

## 1 Corinthians 16

You will need a small pad of paper and pen, a board (or something that you can stick masking tape on, and peel it off!), some masking tape, marker pen, some drawing pins or large headed nails, and a piece of dowel or bamboo cane and a length of timber approx. 80mm x 4mm x 18mm (32" x 1/4" x 3/4").  
*Mark them both with a pen at intervals (I divided it in half, then half again, then again, then again – 16 sections – (This is a timeline for the Earth. Each section represents about 500 years).*



Read 1 Corinthians 15:35-58

35 *But someone may ask, How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?*

36 *How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.*

37 *When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else.*

38 *But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body.*

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; and star differs from star in splendour.*

42 *So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable;*

43 *it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;*

Paul now faces the question: If we are going to come back to life again, do we get our old body back? He answers the question by comparing our old body to a seed – nothing like the plant that will grow from it.

44 *it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.*

45 *So it is written: The first man Adam became a living being; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit.*

46 *The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual.*

47 *The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven.*

48 *As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven.*

49 *And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.*

50 *I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.*

Paul now explains that there is a physical body, and a spiritual body – but he does not go so far as to say that our resurrection body will be a spiritual one, rather he says it will be ‘from heaven’ (verses 47, 48, 49) He also says we will ‘*bear the likeness of the man from heaven*’ (v49) – our body will be like Christ’s resurrection body.

**So what will it be like?**

To answer that I have copied here a section from the first study in Genesis:

We need to understand a little about particle physics. But only a little! Basically everything we can see around us is made of particles (or atoms), and they too can be broken down into subatomic particles – protons, electrons, and neutrons (which themselves can be further broken down). These fundamental particles are described as ‘excitations of quantum fields’ – energy to you and me! Fundamentally, everything that physically exists (matter) is a form of energy – or power.

So if you had ultimate power you could create a physical universe. Then, one day, you could withdraw that same power leaving nothing.

Whether you believe in creation or evolution, you probably agree that there was a time when the universe did not exist. Also, from Isaiah 34:4 (and Revelation 6:14) we are told that a time will come in the future when *All the stars of the heavens will be dissolved and the sky rolled up like a scroll.* And Revelation 21:1 *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.*

So let me ask my first question without an answer:

Before the universe existed, or later, when God has removed everything from Space, **What and where is space? How can you describe it?** (The intention is that people stretch their imaginations. The answers might include ‘Space is nothing so it can’t actually exist’ or ‘Space is an idea God had to build his universe in’ or ‘actually part of eternity’)

I can understand a finite, physical world, which is running down and would eventually stop; a world with a beginning and an end made of physical atoms. And people, made of living cells, also made from atoms. I can also understand that there is a spiritual world in which God exists, with no beginning or end. So what will the new heavens and earth be like? Spiritual? Or physical? – Or could it be something entirely different?

**Can you describe something, not Spiritual, and not Physical; - people not made out of cells or atoms?**

Because I am human and not God, I can’t imagine another kind of world, a world not made from atoms and molecules. But I believe it could exist, whatever it may be like, because the Bible tells us: *No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him (1 Corinthians 2:9)*

Now we will return briefly to our study. Read 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52

*51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—*

*52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.*

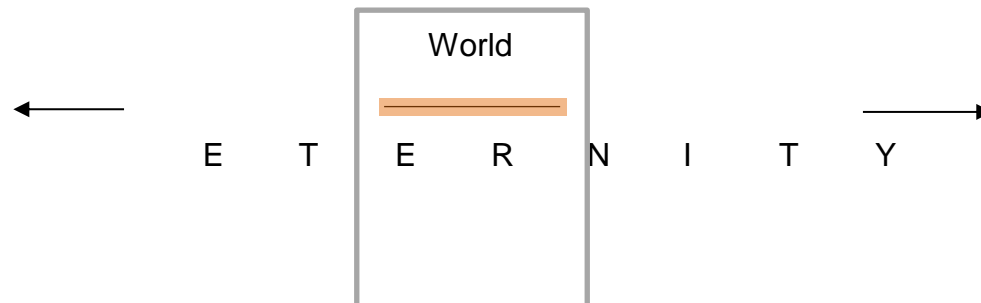
What happens when we die?

(At this point I am introducing a concept that has been covered partly in other studies, but I will state it fully here. If you have already introduced these ideas to your group you may simply wish to pick the parts that are pertinent.)

Stick some masking tape on the board almost from one side to the other. Draw a time line on the tape, with sections like you marked the wood. Introduce the next bit slowly!

