

History of the Received Text

In Defense of Mark 16:20

Study Pak 12A

Score Key

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"It is easy to join the critics and say Mark's original manuscript ended with verse 8; it is impossible to satisfactorily support this statement."

~~ Dean John Burgon ~~

I. THE ARGUMENT FOR NOT INCLUDING MARK 16:9-20 IN THE SCRIPTURE

A. It is not found in the two manuscripts that Westcott and Hort put the most faith in: Sinaiticus and Vaticanus.

1. The Old Scofield Reference Bible note reads. "The passage from verse 9 to the end is not found in the two most ancient manuscripts, the Sinaitic and Vatican, and others have it with partial omissions and variations. But it is quoted by Irenaeus and Hippolytus in the Second or Third Century."
2. Other scholars question the long ending of Mark.

A.T. Robertson, *Studies in Mark*—'It is possible that the last leaf of Mark was lost before any copies were made of it. If Mark did write more of his gospel (after verse 8) and if copies were made of the autograph before it perished, then some day we may see the true ending of Mark's Gospel.'

Howard F. Vos, *A Study Guide Commentary*—'The very best manuscripts stop at verse 8. The great scholar Eusebius, writing in the 4th Century, said that nearly all copies of Mark's Gospel ended in verse 8. Jerome said almost the same thing. Many argue that verses 9-20 are not in the same style as the rest of the Book, so the tendency of modern textual scholars is to omit these verses.'

Tyndale, NT Commentary – 'verses 9-20 are not found in some important witnesses. This longer ending shows knowledge of John 20; Luke 24; Matthew 28. This is an early attempt to 'round off a Gospel whose original ending has become in some way maimed or lost. These verses were perhaps derived from the other Gospels, a patchwork of pieces from the other Gospels.'

B. Some scholars claim that the style of Mark 16: 9-20 is too different, from the rest of the book of Mark.

C.

1. There are some words found in Mark 16:9-20 not found in the rest of the book.
2. The whole issue of style and language is subjective. The majority of scholars and teachers find no problem with the long ending. G. Campbell Morgan, J. Vernon McGee, R.H. Lenski, Bruce Mc Claren, Albert Barnes, JFB etc., accept for the ending.
3. Every chapter of Mark contains at least one word not found in other chapters.

II. ANCIENT EVIDENCE FOR THE LONG ENDING

- A. Justin Martyr (A.D. 150), Ireneaus (180), Tatian (173) and Hippolytus (200) all witnessed to the inclusion of verses 9-20 in the Gospel of Mark (chapter 16).
- B. The earliest translations, Latin, Syrian, Gothic and Coptic, all include the verses.
- C. These verses are found in all Greek manuscripts except Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, and all but one Latin text.
- D. All Syriac versions but one contain the verses (Sinaitic Syriac).
- E. These verses were quoted as Scripture by church fathers 150 years before Sinaiticus and Vaticanus were produced.

III. MANUSCRIPT EVIDENCE FOR AND AGAINST MARK 16:9-20

- A. Of the five majuscule manuscripts considered oldest by Westcott and Hort, two do not contain Mark 16:9-20. The other three do contain it.
- B. Of the next fifteen manuscripts generally considered the oldest, all fifteen contain the full ending of Mark.
- C. Out of 600 minuscule manuscripts, 600 contain it. That makes 618 out of 620. Far more manuscripts contain Mark 16:9-20 than miss I John 5:7.

IV. WHY IS THERE A BLANK IN VATICANUS WHERE MARK 16:9-20 BELONGS?

William Grady, referring to Dean Burgon, answers this question:

"If you had the Codex Vaticanus before you, each page (measuring 10' x 10-1/2") would be seen to contain three columns of 42 lines each. Whenever the respective scribe concluded the individual books within his codex, he would do so according to an established pattern. After penning his final lines, he would

accentuate the book's completion by purposely leaving the column's remaining space blank. The next book would begin at the top of the adjacent column.

When arriving at Mark 16:9-20 however, we observe a pronounced departure from this otherwise consistent procedure. With Mark 16:8 terminating on line 31, we note that the remaining eleven blank lines followed not a fresh column with Luke 1, but rather by an additional 42 *blank* lines! This space of a whole column is striking as it constitutes **the only such occurrence in the entire 759-page manuscript.**

The reason you don't find this "gap theory" discussed in *A General Introduction to the Bible* should be obvious. As these fifty-three lines could have accommodated the missing twelve verses, our 'ancient authority' is suddenly seen to be a 'dubious document' at best."

Dean Burgon was wonderfully led of the Spirit to see the deeper influence of this significant lacuna.

*"The older manuscript from which Codex B was copied must have infallibly contained the twelve verses in dispute. The copyist was instructed to leave a blank space in memoriam rei. Never was blank more intelligible! Never was silence more eloquent! By this simple expedient, strange to relate, the Vatican Codex is made to recite itself even while it seems to be bearing testimony against the concluding verses of St. Mark's Gospel, by withholding them: for it forbids the inference which, under normal circumstances, must have been drawn from that omission. It does more. *By leaving room* for the verses it omits, it bring into prominent notice at the end of fifteen centuries and a half *a more ancient witness than itself.* The venerable author of the original codex from which Codex B was copied, is thereby besought to view. And thus, our supposed adversary (Codex B) proves our most useful ally; for it procures us the testimony of an hitherto unsuspected witness. The earlier scribe unmistakably comes forward at this state of inquiry, to explain that he at least is prepared to answer for the genuineness of these twelve concluding verses with which the later scribe, his copyist, from his omission of them, might unhappily be thought to have been unacquainted."*

V. MARK'S LONG ENDING WAS ACCEPTED

To end Mark at 16:8 destroys any meaningful conclusion to the book.

A. J. J. Griesbach:

"No one can imagine that Mark cut short the thread of his narrative so ineptly." (1775).

B. Arno Gabelein:

"Higher criticism declares that the proper ending of the Gospel of Mark is verse 8. They disputed the genuineness of verses 9-20. Another hand, they claim, added later these verses. That spurious translation, which goes under the name of *The Twentieth Century New Testament* (wholly unsatisfactory) also gives this portion as 'a late appendix.' It is not. Mark wrote it and some of the best scholars have declared that it is genuine. How foolish to assume that the blessed document, which begins with the sublime statement 'The gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God' could end with 'they were afraid!' The trouble with these critics is that they approach the Word of God with doubt and reject its inspiration."

VII. IMPORTANT BOOKS AND ARTICLES ABOUT MARK 16-9-20

- A. In 1871, Burgon published *The Last Twelve Verses of Mark*. His arguments for Mark 16:9-20 have never been answered.
- B. In 2003, N. Clayton Croy published *The Mutilation of Mark's Gospel*. This is the latest compendium of all the different views on the ending of Mark. The author concludes that the real ending of Mark has been lost. Since the author does not believe in preservation this is not a problem for him.
- C. In 1946, R. H. Lenski includes 5 pages about the ending of Mark in his commentary on Mark. He demolishes the subjective arguments about style.

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