

Mark 16:9-20

Omitted in two manuscripts:

@ (Codex Sinaiticus) 4th Century

(here the page is replaced with another written in a larger hand and with greater spacing)

B (Codex Vaticanus) 4th Century

(here, unique to this manuscript, a whole column is left blank, enough to contain the verses)

The Modern Versions

- NIV - separates the section from the rest of the text with the note: "the most reliable early manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have Mark 16:9-20."
- RV - separates the section from the rest of the passage with the note: "The two oldest Greek manuscripts, and some other authorities, omit from ver. 9 to the end. Some other authorities have a different ending to the Gospel."
- RSV - includes the note: "Some of the most ancient authorities bring the book to a close at the end of verse 8."
- NASB - keeps the section in brackets with the note: "Some of the oldest manuscripts do not contain vv. 9-20."

The Early Fathers

(2nd Century)

Justin Martyr - quotes verse 20

Papias - refers to verse 18

Irenaeus - quotes verse 13

(3rd Century)

Hippolytus - quotes verses 17, 18

Vicentius - quotes verses 17, 18

Apostolic Constitutions - quote verse 16

Acts of Pilate - quote verses 15-18

(4th Century)

Eusebius - discusses the whole passage

Marinus - asks a question about the section without any misgiving as to authenticity

Ambrose - quotes verse 15 four times, verses 16-18 each three times, and verse 20 once

(5th Century)

Chrysostom - quotes verses 19 and 20 and calls them the end of the Gospel of Mark

Jerome - included the section in the Vulgate and quotes elsewhere verses 9 and 14

Augustine - quotes from and refers to the section innumerable times

Nestorius - quotes verse 20

Cyril of Alexandria - quotes verse 20

*Victor of Antioch - says of the section that it was deliberately omitted in some copies but regards the whole as genuine on the basis of "accurate copies"

(6th Century)

Hesychius - quotes verse 19

Arguments For and Against the Authenticity of Mark 16:9-20

1. Some early versions omit it - Syriac, Coptic, Georgian and Armenian.

Answer:

- a. Three different Syriac versions do contain it.
- b. At least one copy of the Coptic version, a fragment has verse 20.
- c. Numerous very early versions do contain it: the Vulgate and another early Latin version, the Gothic, the Ethiopic, some of these predating @ and B (two important mss that omit it).

2. Some early church fathers witness to its omission: Clement, Origen, Eusebius, Jerome, Victor of Antioch, and Euthymius.

Answer:

- a. Eusebius - only says that Mark "in almost all copies" ends at verse 8, but then follows with an elaborate proof that there is no conflict between these verses and Matthew and John.
- b. Jerome - in fact included the verses in the Vulgate and quotes twice from the section. In the place he is supposed to reject these verses, he is in fact only quoting Eusebius.
- c. Victor of Antioch - in fact supports the authenticity of these verses. After quoting Eusebius he adds: "We, at all events, inasmuch as in very many we have discovered it to exist, have our of accurate copies, subjoined also the account of our Lord's ascension (following the words 'for they were afraid) ... that is to say, from the words' 'Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week,' etc., down to 'with signs following. Amen'"
- d. Euthymius - only says that some commentators end the gospel at verse 8, but adds that there is nothing in the section prejudicial to the truth.

3. The evidence of the oldest and most reliable manuscripts is against it.

Answer: ACDEFGHLKMSUVXWTΔΠΘ among the uncials, and almost every later uncial and cursive contains it.

4. The section is not in Mark's style: "Any fair-minded reader can detect its non-Markan flavor" (Comfort).

Answer:

- a. Compare this section with chapter 1 - Mark speaks in both of baptism, preaching, preaching the gospel, and believing, thus ending his gospel as he began it.
- b. Note also the parallel between 1:9-11 and 16:9-14 both of which speak of Christ manifesting Himself; 1:12, 13 and 16:17, 18, both of which speak of His victory over Satan; 1:8 and 16:17, both of which speak of the gift of the Spirit; and 1:14, 15 and 16:15, 16, which speak of Christ's and the Apostles' commissions, both of which were the same.

5. The language is not Mark's: "Terms and expressions, phrases and words, are introduced which Mark never uses" (Davidson).

Answer:

- a. "The first day of the week" in vs. 9 occurs only here and is a different Greek expression than in verse 2, but: Matthew, Luke and John, only use the same expression once each.
- b. These verses do not use "immediately" and "again" favorite words in Mark, but "again" also does not occur in the first 45 verses of chapter 1, nor in chapters 1, 6, 9, 13, and 16, nor "immediately" in chapters 12 or 13.