This line represents the timeline for the world. (Indicate leftmost end) Here is creation. (We really don't know when that was. Now point to the fourth line, then fifth, sixth etc). Let's assume here is the flood, then Abraham, here are the Israelites, leaving Egypt. Here is David. Here is the Exile. Next is Jesus. (Now skip 3 lines) And this is us at 2000ad. (Now point to the far right hand end) And somewhere up here is the end of time. Now what I want to do is show where this timeline fits in Eternity. . . .

But the board is simply not wide enough.



Peel the tape off and stick it on the floor so you can walk round it.

Now you have to imagine that you are God.

This line on the floor is the world, from creation to the end. As God you can get up and walk around, you are free to travel to and fro in eternity. Look out of the window. Go outside if you like and look up. Eternity goes on for ever, and you are unrestricted (If people wish to they can actually get up and walk around – then sit down again).

In God's eyes, has the world begun yet?

If yes, has it finished yet?

Where in eternity does God call 'now'?

It's hard to talk about time in eternity because time doesn't exist, and God is free to move about in eternity.

So he can be in a place where the world has not yet come into being.  
Or he can be in a place where the end of the World is long past.

Or he can be spending an eternity considering the potential consequences of granting a prayer from our next prayer meeting. But of course he already knows that prayer before it is spoken.

Some more questions without answers:

Hand the pen and pad of paper to someone farthest from the tape on the floor.  
. . (Name) . . . . is writing the names of those who are saved, in the Lamb's book of life.

When exactly is our name written in The Lamb's Book of Life?

Is it compiled as the Earth progresses to its end?

Or is it left to the last day?

Or was it written before the World started?

As there is no time in eternity how could anyone say?

I'd like to make this more manageable.

Put the rod or bamboo on the floor and take up the masking tape (screw it up and dispose of it) Now pick up the rod.

Here is our Earth timeline

As God you can spend as long as you like looking at any time in history and you know the end from the beginning. (Point to specific points on the dowel)  
Here is an opening flower bud. (Now indicate points on opposite sides) Here is a major natural disaster. Here is a child going to bed and praying to you.

How much time can you spend looking at the flower bud as it opens?

God is eternal. He has unlimited time.

(Don't rush through these questions)

How much time can you spend listening to the child as it prays?

When the child has gone to sleep do you move on to something else or can you afford the time to linger? Have you the time to stay close by her all the years of her life?

Look at another spot on the rod.

And all this while are you concerned about this earthquake in Pakistan?

Now back to the 5<sup>th</sup> mark.

And the possible repercussions on world history of the Exodus?

Let's swap the dowel for a length of wood (1mx20mmx6mm). (If you can, place it flat on a table or the floor in the centre of the room) This also represents the world but it's a more convenient shape for what I want to do.

Now I want to add people. Representatives, sometimes single people, sometimes many thousands. But each of the people (nails/pins) I put on the stick are those who are just about to die. (Use short nails with flat large heads, or drawing pins. Stand them on their heads, point upwards)  
Here is creation, and here is Adam.

(Stand the nail/pin on the wood at the beginning, then slide it towards the second mark) He lived for 930 years and he is now at the end of his life. At about 2500bc is the flood – many people are about to die here. (add a few nails)

Here is Abraham (Add a nail and slide it towards the 4th mark) now about to die (2000bc). Here are the Israelites who have wandered in the desert, but who won't be allowed into the promised land. (1500bc). (From here on, add nails as appropriate)

Here is the imminent death of Saul and the start of David's reign (1000bc).

Here are many about to die in exile (500bc).

Here is Christ on the cross, and next to him is the thief. (0)

Here around 2000ad is the period of world wars, Tsunamis, Earthquakes. Let's add a representative sample.

And here is the very end of time with people still alive but shortly to die.

Do you agree that as Almighty Eternal God you can have a view of the world like this? That you can see each of these individuals just as they reach the end of their lives?

Remember this is a time line and now it represents that point in time for every single individual when they are about to die. From Adam to the last person to walk on this Earth. When I said about to die, we are now seeing them just three seconds from death.

Three, two, one . . . tip the wood so the nails fall off, and take it away.

The world is no more but the people remain. And from an eternal perspective, there is no time. No time from Adam to the end of the World.

**What next? Where are they now?**

They have all entered eternity. And have been transformed into their new, imperishable bodies. For those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life, their hope is now certainty.

Now read 1 Corinthians 15:53 to the end

*53 For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.*

*54 When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: Death has been swallowed up in victory.*

*55 Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?*

*56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.*

*57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.*