**Link FM: Heaven and Hell**

**Chapter 1**

Last week we finished our teachings on *Learning to Love* and we spoke about healing of our past hurts and pain. We said unhealed or suppressed pain leads to sinful attitudes and sinful behaviours, and we need to release our deep hurts to God. Receive his love to heal your heart and then you can even give that love to the offender by forgiving and sharing the grace of God in a tangible way. This power of love will bring you healing and freedom.

Today we are starting a short series of 4 teachings on heaven and hell. We don’t often hear sermons on these subjects although we as believers believe in a heaven and a hell. Interestingly, Jesus spoke more about heaven and hell than any other person in the Bible.

There is much speculation about heaven, but the Bible tells us everything we need to know for certain. Heaven is a place and everyone wants to know about it, and everyone wants to go there. Dr Ray Pritchard says that according to a recent poll, most people believe there is a heaven and most expect to go there when they die. Well, where is heaven?

The most important point is that heaven is a real place. Jesus said on the night before he was crucified, *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in Me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”* John 14:1-3. Twice here he calls heaven a place filled with real people, which is just as real as the place you call home, and is compared to a mansion with many rooms. Sometimes it’s seen as an enormous city teeming with many people (Rev 21). The Bible also tells us it is the dwelling place of God and his throne is there; the angels are there and the Lord Jesus Christ is there. Phil 3:20 says, *“Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.”* That is why Jesus told the thief on the cross, “*Today you will be with me in paradise*.” (Luke 23:43)

Then the Bible hints that heaven is not as far away as we might think, like billions and billions of light years away. But Heb 12:22 tells us that we would pass immediately from this life into the presence of Christ in heaven. It says, “*But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant …”*

The writer is here comparing Mt. Sinai with Mt. Zion. Under the old covenant no one could come near God except under very strict conditions. That's why the mountain shook with thunder and lightning. But 3 times the Greek word is used that means "*to come near*" or "*to approach closely*.” Now in Christ we have been brought near to heavenly realities. Think of what he is saying: We're not that far from heaven. We’re not that far from the angels, not that far from our loved ones in heaven, not that far from God, and not that far from Jesus himself.

Heaven is a real place, it's where Jesus is right now, and it's not far away from us.

**So what is heaven like?**

The Bible gives us pictures of heaven and comparisons with life on earth. Psalm 33:13 says it is “*God’s dwelling place”*. Acts 1:11 says it is where Christ is today. Phil 1:21-23 says it is where Christians go when they die. John 14:2 calls it “*the Father’s house*”, and Heb 11:10 says it is a city designed and built by God. Heb 11:6 says it is a “*better country”* and Luke 23:43 speaks of “*paradise.*”

Most of us have heard that heaven has streets paved with gold. The gates are made of pearl, and the walls made of precious jewels. Those images come from [Revelation 21](http://www.biblestudytools.com/search/?t=niv&q=re+21), which tells us the most about heaven. Are those things literally true? Yes, they are true, but no, heaven won't be anything like we imagine. It will be much greater.

When John writes about a street paved with gold, he simply reports what he saw in his vision. Thus his words are literally true. They are also meant to tell us that the things we value so highly in this life will be used to pave the roads in heaven.

**Well, who is in heaven right now?**

God is in heaven, because it is his dwelling place. The Lord Jesus has been in heaven ever since he ascended from the earth shortly after his resurrection ([Acts 1:9-11](http://www.biblestudytools.com/search/?t=niv&q=ac+1:9-11)), and myriads of angels or heavenly beings are in heaven, all serving God in various ways.

And the saints of God who died on this earth, are in heaven, including the Old Testament Saints who by faith trusted in God's Word and even not fully understanding, looked forward to God's redemption at Calvary. It also includes every true believer from every continent and denomination, everyone who has genuinely trusted in Christ as Lord and Saviour. Ray Pritchard also thinks that children who died before the "*age of accountability*” go to heaven and also those born with such mental limitations that they cannot understand the gospel. The Bible teaches that the moment we die, we go directly into the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul spoke of this in [2 Cor 5:7-8](http://www.biblestudytools.com/search/?t=niv&q=2co+5:7-8) and [Phil 1:21-23](http://www.biblestudytools.com/search/?t=niv&q=php+1:21-23).

