

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

63. The King Is Risen

Mark 16:1-20

INTRODUCTION

Let's turn in our Bibles to Mark 16 where we have the account of one of the three most important events in the history of the world:

1. God, the creator of the universe, became man – we celebrate that on Christmas day.
2. God incarnate is nailed to a Roman cross to pay the penalty for your sins and mine. Before He died He said – *It is finished – Paid in full.*
3. The third is His resurrection from the dead. The great stamp of the VALUE, the MERIT, of the sacrifice of the cross and the GUARANTEE of the life that Jesus promises. The night before He died for us He said

John 14:19 (CSB) ¹⁹In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Because I live, you will live too.

One thing is certain — If Jesus had not risen from the dead, there would be no good news concerning the Kingdom of God to pass on to anybody. **Mark 16** begins with the Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome going to the tomb to anoint **the dead body of Jesus**. The attitude of the disciples was that everything had finished in tragedy.

Imagine how you and I would look at our world and process our own lives without the news of His resurrection!

There are several things that stand as compelling witnesses to the fact of the Resurrection of Jesus

FIRST — If Jesus hadn't been raised from the dead Christianity would have been killed at birth. The enemies of the Jesus could have simply said –*You claim that this Jesus is Messiah, Son of God who die on a cross to pay for our sins — and that*

He is the Risen King of Life. Let's just take a short walk to His tomb and we'll dispel this whole myth right now!

But the enemies of Jesus couldn't do that because the tomb of Jesus was empty! The church was BIRTHED and FLOURISHED in the very place where they had killed Jesus.

SECOND — Only the resurrection of Jesus else can explain the transformation of sad and despairing men and women into people filled with joy and flaming with courage.

THIRD — Apart from the resurrection of Jesus how do you possibly explain the conversion of Saul of Tarsus?! Saul of Tarsus hated the name of Jesus. He was the architect of the systematic, relentless, organized, violent assault against those who followed Jesus, loved Jesus and proclaimed the Good News of Jesus and His Kingdom.

The conversion of Saul of Tarsus would be like Molly Yard (radical pro-abortionist) becoming pro-life and championing New Life Pregnancy Centers; Madalyn Murray O'Hair (a radical advocate of atheism) believing in Jesus and becoming the great advocate of public prayer; the supreme Ayatollah of Iran getting converted and becoming a Christian missionary to Muslims in Iran and Syria and Saudi Arabia. Saul of Tarsus inflicted suffering on those who followed Jesus — but he ended up suffering greatly for Jesus — and ended up being killed for his faith in Jesus.

It was because of the resurrection of Jesus that Saul of Tarsus went from being *convinced that it was necessary to do many things in opposition to the name of Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 26:9)* to saying that *at the name of Jesus every knee will bow— in heaven and on earth and under the earth— (Philippians 2:10 CSB)* — and wanting to see *the name of Jesus glorified (2 Thes. 1:12)* in and through people's lives!

There are also several radical implications of the resurrection of Jesus

¹ Jesus is not a figure in a book — He is the Living Lord. Jesus is not someone to merely discuss — He is someone to meet. That is lost on most of the world today. There are those who want to discuss Jesus with you. Our mission is to

communicate to them that we want them to MEET Jesus — as we have met Him.
² A Christian is not a man or woman who knows **about** Jesus. A Christian is a man or woman who **knows** Jesus. There is all the difference in the world between knowing about a person and knowing a person. The Christian life is not ROOTED in how much you know ABOUT Jesus – It is rooted in KNOWING Jesus. ³ There is an eternal and living quality about life with Jesus and life in Jesus. The Christian faith is faith in the living, risen Jesus. It should never stand still — never be static. There are new wonders and new truths waiting to be discovered about Him all the time **because** He is alive!

HERE WE GO!

Mark 16:1-2 (CSB) ¹When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they could go and anoint him. ²Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they went to the tomb at sunrise.

These are the women who were standing afar off watching the crucifixion of Jesus (**Mark 15:40**). These are the women who also followed Joseph when he took the body of Jesus and watched him carefully as he put the body of Jesus in the tomb and the stone was rolled over the door of the sepulcher (**Mark 15:47**). Now they are coming early in the morning on the first day of the week bringing sweet spices to anoint the dead body of Jesus. But they were never able to anoint His body.

