

WM # 61

Review: Sermon on Mark's Ending. Part Two: External Evidence

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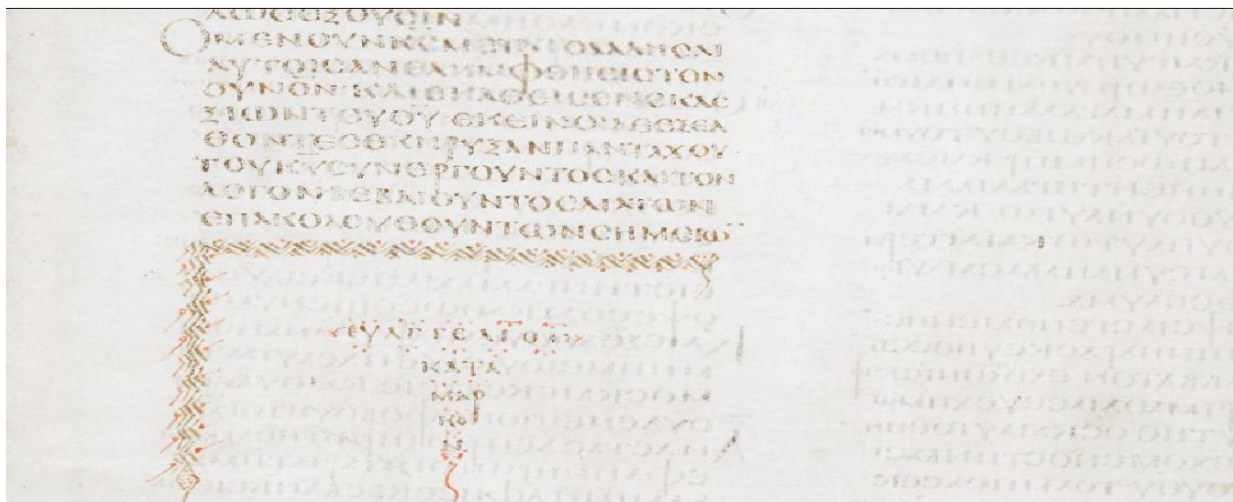


Image: The Ending of Mark in Codex Alexandrinus, c. AD 5th century. This is one of the oldest uncial witnesses to the traditional ending of Mark (Mark 16:9-20).

I recorded yesterday and posted today [WM # 61](#) continuing the review of Pastor Carey Hardy's 2012 sermon "The Added Ending" on the ending of Mark's Gospel in which he rejects the inspiration and authenticity of Mark 16:9-20. In this episode I offer analysis of the sermon's covering of the external evidence for the ending of Mark.

As do most who reject the authenticity of Mark 16:9-20, Hardy gives central importance to the fact that two early Greek mss. end the Gospel at Mark 16:8. Those two are codices Vaticanus (B) and Sinaiticus (Aleph). Here is a table of the Greek mss. for the ending of Mark:

Ending	Greek manuscripts
End at 16:8 ("Abrupt Ending")	Aleph, B
16:1-8 plus "Shorter Ending"	None

16:1-8 plus “Shorter Ending” plus 16:9-20 (“Longer Ending”)	L, Psi, 083, 099, 579, L-1602, plus 274 [in margin]
End at 16:20 with “Freer Logion” after v. 14	W
End at 16:20 (“Longer Ending”)	A, C, D, Q, family 13, and about a thousand other Greek mss.

Even Vaticanus and Sinaiticus give evidence that they knew of the longer ending. See my blog post on the [odd ending of Mark in Vaticanus](#) and in [Sinaiticus](#).

Hardy also calls attention to the versional evidence, citing one Old Latin codex k [as Lunn points out, this ms. has notable irregularities even in its transmission of Mark 16:1-8: it omits the names of the women at the tomb, v. 1; it omits the clause “and they said nothing to anyone in v. 8; it inserts a lengthy text between vv. 3 and 4, describing darkness and angels, possibly taken from the apocryphal *Gospel of Peter*]; one Syriac ms. Sinaitic; about a hundred Armenian mss; and two Georgian mss.

