

# ALL THINGS NEW

The Seventh Sign

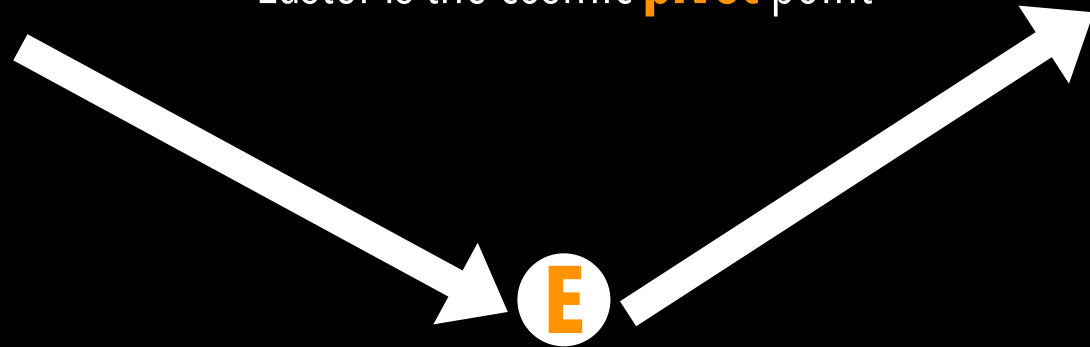
John's gospel is written from a **different** perspective to the other three. Matthew, Mark and Luke are known as the **synoptic** gospels because they all have a similar narrative and tell a similar story. John has other priorities...In fact, moving on to John's perspective on the events leading up to Jesus' arrest, crucifixion and resurrection, the entire gospel of John details no more than the last three weeks of His life and ministry. Chapters 13-19, a **third** of the book, concentrates on the last twenty four hours. [Doug Rogers](#)

John's gospel starts with, "in the beginning."  
John's apocalypse relays the end. His letters  
tell us how to live, **in between**.

John's gospel, 1, 2 and 3 John's letter  
and John's apocalypse, Revelation.

"Behold, I am making **all things new**."  
[Revelation 21:5 ESV](#)

Easter is the cosmic **pivot** point



"Death, decay, entropy, and destruction are the true suspensions of God's laws; **miracles** are the early glimpses of restoration."

*The Jesus I Never Knew, Philip Yancey*

On the (Lazarus) Saturday before Holy Week, the Orthodox Church commemorates a major feast of the year, the miracle of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ when he raised Lazarus from the dead after he had lain in the grave four days. Here, at the end of Great Lent and the forty days of fasting and penitence, the Church combines this celebration with that of Palm Sunday. In triumph and joy the Church **bears witness to the power of Christ over death and exalts Him as King** before entering the most solemn week of the year, one that leads the faithful in remembrance of His suffering and death and concludes with the great and glorious Feast of Pascha. *Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America*

By raising **Lazarus** from the dead **before Thy Passion**, Thou didst confirm the universal resurrection, O Christ God! Like the children with the palms of victory, we cry out to Thee, O Vanquisher of Death: Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord! *(Troparion of the Feast, sung on both Lazarus Saturday and Palm Sunday)*

You start to notice this focus on Lazarus in the earliest centuries of Christianity through the art. In the Roman catacombs alone there are over **55** paintings of Lazarus's resurrection. Roughly an equal number exist of Roman sarcophagi, the marble caskets in which nobility were buried, depicting this life-affirming story relayed only in John's Gospel. And then there are the dozens more depictions of Jesus' friend rising from his grave—on ivory, glass and metal objects that didn't have anything to do with funerals. [Madelon Maupin](#)

The raising of Lazarus is the **match** that **ignites** the Easter week

You can almost glimpse the entire Easter week story in this one **scene**.

The story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead is the **turning point** in John's Gospel. Not only is this miracle the last of the '**signs**' emphasized by John . . . , it is also the climax of Jesus' public ministry. Repeatedly John mentions how this miracle revealed Jesus and led people to believe (11: 4, 15, 25–27, 40, 42, 45). Raising Lazarus from the dead dramatically concluded Jesus' public ministry among the Jews (11: 54) [D A Carson](#)

In the Gospel of John, "sign" is also used to mean "miracle." Unlike the Gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke, John does not record very many **miracles** of Jesus. There are only **seven** listed in John, but each tells us very special things we need to know about Jesus. The seven signs are:

