

Hold the Front Page

“When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come out.’”

John 11:43 (ESV)

It is doubtful that any newspaper editor has used the words ‘hold the front page’, but it makes for drama in films and television shows. But if there was ever a case for changing a headline at the last minute, the incident of raising Lazarus from the dead must be a leading contender.

However, one writer who undoubtedly witnessed the event failed to interview Lazarus to get an exclusive story on the experience. Many years later, of course, John did write about the episode, but the focus was, not surprisingly, on the One who performed the miracle (John 11). John didn’t record the thoughts of Lazarus after his resurrection, which surely would have made fascinating reading. Jesus, on the other hand, was the centre of attention. And this remarkable event allowed Him to explain something of His mission on earth. He told Martha “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.” (John 11:25).

This incident allowed Jesus to point out to the assembled crowd that a resurrection to another life was possible – through Him. The raising of Lazarus was a remarkable physical miracle and Martha and her sister, Mary, would have been overjoyed to receive back their brother. But that’s not really the focus of this story. Jesus was using a physical circumstance to illustrate – for those with a mind to see it – a much more important element in His mission. That raising to physical life was simply a type of the resurrection to ‘spiritual’ life that is possible for those who do believe in Jesus Christ. The removing of the funeral cloths from Lazarus’ body can be compared with the taking away of the physical parts of this human life – to be replaced by a new man (or woman).

And those parallels are commonplace in Jesus’ work on earth. Our job is to look beyond the incredible physical miracles – the healings and so on – to the even more spectacular occurrences that are in store for those who believe in Jesus Christ. If He could perform the ‘physical’ miracles, we can have faith in the ‘spiritual’, too.

Now, those are stories for which it is worth holding the front page.