

**A Word to John MacArthur
Regarding His False Claims
About Mark 16:9-20**

from James Edward Snapp Jr.,
citizen of the kingdom of God,
proclaimer of the gospel,
and resident of Frankton,
Indiana USA

In June of 2011, and again in August of 2016, Dr. John MacArthur made numerous false claims about Mark 16:9-20 – twelve verses which the Christian church has regarded as the word of God ever since the first century.

I wrote this brief response, not to answer the question, “How could a trusted fellow minister of the gospel be so wrong about so many things?”, but to warn my readers, point by point, about the errors in what John has written about Mark 16:9-20.

- **“I would say there is massive evidence that the Holy Spirit not only inspired the Scripture but preserved it in its purity through all history.”**

I agree. Because John and I affirm that God preserved the text of the New Testament in its purity, through all its history, I do not see how John could ever consider rejecting Mark 16:9-20. Out of about 1,650 continuous-text Greek manuscripts of the Gospel of Mark known to exist, Mark 16:9-20 is included in all of them (except in cases where

the last part of the manuscript has been damaged), with two exceptions. The proportion of undamaged Greek manuscripts of Mark 16 that contain verses 9 through 20 is greater than 499 out of 500.

The Latin text of the Gospel of Mark in the Vulgate (which was the dominant text of Western Europe for over a thousand years) contains Mark 16:9-20. The Syriac Peshitta (the dominant Syriac text) contains Mark 16:9-20. The Greek texts that were the basis for Tyndale's New Testament, the Geneva Bible, and the

Authorized (King James) Bible's English text of the Gospel of Mark included Mark 16:9-20. The Gothic version (made in the mid-300s), contained Mark 16:9-20. The text used in Ethiopia contains Mark 16:9-20.

If John is going to say that the Holy Spirit preserved the Scripture in its pure state through all history, how can he turn around and reject these twelve verses? Pick up any of the of copies of Mark in the Vulgate, in the Peshitta, in Ethiopic, or in Greek, that were made between the year 400

and the year 1500, and you will find Mark 16:9-20 there.

John, you can't have it both ways: either the Holy Spirit kept the Scriptures in a pure state, or else the Holy Spirit allowed thousands and thousands of manuscripts in Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic were contaminated by twelve verses that the Holy Spirit did not want to be in the text of the Gospel of Mark.

Once the premise is accepted that the Holy Spirit has providentially preserved the purity of Scripture for the church **in all ages**, then one has

to acknowledge that the inclusion of Mark 16:9-20 does not compromise the purity of the text.

● **“There are twenty-five thousand ancient manuscripts of the New Testament. Such an abundance preserved by the Holy Spirit through faithful men in the church makes it possible to reconstruct the original books with virtually complete accuracy.”**

John, please realize that most “ancient manuscripts of the New Testament” are

manuscripts of *parts* of the New Testament, not all 27 books. We don't have 25,000 ancient manuscripts of the Gospels. The number of manuscripts of the Gospel of Mark that are more than 1,200 years old is less than 250.

Also, brother John, please open your eyes and see what you are talking about: examine the manuscripts of the Gospel of Mark in Greek, Latin, Coptic, Syriac, Ethiopic, and Aramaic, the vast majority of Gospels-manuscripts in these languages includes Mark 16:9-20, and you

will see that over 99.9% of these manuscripts support including Mark 16:9-20.

John, when I look at Greek Gospel lectionary-manuscripts (copies of the Gospels-text arranged in segments for reading on specific days), I see that Mark 16:9-20 is featured very prominently.

Because you believe, John, the Holy Spirit guided the church in every age to use a pure form of the text, then you must believe that the inclusion of Mark 16:9-20 does not make the text impure. Greek-speaking churches and Latin-

speaking churches and Syriac-speaking churches have been using Mark 16:9-20 as Scripture for over one thousand and five hundred years.

● **“There’s some wonderful stories about scribes who would write one letter and take a bath, then write another letter, take a bath, write another letter because of the sense that they were handling the Holy Word of God, fearful of making a mistake.”**

John, I have read the same stories. And that is what they

are: *stories*. Those accounts are not describing what was done by the copyists who produced copies of the Gospel of Mark. It is counter-productive, in the long run, to build people's confidence in the word of God by telling them things that are not true.