But not everyone is in heaven now, and some people won't make it. The Bible speaks of the saved and the lost. The saved are those who trust Jesus Christ as their eternal Saviour. The lost are those who do not trust Christ as Saviour. This is the great dividing line of humanity - you are either saved or you are lost, with no middle category. You will either spend eternity in heaven or eternity in hell.

Our job is not to decide who goes to heaven and who goes to hell. That's God's job. We’re in sales, not administration.

I simply want you to know what God has said about heaven, a place more wonderful than we could imagine. And the saved of all the ages will be there - that vast diverse throng that will no doubt include many people who would surprise us if we knew it now. But I am sure of this one truth. No one will go to heaven except by the grace of God and through the merits of the blood of Jesus Christ. If a man says "No" to Jesus, he has no hope of heaven. So choose today and say, “Yes” to your Saviour. Pray with me, *“Lord Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross in my stead, for my sins. Save me from my sin and from hell. I receive your forgiveness and I receive your Holy Spirit to come into my heart and give me new and eternal life. I believe you are my Saviour and my Lord. Amen.”*  God bless you till next week when we continue this study on heaven and hell.

**Heaven and Hell**

**Chapter 2**

Last week we started a new short series on heaven and hell and said that heaven is a real place where Jesus has gone to prepare for us. It is the most wonderful place, not far away, where God lives. Angels are there; all the saints of the past are there, and His followers will go there when they die. It is a most beautiful place, with streets of gold. We said that the saved will spend eternity there, but the lost will not.

Today we will be looking at more about what the Bible tells us of heaven. Will we know each other in heaven? William Pettengill said, “*We may be sure that we shall not know less in heaven than we know here*."  [1 Corinthians 13:12](http://www.biblestudytools.com/search/?t=niv&q=1co+13:12), "*Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known."* How does God know us? Answer: He knows us completely, intimately, thoroughly, inside and out, with nothing hidden but everything seen as it really is ([Psalms 139:1-4](http://www.biblestudytools.com/search/?t=niv&q=ps+139:1-4); [Hebrews 4:12](http://www.biblestudytools.com/search/?t=niv&q=heb+4:12)). When we get to heaven we'll know each other as God knows us because all the imperfections of this life will be removed. In this life sin causes us to hide ourselves. But when sin is finally lifted from us, then we can be ourselves with no shame, no pain. Dr. Pettingill concludes that we will know every person in heaven and all of them will be friends and loved ones to us.

People sometimes ask: How old will we be in heaven? The truth is, there won't be any age in heaven in the sense we speak of age on the earth. Growing old is a function of the decaying effects of sin. Dr Ray Pritchard believes that babies who die in infancy will not be babies for eternity, nor does he believe that people who waste away of cancer will appear emaciated in heaven. Because of the perfection of heaven, I believe that we will all be made perfect with no flaws or weakness or brokenness.

In heaven we will know each other intimately. That's why Peter, James and John recognized Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration, even though they had been dead for hundreds of years. ([Matthew 17:1-9](http://www.biblestudytools.com/search/?t=niv&q=mt+17:1-9)). Something about those two men made Peter, James and John recognize them even though they had never seen them before.

That's why a wife whose husband died when she was young will be able to pick her husband, and he will know her. In heaven there will be no strangers.

**V. What will we do in heaven?**

The Bible doesn't tell us everything we would like to know, but of this we can be sure: Heaven won't be boring and it will be more fun than the best party you ever attended.

Do you remember the story Jesus told about the man of noble birth who gave his servants money to invest? One servant had doubled his money so the man said, "*You will rule over ten cities."* The next servant had seen a 50% increase so his master said, "*Rule over five cities*." And the man who hid his money had even that amount taken from him in punishment ([Luke 19:11-27](http://www.biblestudytools.com/search/?t=niv&q=lu+19:11-27)). We will use our gifts to administer the new heaven and the new earth.

We will serve God in heaven and reign with him. Rev 21 says, “*The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.* We will worship God, serve him and reign with him.

David Burns says, *“We will worship without distraction, serve without exhaustion, fellowship with fear, learn without fatigue, and rest without boredom.”*

**VI. How can I be sure I am going to heaven?**

This is too important to say "*I think so*" or "*I hope so."* If you're wrong, you're going to be wrong for a long, long time. The following question is often asked, *"Suppose you were to die and found yourself standing at the door of heaven. If God were to say, 'Why should I let you into heaven?' What answer would you give?"*

Most people think they are going there, hoping for the best, that God would accept them for their good deeds. Butour good deeds carry no weight with God. Only Jesus’ life in us will make us acceptable before God. God has made it easy for you to go to heaven. He did the hard part when he sent his Son to die on the Cross for us. Jesus paid the price for our sins so that we could one day stand before God in heaven. Jesus came to take away our sin, impurity and shame by his precious blood. When we turn from our sin to Jesus, and receive his life by faith, he cleanses us and clothes us with his righteousness.

Jesus said, *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me*" ([John 14:6](http://www.biblestudytools.com/search/?t=niv&q=joh+14:6)). He also said, "*I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved"* ([John 10:9](http://www.biblestudytools.com/search/?t=nas&q=joh+10:9), NASB). Jesus is not only the way to heaven, he is also the door to heaven. There is no other entrance.

Rev 21:23-27 tells who will enter heaven. *“The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light … On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”*

Is your name written in that book? Heaven is God's prepared place for prepared people. We prepare for heaven and then God prepares heaven for us. How do we prepare for heaven?

That chapter goes on to say, *“Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may go through the gates into the city.”* Rev 7:11 also says, “*They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb*”.

What is your hope for heaven? When the time comes for you leave this earth, when death comes knocking at your door, what will happen to you then? If you know Jesus, you have nothing to fear. Put your trust in Him today. If you are not certain if your name is in the Lamb’s book of life, do pray this prayer with me, *“Lord Jesus, I am a sinner and have no certainty of heaven. Please wash away my sin with your blood. Change my life by your Holy Spirit. I receive your righteousness. I want to follow you and serve you. I want my name written in the Lamb’s book of life, and when you return, to take me to heaven. Amen.”* So believe that he saves you and you will have eternal life.

Jesus says 3 times in Rev 22, “*Behold I am coming soon!*” He is coming to take his followers to that Holy City to be with him, where we will be his people, where God makes everything new. Rev 21:4-6 says, there “*he will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”* God bless you till next week when we continue this study on heaven and hell.

**Heaven and Hell**

**Chapter 3**

Last week we said that we would know each other in heaven and will be perfect with no flaws or weaknesses. We will serve God there, worship Him, and rule and reign with him. We said that we can be sure of heaven, if we receive forgiveness and life through Jesus. If our names are written in the Lamb’s book of life, we will have access into the Holy City, with streets of gold, where there is no more crying or pain. Jesus is coming soon to fetch us to be there with him.

Today we want to look at what the Bible says about hell. The terribleness of hell clearly shows the awfulness of sin. If God did not punish sin, he would not be holy. Words used for hell are the *abyss*, or a bottomless *pit*, and refers to a prison, a place of severe torment and isolation for demons. Job 9:31 says it is a murky slime pit. Another word is *Sheol* and *Hades*, the place of the dead under the earth, or the underworld of departed spirits, which Psalm 88:6 speaks of as dark and deep. Although *Sheol* is sometimes used for “*grave*” it is also used clearly as a place of punishment. Deut 32:22 says, “*For a fire has been kindled by my wrath, one that burns to the realm of death (Sheol) below.*” Proverbs tells us to discipline our children. *“Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death (Sheol*). In Jude 7 the word for “*hades*” also clearly refers to “*punishment*” - “*Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.”*

The other word used is *Gehenna*, the place of the burning of refuse for the city, but also used to describe the fire of hell in the final judgment. Jesus spoke a lot about hell and taught that we should fear God rather than men, for man may kill our bodies, but only God can cast into hell. Speaking of the sheep and goats, as the righteous and the unrighteous, in Matt 25:41,46, he said, “*Then he (the King) will say to those on his left. ‘Depart from me you who are cursed into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels …. Then they will go away to eternal punishment, and the righteous to eternal life.”* Jesus also said, “*If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out*.” (Mark 9:43) And he called the Pharisees snakes and vipers, and said, “*How will you escape being condemned to hell?*” (Matt 23:33) We also know the story of the rich man and Lazarus Jesus told about in Luke 16:22,23. *“The rich man died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.”* Jesus said in Matt 13:41,49, *“The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace; where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth*.”