Mark 16:3 (CSB) ³They were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone from the entrance to the tomb for us?”

They asked the question because they had seen the size of the stone that was rolled in front of the opening to Joseph’s tomb.

***Matthew 27:59–60 (CSB)** ⁵⁹So Joseph took the body, wrapped it in clean, fine linen, ⁶⁰and placed it in his new tomb, which he had cut into the rock. He left after rolling **a great stone** against the entrance of the tomb.*

Great = megas. Cal Tech engineers estimate the weight of the stone to have been 1.5 - 2.0 tons!

Who is going to push a couple of tons out of the way was a perfectly RATIONAL concern for these ladies!

Mark 16:4 (CSB) *Looking up, they noticed that the stone—which was very large—had been rolled away.*

HERE'S THE DEAL — We might not have any literal giant stones to roll out of the way — but I'm sure that all of us have had some metaphorical giant stones in our life to worry about. I'm sure that all of us have had massive concerns and worries that — in the natural — should give us cause for concern because they are beyond our capacity to deal with. I'm also sure that there are those tonight who have had the same experience as these ladies; when the moment finally arrived you discovered that the Lord's gone before you and that giant stone was already rolled away! We discover that we wasted a lot of energy — not thinking in a responsible way about the matter — but worrying about the matter.

BY THE WAY — Jesus didn't need to have the stone rolled away to get out. On that same evening Jesus would simply appear to the disciples in a room that they had locked themselves into. *The stone was rolled away* — not to let Jesus out — but to **let us in** so that we can see that the tomb was empty!

And with *that* view comes tremendous realities! Follow me here.

Chapter 15 ended with Joseph taking the body of Jesus and wrapping it in fine linen and putting it in the sepulcher and rolling the stone to the door of the sepulcher. Behind that stone laid the body of Jesus — and **hope was buried there with Him.**

There were times during the ministry of Jesus when the disciples were filled with tremendous excitement and hope about the Kingdom of God being established. So much so that they argued about who would sit at His right hand and His left hand in the Kingdom — they argued over who would be greatest in the Kingdom. They knew there was going to be a time when Jerusalem would be the place from which the Messiah would rule over all the earth. From there He would govern the world in righteousness and He would usher in a time when mankind would *“beat their swords into plowshares, their spears into pruning hooks, they would study war no more” (Isaiah 2:4)* and the glory of the Lord would cover the earth. But

Jesus was crucified — and when they placed Jesus in the tomb and rolled the stone over the door of the tomb their hopes were buried there with Him. The disciples on the road to Emmaus said *we had hoped that in Him was the salvation of Israel*. Their hope was in the past tense.

For the stone to be rolled away means that HOPE is alive!

1 Peter 1:3–5 (ESV) ³*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

Looking into the empty tomb also gives us heaven's perspective of the cross!

Before the stone was rolled back, the cross was a horrible display of man's inhumanity against man, a classic example of how heartless and cruel man can be. But now, we look at the cross — not as defeat — but as a glorious victory. God wasn't defeated — Satan was defeated there at the cross. The power of the Satan and sin over our lives was defeated in the cross of Jesus Christ

Colossians 2:15 (NKJV) ¹⁵*Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it (the cross – v.14).*

I love those words — *“that the stone that was great was rolled away.”*

Mark 16:5–7 (CSB) ⁵*When they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side; they were alarmed. ⁶“Don't be alarmed,” he told them. “You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they put him. ⁷But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you to Galilee; you will see him there just as he told you.’ ”*

The resurrection of Jesus is FACT! It is as certain a fact of history as Julius Caesar being emperor of Rome; Henry VIII being king of England; George Washington being president of the United States.

QUOTE: Lord Lyndhurst (High Chancellor of Great Britain (1846) and High Steward of Cambridge)

"I know pretty well what evidence is; and, I tell you, such evidence as that for the Resurrection has never broken down yet."

The most precious thing about this passage is found in **two words** which are not found in any of the other three gospel accounts.

"Go," said the messenger. *"Tell his disciples **AND PETER.**"* I want us to stop and consider how **those two words** must have affected Peter's heart when he heard them!

Peter must have been tortured with the memory of how he denied Jesus three times — the last time with a curse! Peter probably figured that the Lord never wanted to have anything to do with him again. *Jesus is through with me! He's never going to have anything to do with me again. I don't blame Him, I failed Him. In that time of crisis, I let Him down!* And then suddenly — there came a special message for him.

