

1 Corinthians 15:35-49

Intro...

Well it's not long till the schools break up for summer holidays – hands up, who can tell me how does that make you feel? It might make you feel happy. But maybe just a little bit a makes your parents feel sad because it means they've got you lot buzzing around them all day long!

Now it's funny isn't it, the same thing can make one person happy, and another person sad.

Now when somebody dies it's a very sad thing for us. Because we can't see them any more. Perhaps you even know somebody who died. I do and it's very sad. Sad for us...but happy for them. Because dying doesn't stop Christians: when Christians die they go to be with someone...who can tell me who they go to be with?...Jesus!

That's right - Christians don't stay dead, they rise to life with Jesus.

Do you remember when Jesus died on the cross - what happened to him 3 days later?

Yep – and the same things going to happen to Christians after they've died – we're going to rise to life again to be with Jesus in heaven.

And our job this morning is to work out what happens when a Christian dies and then rises to life again in heaven.

Now I need a volunteer...(don't worry I'm not going to send you to heaven now!)

But I'm going to draw around you...

OK – Here you are now. And we're going to imagine that this outline is a picture of someone who been raised to life with Jesus. Which is an amazing thing. But we don't know much about it. And our aim is to find out what it's going to be like for someone to be raised to life.

Now we're going to have a look at the Bible this morning and we've already had the reading but we've got it up there on the screen again.

QUESTION: Now those of you who are good at reading, there's two questions at the beginning of that reading – who can tell me what they are, can anybody spot them?

So let's underline them

And we're going to try and answer each of those questions. So let's take the first one.

Question 1: How are the dead raised?

Right now to find out the answer to that question we need to do a bit of gardening.

And to do some gardening you need some soil, and a plant pot and a seed.

And at this stage the people who do the cleaning in the church are having a bit of heart attack so we'll try not to make too much mess.

And our reading says this – it says this in v36:

What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.

Because how do you make a new plant grow? Well it's no good just getting your seed and putting it on the shelf where you can see it. It won't grow on the shelf. If you want a seed to grow you have to sow it in the soil.

So sow this one in the soil...

Well we can't see it any more, we've buried it, and actually it's like the seed dies – it's going to stop being a seed! It's going to become something new. But that means the old seed bit is going to disappear and die. And that's the first part of the answer to our question: how are the dead raised?

Well first of all – by dying.

Now that's really obvious and really sad.

It's really obvious because somebody can't rise from the dead unless they've already died can they?

But it's also really sad when someone dies – or at least sad for us. But don't forget it's a bit like planting a seed. Just think – if we liked our seed so much that we never planted it – then it would never grow into a plant. It's sad because we can't see our seed anymore. But at least we know it's going to grow into a plant.

And when someone dies it's sad because we can't see them anymore – but at least we know they're going to rise from the dead to be with Jesus.

Now let's get back to some gardening...

QUESTION: Because what's going to happen to this seed...?

And if we wait around for it to grow we'll be here a pretty long time.

So here's one I prepared earlier...

Look what happens to the seed after you've planted it: it turns into a wonderful massive plant. Now here's a little experiment –

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we could dig down and have a look under the soil just see if we can find the seed it came from...Go on root around...

No the old seed has disappeared. And something better than the old seed has come along.

And that's what our reading says in v37: **When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else.** So that's the second part of the answer to our question...

How are the dead raised?

By being changed.

The old seed has disappeared. It's changed. And something better than the old seed has come along.

And that's what happens to us when we die.

Our old bodies disappear. They get changed. And something better than the old body comes along. It'll still be you and me. But we'll have better bodies – just like a plant is better than a seed.

Now if you think about it that's a pretty amazing thing – a big plant growing from a tiny seed. Maybe we don't think about it much because it's happening all the time around us. But it is AMAZING! How does it happen? Well it happens because that's the way God made it. God is so amazing that he can make a seed which grows into a plant. That's what the reading says in v38 –**God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body.**

Now some people in our Bible reading were asking that question – How are the dead raised? And the answer is Jesus does it. Jesus is so amazing that he can make people like you and me change from being dead to being alive again with Jesus. [STICK ON SIGN]

So if you or I ever feel afraid about dying we've got to try and remember – Ah but God will make me alive again in heaven.

