Bi-605 The Gospel of Mark

Research Paper

Mark 16:8: End or No

The ending chapter of Mark's Gospel has been the center of controversy among biblical theologians and scholars. Copies of ancient manuscripts of Mark stop at the sixteenth chapter, verses one through eight. The remaining verses nine through twenty were believed to have been added years later by scribes who carefully copied the Scriptures. Original texts were not found of any of the New Testament, but the oldest copies give clues that add fuel to the fire that heated up the controversy. Even though Mark's Gospel was included in the biblical canon containing all of the verses, the debate continues to be hotly contested.

Mark 16:1-8, "*And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome had bought spices that they might come and anoint him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, 'who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?' And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment, and they were*

affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell the disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre: for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they anything to any man; for they were afraid."[1]

The author, Marie Sabin, put forth that most commentators read Mark through the lens of the other Gospels and speak of Mark as "omitting" a Resurrection appearance. But, according to Sabin, Mark offered a valuable balance to the theological perspective of the other Gospels. Matthew ended with Jesus, like a new Moses, giving new commandments from the mountain to. Luke concluded with Jesus explaining the Scriptures in terms of Himself. John ended with Jesus making predictions about the fate of Peter.[2] According to Sabin, Mark left the meaning of the Resurrection open, allowing God room to make new disclosures and concluded with ordinary witnesses already possessed by holy ecstasy and holy awe. Mark's unresolved ending invited his readers to respond for themselves. Mark's ending also gave prominence to the role of women. The

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[1] King James Version of the Bible
[2] Sabin, Marie Reopening The word: Reading Mark as Theology in the Context of Early Judaism, Oxford Press, New York, 2002, pages 211-225.

other Gospels show women as key witnesses to the Resurrection, but, mute their significance.

The organization http://covenantbaptist.org justified verses Mark 16:1-8 by describing a technique sometimes used in ancient novels that an author would leave a book ending ambiguous requiring the reader to go back and start over and this time pick up new understanding; then read again and unlock even more meaning. Mark's Gospel was supposed to be read, not in a straight line from beginning to end, but, in a circle. The organization continued to report that proposed theories for the short ending were the last page of the original got lost somehow or was accidently torn off the back of the codex (an ancient manuscript). Another theory was that Mark died in mid-paragraph. The ending left one paralyzed in fear and silence or maybe in Mark's Gospel, the reader gets to write the end of the story.[3] Another source cited a few new Testament specialists who gave more support to the theory that the original ending to Mark was lost. However, most scholars of Mark accept the likelihood that the original first century author meant to end the narrative exactly and abruptly at chapter 16, verse 8.[4] Additional support for verses 1-8 continued to maintain that scholars speculated about reasons why Mark might have concluded so suddenly. More evidence of the original was lost. Additional beliefs

[3] https://covenantbaptist.org
[4] https://questia.com

that Mark died or was otherwise prevented from finishing. And again, it was thought Mark deliberately ended his work with verse eight knowing that his readers would already know about the Resurrection and wanted to close with an emphasis on the human dimension of discipleship.[5]

Https://gotquestions.org gave extensive explanations for reasons supporting the Gospel of Mark ending at verse eight. "The Gospel of Mark ends at verse eight in two of the oldest and most respected manuscripts, the *Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus*. As the oldest manuscripts are known to be the most accurate because there were fewer generations of copies. Furthermore, ending the Gospel with verse eight with the description of the amazement of the women at the tomb was entirely consistent with the rest of the narrative. Amazement at the Lord Jesus seemed to be a theme of Mark: *'They were amazed at his teaching' (Mark 1:22); 'They were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves' (Mark 1:27; 'He healed the paralytic, and they were all amazed and were glorifying God' (Mark 2:12).* Astonishment of the work of Jesus was revealed throughout Mark's narrative (Mark 4:41; 5:15, 33, 42; 6:51; 9:6, 15, 32; 10:24, 32; 11:18; 12:17; 16:5). Some of the early scribes apparently missed the thematic evidence."[6]

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[5] https://sermonwriter.com
[6] https://gotquestions.org