- **“When you have the Council of Nicea in 325 and Christianity becomes established as the religion of the Roman Empire, the persecution ends and starting then you have the proliferation of manuscripts. They all survived because no**

one is banning them or destroying them.”

John, this claim of yours is disconnected from historical reality. We do not have very many manuscripts from the 300s and 400s. After the Roman persecutions stopped, *humidity kept on working*. Papyrus manuscripts gradually rotted away. It is simply not true that “they all survived.” John, your claim is ridiculous.

● “The earliest and most important of the Biblical texts that have been discovered

would be what's called Codex Sinaiticus, for where it was discovered on Mount Sinai. This would be about 350 and it is the whole New Testament. About 325 Codex Vaticanus, that is both the New Testament and the Old Testament."

John, permit me to add some clarifications.

First: the Dead Sea Scrolls are older than those two manuscripts.

Second, over a dozen manuscripts, including substantial papyri, containing

portions of the New Testament, are older than Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus.

Third, Codex Sinaiticus contains Old Testament books in addition to New Testament books.

Fourth, Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus have undergone extensive damage in some portions and for that reason, neither one contains text from every book of the Bible.

Fifth, it should be pointed out – because of your claim about the purity of the text – that both of these manuscripts

contain portions of the apocryphal books (called by some the “Deuterocanonical” books), as most Greek Old Testament manuscripts do.

Codex Sinaiticus includes text from the “*Epistle of Barnabas*” and the “*Shepherd of Hermas*,” non-canonical books written in the 100’s.

- **“There are eight thousand copies of Jerome’s Vulgate, Bible translation from 382 to about 405. A Vulgate means Common in Latin. . . . It was the common translation of the Roman Catholic Church for a**

long time. So you have eight thousand copies going back to the fourth century.”

John, I think should point out two things to your congregation.

First, Jerome said in the Preface to the Vulgate Gospels that he consulted ancient Greek manuscripts when he was preparing the Latin text of the Gospels. (Jerome was born around 340, so I think it's reasonable to deduce that these manuscripts had been produced before then).

Second, if you and I were to examine 8,000 manuscripts of the Gospel of Mark in manuscripts of the Vulgate, we would find (except in cases where the manuscripts were damaged) the passage that you and I know as Mark 16:9-20.

- **“There are three hundred and fifty-plus copies of the Syriac Bible. Syriac is a dialect of Aramaic and it would have been very close to the language that Jesus spoke. . . . There are 350 copies that go back to the 200’s, very ancient manuscripts.”**

(My apologies, John, for not providing the quotation in its entirety.)

We do not have 350 Syriac copies made in the 200s.

John, you were probably taught that the Syriac Peshitta was made in the 200s.

Nowadays, it is considered a given that the Syriac Peshitta was initially produced in the late 300s and was standardized in the 400s. Regardless of the date, though, all undamaged copies of the Gospel of Mark in the Syriac Peshitta include Mark 16:9-20.

There's only one Syriac manuscript of Mark that ends the text at 16:8: the Sinaitic Syriac (which has a very corrupt text which compromises the virgin birth in Matthew chapter 1, omits Jesus' command to repent in Matthew 4, and has numerous other strange readings).

● **“When you compare all of these manuscripts, they're all saying exactly the same thing.”**

John . . . think about what you said. 1,650 Greek manuscripts of the Gospel of

Mark include Mark 16:9-20. 8,000 Vulgate copies of Mark include Mark 16:9-20. The normal text of Mark in over 99% of the Syriac manuscripts (whether the Syriac Peshitta, or the Harklean Syriac) includes Mark 16:9-20.

It would be twisted, brother John, to say, “We should erase Mark 16:9-20, because of all those Greek and Latin and Syriac manuscripts,” considering that those manuscripts **INCLUDE** Mark 16:9-20. If your approach is, *“Let’s accept the text that is supported by thousands of*

manuscripts,” then it seems to me that the irresistible position you must have is to accept Mark 16:9-20 without hesitation.

● **“In fact, there are so many quotes, 32 thousand of them, that you can virtually put the entire New Testament together from the quotes of the fathers and it matches perfectly all other manuscript sources.”**

John, you have been misinformed. The early church fathers disagree about

hundreds of readings. An elementary investigation of the evidence will demonstrate this beyond the shadow of a doubt.