This messenger added those two words that no one would ever appreciate like Peter!

THIS IS SO HUGE — *Because of the cross and resurrection of Jesus the door isn't closed behind us because of our failures!* There's **forgiveness**, there's **understanding**, there's **compassion**, there's **love**.

*"Go tell the disciples **and Peter.**"* The amazing mercy and grace that those words brought to Peter would also make a huge impact on the life of another man who had failed miserably. Peter tells us in his first epistle that he's writing from Babylon — referring to Rome. Mark — the man whose name is on this account of the good news was there with Peter. We actually meet Mark in the book of Acts. He went with Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. But when things got tough he bailed!

Acts 15:37–38 (CSB) ³⁷*Barnabas wanted to take along John who was called*

Mark. ³⁸But Paul insisted that they should not take along this man who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone on with them to the work.

Peter could say to Mark — *“I also failed. I denied Him three times. I have heard a rooster crow in my ears for thirty years now. Believe me I understand how you feel — but blessed be the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*

AND PETER – Awesome!

Mark 16:8 (CSB) ⁸They went out and ran from the tomb, because trembling and astonishment overwhelmed them. And they said nothing to anyone, since they were afraid.

Between Mark 16:8 and 16:9, the ESV includes these words: “Some of the earliest manuscripts do not include 16:9–20.” The NIV and CSB include similar notes at the same place. Your Bible may have in brackets verses 9-20 — often referred to as the “Longer Ending of Mark”.

Some ancient manuscripts of Mark’s Gospel contain these verses and others do not. This presents a puzzle for scholars who specialize in the history of such manuscripts.

The Greek text of the NT is constructed from later copies of manuscripts dating from A.D. 135 at the earliest to about A.D. 1200 at the latest. There are more than 5,500 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, making the Bible the greatest preserved document of antiquity. Nothing else comes close.

James Edwards — *In general, these copies show remarkable agreement among themselves. The most notorious exception to this otherwise happy rule, however, is the ending of Mark, which presents the gravest textual problem in the NT.¹*

D. A. Carson — *these added verses “cannot be said to be part of the Scriptures (like the rest of the gospel), but they are an honest attempt to ‘complete’ the story of Jesus.”*

¹ Edwards, J. R. (2002). *The Gospel according to Mark* (p. 497). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos.

Some Christians get a bit ruffled and troubled here. I found this comment by Danny Akin really helpful —

We need to remember that God guaranteed the inspiration of the text of Scripture (Matt. 5:17–18; John 10:35; 2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Pet. 1:20–21) in a way he did not guarantee its transmission.

That said — the longer ending of Mark (v.9-20) is theologically sound and consistent with the rest of Scripture.

In the longer version we have: The appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene (9–11). The appearance to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (12–13). The commission of the eleven, and all the followers of Jesus (14–18). The ascension of Jesus — the disciples carrying out the mission — Jesus working with them (19–20)

ADDITIONAL NOTES ON DIFFERENT VIEWS ON “THE LONG VERSION” of the Gospel of Mark

Elijah Hixon — *(PhD, University of Edinburgh) is a research associate at Tyndale House in Cambridge. He completed his doctoral thesis on a trio of manuscripts from the sixth century and their scribes. His areas of research include New Testament textual criticism, papyrology, early Christian apocrypha, early Christian theology, and apologetics.*

If you’ve ever read through the Gospel of Mark, you may have come across an unusual note near the end of the book. For example, between 16:8 and 16:9, the ESV includes these words: “Some of the earliest manuscripts do not include 16:9–20.” The NIV and CSB include similar notes at the same place. Although there aren’t many places where such an intrusive note about several verses disrupts the text, this information can still be startling.

To put it in perspective, it’s important to know that including a note here is [not a recent development](#) in the history of the church. Christians have known for centuries that [Mark 16:9–20](#) might [not have originally been part of Mark’s Gospel](#).

One brother in Christ, a monk named Ephraim who lived in the 900s, wrote these words in a manuscript of the Gospels between [Mark 16:8](#) and 16:9: “In some of the copies, the evangelist finishes here, up to which (point) also Eusebius of Pamphilus made canon sections. But in many the following is also contained.”

