

**Valley Bible Church**  
**Sermon Notes for April 8, 2018**

**The End?**  
**Mark 16:9-20**

I. Is Mark 16:9-20 the actual ending of Mark's gospel?

- We ask this question because of the obvious flags we find in our English bibles
  - ESV - [SOME OF THE EARLIEST MANUSCRIPTS DO NOT INCLUDE 16:9–20.]
  - NASB - All of verses 9-20 are in brackets with a footnote stating “Later mss add vv 9–20”
  - NKJV - Footnote stating, “Vv. 9–20 are bracketed in NU as not in the original text. They are lacking in Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, although nearly all other mss. of Mark contain them.”
    - NU - Nestle-Aland and UBS Greek New Testaments
  - NIV - 3 things
    - Line across the entire page separating verse 8 from verse 9
    - Bracketed statement, “[The earliest manuscripts and some other ancient witnesses do not have verses 9–20.]”
    - All of verses 9-20 are italicized
- When we encounter such flags in our bibles, we have some options this morning:
  - Ignore the flags and just study verses 9-20 provided it doesn't say anything too controversial or contradictory to the rest of the bible
  - Embrace the flags and pass around scissors this morning for everyone to cut these verses out of your bible
  - We could seize the opportunity to learn more about these verses in order to make an informed decision ourselves.
  - Of course we will attempt the third option and it is my sincere hope that the process will be edifying for us as well as affirming concerning our trust in the bible as the Word of God
- Transition: Since verses 9-20 begin with a statement about certain manuscripts containing these verses while other manuscripts do not, let us first examine...

A. The historical documentation of Mark 16:9-20

- Since the New Testament was written in the Greek language a little under 2,000 years ago, it makes us wonder how exactly the New Testament was assembled
- The New Testament did not fall from heaven into the hands of the disciples

- The disciples and their associates wrote the books of the New Testament over the course of the first century
- As these books were written and as the church was growing and expanding there became a need for these books to be multiplied for the edification of the church
- Thus, copies of books were made and dispersed starting in that first century
- As time progressed, the early church eventually assembled these books from the disciples and their associates, which became the New Testament that we now have in the English language
- Of course, the archaeological discoveries over the past 2,000 years has produced multitudinous results proving the reliability of the New Testament
- We have found...
  - Ancient Greek papyri containing portions of New Testament books
  - Ancient Greek manuscripts containing multiple New Testament books
  - Some ancient Greek manuscripts containing the whole New Testament
  - Ancient manuscripts that are translations of the Greek New Testament (Latin, Syrian, Coptic, Ethiopian, Georgian, Gothic, Arabic, etc.)
  - Ancient writings from the early church leaders (or early church fathers) who actually quoted the entire New Testament in the combination of their writings
    - Even if all the ancient Greek manuscripts of the New Testament were lost, we would still be able to assemble the entire New Testament just from the writings of the early church fathers!
- With this plethora of historical documentation verifying the New Testament, we now turn to the specific passage at hand
- What do these ancient manuscripts, translations, and writings tell us regarding Mark 16:9-20?
  - First, we find that Mark 16:9-20 is not present in two of the earliest and most significant Greek manuscripts containing the entire New Testament
    - These manuscripts are Codex Vaticanus and Sinaiticus
    - They both date all the way back to the early 300's
    - Both of these manuscripts record Mark ending at chapter 16 verse 8
  - Second, many translations of the Greek New Testament lack Mark 16:9-20
    - There are even more Syrian, Armenian, Georgian, and Coptic translations of Mark's gospel that do not contain Mark 16:9-20
  - Third, the testimony of the early church fathers does not agree on Mark 16:9-20
    - Two major players in the early 4th century, Eusebius and Jerome, both affirm Mark's gospel ending at 16:8
    - In fact, they both said that most (almost all) Greek manuscripts do not have Mark 16:9-20

- Since countless manuscripts have been destroyed or lost over the centuries, it is significant that these men said they did not see Mark 16:9-20 in almost all the Greek manuscripts that they read
- Just based upon the lack of agreement among the Greek manuscripts, the several translations of Mark without verses 9-20, and the testimonies of the early church fathers it is unlikely that Mark actually wrote verses 9-20
- Transition: However, this historical documentation and external evidence is not the only reason to doubt the originality of Mark 16:9-20...

