

Mark 9:48

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

Quoting Isaiah 66:24, Jesus describes hell with imagery of unquenchable fire and undying worm—perpetual, irreversible judgment. 'Their worm' (Greek *skōlēx*) refers to maggots consuming corpses, symbol of decay and disgust. That it 'dieth not' indicates eternal duration—no relief, no end. 'The fire is not quenched' (to pyr ou sbennutai) emphasizes permanence of punishment. Context (9:43-47) teaches it's better to enter life maimed than go to hell whole—hyperbole stressing hell's seriousness. Reformed theology affirms eternal conscious punishment against annihilationism. Hell isn't remedial but retributive—just punishment for sin against infinite God requires infinite duration. The horror of these images should drive people to Christ and motivate evangelism. Jesus, the most loving person who ever lived, taught hell more than anyone in Scripture, demonstrating it's not vindictiveness but reality. Love warns of danger.

Historical Context

Gehenna (translated 'hell') refers to Valley of Hinnom outside Jerusalem where refuse burned continuously. In Old Testament times, apostate Israelites practiced child sacrifice there (2 Kings 23:10), making it symbol of judgment. By Jesus' time, it represented final punishment. Isaiah 66:24's original context depicts defeated enemies' corpses being consumed—ultimate disgrace and defeat. Jesus applies this to eternal state, not earthly humiliation. First-century Jews debated afterlife; Pharisees affirmed resurrection and judgment, Sadducees denied it. Jesus' teaching sided with Pharisees but intensified the stakes, making His audience face

eternal consequences. This wasn't hypothetical theology but urgent warning to flee coming wrath.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus' teaching on hell affect your urgency in evangelism and personal holiness?
2. Does belief in eternal punishment seem incompatible with God's love, or the necessary outworking of His holiness and justice?

Interlinear Text

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

σβέννυται

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G4570

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 66:24 (Parallel theme): And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.

Matthew 25:41 (Parallel theme): Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