We know about Ephraim because we still have several manuscripts he made. Some still have his signature. We can identify others by his handwriting and craftsmanship. Ephraim wasn't the original author of these particular words. He regularly copied marginal notes that were already in the manuscripts he was using, and this note was one of them. And Ephraim's manuscript isn't the only copy of Mark that has this note between 16:8 and 16:9. There are at least 11 others in Greek. The note probably predates 10th-century Ephraim by a few hundred years.

Ephraim's approach to the ending of Mark was the same as that of modern translations and editions. [The Tyndale House Greek New Testament](#) even prints Ephraim's note as [a word of caution](#) that [Mark 16:9–20](#) might not be original to Mark's Gospel. In my judgment, this is the best solution.

Evidence For Mark 16:9–20

Evidence for including these verses is staggering. When we look 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.

In light of all the evidence in support of [Mark 16:9–20](#), why would anyone question its authenticity?

Moreover, by around AD 180, Irenaeus unambiguously quoted [Mark 16:19](#) as Scripture in [Against Heresies](#) (3.10.6). 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. In light of all the evidence in support of [Mark 16:9–20](#), why would anyone question its authenticity?

Evidence Against Mark 16:9–20

There are effectively just two Greek manuscripts that lack [Mark 16:9–20](#). These are codices Sinaiticus (ⲛ01) and Vaticanus (B03), two important manuscripts from the fourth century. It's almost unimaginable that the copyists who made them were unaware of [Mark 16:9–20](#), but at the end of the day, they left it out of their Bibles.

Once we look beyond the question of ⲛ01 and B03 against the other 1,600-plus Greek manuscripts of Mark, the picture becomes more complicated. At least 23 Greek manuscripts that include [Mark 16:9–20](#) also have anomalies like extra endings or notes that express doubts concerning the authenticity of these verses. One important fourth-century Old Latin manuscript has a short addition after verse 8 and then ends without verses 9 to 20. A valuable Old Syriac manuscript from the fourth century also ends Mark at 16:8. A Sahidic Coptic manuscript (probably from the fifth century) ends Mark's Gospel at 16:8 as well. In 1937, E. C. Colwell identified 99 Armenian manuscripts of Mark (of 220 surveyed) ending at 16:8, and a further 33 containing 16:9–20 but with notes expressing doubt about the verses' authenticity.

At least 23 Greek manuscripts that include [Mark 16:9–20](#) have anomalies like extra endings or notes that express doubts of the authenticity of these verses.

Further, though more than 99 percent of manuscripts available to us now contain [Mark 16:9–20](#), it may not always have been this way. A Christian named Marinus wrote to Eusebius (c. AD 265–339) to ask for help resolving a perceived contradiction between Matthew and Mark. Marinus asked why Matthew (28:1) says Jesus appeared "late on the Sabbath," but Mark (16:9) says Jesus appeared "early on the first day of the week."

Eusebius [responded](#) that one possible solution to this problem was simply to reject [Mark 16:9](#) as not part of Mark's Gospel. "[T]he accurate ones of the copies define the end of the history according to Mark [at 16:8] . . . in this way the ending of the Gospel according to Mark is defined in nearly all the copies."

Think about that. Eusebius told a Christian whose Bible contained [Mark 16:9–20](#) that "nearly all the copies" of Mark, including "the accurate ones" lacked these verses, so they might not be inspired Scripture. And Eusebius didn't have a problem saying that! This was just life as a Christian in an age when copies of

infallible Scripture were made by fallible hands. This was pastoral textual criticism, not some empty academic exercise.

Eusebius's work was repeated both by Jerome (c. AD 347–419) and also Severus of Antioch (c. AD 465–534). Even though Jerome and Severus were clearly drawing from Eusebius's work, nothing in their experience with manuscripts prevented them from repeating Eusebius's claims that the majority of manuscripts (Jerome), or at least the most accurate ones (Jerome and Severus), lacked those verses. Independent of Eusebius, fifth-century father Hesychius of Jerusalem affirmed that "the more accurate copies" of Mark ended at 16:8 as well.

Scribes: More Likely to Add or Omit These Verses?

In the copying process, omissions were more likely than additions, but omissions are often short, often accidental, and there are many qualifications to this tendency. One such qualification is that material could be added when the change involved a harmonization to a parallel passage. In a broad sense, [Mark 16:9–20](#) does just that; it takes the lone Gospel that lacks a post-resurrection appearance of Jesus and makes it like the other three.

