

# 'Signs of life'

The seven 'signs' in the public ministry of Jesus

*"Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name."*

[John 20.30f]

John records seven incidents during the public ministry of Jesus which he describes as 'signs'. 'Signs', as John presents them, both *authenticate* (see Acts 2.22 for a similar perspective) and *illustrate*: that's to say they point clearly to who Jesus is and the significance of what He has come to do.

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## 7.

*".. 'I am the resurrection and the life .."*

John 11.1-46

This final 'sign' recorded by John comes towards the end of Jesus' public ministry. There is a certain irony in the fact that the Jewish leaders' response to Jesus is to plot to put to death the One who is in Himself 'life' and who has just raised a dead man to life.

The story is narrated very fully, as the culmination of a catalogue of 'signs' revealing who Jesus is, what He does and why He matters.

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1. **Read John 11.1-46.** It's worth reading the whole narrative again in one sitting and catching some sense of the wonder of it all.

What particularly strikes you as you read the passage?

What are the different responses to Jesus as the narrative unfolds?

To which responses do you relate most readily?

2. **Read John 11.1-16.** The scene for this climactic 'sign' is carefully set by John, highlighting a number of important features of the situation.

How is the delay of Jesus explained?

What lessons can you learn from the fact that Jesus didn't exactly 'come running' in this instance?

3. **Read John 11.17-37.** The two sisters were clearly different in many ways, but they share the same opening line (see vv.21, 32) when Jesus finally arrives in Bethany.

In what ways is the faith of Martha and Mary seen?

In what respects does Jesus show them that their faith is deficient?

How would you explain to an interested friend what Jesus meant when He said "*I am the resurrection and the life*"?

4. **Read John 11.38-46.** The drama of Jesus raising this man Lazarus from death is narrated by John.

Our natural condition is akin to that of Lazarus here (see Eph.2.1ff): what do we learn here as to how Jesus raises those who are dead to life?

How were you brought from that state of deadness to newness of life?

What did Jesus mean when He said that "*.. if you believe, you will see the glory of God*" (v.40)?