Hardy does not cite, however, the significant versional evidence in favor of Mark 16:9-20, which includes: the Old Latin, the Vulgate, the Syriac (the Ditessaron, the Curetonian, the Peshitta, and the Harklean), etc.

When it comes to the Church Fathers, Hardy cites evidence from Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Eusebius, Jerome, and Victor of Antioch.

Responses: The references to Clement of Alexandria and Origen are arguments *ex silencio*. Clement of Alexandria also offers no references from Matthew 28 or Mark 16:1-8, though these are not challenged. We have neither a commentary or a collection of sermons from Origen on Mark, so it is not surprising that we find no references to them in his writings.

The often cited reference from Eusebius’ epistle *Ad Marinum* concerning Mark’s ending must be read in context of Eusebius addressing a perceived conflict

between the resurrection accounts in Matthew and Mark, and his suggestion of one hypothetical option [which he does not necessarily endorse] which would be to deny the authenticity of Mark's ending.

The supposed evidence from Jerome and Victor of Antioch is simply their citation from Eusebius.

With regard to Jerome, he clearly did not reject the traditional ending of Mark, as chiefly evidenced by the fact that he included it in the Vulgate.

Hardy concedes reference to the traditional ending of Mark in the writings of the early Church Fathers, including Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Tertullian.

He downplays, however, the significance of and does not quote the direct citation of Mark 16:19 in Irenaeus and his clear reference to the fact that it comes from Mark's ending [as cited in Lunn, *The Original Ending of Mark* p. 82]:

Also, towards the conclusion of his Gospel, Mark says, "So then, after the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was received up into heaven, and sits on the right hand of God"; confirming what had been spoken by the prophet [Ps. 110:1]. (Haer. 3.10.5).

This citation from c. AD 175, makes it the earliest witness to the ending of Mark.

I close this episode by citing Lunn's conclusion after his discussion of the external evidence for the ending of Mark:

For the vast majority of its history the church as a body has pronounced in favor of this passage. The indications of doubt on the part of Eusebius and the copyists of a small number of manuscripts do not reflect the view of the church in general. Its inclusion was unambiguously accepted from the earliest times, with the second century fathers. The Byzantine, Vulgate, and Peshitta texts, which were to hold sway in the principle sections of the church for a thousand years or more, each embraced it. The humanist scholars and reformers of the early sixteenth century all received it as authentic, it being published in the Greek NT editions of Erasmus, Stephanus, Elzivir, and Beza. The Bible translation tradition set in motion

by Tyndale included it, the passage appearing in Coverdale's version, the Great Bible, the Anglican Bishops' Bible, the Puritan Geneva Bible, the Catholic Rheims-Douai version, as well as the King James Bible which came to dominate the English-speaking world for the next three centuries. In the Great Awakening of the mid-eighteenth century and other subsequent revivals of the Gospels were preached and read in a form contained the final verses of Mark. The great missionary movement of the early nineteenth century brought about the translation of the NT into numerous languages of Africa, Asia, Australasia, and the Americas. With the received Greek text and the King James Bible as the only possible, and indeed the only known base-texts, the longer version of Mark's Gospel passed into the hands of the indigenous churches. It was not until the latter half of the nineteenth century that the long-established acceptance of Mark 16:9-20 began to be seriously challenged in certain academic quarters of the Western world. This turn-around found its impetus in the re-discovery of Codices Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, two manuscripts which, it should be remarked, had long lain unused by the church. History shows therefore that also in the matter of ecclesiastical tradition, or what may be termed "canonicity," the longer ending has received a clear stamp of approval (p. 115).

Lunn closes by noting the superiority of the longer ending, based on external evidence, including its **antiquity, ubiquity, diversity, quantity, and canonicity** (pp. 115-116).

JTR