More than that, we know that at least once, someone added [Mark 16:9–20](#) to a text that lacked it. The compiler of a commentary from the 500s, attributed to Victor of Antioch, admitted that most copies he knew of didn't contain [Mark 16:9–20](#). However, in his opinion (unlike Eusebius), the "more carefully edited" ones did contain these verses, and as a result, he added 16:9–20 to his Gospel. Here is a place where one Christian didn't accept the text he received—he added to it something he thought missing.

Because [Mark 16:9–20](#) is undeniably early, is present in 99 percent of manuscripts, and has traditionally been considered canonical, I recommend keeping it in the text. But it's probably not from Mark.

In short, it's hard to explain why [Mark 16:9–20](#) would ever be removed. Yet we find it missing in early manuscripts in multiple languages and absent in the majority of Greek manuscripts according to Eusebius, whose remarks were repeated by Jerome. It's much easier to explain why 16:9–20 would be added to the only Gospel that seems like it's missing something, which is precisely what the

compiler of one sixth-century commentary did. Without 16:9–20, there’s an empty tomb, but where is Jesus? It seems to me the women leaving the tomb weren’t the only ones afraid to be left hanging.

Trusting God in the Face of Uncertainty

Because [Mark 16:9–20](#) is undeniably early, is present in 99 percent of manuscripts, and has traditionally been considered canonical, I recommend keeping it in the text. **But it’s probably not from Mark.**

Some have suggested that the verses might be apostolic, but not from Mark himself. The best solution in my judgment is that of Ephraim: include the verses, but with a word of caution explaining they may not be original. That keeps us honest about ancient Christians whose Bibles ended Mark at 16:8.

With or without [Mark 16:9–20](#), the tomb is empty, Jesus has purchased our pardon, and we can be certain of that.

WILLIAM LANE — (1974). The Gospel of Mark (pp. 591–592).

Mark concluded his Gospel at this point. That verse 8 marks the ending to the Gospel in its present form is scarcely debated. The contention that this is the original and intended ending, however, continues to be resisted.²⁴ The abrupt ending on the phrase “for they were afraid” has been regarded as evidence that the Gospel is incomplete or mutilated. It has been conjectured that the original ending reported a resurrection appearance to Peter and to all the disciples in Galilee, in harmony with the promise of verse 7 (cf. 1 Cor. 15:5, “he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve”). A common feeling is that a Gospel would be terminated by a narrative reporting a resurrection appearance with a confession of faith by believers or by an expression of joy among those who have seen the risen Lord. All such proposals reflect a preconception of the form of a true Gospel. It is necessary to recognize that Mark was a theologian and historian in his own right, who has developed his conception throughout his work. Methodologically, it is imperative that the form be defined from the data offered by the Gospel in its totality.

In point of fact, the present ending of Mark is thoroughly consistent with the

motifs of astonishment and fear developed throughout the Gospel. These motifs express the manner in which Mark understands the events of Jesus' life. In verse 8 the evangelist terminates his account of the good news concerning Jesus by sounding the note by which he has characterized all aspects of Jesus' activity, his healings, miracles, teaching, the journey to Jerusalem. Astonishment and fear qualify the events of the life of Jesus. The account of the empty tomb is soul-shaking, and to convey this impression Mark describes in the most meaningful language the utter amazement and overwhelming feeling of the women. With his closing comment he wished to say that "the gospel of Jesus the Messiah" (Ch. 1:1) is an event beyond human comprehension and therefore awesome and frightening. In this case, contrary to general opinion, "for they were afraid" is the phrase most appropriate to the conclusion of the Gospel. The abruptness with which Mark concluded his account corresponds to the preface of the Gospel where the evangelist begins by confronting the reader with the fact of revelation in the person of John and Jesus (Ch. 1:1–13). The ending leaves the reader confronted by the witness of the empty tomb interpreted by the word of revelation. The focus upon human inadequacy, lack of understanding and weakness throws into bold relief the action of God and its meaning²

JAMES EDWARDS (2002). *The Gospel according to Mark* (pp. 497–504)

It is virtually certain that 16:9–20 is a later addition and not the original ending of the Gospel of Mark. The evidence for this judgment is complex, and it is necessary to discuss the problems in some detail before taking up the secondary ending itself.