#### B. The literary difficulties of Mark 16:9-20

- At this point, we must actually get into the text of Mark 16:9-20
- Let's read these verses and see how much they fit Mark's style of writing
- Just from reading these verses it might be easy for you to tell that we got issues
- The issues begin in verse 9
  - First, why restate that "he rose early on the first day of the week"?
    - This was already known because of what was stated back in verse 2
    - Grammatically this is awkward if Mark was simply trying to state what happened next on that Sunday morning
  - Second, why reintroduce Mary Magdalene?
    - A character we have seen at the cross (15:40), the tomb (15:47), and early on this Sunday (16:1-2)
    - Yet **now** Mark wants to identify her as the one from "whom he had cast out seven demons"?!
  - Third, why the awkward grammar?
    - Verse 8 ended with the focus upon the women "they"
    - Verse 9 simply states the verb "he appeared" without identifying who "he" is; thus, we have to assume Jesus is now the focus
- Also, the vocabulary and style of these verses hardly reflect Mark as the author
  - First, one-third of the vocabulary has not been used elsewhere in Mark
    - These words are only found in these verses
  - Second, Jesus' rebuke of the disciples for their hard hearts in verse 14 is not consistent with Jesus' character throughout Mark's gospel
    - Sounds more like a response to the Jewish leaders than His own disciples
  - Third, the promise of miracles to the disciples is not documented in any other gospel record of Jesus' post-resurrection teaching
    - These are randomly specific supernatural abilities that Jesus lists (cast out demons, speak in new tongues, pick up snakes, drink deadly poison, and heal the sick)

- A simple glance and brief examination has proven that these verses were not written by Mark
- Who then, we ask, wrote these verses?
  - Probably scribes and copyists who were uncomfortable with the abrupt ending of verse 8
  - These scribes and copyists probably tried to fill some gaps utilizing other Scripture so as to feel justified in so doing
  - Mark 16:9 is from Luke 8:2
  - Mark 16:10 is from John 20:18
  - Mark 16:11 is from Matthew 28:17
  - Mark 16:12-14 is from Luke 24:13-42 and the story of the road to Emmaus
  - Mark 16:15 is from Matthew 28:19
  - Mark 16:16 is from John 20:23
  - Mark 16:17-18 is from Matthew 10:8, Luke 10:19, Acts 2; 28:3-6
  - Mark 16:19-20 is basically a summary of the book of Acts
  - Thus, verses 9-20 were not added in some attempt by the early church to justify their practices
  - Rather some of the earliest scribes simply tried to end Mark in a Scriptural way
- You might ask, “How did Mark really end?”
  - Simple, with verse 8 and what we emphasized last week
  - Mark intentionally ended his account of Jesus’ life with astonishment and amazement
  - Since Mark recorded consistent responses of astonishment to Jesus throughout His life and ministry, it is fitting that Mark ended his book with women astonished upon finding Jesus’ most stunning miracle of defeating death in His own resurrection
- Transition: If you have endured this far in the lecture this morning, you might be feeling nervous or timid about what to do with the rest of the bible you’re holding
  - We just talked about Greek manuscripts and Greek grammar and I can picture what you might be thinking...
    - “If these verses weren’t supposed to be in the bible, what else is not supposed to be in the bible...”
  - You might even be feeling overwhelmed by this talk of Greek grammar and Greek manuscripts...
    - “I’m banking my life on what this book says, yet I have no idea how to discover what really is from God and what isn’t...”
  - I want to address these concerns and zoom out to answer the question...

## II. Can we trust the bible?

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- Psalm 119:89 “Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens.”
- Do we have a bible that is fixed in the heavens or up for grabs among men?

#### A. The historical confirmation of the bible

- Since people often attack the reliability of Scripture by appealing to the challenges of actually assembling the original text of the authors of the New Testament, it is worth looking further into the historical veracity of the New Testament
  - I strongly recommend you check out Gerry Andersen’s class on the “Ancient New Testament Manuscripts”
- I mentioned earlier that we have a plethora of New Testament manuscripts from the past 2,000 years of church history
- The total number of Greek manuscripts for the New Testament totals approximately 5,820
  - Additionally we have over 10,000 Latin translations of the NT from antiquity
  - We also have 9,300 early translations of the New Testament
  - This gives us more than 24,000 manuscript copies of portions of the NT in existence
- We must do a comparison with other ancient texts in order to see how impressive this really is

