

How are the Dead Raised?

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[0 : 0 0] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on the 21st of May 2000. The preacher is Warwick Grant.

His sermon is entitled, How Are the Dead Raised? and is from 1 Corinthians chapter 15 verses 35 to 50.

God has made us all beautiful in different ways and he has created her as a very attractive woman.

I don't think anyone here is going to doubt that. But one day she's going to get old and wrinkly. She might need a hip replacement.

She might need a new set of dentures. She might even need a hearing aid. She might have to get around with a walking frame. Or be confined to a wheelchair perhaps.

[0 : 5 9] She could suffer some kind of dementia that will affect her memory. Without a doubt we know that one day she'll die and her beautiful body will rot away.

It'll be no more. Look, I don't mean to pick on Elle Macpherson but she's someone we all know. And it's true, isn't it? But it's the same for all of us.

It's the same for me and it's the same for you. Our bodies are going to wear out completely. And we're going to cark it. But Christian people have a sure and certain hope that by trusting in Jesus, this life isn't the end of it.

It doesn't just end when we die in this life. We're resurrected. We have this hope that we'll be resurrected to be with God and to enjoy his love forever.

Over the last few weeks in our Sunday evening service, we've been looking at Jesus' own resurrection and the overwhelming evidence that there is for it.

[2 : 1 3] We've also seen that it's a central thing for Christians to believe in. It's very important. We've seen that it has implications for our lives and for our behavior in this life.

Well, tonight we're looking at the question, well, how are the dead raised? What are they like when you're raised if you're a Christian? I'd suggest you grab one of the black Bibles in the seats in front of you and to follow this passage as we look through it.

It's on page 936 and it's Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. Page 936.

And it's chapter 15 and we're kicking off from verse 35. And Paul kicks off with two questions, one of which I just mentioned a second ago.

He says, someone will ask, how are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come? Well, before I go on, let me point out, Paul's actually trying to express something which is really inexpressible and to describe something that is really for us indescribable.

[3 : 3 1] Our English language sort of fails us when we try and understand these sorts of things. But he has some really helpful things that give us a really good idea. In verse 36, he reminds them of their activity as farmers and how they farm and sow seeds.

Now, when we plant a seed, it's with the expectation that a plant will grow. So, that little seed will end up being destroyed, but from it will come a beautiful plant.

And in verse 37, Paul says, And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain.

And often the seed that you stick in the ground doesn't look anything like the plant that grows. For example, this little seed, which I'm sure you won't be able to see, is a pumpkin seed.

It's a tiny little thing. Tiny little thing. Now, I don't know about you, but... I'm sorry, it doesn't look much like a pumpkin, does it really?

[4 : 43] It looks nothing like a pumpkin. It's the wrong shape, it's the wrong size. Quite different. What Paul is trying to get us to understand is the whole concept of transformation.

A resurrected body that God promises us when we trust in Him is one which is completely transformed. You will agree, this seed has been transformed into something quite different.

And our resurrected bodies are quite different. They're transformed from the physical bodies that we have. But if you plant a tiny little seed like that pumpkin seed, it'll produce something that looks a bit like a pumpkin.

Except if it's in our garden. Now, don't you think though, seriously, when you see that transformation, that's a pretty amazing thing, isn't it? And that's happening constantly in all of our gardens.

It's a miracle that is going on all the time. There are miracles around us, just in our own gardens, of these transformations that God produces in plants. We shouldn't be surprised then that our earthly body is transformed in the resurrection that God promises those who trust Him.

[5 : 57] Now, the idea of a body being transformed, it's a bit hard to get. And so Paul uses a few examples of different things and how they have different forms. And God has made so much wonderful stuff in our universe and He's made things that are incredibly different.

And this is what he's talking about in verses 39 to 41. I'll just read them. He says, When he says earthly bodies, by the way, he's referring to the earth, really.

So Paul's talking here about difference. Things are different. And he's made so many different things. The body that a Christian person will have at their resurrection is one which is completely different to the one they had in this earthly life.

And Paul basically spends the rest of the reading we're going to look at going through the differences between the earthly physical body and the resurrected body. And that's what we're going to look at.

So, Anne-Marie, if you could pop that table up for us. And we'll just leave this on the screen and we'll just work through the differences that Paul has got between our earthly physical body and our resurrection body.

[7 : 28] Well, the first difference between the physical and the resurrection bodies is that the physical one is perishable. But the resurrection body is imperishable.

Now, our physical bodies, they're going to decay and rot. We're all going to die one day. And you don't need me to tell you that. It could be of old age. It could be of disease.

And I hope not. It may be an accident. I mean, we all hope that we live a long and fruitful life. But we can be sure that we will die. But our resurrection bodies, as Andrew mentioned in his prayer, will never die.

They will be imperishable. Sometimes people at the funeral of a loved one have the wish, the desire to view the body of the person who has died.

Just as a quiet final time, perhaps to say goodbye or to come to terms with their death. And not all families do that, but some do.

[8 : 35] And on that occasion, I remember once seeing a dead body. It's really the only dead body I've ever seen in my life. And I knew that this person, who had died quite young, relatively young, had had a full and lively relationship with God through Jesus.

And even though it was sad that this person had died, it gave me great comfort and hope that I knew that even as I looked at their dead body, God had already given them a resurrection body.

It was so comforting and such a great hope to have. There's also a sense here that with the word perishable and imperishable, that our earthly bodies are perishable in the sense that we're prone to sin.