Since none of the autograph copies of documents of the NT survives, the Greek text of the NT is constructed from later copies of manuscripts dating from a.d. 135 at the earliest to about a.d. 1200 at the latest. These copies, of which more than five thousand exist, range in size from scraps little larger than postage stamps to complete manuscripts of the Bible. In general, these copies show remarkable agreement among themselves. The most notorious exception to this otherwise happy rule, however, is the ending of Mark, which presents the gravest textual problem in the NT. The two oldest and most important manuscripts of the Bible, codex Vaticanus (B) and codex Sinaiticus (א), omit 16:9–20, as do several early

² Lane, W. L. (1974). [*The Gospel of Mark*](#) (pp. 591–592). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

translations or versions, including the Old Latin, the Sinaitic Syriac manuscript, about one hundred Armenian manuscripts, and the two oldest Georgian manuscripts. Neither Clement of Alexandria nor Origen shows any awareness of the existence of the longer ending, and Eusebius and Jerome attest that vv. 9–20 were absent from the majority of Greek copies of Mark known to them. An ingenious system of cross-referencing parallel passages in the Gospels that was devised by Ammonius in the second century and adopted by Eusebius in the fourth century (hence the name Eusebian Canons) does not include Mark 16:9–20. The apocryphal *Gospel of Peter* does not contain the longer ending, and concludes, as does Mark 16:8, with the fear of the women. Although a majority of ancient witnesses, including Greek uncial and minuscule manuscripts, church fathers, and versions in other languages do include vv. 9–20, this does not compensate for the textual evidence against them. The inclusion of vv. 9–20 in many manuscripts is accounted for rather by the fact that the longer ending, which must have been added quite early, was naturally included in subsequent copies of the Gospel. Many of the ancient manuscripts that do contain the longer ending, however, indicate by scribal notes or various markings that the ending is regarded as a spurious addition to the Gospel. External evidence (manuscript witnesses) thus argues strongly against the originality of the longer ending.

The secondary nature of the longer ending is further corroborated by the application of the techniques of literary criticism to 16:9–20. This is apparent beginning in the first verse of the longer ending, which is a conspicuous non sequitur: whereas the subject of v. 8 is the frightened and fleeing women, v. 9 begins by presupposing the resurrected Jesus, who appears to Mary Magdalene. The latter, moreover, is introduced as a newcomer (“out of whom [Jesus] had driven seven demons,” v. 9), although Mark has mentioned her three times immediately before (15:40, 47; 16:1). In vv. 9–20 Jesus is for the first time in Mark referred to as the “Lord Jesus” (v. 19), or simply “the Lord” (v. 20), rather than Mark’s custom of calling Jesus by his given name. Such reverential nomenclature likely derives from later Christian worship. Particularly noticeable is the number of new words that appear nowhere else in Mark. In the so-called shorter ending of Mark nine of the thirty-four words are new, and in the longer ending there are an additional eighteen words that otherwise do not appear in Mark,⁴ plus several unique word forms and syntactical constructions. Several of Mark’s signature stylistic features are likewise absent from the longer ending.⁶ The longer ending also includes themes peculiar to itself, some of which contradict Markan themes.

The repeated chastisement of the disciples for their “disbelief” (Gk. *apistein*; *apistia*; vv. 11, 14, 16) of the gospel proclamation (Gk. *kērygma*; vv. 11, 13, 14, 15, 16–18, 20) is unique to the longer ending, and the prominence given to charismatic signs in vv. 17–18 stands in stark contrast to the reserve of Jesus in Mark with regard to signs and sensation (cf. 8:11–13).

External and internal evidence thus necessitates the conclusion that 16:9–20 is not the original ending of Mark but rather a later addition to the Gospel. The longer ending is a patchwork of resurrection appearances (or summaries) taken from the other three Gospels, the chief theme of which is the unbelief of the disciples (vv. 11, 13, 14, and 16). Although the longer ending is clearly secondary, it is nevertheless very old. The earliest witnesses to the longer ending come from the *Epistula Apostolorum* 9–10 (c. 145), perhaps Justin Martyr (*Apol.* 1.45; c. 155), Tatian’s *Diatessaron* (c. 170), and Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* 3.9–12; c. 180). This means that the longer ending “must be dated to the first decades of the second century.” Of further interest in this regard is the fact that the resurrection harmony of the longer ending is composed of texts drawn largely from tradition that later became canonical,⁹ and not from the plethora of apocryphal Gospels that were beginning to circulate in the second century. This testifies to a collection of the four Gospels no later than early in the second century, and with the collection a recognition of the authority of the four Gospels vis-à-vis other early Christian literature.