● **“There are over 19 thousand quotations of just the Gospels in their writings, and they read the Gospel text the very same way you read them in your Bible today.”**

John, I do not know where you found such a claim, but I assure you, IT IS NOT TRUE. Patristic writings reflect many textual variants. Writers such as Origen, Augustine, and

Jerome mention textual variants in their writings. Your claim that the early church writers *“read the Gospel text the very same way you read them in your Bible today”* can be refuted by a sixth grader with a copy of the United Bible Society’s Greek New Testament.

- **“All this provides an abundant evidence for the original text of Scripture being preserved and protected as it was passed down. And we wouldn’t question that, because why would the Holy**

Spirit go to the trouble of inspiring it and then not providentially protect it?”

John, I am amazed at how you emphasize this point in the course of attempting to persuade your congregation that Mark 16:9-20 is not legitimately part of the Gospel of Mark. Let's revisit something I already pointed out: every undamaged continuous-text Greek manuscript of Mark 16 that we have, from the year 400 onward, includes Mark 16:9-20. Brother John MacArthur, have a few questions for you:

When Greek-reading children of God, after the year 400, picked up their Greek copies of Mark, asking for bread, did their Father give them a stone in Mark 16?

Were all the Christians in Ethiopia using the wrong text?

Did generation after generation of Vulgate-readers use a "*bad ending*"? Did all the Greek-speaking Orthodox believers, gathering annually on Ascension-day, read 12 verses that the Holy Spirit did not want them to read?

Did the Reformers develop doctrine based on this passage

that they never should have used?

I remind you, John, that we are not talking about small differences in the text (such as the repetition in one Gospel of a phrase that is found in another Gospel, or the interchange of an *omicron* and an *omega*.) We are talking about twelve consecutive verses about Jesus' appearances after His resurrection.

● **“Why would the Holy Spirit go to the trouble of inspiring it**

and then not providentially protecting it?”

John, seeing that (if I understand you correctly) your position is that the most *preserved* text must be the most *inspired* text, it sounds to me like you are accusing Holy Spirit of being very negligent. If you reject Mark 16:9-20, then you must admit that God allowed 12 uninspired verses to corrupt thousands of copies of the Vulgate, and hundreds of copies in Syriac, and many copies in Ethiopic, and *every* continuous-text Greek

manuscript of the Gospel of Mark except two.

● **“Homer’s *Iliad* was written in the eighth century B.C., the oldest manuscript we have is in the thirteenth century A.D., two thousand years later. We don’t have anything between the thirteenth century and the eighth century B.C. of Homer’s *Iliad*.”**

John, your information appears to be very outdated. In real life there are over two dozen fragments of the *Iliad* from way before the thirteenth

century A.D.; Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 560, from the 200s, is just one example.

John, are all of the professors at Masters Seminary ignorant of the manuscript-background of the *Iliad*? Have any of them, at any time after you publicly shared this claim in 2005, tried to bring you up to date?

I have been under the impression that the slogan of *Grace To You* was “*Because Truth Matters.*” John, I can understand why you were allowed to tell your congregation things that are

not true – we all make gaffes from time to time, and it is difficult for a busy minister to keep his all of his data constantly updated. But why have you been allowed to keep spreading this erroneous claim for twelve years?

● **“Look at the Bible; we have so many accurate, consistent manuscripts that we know without hesitation that what we hold in our hands is an English translation of the original with no loss.”**

Brother John, you once again appeal to the quantity of manuscript as a basis for your claim that the text has not undergone any major changes. And again, I must point out to you that the proportion of Greek manuscripts that include Mark 16:9-20 is above 99%.

I also point out that the Greek texts of Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus disagree with one another over 3,000 times in the Gospels. I conclude that the two manuscripts that you have relied on so heavily, as far as the ending of the Gospel of

Mark is concerned, cannot both be considered to be an accurate copy of the Gospels.

- **“It’s uniformly agreed that . . . it does not belong there.”**

Brother John, I affirm that Mark 16:9-20 DOES belong there. Generally everyone on earth who considers the King James Version authoritative believes that Mark 16:9-20 belongs there. Textual analysts who advocate the Byzantine Priority approach believe that Mark 16:9-20 belongs there. Maurice Robinson, Wilbur

Pickering, Nicholas Lunn, and David Alan Black have affirmed that Mark 16:9-20 belongs there. Whatever that is, John, that is not a uniform agreement that these twelve verses do not belong there.

