

November/December 2009

SMALL GROUP SERIES:

# 7 Signs of Jesus

Discussion Guide  
Sign #7  
Jesus Raises Lazarus

## Sign #7: Jesus Raises Lazarus

### John 11:1-44 (TNIV)

1 Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) 3 So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick." 4 When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." 5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6 So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, 7 and then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea." 8 "But Rabbi," they said, "a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?" 9 Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world's light. 10 It is when people walk at night that they stumble, for they have no light." 11 After he had said this, he went on to tell them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up." 12 His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." 13 Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. 14 So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, 15 and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." 16 Then Thomas (also known as Didymus [a]) said to the rest of the disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

17 On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. 18 Now Bethany was less than two miles [b] from Jerusalem, 19 and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. 20 When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home. 21 "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." 23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." 24 Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even though they die; 26 and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?" 27 "Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who was to come into the world." 28 After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. "The Teacher is here," she said, "and is asking for you." 29 When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. 30 Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. 31 When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there. 32 When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." 33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. 34 "Where have you laid him?" he asked.

"Come and see, Lord," they replied. 35 Jesus wept. 36 Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" 37 But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

38 Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. 39 "Take away the stone," he said.

"But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days." 40 Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" 41 So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. 42 I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me." 43 When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" 44 The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

### Notes For Reflection:

## Facilitator's Guide

### Helpful Background Information for the Passage:

**11:6.** It is a long walk from where Jesus is to Bethany, but Lazarus is already dead, perhaps by the time the messengers reach Jesus (11:14, 17)-it was only a day's journey each way, just over twenty miles. For temporary rebuffs to test faith, cf. 2:4.

**11:17-19.** Visiting and consoling the bereaved in the days immediately following a close relative's loss was an essential duty of Jewish piety. The neighbors would provide the first meal after the funeral. Lazarus would have been buried on the day of his death.

**11:20.** The first week of deep grief after a close relative's burial would be spent mourning in one's house, sitting on the floor and visited by friends. This custom, called *shivah* (for "seven" days), is still practiced in Judaism today and is very helpful for releasing grief. Mourners abstained from adornment for the next three weeks and from common pleasures for the next year.

**11:25-27.** The common belief of Judaism in this period was that the dead would be raised bodily at the end

**11:38.** People were often buried in caves; stones, usually disk-shaped, would be rolled along a groove into place in front of the tomb, protecting its contents from animals, the elements and occasionally robbers.

**11:39.** The body would be wrapped and left lying on the floor in the tomb's antechamber; only after a year, when the flesh had rotted off, would family members return to collect the bones into a box, which they would then slide into a slot on the wall. After four days (11:17), decomposition was well under way, especially because it was no longer winter (11:55). Whatever spices they may have used to delay the stench (cf. comment on Mk 16:1) would no longer be effective.

**11:43-44.** The deceased would be wrapped in long cloth strips. This wrapping was thorough, binding the limbs to keep them straight and even the cheeks to keep the mouth shut; the facecloth may have been a yard square. This tight wrapping would have made it hard enough for a living person to walk, not to mention a formerly dead person coming forth from the entrance to the tomb; this difficulty further underlines the miraculous nature of this event. Men could not wrap women's corpses, but women could wrap both men and women, so Lazarus may have been wrapped by his sisters.

The InterVarsity Press Bible Background Commentary, Craig Keener

### Facilitator's Tip of the Week

As we wrap up this series on the 7 Signs of Jesus, it is time to consider "what's next?" This is a good time to bring up the conversation with your group.

Coming in January 2010: "**Genesis: The Story Begins**" a sermon-based small group series – a great opportunity to continue your faith journey!

*May you and yours have a blessed Christmas!*

## Jesus Raises Lazarus

### START IT

- What's the typical grieving process when someone dies in our culture?
- Ask someone in the group to share about a loved one who died.

### STUDY IT

- How do Lazarus and his sisters deal with his sickness?
- How does Jesus respond to them? What do we learn about Jesus in his response?
- What is unexpected in this story?
- How are people grieving and mourning the death of Lazarus?
- How do you understand the frustration and disappointment of Martha?
- Why, do you think, does Jesus have such a strong emotional reaction? What does that reveal about who he is?
- What do you notice about how Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead?
- What makes this story difficult to believe?
- What does the resurrection of Lazarus say about Jesus?
- What is important to believe from this passage?

### LIVE IT

- What in your life has died that seems to have no hope for resurrection?
- What has God already brought life to for you that seemed finished already?

### PRAY IT

- That we would be bold in our prayers for resurrection.
- That our beliefs would be true to who Jesus is.