Mark 16:9–20 is thus a later and, in several respects, incongruous addition to the Gospel. Whether or not the longer ending was excerpted from an earlier document and added to the end of Mark or composed specifically for Mark is difficult to say. On the one hand, the awkward splice at v. 9 and the theological incongruities of the longer ending might be taken as evidence for its existence in a prior document. Nevertheless, stylistic arguments are not conclusive in this instance since the longer ending makes no attempt to conform to Mark’s vocabulary, style, and theology. The concern of the longer ending is with content rather than style, that is, to rectify the omission of a resurrection appearance of Jesus in Mark. This has been accomplished by adding a resurrection harmony composed of texts from the other three Gospels. Since Mark’s lack of a resurrection appearance is unique among the Gospels (and this includes the apocryphal Gospels and those from Nag Hammadi), and since we do not possess an extant text similar to the longer ending, it may be that vv. 9–20 were composed especially with the problem of Mark’s ending in mind.

The chief remaining question concerns the original conclusion of the Gospel of Mark. There are two possibilities. One is that Mark concluded at 16:8. This is the position held by a majority of recent interpreters of Mark. In this view, Mark intentionally leaves the conclusion “open-ended.” For some scholars Mark has given enough clues in the body of the Gospel for readers to supply the resurrection account themselves.¹⁴ For others the inconclusive ending halts readers in their presumption to preempt the conclusion of the story, forcing them to unconventional responses. For others the sober ending demands readers to ponder the cross and discipleship rather than taking refuge in enthusiasm and triumphalism.¹⁶ Still others suggest that since Jesus’ “original Jewish disciples didn’t get the message,” the risen Jesus is to be found in a Gentile gospel for Gentile readers. In these and similar interpretations, the final word of “fear” in v. 8 leaves readers, like the women, in a state requiring a response of faith. A resurrection announcement as opposed to a resurrection appearance is sufficient, in this view, because for Mark faith is elicited by hearing rather than by sight. The conclusion to the Gospel of Mark must be supplied, in other words, by each reader’s response of faith.

The chief argument in favor of this view is that our earliest and most reliable manuscripts end the Gospel at 16:8. This is a strong argument, and it is held by excellent scholars. In my judgment, however, the argument is not persuasive. The suggestion that Mark left the Gospel “open ended” owes more to modern literary theory, and particularly to reader-response theory, than to the nature of ancient texts, which with very few exceptions show a dogged proclivity to state conclusions, not suggest them.

Several important arguments can be adduced in favor of the view that 16:8 was not the original, or intended, ending of Mark. First and perhaps most important, it is hard to imagine a Gospel that begins with a bold, resounding announcement of divine Sonship (1:1) ending on a note of fear and panic (16:8). The purpose of the centurion’s confession in 15:39 is to bring Mark’s readers to a confession of faith, whereas a conclusion at 16:8 leaves them in bewilderment. It has often been rightly observed that v. 8 seems to break off in mid-sentence, and this is more apparent in Greek, where the final word is a conjunction (Gk. *ephobounto gar*; “for they were afraid”). Although Greek sentences very occasionally ended in *gar* (“for”), there are only three known examples of Greek books ending in this way.

Given the vast Greek literary corpus, which consists of more than sixty million words, it is scarcely compelling evidence to cite three documents ending with *gar* as a precedent for Mark's ending. At any rate, Mark does not end sentences with *gar*, nor does any of the four canonical Evangelists, and this leads us to assume that the sentence is either broken off or incomplete.