The dearly departed Dr. Norman Geisler, at the *“Defending Inerrancy”* website, made many false claims about the evidence pertaining to Mark 16:9-20, but at least he acknowledged that “Scholars are divided over the authenticity of these verses.”

- **“Somewhere along the line they started piling up optional endings.” And “In fact, several such endings start to show up as people try to help Mark a little bit with his abrupt ending.”**

John, when we look at patristic writings, it is obvious that wherever the Gospel of Mark went, verses 9-20 went. When we look at the text used by Aphrahat (in Syria), or by Wulfilas (in the territory controlled by the Goths), or by Augustine (in North Africa), or by Irenaeus (in what is now

southern France), or by Epiphanius (on the island of Cyprus), by Hierocles (in Asia Minor), or by Patrick (in Ireland), or by Ambrose (in Milan), or by Eznik (in Armenia), we find Mark 16:9-20 – except in part of Egypt.

At an early period in Egypt, the text of the Gospel of Mark circulated for a while without verses 9-20. Because this form of Mark's narrative ended so suddenly, someone wrote a two-sentence conclusion to wrap up the narrative. This "Shorter Ending" is preserved in eight Greek manuscripts. All

eight of them also contained verses 9-20 when they were new. That “Shorter Ending” is the only other ending after verse 8.

Allow me to spell things out to you, brother John: eight Greek manuscripts had, when produced, the “Shorter Ending” and Mark 16:9-20. One manuscript has an interpolation between verse 14 and verse 15. Your claim that ending “started piling up” is RUBBISH. It is nonsense. Whoever told you that there were “several endings” or “various endings” was distorting the evidence.

That deceiver, whoever it was, and whatever motive he or she had, was either clueless, or else he or she wanted to make sure you did not have a clear view of the evidence.

● **“Justin Martyr and Tatian, however, show knowledge of other endings,” and “Even Irenaeus shows knowledge of other endings starting to float around.”**

John, it appears that someone has misinformed you about these second-century writers. What these three men

really show is their acceptance of Mark 16:9-20. There is no evidence in their writings of any “other endings.” Justin Martyr made a strong allusion to Mark 16:20 in his *First Apology*, chapter 45. He alluded to Mark 16:14 in chapter 50. Tatian incorporated almost all 12 verses into his *Diatessaron*. Irenaeus, writing in the early 180s, specifically quoted Mark 16:19 in *Against Heresies*, Book Three, chapter 10: “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.’”

I do not know how you could ever get the impression that these three writers show knowledge of “other endings.” You must stop misrepresenting what these heroes of the Christian faith said. It would be very helpful, John, if you are going to be involved in the production of English New Testaments in the future, to include, with any footnotes or sub-headings about Mark 16:9-20, the names of these men who had Mark 16:9-20 in their manuscripts of the Gospel of

Mark. There is sufficient room in the margin to mention them.

As I begin to conclude, brother John, I call on you, and on the organization known as *Grace To You*, and the members of Grace Community Church (in Sun Valley, California) to retract your false claims about Mark 16:9-20. Stop circulating the false claims about 16:9-20 that you made in your sermon and in other venues.

You were very misinformed, it seems to me, about almost every aspect of the external evidence pertaining to Mark

16:9-20. But I think you, and those in charge of *Grace To You*, and the members of Grace Community Church, know the difference between right and wrong.

I also call on the professors at *The Masters Seminary* to behave themselves as men among men, and correct a brother when they observe that he is speaking nonsense. Have you all imagined that Dr. John MacArthur *intended* to misinform his congregation? Speak up, my brothers, or share the blame.

Finally: REPENT. Stop spreading falsehoods about the ending of Mark. If you need to become better-informed about Mark 16:9-20, I offer to you, and to each of the elders of Grace Community Church, a copy of my book, *Authentic: The Case for Mark 16:9-20* (Fourth Edition).



As a postscript, brother John (and concerned saints everywhere), I now offer some

comments about the statements which I suspect misled brother John MacArthur regarding twelve inspired, inerrant, and canonical verses of our sacred Scriptures. (Similar comments appear in the opening chapter of my recently published book, *Authentic: The Case for Mark 16:9-20.*)

First, I wish to establish that I am not a King James Only fanatic. Not do I consider the Textus Receptus to be the best available compilation of the

Greek text of the books of the New Testament.

I shall now review what has been claimed by various authors regarding Mark 16:9-20, especially authors who I suspect of misinforming John MacArthur.