We do wrong stuff against God. But our resurrection body, that won't happen. In heaven we'll be with God, our wills will be in tune with His and we'll be pleasing Him and serving Him forever.

Our life will be fulfilled completely. Everything will be of top quality. It'll be just wonderful and everything will be perfect. We will live for God's glory, perfectly. Well, verse 43, let's read that.

[9 : 48] Referring to this physical body, it says, It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. So a body is, I mean, no bodies can be cremated, but if a body is buried, it's a bit like planting a seed in the ground.

It's sown in dishonour. There is nothing honourable about a dead body. Yet the resurrection body is glorious, we're told. A bit like a beautiful plant that blossoms from a tiny little seed.

It's not dishonourable, it's glorious. Verse 43 also tells us that our bodies are weak, our earthly bodies. I turned 37 later this year and I just know that there are things that I used to be able to do as a teenager that I just can't do now.

And I know that I'm not the oldest person here and others of you could testify to that in other ways too. I can't run as fast, I can't run for as long, I wonder if I'm going the same way as my dad and that I can't hear as well as I used to.

And it's a sad thing too when there are people that you love and care about and you see them deteriorate with old age or even disease. But we can be full of hope as Christian people that one day we will have a resurrection body if we trust in Christ.

[11 : 20] For me, the vulnerability of our physical bodies was highlighted in the whole thing about the Melbourne Aquarium and Legionnaire's disease. Those people that contracted disease, all they did was breathe in a tiny water droplet with the bacteria in it.

That's all they did. And four of them have died, I think it is now. We hang by a very thin thread. You can imagine that just by breathing in one tiny little water droplet and four people have died.

We're very weak. We're very vulnerable. But our bodies, we can also achieve a few things too, can't we?

And we're coming up to the Olympics in September and we'll see all these athletes that have trained and honed their bodies in such a way they can do great feats of athleticism. And that's really great to see.

But that's nothing compared to the powerful resurrection body that we will have with God in heaven. Our resurrected body is powerful.

[12 : 28] Well, in verse 45 we're taken all the way back to the book of Genesis at the very start of the Bible to the creation of the first man to Adam. It says, Thus it is written, the first man Adam became a living being.

The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. Well, hang on, we know who the first Adam was but he was the first person made by God.

But who then is this last Adam? Well, this is another name for Jesus. The first Adam passed on his nature to all of us who have followed after him.

After sin had entered the world, Adam's body was perishable, weak and physical like yours and mine. And basically that's something which is almost in our genes, I suppose, that we pass that on to those who come after us.

But Christ, the second Adam, stamps his characteristics on those who are his. He's the source of that spiritual life that will result in the resurrection bodies that we all look forward to.

[13 : 42] And verse 46 states that we have our physical bodies first and then we get our resurrection body. verses 47 and 48 remind us of the source of our bodies.

Let's read them. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust. The second man is from heaven, as was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust.

And as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. If you read Genesis chapter 2, verse 7, you'll see that it says that Adam was made from the dust of the ground.

And when you think about it, so are we. God, of course, has breathed his life into us, but we're really, when it comes to it, a bunch of atoms and molecules ordered in such a way that we've got this body.

And as I say, God has breathed his life into us. To say we're unimportant, we're not precious, we're very precious to God. But our makeup is very physical in terms of our flesh and bone and stuff like that.

[14 : 51] As we say in the funeral service, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. The body is returning to the ground from which it was made. But Jesus is from heaven.

We need to remember that he is from heaven. He isn't just simply a human being. I mean, he is a human being, 100% human. But Jesus is also 100% God as well, which is a mystery for our minds to comprehend.

Now, he has always existed in heaven with God and the Holy Spirit. Because of a person's relationship with Jesus, the resurrection body that they will receive can be described as it is here as being from heaven, which is the fifth characteristic of the resurrection body.

The resurrection body that Jesus had gives us an idea of what the resurrection body that we will have will be like. Let me read to you from Philippians 3, verse 21, where Jesus' resurrection body is described.

It says, he will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory. So, we will become like Jesus in his resurrection body in the senses how we exist.

[16 : 19] Well, we conclude our passage tonight with verse 50 and I'll just read that. Paul writes, what I am saying brothers and sisters is this, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

Well, the expression flesh and blood refers to our lives in the form that we currently live them in our physical body. Clearly, this body that I've got here cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God is eternal and imperishable and our earthly bodies are not fit for an existence in heaven with God. We need to be changed and that's basically one of the things we're looking at at next week's evening service.

The fact that we are changed into this resurrection body if we trust in Jesus. This gives us incredibly great hope, doesn't it?

Those of us who, for example, suffer in our earthly bodies, look forward to an imperishable body from heaven. Of course, this body is a gift from God in itself and we need to look after it.

[17 : 32] But as time goes by, it decays and wears out. But we remember the hope that Paul describes we have from God in Romans chapter 8 where Paul describes the whole of God's creation as waiting for the redemption from God, including our bodies.

this is from Romans chapter 8 verse 21. Paul writes that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the Spirit groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

Our bodies will be changed into something much better than what we have now. People who are quadriplegics will not be paralyzed anymore.

People who have suffered from dementia will no longer have that problem. People will be forever with God. It's a great hope that we're offered.

[18 : 46] Well, let's look at those characteristics again of our resurrection body. It'll be imperishable. It'll be glorious. It'll be powerful.

It'll be a spiritual body. It'll be from heaven and one with which we can inherit God's kingdom. Isn't it a great hope that Jesus offers all of us?

Have you accepted what He's offering you? Thank you.