Considering the centrality of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark, and especially the promise of his appearance to the disciples in Galilee (14:28; 16:7), it seems incongruous for Mark to conclude with a resurrection announcement rather than with a resurrection appearance. The expectation of a resurrection appearance is further anticipated by the three passion predictions, each of which ends in a resurrection announcement (8:31; 9:31; 10:34), as well as by the example of Elijah in 9:9–13. Again, Mark's Gospel generally conforms to the skeleton of the *kērygma*, an early preaching outline of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. It is worth questioning why a Gospel otherwise faithful to the *kērygma* would depart from it at the crucial point of the resurrection when the other Gospels and Paul (1 Cor 15:3–8) include resurrection appearances as indispensable keystones of the *kērygma*.

The abnormality of Mark's ending is made even more apparent when we compare the Gospel of Mark with the plethora of Gospel-like literature from both the NT Apocrypha and Nag Hammadi. Although the Gospel genre varies considerably in these two bodies of literature, all the documents that purport to deal with the life of Jesus include appearances or words of Jesus, or both, to the disciples following the resurrection. The only exceptions to this are *The Protevangelium of James* and *The Infancy Narrative of Thomas*, which contain only apocryphal legends of Jesus' youth; the *Gospel of Truth* and the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, which do not focus on either the words or deeds of the historical Jesus; and the *Gospel of Thomas*, which contains only supposed sayings of Jesus, but no deeds. Even the *Gospel of Peter*, which breaks off with the fear of the women as does Mark 16:8, contains resurrection appearances of Jesus prior to that event. An ending of the Gospel of Mark at 16:8 is thus not only an aberration among the canonical Gospels but also among the diverse and fluid Gospel genres of the early centuries of Christianity.

One must further consider what effect the fear and bewilderment at 16:8 would have had on Mark's Roman readership as it grappled with faith in the midst of persecution. Would an "open ending" at 16:8 or the promised resurrection

appearance of Jesus to the disciples better achieve Mark's purpose of presenting Jesus as God's Son? I think not, nor would an open ending be much encouragement to Mark's readers facing the savagery of Nero's persecution. Finally, as was suggested above, the rather existential interpretation of each reader supplying his conclusion by a decision of faith is more suited to modern sensibilities than to ancient literary canons. If such were Mark's purpose, the dogged appendices in vv. 9–20 are surely artless testimony that he failed in his intent. It was the custom in antiquity to conclude books with a resolution of major conflicts, not to leave them unresolved.

There is thus considerable reason to doubt that 16:8 was ever the intended conclusion to the Gospel of Mark. My own judgment is that it probably was not. What might have happened to the original ending we shall probably never know. The most plausible suggestion is that it was lost due to wear-and-tear on the last leaf of a codex. Or perhaps Mark was interrupted or died before completing it. The latter suggestion is a distinct possibility if Mark composed his Gospel, as we suspect, in the mid-sixties of the first century. It would not be surprising if Mark's name were among the martyrs of Nero's reign.

How Mark may have ended the Gospel is, of course, unknown, but one tantalizing piece of evidence allows us to make a brief and modest attempt at a suggested ending. We have noted throughout the commentary that Matthew frequently follows Mark quite closely. That is particularly true of Mark 16:6–8, where the report of the women at the tomb in Matt 28:5–8 parallels Mark nearly verbatim. On the basis of this parallelism it seems plausible to suggest that Mark originally ended more or less like Matthew 28, with the exception of the report of the guards at the tomb in 28:11–15. Two pieces of evidence undergird this suggestion. First, Mark leads readers to expect an appearance of Jesus to the disciples in Galilee (14:28; 16:7), just as Matthew reports in 28:9–10. Second, we have noted that the authority (Gk. *exousia*) of Jesus is one of Mark's signature motifs for Jesus' nature and bearing. Every Markan episode of Jesus' filial authority as the Son of God is reproduced in Matthew. The only place where Matthew includes a reference to Jesus' *exousia* that is *not* found in Mark is in the parting commandment of the resurrected Christ that "all authority (Gk. *exousia*) in heaven on earth has been given to me" (Matt 28:18). It seems plausible to suggest that Matthew also gleaned this reference to Jesus' authority from the original ending of Mark. Thus, two things Mark has led us to expect in a resurrection narrative—

an appearance of Jesus to the disciples in Galilee and a transferal of his authority to the disciples—constitute the essence of Matthew’s ending in 28:9–10 and 16–20. **Those seven verses have as good a claim as any to being the substance of Mark’s original ending.**³

³ Edwards, J. R. (2002). *The Gospel according to Mark* (pp. 497–504). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos.