



The Gospel of Mark

A Living Word Independent Bible Study



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Part 45

Mark 16:9-20

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(NIV)

INTRODUCTION

All of the earliest manuscripts of Mark's Gospel end after verse 8 of chapter 16.

All modern Bibles, then, have a major break, with an explanation, after verse 8.

Major scholarly debate surrounds the issue of the ending of Mark's Gospel.

Most likely, either the Gospel ended at verse 8, or, the original ending was somehow lost.

The early manuscripts of Mark's Gospel that have been discovered end in one of four ways:

- Ending at verse 8 (the very oldest manuscripts)

- Including an additional "short ending" after verse 8

- Including an additional "long ending" after verse 8

 - These verses are given the numbering of 9-20

 - Including the "long ending" then followed by the "short ending" as an additional verse.

Nearly all scholars agree that both the "short" and "long" endings are not part of the original work.

Disagreement centers on whether the original text ended at verse 8, or if there is an original ending that has been lost.

Mark: The Short Ending

But all that they had been told they reported briefly to those with Peter. But after these things, even Jesus himself sent out by means of them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation. Amen.

Only ONE ancient manuscript of Mark's Gospel contains ONLY the "short ending", without the "long ending" ahead of it.

This manuscript dates from the fourth century, and is a translation into Old Latin – it does not reflect the original Greek version of the Gospel.

Many other manuscripts that contain the full long ending (Mark 16:9-20 in most Bibles) ALSO contain this short ending ... but many do not.

Some scholars have taken to referring to this as "the happy ending"!

Mark 16:8 ended with the women fleeing the empty tomb in fear, saying nothing to anyone about what they had seen.

The short ending takes care of the messy detail that Mark 16:9 leaves hanging – why didn't the women do as the young man had commanded them, and tell the disciples what they had seen?

According to the short ending, they DID!

They gave a brief report to Peter, and then the disciples shared the gospel message across the known world.

A Happy Ending!

Mark: The Short Ending

But all that they had been told they reported briefly to those with Peter. But after these things, even Jesus himself sent out by means of them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation. Amen.

The only problem is:

The language found in the short ending is not at all typical of Mark.

Nowhere do words like “the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation” appear in the rest of the Gospel.

It seems clear that the short ending of Mark was added, at some point, by a copyist or scribe to correct any perception that the women who found the tomb were disobedient to the command the “young man” gave them.

This would be especially true as the language of Matthew and Luke, in referring to this young man as an “angel”, became the dominant understanding of followers of Jesus.

Mark: The Long Ending, Part 1: 16:9-11

When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons. She went and told those who had been with him and who were mourning and weeping. When they heard that Jesus was alive and that she had seen him, they did not believe it.

Most ancient manuscripts of Mark's Gospel DO include the "long ending" found in Mark 16:9-20.

It is a very few, even more ancient manuscripts, that do NOT include it.

Most scholars believe that scribes copying the Gospel in the second century AD added the texts, either after the original ending was lost or because they thought that, compared to Matthew, Mark, and John, the ending seemed incomplete.

The stories included in verses 9-20 are a conflation of stories and traditions found in Matthew, Luke, John, and even the Acts of the Apostles.

For each story in the "long ending", we will look at the Gospel parallel from which it is drawn.

Mark: The Long Ending, Part 1: 16:9-11 (NIV)

When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons. She went and told those who had been with him and who were mourning and weeping. When they heard that Jesus was alive and that she had seen him, they did not believe it.

Mark 16:9-11 is a summary of the story found in John 20:10-18.

Mark is here following the tradition of John's Gospel, in which Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene, alone.

This is in contrast to Matthew's Gospel, in which Jesus appears to both Mary Magdalene AND "the other Mary".

And in contrast to Luke's Gospel, which does not have a Resurrection appearance to the women at all.

The next slide contains the full text of John's account of Jesus' appearance to Mary Magdalene, which is summarized in Part 1 of Mark's "Long Ending".

Mark: The Long Ending, Part 1: 16:9-11 (NIV)

When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons. She went and told those who had been with him and who were mourning and weeping. When they heard that Jesus was alive and that she had seen him, they did not believe it.

Mark 16:9-11 is a summary of the story found in John 20:10-18:

John 20:11-18 (NIV) – ¹¹ Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹² and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. ¹³ They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." ¹⁴ At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher"). ¹⁷ Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

Mark: The Long Ending, Part 2: 16:12-13 (NIV)

Afterward Jesus appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking in the country. These returned and reported it to the rest; but they did not believe them either.

Mark 16:12-13 is a summary of the story found in Luke 24:13-35.

Luke is the only Gospel writer to include the long story that has come to be known as “The Walk to Emmaus”.

This short account of two disciples encountering the risen Jesus “while they were walking in the country”, and their return to Jerusalem where they “reported it to the rest” is almost assuredly a reference to this longer story.

