

**My 10 Cents On the Long
Ending of Mark's Gospel**

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The long ending of Mark (being verses 9 through 20) has long been challenged; many folks accepting verses 9 - 20 as genuine, many not accepting them, and some accepting slight variations within the long ending. I am not going to review all of these various theories and supporting hypotheses, and right here at the outset of this brief note I wish to state that I believe verses 9 - 20 to be genuine.

This note will simply illustrate why I believe Mark 16:9-20 to be genuine, and why many others do not apparently accept the full text.

Mark 16:9-20 does contain some words not common to the earlier portions of Mark. To some there also seems to be a change of style. These observations, if they be true, have been answered: that Mark later rewrote or replaced the final missing folio of the codex he initially wrote under Inspiration. I suspect that the original document was written upon a papyrus scroll, and that the last kollema was not well attached. When this was discovered it was rewritten via Mark's inspired memory, or possibly replaced with a back translation into the original Greek from a Latin or Syriac translation. or possibly even from a Sahidic translation [though I prefer the Latin or Syriac as they seem to fit the locale of Mark's activities in early Acts].

The above are practically irrelevant to me, as I sense that the *real reason* why these verses are suspect has to do with THEOLOGY. Some of the sentences in Mark 16:9-20 seem very uncomfortable to many religious folks, the concepts do not mesh well with their theological perspectives or denominational doctrines. Since some rather famous [or

notorious] textual critic's have suggested that the long ending is not genuine and that it need not be printed in modern Bibles—many of the theologically based objectors simply used these critic's theories to discard these troublesome passages. After all, if some early Egyptian manuscripts omit these verses (as well as a handful of MSS connected with this Egyptian corruption), therein lies an easy excuse to just omit the passages. No further explanations needed!

There that solves the problem: further by not having to go into theological detail in explaining why some of the passages are troublesome—which would offend other religious groups—they continue to promote some type of religious ecumenicalism, compromise and a sort of shallow peace is obtained.

This is why, in my mind, these passages continue to be suspect within powerful religious groups and publishing concerns. It is easier to dismiss the complications than to face them!

Their religious doctrine or belief system fails them, or cannot be reconciled with the disputed passages. The following passages in particular seem to upset many religious folks:

¹⁵ And he [Jesus] said unto them [the eleven], Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. ¹⁶ He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. ¹⁷ And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; ¹⁸ They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

Several issues in the above quote of the beautiful KJV present themselves as offensive to numerous religions. For some types of Calvinists, one may note that salvation seems to be based upon believing

and being baptized (surely a water baptism). They would object to the act of baptism as being a necessary requirement for salvation! Others who hold to a supralapsarian view might object to the need for a person to FIRST believe before one is reckoned as saved (as viewing salvation wholly as of grace, an act credited to God and not the person(s) who just becomes aware of their election).

These types of Calvinists would object to the above passages, and devise ingenious ways to alter their semantics, or to simply declare them not genuine!

Then there are those Baptists who object to this passage as it adds "baptism" to the salvation formula. They would insist that water baptism is not required for salvation, that instead it is some sort of public demonstration of faith. Or, they would insist that "baptism" as used herein is not water baptism, but is perhaps some other form of the various baptisms depicted in the New Testament. But easier yet, is to simply declare that the passages are not genuine, and claim the support of numerous liberal and or confused textual critics.

Then there is the portion of Mark 16 which states:

...these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; ¹⁸ They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

For some religious groups these passages make fine sense, and they even practice these acts today. But for most religious readers, these passages present major problems. For example:

- If I do not speak in foreign languages: do I really believe?
- Should I not fear rattlesnakes?
- Can I drink poison to prove my faith to my friends?
- Should I lay hands on my 97 year old grandmother and heal her?
- Should I cast out the demons from Charles Manson?
- Do I need each of these proofs to be reckoned a believer? Or which do I manifest?

Rather than to struggle with the difficult issues as presented above, most non-Charismatics simply remove these passages from their Bibles! Why fight with the Holiness peoples?

