

The Perfect End of Mark

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Mark 16:9-20

All translations of Scripture are based on ancient sources, ancient sources that have been compared by the most fastidious, thoughtful, careful scholars through the centuries so that I can say to you unequivocally the Bible you hold in your hand, if you have formal equivalence translation, is an accurate Bible.

Nothing in ancient literature even comes close to the mass of manuscripts that we have on the New Testament. Today, we have **25,000**. They demonstrate uniformity and consistency. Of the 25K manuscripts, there are 5600 or so Greek manuscripts, and they go way back. We have Greek manuscripts from the 2nd century, and 3rd century.

P-52 is dated from 100 to 150.

The **Chester Beatty Papyrus** (gospels and Acts) is dated around 200.

Two especially important bound volumes (Codices)

Sinaiticus (about 350) contains the whole New Testament

Vaticanus (325) contains the whole Bible

Vulgate (Latin translation, 382-405) 8000 ancient copies extant

Syriac translations (200's and later), 8000 copies

Why are these important?

All these ancient manuscripts *all say the same thing*.

By the way, *both Sinaiticus and Vaticanus end Mark at verse 8.*

What's so amazing about this, these are all **hand copies**. They made errors. They put in a wrong word, put in a wrong spelling, left something out. Occasionally, they even tried to clarify something. But we have so many manuscripts, we know when mistakes popped up.

This is the science of **textual criticism**. By comparing manuscripts, we can see when somebody introduces a change. That's the science of **textual criticism**. Camel is right. We also know that because of the text, because the text says, "*It's impossible with man,*" and it would be impossible to put a camel through the eye of a needle.

Some principles of textual criticism:

Choose **earlier** manuscripts **over later** ones

Choose **shorter over longer**

Choose **more difficult over easier**

Mark's closing statement:

Mark 16:8: *They went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.*

The language is dramatic. The resurrection is shocking. The women are convinced of the resurrection by the empty tomb and by the angelic announcement, it has dawned on them in their terrified bewilderment. They're gripped by the wondrous reality of the resurrection, and a few steps later they're overwhelmed by joy. They're speechless. And, so is Mark. What needs to be added? You have an **empty tomb**, you have an **angelic announcement**, and you have the **eyewitnesses**.

Mark wanted you to be convinced that Jesus is the Son of God!

Mark 1:1: *"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."*

Mark 16:8: *They went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.*

The Greek word *tromos* is the word **trembling**, ecstasy, transcendent bewilderment. The word *ekstasis* is the word here for **astonishment**. *Phobeō* is the word for **afraid**. It's very strong language to express the amazing and terrifying bewilderment that gripped their minds as they began to understand that Jesus has come back to life.

Yes, it's abrupt. Yes, it's a shocking ending. **But is it incomplete?**

There's also **internal evidence**. Let's look at this long ending. By the way, what is said here is true. That isn't the argument. The argument isn't whether it's *true*, the argument is whether it's *included*.

Mark 16:9–20: [Now after He had risen early on the first day of the week, He first appeared to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven demons.

10 She went and reported to those who had been with Him, while they were mourning and weeping.

11 When they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they refused to believe it.

12 After that, He appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking along on their way to the country.

13 They went away and reported it to the others, but they did not believe them either.

14 Afterward He appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at the table; and He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen.

15 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.

16 "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.

17 "These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues;

18 they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

19 So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.

20 And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed.]

[And they promptly reported all these instructions to Peter and his companions. And after that, Jesus Himself sent out through them from east to west the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.]

The **internal evidence** also argues for exclusion.

1. The transition from verse 8 to 9 is **awkward**. Verse 9 begins, **Now**. That necessitates continuity from verse 8. However, what follows in verse 9 does not continue the story of the women.
2. Also, in verse 9, there's a **masculine pronoun**. A masculine pronoun requires a masculine antecedent, not the women.

3. Why would Mark also identify Mary Magdalene as the one from whom Jesus cast seven demons?

4. The angel spoke of Jesus' promise to appear to His followers in **Galilee**. But all the appearances recorded in this added part postscript are appearances in **Jerusalem**.

5. The **vocabulary is not consistent** with Mark. The structure is very different from the structure of Mark's writing. The title, **Lord Jesus**, (verse 19) is never used anywhere else by Mark.

6. There are **strange themes** here. They don't exist anywhere in Mark. They are out of range for the subjects that occupy him.

People picked things out of the other gospels and some of the other New Testament books and put them together.

Mark 16	Comes From
9	Luke 8:1-3
10	John 20:18
12	Luke 24:13-32
13	Luke 24:11
14	Luke 24:36-38
15	Matthew 28:19
16	John 20:23
17-18	Matthew 10, Mark 6, Luke 10, Acts 28

Why does Mark end the way he ends?

He set out to prove a point, that ***Jesus is the Son of God***, and he proved it by following Him through His ministry to His resurrection. But there's something else here that is striking. The ***last word*** that Mark wrote was the word ***afraid***.

Think back over our time in Mark. It's been 81 sermons—82 with this one—over 29 months.

1:22 They were amazed
1:27 They were all amazed
2:12 They were all amazed
4:41 They became very much afraid
5:15 They became frightened
5:33 The woman, fearing and trembling, and fell down before Him
5:42: They were completely astounded
6:51 They were utterly astonished
9:6 Peter, James, and John became terrified
9:15 A huge crowd was amazed
9:32 They were afraid
10:24 The disciples were amazed
10:32 They were amazed and fearful
11:18 The Chief priests were afraid of Him
12:17 They were amazed at Him
15:5 Pilate was amazed
16:5 Entering the tomb, . . . they were amazed.

Are you amazed? The story of Jesus is amazing. Isn't every word in the gospel of Mark amazing? Isn't every miracle amazing? Isn't every confrontation amazing? Isn't every insight amazing? Isn't everything about Him stunning and overwhelming? Why not end it with the glory and wonder of the resurrection that proves He is the Son of God and we all walk away in amazement?