

The Doctrine of Hell: Part 1

Many people think that hell is either a word by which they can curse and swear or that it is a humorous word to use when joking. Jesus gave very clear teaching on hell in Luke 16:19-31 that establishes it as a cardinal doctrine of the afterlife. It is not a word of profanity and it is no joke.

1. **Hell is the final state of the unsaved.** It is inhabited by the lost, who are all those never having received Jesus Christ as Savior. In the story Jesus related the rich man died, Lk 16:22 and was in torment in Hades, Greek for the “grave” or place of the dead (cf. Mt 25:41). It also is inhabited by Satan and his demons.
2. **Hell is a real place.** The rich man called for someone to deliver him from “this place (Greek **to,poj** = a literal place), of torment,” and punishment v. 28. Hell is not a dream state nor is it a make-believe location. Jesus’ story in Luke 16:19ff. is about real people in a real place experiencing real eternity.
3. **Hell is an eternal place.** Hell was created by God for Satan and those angels who rebelled against God (2 Pet 2:4). Mark says that in hell the worm never dies and the fire is never quenched (Mk 9:44, 46, 48). The rich man of Jesus’ story said he was “tormented” in the flames (Lk 16:24). Just as heaven is an eternal home (1 Pet 1:4), hell is a foreboding place of eternal punishment (2 Pet 3:7).
4. **Hell offers no hope of redemption.** Jesus said those who are lost go away to eternal punishment and the saved to eternal life (Mt 25:46). It also is called the place of “contempt” (Dn 12:2), destruction (2 Thess 1:9), chains (Jude 6), torment (Rev 14:11; 20:10). Those in hell are eternally cut off (Lk 16:24, 26).
5. **Hell is chosen by the lost.** God does not send anyone to hell! His desire is that no one should perish, but all come to eternal life in Christ (2 Pet 3:9). The wages of sin is death but God’s gift is eternal life (Jn 3:16; Rm 6:23). Whatever we are morally and spiritually when we die, will continue for all eternity (Lk 16:25).
6. **Hell is for those who willingly reject Christ.** Those who will not believe the testimony of the word of God and of Jesus who died and rose to give all who receive him victory over the grave (1 Cor 15:1-19, 55-58). If a person will not receive the resurrected Christ, he or she cannot be saved (Acts 4:12; Lk 16:29-31).
7. **Hell is a place you can avoid.** Jesus went to the cross as a ransom for our sin that He might give to all people the opportunity for eternal life (Jn 3:16; 1 Cor 15:20-28). Those who refuse God’s gift of salvation by grace through faith, choose eternal condemnation (Jn 3:18).

Lamar E. Cooper, Sr.