

Mark 9:46

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

Analysis

Jesus repeated again: 'Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched' (ὅπου ὁ σκώληξ αὐτῶν οὐ τελευτᾷ καὶ τὸ πῦρ οὐ σβέννυται). The triple repetition (vv. 44, 46, 48) emphasizes importance—threefold witness establishes truth (Deuteronomy 19:15; 2 Corinthians 13:1). Jesus won't allow hearers to dismiss hell as metaphor or minimize its reality. The unending worm and unquenched fire represent eternal conscious torment. Some argue 'fire' is metaphorical for annihilation, but 'dieth not' and 'not quenched' indicate perpetual existence, not cessation. Whether fire is literal or metaphorical (representing indescribable suffering), the point is clear: eternal punishment awaits impenitent sinners. This doctrine, though unpopular, is central to Jesus' teaching and biblical revelation. God's justice demands punishment for sin; His mercy provides escape through Christ's atonement.

Historical Context

The phrase's repetition in Mark 9:44, 46, 48 appears in textual variants—some manuscripts omit vv. 44 and 46, retaining only v. 48. However, the content is identical, and early manuscripts include all three. The repetition pattern reflects Jesus' emphatic teaching style. Jewish apocalyptic literature (1 Enoch, 4 Ezra) described eternal punishment, though with varying details. Jesus' teaching was consistent with broader Jewish belief in judgment but more explicit about its eternal nature. Early church fathers universally affirmed eternal punishment as Jesus taught, though debating fire's literal versus metaphorical nature. Modern evangelical debates over annihilationism challenge traditional doctrine, yet Jesus'

repeated emphasis on 'not quenched' and 'dieth not' seems incompatible with cessation of existence.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. Why did Jesus repeat the warning about eternal punishment three times in rapid succession?
2. How should the doctrine of hell shape Christian evangelism, preaching, and personal holiness?

Interlinear Text

ὅπου	ό	σκώληξ	αὐτῶν	οὐ	τελευτᾶ,	καὶ	τὸ	πῦρ	οὐ
Where	G3588	worm	their	not	dieth	and	G3588	the fire	not
G3699		G4663	G846	G3756	G5053	G2532		G4442	G3756

σβέννυται

is

G4570

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