AUTHOR	When Written	Earliest Copy	Time Span	No. of Copies
Caesar	100—44 B.C.	A.D. 900	1,000 yrs.	10
Livy	59 B.C.—A.D. 17			20
Plato ( <i>Tetralogies</i> )	427—347 B.C.	A.D. 900	1,200 yrs.	7
Tacitus ( <i>Annals</i> )	A.D. 100	A.D. 1100	1,000 yrs.	20 (-)
also minor works	A.D. 100	A.D. 1000	900 yrs.	1
Pliny the Younger ( <i>History</i> )	A.D. 61—113	A.D. 850	750 yrs.	7
Thucydides ( <i>History</i> )	460—400 B.C.	A.D. 900	1,300 yrs.	8
Suetonius ( <i>De Vita Caesarum</i> )	A.D. 75—160	A.D. 950	800 yrs.	8
Herodotus ( <i>History</i> )	480—425 B.C.	A.D. 900	1,300 yrs.	8
Horace			900 yrs.	
Sophocles	496—406 B.C.	A.D. 1000	1,400 yrs.	193
Lucretius	Died 55 or 53 B.C.		1,100 yrs.	2
Catullus	54 B.C.	A.D. 1550	1,600 yrs.	3
Euripides	480—406 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1,500 yrs.	9
Demosthenes	383—322 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1,300 yrs.	200 *
Aristotle	384—322 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1,400 yrs.	49 †
Aristophanes	450—385 B.C.	A.D. 900	1,200 yrs.	10

- First, we notice how the New Testament blows all the other ancient manuscripts out of the water when it comes to copies

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- The writing that has the closest in terms of total manuscripts is the *Illiad* by Homer with 652 manuscripts
- Second, we notice that the New Testament has manuscripts from within decades of the original and a complete copy less than 300 years
  - Look at the time span between when these other documents in antiquity were written and when we found the earliest copy of that document!
  - The earliest fragment from Homer is 500 years after his death

WORK	When Written	Earliest Copy	Timespan	No. Of Copies
Homer ( <i>Illiad</i> )	900 B.C.	400 B.C.	500 yrs.	643
New Testament	A.D. 40–100	A.D. 125	25 yrs.	over 24,000

- No other ancient Greek or Roman text has any portion of any copies less than 300 years after the original writing. The New Testament not only has a complete text but has over 100 other partial copies within 300 years of the original text.
- It is amazing that people will so quickly endorse and embrace anything written by Plato, Aristotle, or Homer despite the extreme lack in manuscript evidence
  - Yet when it comes to the New Testament, people will argue that the New Testament manuscripts cannot be trusted historically!
- To quote Gerry Andersen from his notes on the NT Ancient Manuscripts class, “To say that the New Testament has far more manuscript evidence than any other comparative text would be a massive understatement.”
- Still, people might argue that copies no matter how close they are to the original are still copies

#### B. The literary consistency of the bible

- One of the amazing aspects of the bible is its cohesion considering its diversity
- First, let’s consider the diversity of the bible
  - The bible was written by approximately 35 human authors for both the OT and NT
    - Consider the diversity in these human authors
      - Hebrew raised as an Egyptian
      - Kings
      - Musicians
      - Scribes
      - Shepherds
      - Prophets

- Fishermen
  - Tax Collectors
  - Pharisee
- These writings took place over the span of 1,500 years
  - Moses began writing the OT around 1,400 BC
  - John finished the NT around 95 AD
- The bible was originally written in different languages
  - Old Testament primarily written in Hebrew
    - Some Aramaic portions
  - New Testament written in Greek
- This book has several different genres
  - Narrative, Law, Poetry, Prophecy, Epistolary
- Second, let's recognize the cohesion of the bible despite such diversity
  - There is a consistent storyline and theme interwoven throughout all of Scripture
    - No matter the genre the goal for mankind is to bring glory to God
    - No matter the author the hope is found in the Messiah, Jesus
    - No matter the time of writing the plan is highlighted in God's Kingdom coming to earth
  - This consistency can be proven in the brilliant yet supernatural fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies throughout the life of Christ
    - The Old Testament built up anticipation of a Messiah who would save people from their sins through His own suffering
    - The gospel of Mark has displayed and declared the fulfillment
    - The Old Testament has also anticipated a future day when the Lord will reign upon the earth with justice, peace and righteousness
    - The New Testament has only affirmed the reality of such a day that will dawn when Christ returns from heaven to establish His Kingdom on earth
- These brief observations about the bible declare the sheer genius of Scripture
  - Of course, in order to appreciate the genius of Scripture we must recognize the God who authored the Scriptures
  - In order to increase in our love for God and to increase in our love for His Word, we will be taking the next two weeks surveying what God says about His Word
  - Namely, we will be examining the bible's divine source, perfect character, absolute authority and sufficient agency in our lives