Peter says in 2 Pet 2:4, “*For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment … he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly…”* And in Revelation five times it speaks of the “*lake of fire*” or “*burning sulphur*.”

Jesus spoke of hell as an actual destination, a literal place, rather than a state of mind. The Bible shows that hell is a place of consciousness, a place of suffering, a place of pain (Ps 116:3), a place of torment, a place of wrath and a place of eternal damnation and judgement for unbelievers. It is also a place of remembrance. Abraham told the rich man to remember the good things that he enjoyed while living on the earth. He remembered his five brothers that were on the earth. The sinner will remember his past sins, and the prayers and pleading of godly parents and every time he rejected the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but it will be too late.

***Is hell forever?*** Although some people believe that hell is a place of annihilation, the Bible is clear that the fire of hell is eternal – eternal torment. Jesus said clearly in Mark 9:44, *“where the fire never goes out*.” Revelation speaks of the Great Tribulation, of the people who will receive the mark of the beast. It says the “*smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever.”* And it is clear that not one single Scripture tells us that men will be given a second chance once they have gone to hell. No one will escape from hell once they go there.

***So who will be in hell***? The devil will be in hell, for it was prepared for him and his angels. He will be cast into hell at the close of the millennial reign of Christ (Rev 20:10). The angels that rebelled with Satan await their judgement in hell. The beast or Anti-Christ and false prophet will be cast into hell, and those who receive his mark during the Great Tribulation. And then Psalm 9:17 says, “*The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.”* Revelation 21:6-8*. “But the* ***cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars*** *– their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death.”*

All these terrible verses about hell are enough to scare us out of our wits and give us sleepless nights. But God showed us His love by providing an escape route through Jesus. The truth is many lost people do not believe that they are bad enough to go to hell. Yet it is not how many sins are committed that tilts the scale, but simply any person ignoring or rejecting the salvation that Jesus paid for with his blood. Hell is the consequence of sin, the terrible punishment for rejecting Jesus’ salvation. Anyone does not receive his righteousness, is condemned, because for him the death of Jesus was in vain. Jesus’ blood cleanses us from our sin, and those who have not had their sins taken away, cannot enter heaven with their sins. 2 Pet 3:9 says, God does not want anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. Ezekiel 22:11, “*As surely as I live, says the Sovereign Lord, ‘I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die…?”*

In Rev 21 Jesus says, *“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty, I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, (speaks of the Holy City) and I will be his God he will be my son.*

Man has a choice and that choice is either life or death, heaven or hell. Why not choose life today? Why not choose heaven, and find forgiveness, peace, joy and eternal life? This salvation is free for everyone, because Jesus paid for it with his life. Pray with me today, “*Lord Jesus, I am a sinner condemned to hell. I need a Saviour. I believe that you died on my behalf, and that you rose from the dead. Save me from my sin. I receive the water of life - eternal life. I receive your Holy Spirit. Thank you for the promise of heaven. Thank you that I am a child of God. Teach me how to walk in your way. Amen.”*

Believer, never doubt His promise of eternal life in heaven. Share with others about this free gift, and warn them urgently about hell.

God bless you till next week when we will do the last session on this study of heaven and hell.

**Heaven and Hell**

**Chapter 4**

Last week we spoke about the difficult subject of “Hell. Jesus spoke a lot about hell, where the fire never goes out. Hell is a place of consciousness, a place of suffering and pain (Ps 116:3), a place of torment, a place of wrath, a place of regret, and of eternal damnation and judgement for unbelievers. But we showed how we can choose heaven instead, and have our names written in the Lamb’s book of life.

Today we want to look at a common question people ask, namely, “*How can a loving God send anyone to hell? If He is all-loving, how can He be so merciless as to torment people for all eternity?”* People’s view of God is that He is either merciless in sending people to hell, or He is one who excuses their sin altogether. Either way, both concepts are misguided.