My reason why I believe these to be genuine is textual as well as theological. My reasoning is not original, but is also not very well known, so I shall briefly present it to you, and you can then judge for yourself.

I believe that as the early Millennial Kingdom hopes of Israel faded (because Israel rejected the Kingdom Gospel and the Person of Jesus Christ) and terminated by A.D. 70, the Kingdom signs [healings, drinking of poisons, supernatural ability to speak foreign languages, *et al*]; ceased. Early theologians also had problems with our passages in Mark 16:16-18. If they did not exhibit some of these signs, then others could question their Christian status, consequently they probably looked-down upon these passages; especially if they themselves KNEW that they were genuine believers, they would have trouble with such passages, how to reconcile them! One wonders if the text was intentionally removed in the late first or early second century? It is possible, consider what some monks did to the text in the Egyptian produced codex W (uncial 032)! [as an aside, I am convinced that the "western" text-type originated in central Egypt in the late first or early second century].

Mark basically worked with Peter, and he is probably the person referred to in Mark 14:51,52. His Jewish name was John. Peter when first released from prison went to the home of John Mark's mother (Acts 12:12). Later on, Mark, at first did not fit well with Paul's mission to the Gentiles, and so worked with Barnabas. As later revealed, Paul did eventually commend young John-Mark. In I Peter 5:13 John-Mark is referred to by Peter as "my son", which may suggest that Mark was first converted under Peter's ministry.

Whatever the case, Mark writes a gospel which was/is meant to minister specifically to Israelites and their proselytes (as are the other three gospels). These four documents were composed by those who were sent to minister to Israel PRIMARILY. (Most certainly these gospels are written *for* us today as well, but they are not *to* us specifically).

One might refer to Galatians 2:7 or I Peter 1:1 or Matthew 28 wherein they are told to preach the good-news of the Kingdom!

Israelites, in the coming 1,000 year Kingdom, will be blessed with the supernatural ability to speak many foreign languages. Israelites will be blessed with the ability to keep demons at bay, to be safe from poisons. Israelites will again enforce the Jewish custom of water baptism for obedience and purification, a then necessary requirement for salvation. During the 1,000 year millennial Kingdom—supernatural Divine healings will be the norm. In that future dispensation, the signs mentioned in Mark 16 WOULD follow those who believe! Mark, like Peter, James, John and Matthew, expected the 1,000 year reign to begin shortly. They expected the soon return of their crucified Messiah; some of the "early-rain" indications led them to believe so.

But God had other plans. Israel rejected the cries of the 12 apostles (Matthias being number 12), Israel rejected God again. So God temporarily closed the door on Israel and her prophetic expectations. Instead he chose Paul, and sent him out of Israel to the nations with a message of grace. Gentiles *and* Jews under Paul's gospel, could be accepted by God on the basis of grace alone. No Jewish laws or rituals needed, nor Jewish signs!

These new Gentile converts, would eventually generate jealousy within Judaism, and hopefully move these Jews to accept the Person of Jesus Christ, their Messiah. Until then God is, in this dispensation, working with the nations, despite Judaism's unbelief. Israel *in this dispensation* is not the agent via which the nations come to Christ. Paul's gospel (the good-news of UN-circumcision) was/is all we need today to trust in Jesus Christ, to experience redemption and salvation, to be

resurrected and to presently experience a resurrected life, to know how to behave in this age, and to exist as fully justified. Period.

Just as God did not command ME to build an ark in the backyard for preservation of the animals in the face of a looming flood (or some type of tribulation)—so Mark is not telling me to speak in foreign languages or to drink poison to validate my faith. It is a dispensational issue.

Those who object to the long ending of Mark 16, seem to me, to misunderstand the basic dispensations. Mark's message (in part) is:

- prophetic - Mark 13, and some of the long ending of Mark

- history - most of the entire book

- TO the Israelites - all of the book

- FOR all believers - all of the book

All of Mark is for my/our edification today as well. From it we learn much about the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ and His genuinely sincere effort to establish His Kingdom in Israel in the early first century.

So there is my 10 cents worth on the long ending of Mark; reject, modify or accept it—I only hope you understand it.