

Why does the EHV include Mark 16:9-20? Other translations question whether these verses belong in the text.

This is treated in FAQ #39. Some information from that FAQ is below, but this article provides some more information.

It is helpful to begin with a statement of our general policy about textual variants. We follow an objective approach which considers all the witnesses to the text (Greek manuscripts, lectionaries, translations, and quotations in the Church Fathers) without showing favoritism for one or the other, since each of these has its own strengths and weaknesses as a witness to the text. We then report the textual evidence in this way:

The reading in a set of variants that has the earliest and most widespread support in the witnesses is the one included in the text. The other readings in a set of variants are dealt with in one of three ways:

- A variant reading that has very little early or widespread support in the witnesses is not given a footnote in order to avoid an overabundance of textual notes.
- A variant reading with significant early and/or widespread support but not as much early or widespread evidence as the reading in the main text of the translation is reflected in a footnote that says, “Some witnesses to the text read/add/omit:”
- A familiar (e.g., KJV or NIV reading) or a notable reading (e.g., the addition or omission of a whole verse) with support that is not nearly as early or widespread as the other reading can be reflected in a footnote that says, “A few witnesses to the text read/add/omit:”

The handling of the end of Mark is simply an application of this objective principle. This is the EHV footnote on this textual question:

This translation includes verses 9-20 because they are included in the vast majority of Greek manuscripts that have been handed down to us. Evidence for the existence of this long ending extends back to the 2nd century. In the early centuries of the church, these verses were read in worship services on Easter and Ascension Day. However, a few early manuscripts and early translations omit verses 9-20, and a few manuscripts have a different ending.

We believe that this footnote states the textual evidence accurately and concisely. But there are many details behind it. A brief summary of the evidence can be found in an article that was published in *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* (Vol 102:1), which is posted at our WP website.

For more information on the evidence, two books are particularly helpful:

- *Authentic: The Case for Mark 16:9-20 (2016 edition)* by James Snapp Jr. It can sometimes be purchased on Amazon for as low as 99 cents. Link below:
- https://www.amazon.com/Authentic-Case-Mark-9-20-2016-ebook/dp/B01EU10R90/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=Authentic%3A+snapp&qid=1574288391&sr=8-1
- *The Original Ending of Mark: A New Case for the Authenticity of Mark 16:9-20* by Nicholas P. Lunn (2014). The Kindle version is much less expensive than the paperback. Link below:
- https://www.amazon.com/Original-Ending-Mark-Case-Authenticity-ebook/dp/B000U60B78/ref=sr_1_2?keywords=Nicholas+Lunn&qid=1574288469&sr=8-2

Below is a chart offering some of the evidence that can be found in these books.

Mark 16:9-20	N. Africa (Carthage)	Gaul/Italy	Asia Minor (Byzantium)	Syria (Antioch)	Palestine (Caesarea)	Egypt (Alexandria)
I 50 - 100 A.D.		Clement (Rome)**				
II 100-200 A.D.		Irenaeus Justin	Byz & Lect ☐	Diatessaron Byz & Lect ☐		
III 200-300 A.D.	Tertullian Rebaptism Vincentius of Thibaris**	Old Latin d Hippolytus	Byz & Lect ☐	Byz & Lect ☐ Syriac c Syriac p		Coptic-sahidic 5 include: 4-omit**
IV 300-400 A.D.	Lectionaries used by Augustine ☐	Vulgate Ambrose	Byz & Lect ☐ Gothic	Byz & Lect ☐ Asterius Apostolic Constitutions Syriac a Byz & Lect ☐ Ephraem	Eusebius** Jerome**	Beza** Aleph** Coptic-bohairic Coptic-fay Didymus
V 400-500 A.D.	Augustine (Gk & Lat) W *Old Latin k Marius Mercator	Old Latin ff2 Old Latin n D Cassian Prosper Leo Patrick (Ireland) Peter Chrysologus	Byz & Lect ☐ Macarius Magnes	Byz & Lect ☐ A Syriac h Severian Nestorius Ezrik Armenian Victor?	Epiphanius** Hesychius** Georgian 1-4 Georgian B	Cyril of Alexandria A C Nestorius Marcus-Eremita
VI 500-600 A.D.		Old Latin q		Syriac pa Severus-mss Severus-mss	983	Theta Ethiopic

Key:

Bold = include Mark 16:9-20

Red-Strikeout = omit Mark 16:9-20

*Green = The shorter ending (Old Latin k)

Titles are in italic print.

Eusebius** - Two colors indicates the witness is considered divided. Further reading will explain the reasons.