Bill Wiese addresses this issue in his book, “*Hell*” and explains that if a stranger came to you and said that he was moving into your home, and you refused, would he be justified in calling you “*mean*” or “*unloving*” for not allowing him access? No, because his moving in with you is not based on the question of whether you are “*loving*” or not, but it is based on your “*relationship*” with him. So it is with us. If we do not have a relationship that exists with Jesus, then we are not in His family, and we have no right to enter His home. When Jesus’ message did not find a place in the people’s hearts in John 8:37, He said, *“For you are the children of your father the devil*…” In other words, either God is your Father, or the devil is your father. Many assume that we are all “*the children of God*”, but that is a misnomer. Jesus also said in John 1:12, “*To all who received him and believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”* Gal 3:26 also says, “*You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”*

So for us to show up at heaven’s gates and expect to just move in without a relationship with God, would be like a stranger arriving and expecting to move into your expensive home.

When God gave man a free will to choose whatever he wanted to do and believe, He also provided a way for man to avoid hell. Man cannot blame God for tragedies that happen, or that people end up in hell. God said in Job 40:8, “*Would you condemn me to justify yourself?”* God has established a universal law: we reap what we sow. But, when terrible things happen, man often says, “*Blame God!”* despite the fact that they are due to his own sinful choices, while rejecting God and His Word and believing, “*Why, it couldn’t be my fault. I couldn’t possibly be to blame?”* Rather than take responsibility, many choose to believe that God is the author of evil. Then they can question His love and fairness, and eventually reject God and also the reality of hell.

Or sometimes, because of a broken earthly father, you have a twisted view of God. Or religion may have said, “*You’re never good enough to receive God’s love and acceptance*.” And you’re taught to keep countless rules, but never to know God personally, and He sounds too demanding anyway. This is not the true God.

Just as Satan tempted Adam and Eve to doubt God’s Word and His integrity, so he still persuades man to rationalise and question God’s authority. If a warning posted on a door reads, “*Do not open the door, or you will die*.” You have a choice to lose your life by opening the door, or to heed the warning and not die. It is not God’s will or desire that you die, and you can choose not to open the door. God doesn’t “*send*” us to hell, but he warns us of the consequence of rejecting his Word. It was the same in the Garden of Eden. Just as through one man, Adam, we all reaped the fruit of his sin, namely death; so through one man, Jesus (if we choose his salvation) we can all reap the fruit of his righteousness, namely eternal life.

Hell was created for the devil and his angels, and for those who choose to remain in his kingdom and to reject the **way out** of darkness, death and hell. Imagine a road sign that warns that there is a river in flood that has completely washed away the road, but there is a narrow off-ramp that leads to a bridge that crosses that river. If you choose to continue on the broad road of danger, when you had the chance to take the escape route – who is to blame for your destruction in the end? If we reject Jesus’ way, we will end up in hell. We choose to go there by our own stubborn will, rejecting the way God has provided us for escape. A.W Pink says, “*If he will not believe then it is his own will which damns him*.”

You may ask, *“But what about God’s grace?”* The truth is that grace is not a cover up for our ignorance or an excuse for our sin. Grace is an empowerment to live in obedience to His Word. We are held accountable to do just that – to choose life and to obey His Word. That is not legalism, that is simply accepting his Word as truth and believing and obeying it.

God loves us, and wants to bless us. And He gives us a choice to respond to his love and to receive his blessings. Jesus didn’t come into this world to condemn it; quite the contrary. He came to save it. (John 3:17) He came to redeem us and save us from hell, not send us there! He said in Matthew 7:13-14, “*Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.*”

To sum up then: God is not sending people to hell, but because of sin, man is heading there; that is why Jesus came to provide a way of escape, a way of salvation. You can choose to take that way or do nothing at all and end up in hell.

So if you are heading in the wrong direction, heading for an eternal hell, with the devil and his angels, then I urge you to stop and take hold of the life-line of Jesus, the bridge over the chasm of destruction. Jesus gave his life to become that bridge for you.

Pray this prayer with me today, “*Dear God, I realise that I am on my way to hell and have not turned off this road of destruction. I reach out to you, Jesus, to save me from sin and death. I believe that you died in my place. I choose to enter the narrow gate that leads to life. Give me your Holy Spirit to live in me and empower me to live for you. Thank you for saving me today. Thank you for eternal life, and for heaven at the end of this road. Amen.”* God bless you as we have come to the end this mini-series on heaven and hell.