Sabin presented more evidence in favor of ending mark's Gospel at verse 8 of chapter sixteen in examining the literary form of the text. "Although it is difficult to separate literary issues from theological implications, three literary factors impact meaning were vocabulary, tone, and structure. Near Eastern wisdom and midrashic Jewish Discourse end with a preposition 'for.' In the English language (a grammar rule is never to leave a hanging preposition), it is considered improper, however, in the Greek language, it was not out of place and was used in numerous examples of sudden endings. The verses suggested some sort of fear. Many commentators lump together the women's fear with that of the male disciples and find all instances to be equally negative. Mark's Gospel contained a pattern of expressing religious experience through words of fear and ecstasy which made it perceived as not a let down but a climax of trembling and ecstasy. The abrupt silence of the ending relate to the structural pattern of the Gospel as a whole. Mark's structure was typified by various forms of repetition, for example, the women's 'trembling' (16:8) response was similar to the women's act of faith in 5:33. A circulatory of phrases and meanings that emphasized the doublet of Jesus promised 'I am going before you into Galilee' in 14:8 and 16:7 which was a promise that points back to the beginning or the Gospel and a fitting climax to the poetically packed ending to Mark's work."[7]

[7] Ibid, Sabin, page 228.

**Mark 16:9-20, "*Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not. After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue neither believed they them. Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen after he was risen. And he said unto them, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believed not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following, Amen."*[8]

[8] Ibid #1.

In contrast to the other views presented, a source saw Mark 16:9-20 as the possible ending for the Gospel: "It is important to note that the variations were seen in relation to differences in manuscript evidence. There are two lines of Bible manuscripts. One originated in Antioch, Syria and is commonly referred to One originated in Antioch, Syria and is commonly referred to as the Antioch line. The other is referred to as the Alexandrian line because it originated in Alexandria, Egypt. All modern translations derive from one of these two lines of manuscript. Mark 16:9-20 is not found in the oldest manuscripts from the Alexandrian line (Vaticanus and Sinaiticus). Mark 16:9-20 is found in the extensive number of manuscripts that originated in Antioch. Those who hold to the inclusion of Mark16:9-20 will claim that the omission of the message leaves the book of Mark ending in fear. If Mark 16:9-20 is omitted, there is no account of the resurrection recorded in Mark's gospel which would make it inconsistent with the other gospel accounts of Jesus' life, death, burial, and his resurrection. This should cause to wonder why the Gospel accounts especially the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) would be alike on all historical events but the book of Mark would leave out the most important event. It is believable that the Gospel of Mark would have included the entire passage of Mark 16:9-20. It is plausible that Mark would have ended his writing as did the other Gospel writings

showing the resurrection account and Jesus encouraging and empowering His disciples to go forth and serve."[9]

The Apologetic Press continued to show support Mark 16:9-20 as being the ending of the Gospel. "One textual variant that has received considerable attention from the textual critic concerns the last twelve verses of Mark. Much has been written on the subject in the last two centuries. Most, if not all, scholars who have examined the subject concede that the truths presented in the verses are historically authentic- even if they reject the genuineness of the verses as being originally part of Mark's account. The verses contain no teaching of significance

that is not taught elsewhere. Christ's post-resurrection appearance to Mary is verified elsewhere (Luke 8:2; John 20:1-18), as is His appearance to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:35), and His appearance to the eleven apostles (Luke 24:36-43); and The Great Commission is presented by two of the other three Gospels."[10] The Gospel Coalition brought more support for evidence to include the debated verses: "Evidence for including these verses is staggering. When looking at the manuscripts of Mark's Gospel that survive today, more than 99 percent contain Mark 16:9-20. This includes not only 1,600 plus Greek manuscripts, but most manuscripts of early translations of Mark as well. Moreover, by

[9] https://reasonforhopejesus.com
[10] https://apologeticpress.org

around AD 180, Irenaeus unambiguously quoted Mark 16:19 as Scripture. Justin Martyr and Tatian likely knew the verses earlier in the second century as well. Undeniably, Mark 16:9-20 was considered by many Christians early on to be a part of Mark's Gospel."[11]

Scholars, commentators, and theologians continued to go back and forth varying with opinions supported by their own selection of evidence.

[11] https://thegospelcoalition.org