said the same thing to Jesus that Martha had said to Jesus, **“Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died”** (11:32).

Now, it is important to note that neither sister was rebuking Jesus. Rather, they were each expressing—in their grief—that Jesus had the power to heal.

After all, they had undoubtedly heard Jesus recount the innumerable stories of thousands of healings throughout his ministry. They were privileged to hear of Jesus’ power over demons, blindness, sickness, and even nature. They knew that Jesus had the power to heal.

But I want you to notice how Jesus dealt differently with each sister.

Jesus said to Martha, **“Your brother will rise again”** (11:23).

Thinking of the future resurrection, Martha said to Jesus, **“I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day”** (11:24).

Then Jesus gave these glorious and memorable words to her, **“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die”** (11:25-26).

Jesus was confronting Martha with his deity. He was asserting that he was God.

When Jesus asked Martha, **“Do you believe this?”** she responded by saying, **“Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world”** (11:27).

So, Jesus showed himself as God to Martha.

How, then, did Jesus relate to Mary?

When Mary came to Jesus, John wrote in verse 33, **“When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.”** Mary was weeping when she came to Jesus.

Jesus then asked where they had laid Lazarus. The Jews showed Jesus the tomb where Lazarus was laid.

Then John wrote in verse 35, **“Jesus wept.”**

Notice that Jesus did not engage in discussion with Mary. Instead, Jesus entered into her sorrow. He wept with her.

And here we see the humanity of Jesus. Jesus showed himself as Man to Mary.

What a wonderful portrait of Jesus as the God-Man who dealt differently with each sister.

Martha saw the deity of Jesus and Mary saw the humanity of Jesus.

## II. The Perspective of the Crowd (11:43-46)

Second, let’s look at the sign from the perspective of the crowd.

John did not tell us how many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother Lazarus (cf. v. 19). Presumably, there were many dozens in attendance.

Lazarus was most likely buried in a cave-like tomb. He would have been covered with some linen strips and a cloth and placed either on the ground or on a slab inside the cave.

Many dozens of Jews were outside the tomb of Lazarus when Jesus cried out with a loud voice, **“Lazarus, come out”** (11:43).

Astonishingly, John recorded in verse 44, **“The man who had died [that is, Lazarus] came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, ‘Unbind him, and let him go.’ ”**

We can imagine that the crowd must have been blown away!

You may recall that Jesus had previously raised two dead people back to life. One was the son of the widow of Nain ([Luke 7:11-17](#)) and the other was Jairus’ daughter ([Luke 8:40-56](#)). In both cases, Jesus raised them back to life on the same day that each one died.

But Lazarus had already been dead for four days. Martha had said, in the quaint *King James Version* English, “Lord, by this time he stinketh” (11:39).

However, after Jesus said, **“Lazarus, come out,”** Lazarus came out of the tomb.

No one in the crowd expected this to happen.

There were two reactions to Jesus’ sign of raising Lazarus back to life.

First, we read in verse 45, **“Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he [that is, Jesus] did, believed in him.”**

Part of the crowd believed in Jesus.

Second, we read in verse 46, **“... but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.”**

The other part of the crowd did not believe in Jesus.

### III. The Perspective of the Religious Leaders (11:48-50)

Third, let’s look at the sign from the perspective of the religious leaders.

Ironically, the unbelievers in the crowd testified to the sign of Jesus. They told the religious leaders what Jesus had done by raising Lazarus from the dead.

Jesus’ sign of raising Lazarus from the dead caused the religious leaders to gather together to try and figure out what to do with Jesus.

Some of the religious leaders said about Jesus, **“If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation”** (11:48).



They were afraid that the Romans would intervene and take away what little autonomy they had. They were discussing this back and forth among themselves.

Then Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, **“You know nothing at all. Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish”** (11:49-50).

So Caiaphas persuaded the religious leaders that Jesus needed to die.

A week later, the religious leaders convinced the Romans to crucify Jesus.

#### IV. The Perspective of Lazarus (11:44)

Fourth, let’s look at the sign from the perspective of Lazarus.

Astonishingly, we have no record of what Lazarus thought or felt.

We would like to know what it was like to be dead for four days. Where did he go? What did he see?

But we have no record of that at all.

Nor do we have a record of what Lazarus thought or felt when life came back to his dead body.

At some point, he would have gained a level of consciousness. As the blood started coursing through his veins and his mind and muscles started to function, he must have wondered where he was.

And then he felt that he was draped in strips of linen and a cloth was about his head.

Somehow he would have struggled out of the hole in the cave into the daylight. He would have heard Jesus say, **“Unbind him, and let him go”** (11:44).

Undoubtedly, his sisters Martha and Mary would have rushed forward, along with some friends, and freed him from the strips of linen. They would have hugged him and kissed him.

But we have no record of the perspective of Lazarus.

We shall have to wait until glory to learn his perspective.

I do think, however, that we do not have his perspective because the focal point was not about Lazarus but about Jesus.

And it is to Jesus that we turn next.

## V. The Perspective of Jesus (11:33, 38)

Finally, let's look at the sign from the perspective of Jesus.

Four days after Lazarus' death, Jesus arrived back in Bethany.

He saw the grieving sisters. He saw the grieving crowds.

John recorded in verse 33b that Jesus **“was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.”**

Then Jesus asked where the tomb of Lazarus was, and they showed it to him. Jesus then wept.

The Jews said, “See how he loved him” (11:36). That was true. But there was more to his tears than love for Lazarus.

John wrote in verse 38a, **“Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb.”**

In verses 33 and 38, we read the expression **“deeply moved.”**

The difficulty with that translation is that it does not fully capture the Greek word, which is *embrimaomai*. One dictionary says the word means “to feel strongly, to be indignant” (Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* [New York: United Bible Societies, 1996], 293).

Perhaps the best translation of the word is found in *The Message Bible*, where we read in verse 33, “When Jesus saw her sobbing and the Jews with her sobbing, *a deep anger welled up* within him.”

Verse 38 in *The Message* is translated as, “Then Jesus, *the anger again welling up* within him, arrived at the tomb.”

Jesus' sorrow was superseded by his deep anger.

But what was Jesus angry about?

Jesus was standing in the presence of death. Death is the great enemy. He was angry that death was the result of sin.

He was about to do battle with the mighty enemy called “Death.”

Who would win this battle?

So, with a deep anger welling up within him, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.”

And Lazarus came out.

## Conclusion

The seventh sign in [John 11:1-57](#) teaches us that Jesus is the Son of God who rules over death and gives life to the spiritually dead.

Jesus was able to gain victory over death because only days later he would be killed and laid in a tomb.

Three days later, Jesus’ Father raised him back to life again.

And because of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, we have confidence that Jesus can give life to the spiritually dead.

How do you receive spiritual life?

You receive spiritual life by believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. Amen.