And if anyone says to you it's impossible for people to come alive again. Then we say to them, it might be impossible for us, but not for God. Just like God changes seeds into plants. He can change you and me into being alive again for ever.

Well we've got another question to do in a bit...

: *With what kind of body will they come?*

Well I wonder what you think heaven is going to be like? I've got picture here...

Lots of people think heaven's going to be like that. It's going to be about sitting around on a cloud with your angel wings and a harp. What do you think of that? Well let's see what this fellow thinks of it.

– boring!

Because unless you're really into clouds and playing harps that's what it'll be.

But I don't know why anyone ever thought heaven would be like that!

So what kind of bodies will we have in heaven?

If heaven *was* going to be like a cloud, then God would need to give us wings.

In fact God always gives different things just the right kinds of bodies they need – here's a few examples:

Who can tell me what that is? A giraffe. What's special about a giraffe's body? It's got a long neck! Just what it needs to reach the tasty leaves on the top branches.

Now that's a... And what's special about a bird's body? It's got wings to fly with. Just what it needs to fly with.

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Now that's a...fish. And what special about a fish's body? It's got fins and scales. Just what it needs to swim with.

And in fact it's not just animals and things that God made in the right way – he also made...the sun and the moon and the stars. He made the sun just right so that it beams, and he made the moon just right so that it shines, and he made the stars just right so that they twinkle.

And all that's just exactly what our Bible reading says:

³⁹ All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. ⁴⁰ There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendour of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendour of the earthly bodies is another. ⁴¹ The sun has one kind of splendour, the moon another and the stars another;

God makes everything different - but with just the right kind of body that it needs.

So when he raises you and me to life in heaven we can be sure he'll give us just the right kind of body we'll need for heaven. But the question is, what kind of body will it be?

Giraffe's have their own kind of body, birds have theirs and fish have theirs. But what kind of body is God going to give us for heaven?

Now I need my first volunteer again.

Here's you now and here's your imaginary body for heaven. I wonder what the differences between the two are going to be? Remember there was a big difference between that seed and the plant it changed into. Well, there's going to be some big

differences between our bodies now, and the bodies they'll change into in heaven.

Here's the first one then:

At the moment our bodies are PERISHABLE – and that's just a fancy way of saying that they get sick. So let's make you sick for a moment...

But when we get our new bodies they'll be IMPERISHABLE – which means that we'll never get sick. Because in heaven there'll be no more crying or mourning or dying or pain. Our bodies won't get sick. [STICK SIGN ON] Now that's great for us to know and it's great for the grown ups to know too. Because going to heaven doesn't mean living with your bad back and wobbly thighs forever – going to heaven getting a new body...literally a body to die for.

Here's the second difference:

At the moment our bodies are DISHONOURABLE – which basically means we use our bodies for bad things. We use our bodies to sin with. We've used our tongues to tell lies with, we've used our heads to think nasty things with and we've used our hands to hurt people with.

But when we get our new bodies they'll be GLORIOUS – which means that we'll never use our bodies for sin again – because in heaven we won't sin. Our bodies will be perfect, glorious. [STICK SIGN ON]

And here's the third difference:

At the moment our bodies are WEAK – which basically means that one day they'll die. So can you just play dead for us for a moment?

But when we get our new bodies they'll POWERFUL. And that means they'll never die. We'll live for ever and ever with Jesus. [STICK SIGN ON]

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Now here's a question for you. Who can tell me the name of the first man ever to have lived? Yep – Adam, and our Bible reading says that at the moment, all of us are like Adam. Adam got sick. Adam sinned. And Adam died.

But when we get our new bodies we're going to be like someone else. Can you guess who we'll be like then? Jesus!

And at the moment he's in heaven now and this is the kind of body he's got: a real solid body that never gets sick, he never uses it to sin with, and it'll never die. That's the kind of body we're going to get too.

[STICK SIGN ON: TO BE LIKE JESUS]

Now I've got one last thing to say, but it's very important. I don't know if you've ever planted lots of seeds – because some of the seeds grow into plants like that big one, but there's always some of the seeds that don't seem to do anything at all.

Now how can we tell that we're going to be like the seeds which do grow and not like the seeds which don't? How can we tell that after we die we will get a new body like this? Well there's only one way to tell. And that's to make sure you're a friend of Jesus. Only Jesus' friends get new bodies like this. So let's say a prayer to Jesus now.