- Changing water into wine([Jn 2:1-11](#))
- Healing the royal official's son ([Jn 4:46-54](#))
- Healing the paralyzed man at the pool of Bethesda ([Jn 5:1-15](#))
- Feeding the 5,000 ([Jn 6:5-14](#))
- Walking on water ([Jn 6:16-21](#))
- Healing the man born blind ([Jn 9:1-7](#))
- Raising Lazarus from the dead ([Jn 11:1-45](#))

John uses the Lazarus account to **frame** the Passion week

A man named **Lazarus** was sick. He lived in Bethany with his sisters, Mary and Martha. This is the Mary who later poured the expensive perfume on the Lord's feet and wiped them with her hair. Her brother, Lazarus, was sick. So the two sisters sent a message to Jesus telling him, "Lord, **your dear friend** is very sick." [John 11:1-3](#)

The average life expectancy in the first century was between **20-30yrs**.

Then he said, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen **asleep**, but now I will go and wake him up." [Vs 11](#)

The disciples said, "Lord, if he is **sleeping**, he will soon get better!" They thought Jesus meant Lazarus was simply **sleeping**, but Jesus meant Lazarus had **died**. [Vs 12-13](#)

But his disciples objected. "Rabbi," they said, "only a few days ago the people in Judea were trying to stone you. **Are you going there again?**" [Vs 8](#)

Thomas, nicknamed the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let's go, too—**and die with Jesus**." [Vs 16](#)

When Jesus arrived at Bethany, he was told that Lazarus had already been in his grave for **four** days. [Vs 17](#)

The fourth day after death is an important milestone for Jews at this time. Jews believed a person's soul would hover over the dead body for three days, trying to return to the body. **After three days, when decomposition had set in, the soul would depart.** In other words, there was no question that Lazarus was dead four days after he was buried. If it had been one to three days, there would have been some doubt as to whether he was actually deceased. [Bill Pratt](#)

Why does this matter? Because the rabbis had been teaching that when the Messiah finally arrived he would be able to achieve something so amazing they'd easily know he was the prophesied one. It's so impossible to bring someone back from the dead. **That can only happen when Messiah finally came.** Only He could achieve such an act. Only the Messiah or his prophets could bring people back from the dead. [Doug Greenwold](#)

Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died. But **even now** I know that God will give you whatever you ask." [Vs 21-22](#)

Jesus told her, "Your brother will **rise again**." "Yes," Martha said, "he will rise **when everyone else rises**, at the **last day**." Jesus told her, "**I am the resurrection and the life**. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. **Do you believe this, Martha?**" Vs 23-26

**Believe** is used **32 times** in Matthew, Mark and Luke combined. It is used **86 times** in John's gospel

"Yes, Lord," she told him. "I have always believed you are the **Messiah**, the Son of God, the one who has come into the world from God." Vs 27

"The miracle of the raising of Lazarus is the climax of John 11:1-44, but it is not its center... The conversation between Martha and Jesus is the **theological** heart of the story." Gail O'Day

If Yeshua really was the Messiah, then the religious leaders in order to **keep their positions**, wealth, and power would have to kill him. Doug Greenwold

The Jewish understanding of the Messiah is that He would **supplant** existing power structures (Jewish and non-Jewish alike) and usher in His own system of rule. But there is **no** reference to the Messiah's power over death

Jesus told them, "Go back to John and tell him what you have heard and seen—the blind see, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, **the dead are raised to life**, and the Good News is being preached to the poor." Matthew 11:4-5, (Isaiah 35:4-6, Isaiah 29:18-19, Isaiah 61:1-3)

For he will heal the wounded, **resurrect** the dead,  
and proclaim glad tidings to the poor. **Line 11,**  
**Dead Sea Scroll Fragment (4Q521), 150BC-70AD**

in the entire Hebrew Bible there is nothing about a  
**messiah figure raising the dead**. Yet, when we turn to  
the Q Source, which Luke and Matthew quote, regarding  
the "signs of the Messiah," we find the two phrases linked:  
"the dead are raised up, the poor have the glad tidings  
preached to them," precisely as we have in our Qumran  
text. **James Charlesworth, Sheffield Academic Press**

There he will remove the cloud of gloom, the shadow of  
death that hangs over the earth. **He will swallow up**  
**death forever!** The Sovereign Lord will wipe away all tears.  
He will remove forever all insults and mockery against his  
land and people. The Lord has spoken! In that day the  
people will proclaim, "This is our God! We trusted in him,  
and he saved us! This is the Lord, in whom we trusted. Let  
us rejoice in the salvation he brings!" **Isaiah 25:7-9**