** = see information in Lunn (and Snapp)

For more information on these witnesses, see Snapp and Lunn.

Snapp documents many false statements about the evidence supporting Mark 16:9-20. The UBS apparatus has changed over the years. Many commentators have unfortunately made statements that are misleading or false. Beginning on page 19 of “Authentic,” Snapp presents a list of early witnesses.

Here is a sample of just some information available about the early witnesses. Those interested in reading more are directed to the books by Snapp and Lunn listed above.

Clement of Rome (95-97 AD; late first century) – *First Epistle of Clement*

Lunn states that there is “not merely a good case but an extremely forceful one for Clement’s familiarity with the questioned ending of Mark. If so, the significance of this cannot be overestimated since Clement’s letter is generally dated to the late first century.” (Lunn, p. 66-67, Kindle Edition).

[Footnote 297: Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 35–36. Holmes speaks of “a long-standing tradition of dating the document a bit more narrowly, to ca. AD 95-97.”]

Justin Martyr (155 AD)

Lunn: Regarding Justin’s reference in *First Apology* – “That this is a reference to Mark 16:20 is generally accepted, though there are a few who fail to be convinced” (Lunn, pp. 76-77, Kindle Edition).

Snapp: “Justin Martyr (155), in *First Apology* chapter 45, as he interprets Psalm 110, makes a strong allusion to Mark 16:20” (Snapp, location 497, Kindle Edition).

Diatessaron (around 172 AD)

Lunn writes:

In view of these facts, that is, the presence of verses from the longer ending in the earliest complete versions of the Diatessaron, traces of its wording in the much earlier commentary of Ephrem, and the connection between Tatian and Justin, it seems safe to conclude that Tatian's original composition incorporated the disputed verses. It is noteworthy that text-critical expert Bruce Metzger, though not supportive of the Markan origin of the longer ending, affirmed the inclusion of these verses in Tatian's Gospel harmony. Metzger wrote: "Already in the second century . . . the so-called long ending of Mark was known to Justin Martyr and to Tatian, who incorporated it into his Diatessaron." [fn: *Canon of the New Testament*, p. 269] Kelhoffer also concurs. (Lunn, p. 82, Kindle Edition; see the original for more footnoted information).

Snapp writes that "Tatian (c. 172) incorporated all twelve verses into his Diatessaron..." (Snapp, Location 497, Kindle Edition).

Irenaeus (c. 175-189 AD)

Lunn writes:

The work for which he is best known is his five-volume *Adversus Haereses* ("Against Heresies"), written between 175 and 189. Here there is absolutely no question regarding the fact of this church father's acquaintance with the longer ending seeing that he actually gives a named citation ascribed to Mark: 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)³⁴⁵ Irenaeus here quotes Mark 16:19 verbatim. [footnote: Two Greek minuscules, MSS 72 and 1582, include marginal notes placed alongside Mark 16:19, which make reference to Irenaeus' citation. See Snapp, "Authentic," 1.1.5.]. The point he is making is that the second Gospel closes with the fulfillment of a prophecy, Psalm 110, just as it begins with one, Isaiah 40:3 in Mark 1:2–3. (Lunn, p. 82, Kindle Edition).

Lunn adds:

One further important observation regarding Irenaeus' use of Mark 16:19 is that this, together with the accompanying Mark 1:2–3, is in fact the first ever instance of an explicitly named citation from any part of the second Gospel in extant patristic literature. It would be a remarkable irony if the first church father to quote from this Gospel in the name of "Mark," should in actual fact be quoting from the part supposedly not written by Mark at all! (Lunn, pp. 82-83, Kindle Edition).

Snapp writes:

Irenaeus (c. 184), in the tenth chapter of Book Three of *Against Heresies*, wrote, "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.'" (Snapp, Jr., Location 497, Kindle Edition.)

Lectionaries

Lunn writes:

To summarize the lectionary evidence we here reproduce the relevant details as outlined by Farmer, which in turn depends upon information given by Westcott and Hort, and also Burgon:

- (A) The Synaxaria of the Greek church require Mk. 16:9–20 to be read for Matins on Ascension Day.
- (B) This same lection was adopted among the Syrians by the Melchite churches.
- (C) According to the Evangelistarium used by the Jacobite Copts, Mk. 16:14–20 was read at the liturgy on Ascension Day.
- (D) Mk. 16:9–20 constituted the third of eleven lections which were read successively on Sundays at Matins throughout the year; as well as daily throughout Easter week in both Greek and Syrian churches.
- (E) Mk. 16:9–20 was read at Matins for the second Sunday after Easter in both Greek and Syrian churches.
- (F) In the Monophysite churches of Syria, Mk. 16:9–20 was read at Matins on Easter Tuesday.
- (G) Augustine writes that these same verses were read publicly during Easter among the churches in Africa. They are also included in the oldest lectionary of the Roman church.