Luke’s full account of the walk to Emmaus is included on the next slide, for comparison to Mark’s summary statement.

Mark: The Long Ending, Part 2: 16:12-13 (NIV)

Afterward Jesus appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking in the country. These returned and reported it to the rest; but they did not believe them either.

Luke 24:13-35 (NIV):

¹³ Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; ¹⁶ but they were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast. ¹⁸ One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" ¹⁹ "What things?" he asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. ²⁰ The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; ²¹ but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. ²² In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning ²³ but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. ²⁴ Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus." ²⁵ He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. ²⁸ As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. ²⁹ But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. ³² They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" ³³ They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together ³⁴ and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." ³⁵ Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

Mark: The Long Ending, Part 3: 16:14 (NIV)

Later Jesus appeared to the Eleven as they were eating; he rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen.

Mark 16:14 is a summary of the story found in John 20:19-29.

The verse seems to be a reference to the famous story of “doubting Thomas”.

Thomas, of course, refused to believe the other disciples when they told him about their first encounter with Jesus while they were gathered in an upper room.

At the second encounter, with Thomas present, Jesus rebuked Thomas for his doubt – “Stop doubting and believe!”

The next slide contains the full text of the story from John’s Gospel for comparison.

Mark: The Long Ending, Part 3: 16:14 (NIV)

Later Jesus appeared to the Eleven as they were eating; he rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen.

Mark 16:14 is a summary of the story found in John 20:19-29.

John 20:19-29 - ¹⁹ On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." ²² And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." ²⁴ Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." ²⁶ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." ²⁸ Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹ Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Mark: The Long Ending, Part 4: 16:15-16 (NIV)

He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”

Mark 16:15-16 is a combination of the Great Commission from Matthew 28:19 and the testimony of John the Baptist concerning personal response to Jesus from John 3:36.

In the long ending of Mark, John’s commentary on belief becomes the natural byproduct of personal response to the preaching of the gospel in response to Jesus’ Great Commission:

Jesus: Go into all the world, preaching the gospel.

Disciples: Obedient proclamation of the gospel.

The World: Believe and be baptized – salvation.

Reject and refuse baptism – condemnation.

The next slide contains the text of both Matthew and John, for comparison.

Mark: The Long Ending, Part 4: 16:15-16 (NIV)

He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”

Mark 16:15-16 is a combination of the Great Commission from Matthew 28:19 and the testimony of John the Baptist concerning personal response to Jesus from John 3:36:

Matthew 28:19 (NIV) – “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

John 3:36 (NIV) – “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”

Mark: The Long Ending, Part 5: 16:17-18 (NIV)

“And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.”

Mark 16:17-18 summarizes many specific episodes drawn from the Acts of the Apostles.

There is no biblical account, though, of believers surviving the drinking of deadly poison. This may be drawn from a different oral tradition not recorded in our Scriptures.

Acts 5:16 – “Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed.”

Acts 2:4 – “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”

Acts 28:3-6 – “Paul gathered a pile of brushwood and, as he put it on the fire, a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand. When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, “This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, the goddess Justice has not allowed him to live.” But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects. The people expected him to swell up or suddenly fall dead; but after waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god.”

Mark: The Long Ending, Part 6: 16:19 (NIV)

After the Lord Jesus had
spoken to them, he was
taken up into heaven
and he sat at the right
hand of God.

Mark 16:19 is a brief account of the Ascension.

Luke introduces his account of the Ascension in his gospel, but gives the fuller account in the book of Acts:

Luke 24:51 – “While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven.”

Acts 1:2-9 – “In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

Mark: The Long Ending, Part 7: 16:20 (NIV)

Then the disciples went
out and preached
everywhere, and the
Lord worked with them
and confirmed by his
word the signs that
accompanied it.

Mark 16:20, the final verse of the “long ending” of Mark, is essentially a summary of the entire book of Acts.

The story of Acts, written by Luke, is the story of how the disciples, empowered by the Holy Spirit, continued the work of the Kingdom of God that they had begun under Jesus’ guidance, under the continuing guidance of Jesus through the presence of the Holy Spirit.

This ending to Mark’s Gospel is, in fact, another “happy ending”, in that like Acts, it affirms the ongoing mission of the church, begun by the earliest followers of Jesus!

Mark 16:9-20

(NIV)

SUMMARY

In conclusion, we will probably never be certain how Mark originally ended.

But the message is clear!

Jesus of Nazareth was God's Son ...

Who powerfully proclaimed the Kingdom of God, witnessed in his miracles and teachings ...

And who willingly went to the cross in fulfillment of his mission to inaugurate the Kingdom of God on earth.

Because of the Resurrection, and the promise of the risen Christ to continue to lead his disciples, the ultimate completion of that mission may yet be accomplished.

The Christian community is called to continue to proclaim, along with Jesus, "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand!"

And to actively demonstrate its presence in thought, word, and deed!



Bibliography

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