If we say the kingdom is far off then we can live for ourselves today

We all can fall into the trap of "**future faith**." What  
God will do and accomplish is **far off**. In John's  
account of Lazarus, he is emphasizing a **present**  
**faith**. The Messiah and His Kingdom is **here, now!**

One day the Pharisees asked Jesus, "When will the  
Kingdom of God come?" Jesus replied, "The Kingdom of  
God can't be detected by visible signs. You won't be able  
to say, 'Here it is!' or 'It's over there!' For the Kingdom of  
God **is already among you**." **Luke 17:20-21**

When Jesus saw her weeping and saw the other  
people wailing with her, **a deep anger welled up**  
**within him**, and he was **deeply** troubled. **Vs 33**

"Where have you put him?" he asked them. They told  
him, "Lord, come and see." **Then Jesus wept.** **Vs 34-35**



The **incarnation** means that Jesus has come fully and deeply into **our pain and suffering**. But there's more. The Greek term *embrimáomai* in 11:33 and 38 is often translated "deeply moved" (NIV, HCSB, ESV) or something similar. Yet the use of the term elsewhere in Scripture and in the immediate context suggests a **different** meaning here.

The word is used in classical Greek of horses "snorting" as they prepare to charge the enemy. It also refers to "**indignation**" or "**rage**" in the Greek Old Testament

The Gospels so rarely tell us how Jesus feels about anything, that this portrayal of his emotions is striking and significant. We have a window into how Jesus feels about the suffering and death of beloved people: a deep, complicated mixture of **sadness and anger**. I sense that Jesus's anger is directed toward death as the enemy who so brazenly robs us of our precious loved ones. **His indignation is aimed at sin, sickness, suffering, and death**, and what these enemies are doing to the people we love. [J. Scott Duvall, PhD](#)

Jesus was **still angry** as he arrived at the tomb, a cave with a stone rolled across its entrance. "**Roll the stone aside**," Jesus told them. [Vs 38-39](#)

So they rolled the stone aside. Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father, thank you for hearing me. You always hear me, but I said it out loud for the sake of all these people standing here, so that they will **believe** you sent me." Then Jesus shouted, "Lazarus, come out!" And the dead man came out, his hands and feet bound in graveclothes, his face wrapped in a headcloth. Jesus told them, "Unwrap him and let him go!" [Vs 41-44](#)



## How Lazarus Frames Easter

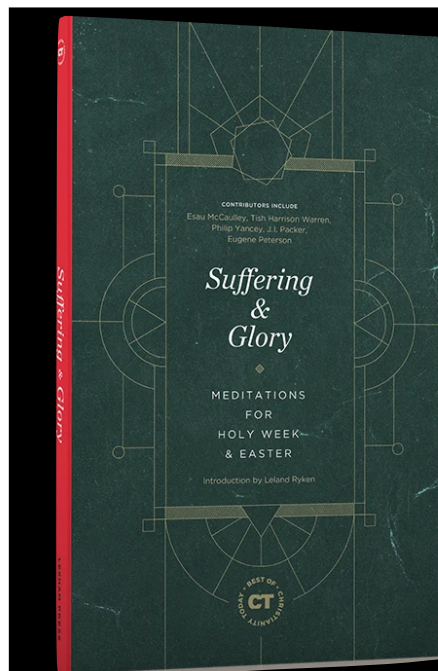
### Humanity is haunted by the spectre of death

"Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but now I will go and wake him up." Vs 11

**Jesus has conquered the grave**  
I am the resurrection and the life. Vs 25

**Jesus is with us in our suffering**  
a deep anger welled up within him Vs 33

It was now almost time for the Jewish **Passover** celebration, and many people from all over the country arrived in Jerusalem several days early so they could go through the purification ceremony before Passover began. **They kept looking for Jesus**, but as they stood around in the Temple, they said to each other, "What do you think? He won't come for Passover, will he?" Meanwhile, the leading priests and Pharisees had publicly ordered that anyone seeing Jesus must report it immediately so they could **arrest** him. John 11:55-57



**Suffering & Glory** recovers some of the best Holy Week and Easter articles from half a century of Christianity Today. Guiding readers from Palm Sunday to Pentecost and including contributions from Tish Harrison Warren, J. I. Packer, Nancy Guthrie, and Eugene Peterson, *Suffering & Glory* will remind readers of the beauty of Christ's death and resurrection.

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