In addition to the above, we recall the inclusion of the disputed verses in the Palestinian Syriac lectionary, mentioned earlier.

Certain of these reading systems may have their origins in the fourth or fifth century, or even earlier. Even Westcott and Hort conceded the antiquity of this evidence. For sure the portions of scripture appearing in the liturgy of festive days, such as Easter and Ascension Day with regard to the longer Markan ending, would have become fixed much sooner than those used during regular days of worship. It is difficult to conceive that a foreign text, especially one containing such unusual details as found in Mark 16:18, could have been successfully introduced into these liturgies at a later date without opposition, and that across the whole range of different lectionaries. It is apparent then that the canonicity of the Markan ending was widely accepted by the church at large during these early centuries. Burgon went so far as to claim that the testimony afforded by these lectionaries was “simply overwhelming.” (Lunn, p. 56-57, Kindle Edition; see original for footnoted information).

Snapp writes:

In the 400's, the Byzantine lectionary-system (which is represented in most Gospel-lectionaries) included Mark 16:9-20. The lectionary-system used by the Jacobite Copts also included Mark 16:9-20. The passage was used by the Jacobite Syrians as a reading during Easter-week. The Palestinian Aramaic lectionary also included it. A statement from Ambrose shows that it was used in the church-services in Milan in the late 300's. Statements from Augustine show that it was used in the church-services in North Africa, c. 400. The establishment of this passage in the normal cycle of readings in church-services over such a broad area shines a bright hot light on Jerome's statement that hardly any Greek codices contain Mark 16:9-20, showing that Jerome harvested that claim from Eusebius' To Marinus, rather than from his own experience.

Mark 16:9-20's prominence in widespread lectionary-systems is a real problem for those who have tried to maintain that Eusebius' statement – or rather, one of the statements that Eusebius mentioned, specifically the statement that hardly any copies have Mark 16:9-20 – reflected a

situation which was typical throughout the Roman Empire. The lectionaries show that Mark 16:9-20 was recognized as Scripture in congregations throughout the Roman Empire. Those who have proposed that Mark 16:9-20 was gradually accepted in the Middle Ages must believe that at some point, bishops introduced previously unheard-of material into the church-services at Easter-time and on Ascension-Day, and that nobody objected to this novelty – even though it portrays the apostles in a negative light, it omits the triune baptismal formula from the Great Commission, and it says that Jesus prophesied that believers will handle snakes and survive poison-drinking. (Snapp, Location 1031, Kindle Edition.)

This was just a small sample. There is much more to know. Interested readers are directed to the works listed above. The external evidence for including Mark 16:9-20 is overwhelming as the chart demonstrates and as both Lunn and Snapp document in their books.

The internal evidence also matters. Many confident assertions have been made over the years. Lunn's contribution to the discussion of the internal evidence seems very significant. He writes: "The primary contribution of this volume... lies in the presentation of new internal evidence which itself, the author would contest, points with some degree of certainty to the originality of Mark 16:9-20." (Lunn, p. 22, Kindle Edition.)

It has often been mentioned that there are too many unique words in Mark 16:9-20 for it to be genuine, but Lunn demonstrates over and over again that other sections of twelve verses have similar or more unique words. Scholars should carefully study the convincing evidence Lunn has provided. The following two well-informed scholars have found it convincing, as is mentioned on the back cover:

"A well-written tour de force... Highly recommended reading for anyone generally interested in textual criticism or this passage in particular."

-- Maurice A. Robinson, Research Professor in New Testament and Greek, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, NC

"Nicholas Lunn has thoroughly shaken my views concerning the ending of the Gospel of Mark. As in the case of most gospel scholars, I have for my whole career held that Mark 16:9-20, the so-called 'Long Ending,' was not original. But in his well-researched and carefully argued book, Lunn succeeds in showing just how flimsy that position really is. The evidence for the early existence of this ending, if not for its originality, is extensive and quite credible. I will not be surprised if Lunn reverses scholarly opinion on this important question. I urge scholars not to dismiss his arguments without carefully considering this excellent book. *The Original Ending of Mark* is must reading for all concerned with the gospels and early tradition concerned with the resurrection story."

-- Craig A. Evans, Payzant Distinguished Professor of New Testament, Acadia Divinity College, Wolfville, Nova Scotia, Canada