Norman Geisler: verses 9-20 “are lacking in many of the oldest and most reliable manuscripts.” [See pp. 377-378 of *The Big Book of Bible Difficulties*, © 1992 by Norman L. Geisler and Thomas A. Howe, republished in paperback in

2008 by Baker Books, also published as *When Critics Ask.*]

Larry O. Richards: “In many ancient Greek manuscripts,” Mark’s Gospel ends at 16:8. [See p. 648 of *Bible Reader’s Companion*, by Larry O. Richards, © 1991, 2002 Cook Communications Ministries.]

Wilfrid J. Harrington: Mark 16:9-20 is omitted “in very many Greek manuscripts of the Gospel.” [See p. 128 of *Record of the Fulfillment: The New Testament*, by Wilfrid J. Harrington, © 1965 The Priory Press, Chicago.]

Donald Juel: “according to the almost unanimous testimony of the oldest Greek manuscripts,” Mark ends at 16:8. [See p. 168 of *An Introduction to New Testament Literature*, © 1978 by Donald Juel.]

Ernest Findlay Scott: these 12 verses “are found in no early manuscript.” [See p. 59 of *The Literature of the New Testament*, by Ernest Findlay Scott, © 1932 Columbia University Press.]

David Ewert: “All major manuscripts end this Gospel at 16:8.” [See the section “So

Many Versions” in A General Introduction to the Bible, by David Ewert, © 1983 by David Ewert under the title From Ancient Tablets to Modern Translations, published by Zondervan.]

Eugene Peterson (in a footnote in *The Message*): Mark 16:9-20 “is contained only in later manuscripts.” [See the footnote at Mark 16:9 (page-numbers differ in different editions), *The Message*, © 1993 by Eugene H. Peterson.] This was changed in later editions.

Ron Rhodes stated that Codex Alexandrinus does not

contain Mark 16:9-20. [See p. 31 of *The Complete Book of Bible Answers* by Ron Rhodes, © 1997 by Ron Rhodes, published by Harvest House Publishers, republished in 2007 as *What Does the Bible Say About...?* in which the same false claim appears on page 32.]

G. W. Trompf (in the scholarly journal *New Testament Studies*) wrote that Codex D's text of Mark ends at 16:8. [See p. 315 of "First Resurrection Appearance: Mark XVI," by G. W. Trompf in *New Testament Studies*, 1972 (#18).]

Bob McCartney, who has two graduate degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, told his congregation at the First Baptist Church of Wichita Falls, Texas, “It’s also a fact that these verses, as I’ve said a couple of times, really don’t have any substantiation until you get to medieval times. Until you get to about eight- or nine-hundred A.D., you can’t find a manuscript that contains these verses of Scripture.” [from the sixth minute of *“How Does Mark’s Gospel Really End?”* (preached on July 17, 2011).]

Robert Grant wrote that Codex W “contains a different ending entirely.” [See chapter two of *A Historical Introduction to the New Testament, Materials and Method of Textual Criticism*, ©1963 by Robert M. Grant.]

N. T. Wright wrote that “a good many of the manuscripts” with Mark 16:9-20 “have marks in the margin (asterisks or obeli) to indicate that the passage is regarded as of doubtful authenticity.” [See p. 618 of *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, © 2003 Nicholas Thomas

Wright, published by Fortress Press.]

The late Robert Stein wrote that “A number of the manuscripts have asterisks or other markings by the text indicating that the copyists thought the longer ending was spurious.” [See p. 82 of “*The Ending of Mark*” by Robert Stein, in *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 18.1 (2008)]

James Edwards wrote that “Many of the ancient manuscripts” contain “scribal notes or markings” to indicate that “the ending is regarded as a spurious addition.” [See p.

498 of *The Pillar New Testament Commentary on Mark*, by James Edwards, © 2002 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., D. A. Carson, General Editor.]

Craig Evans wrote, “Many of the older manuscripts have asterisks and obeli marking off the Long or Short Endings as spurious or at least doubtful,” and, “Later copies contain vv. 9-20, but they are marked off with asterisks or obelisks, warning readers and copyists that these twelve verses are doubtful.” [See p. 1103 of *Eerdman’s Commentary on the*

Bible, © 2003 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., James G. D. Dunn and John W. Rogerson, editors; cf. the *Word Biblical Commentary on Mark*, Volume 2 (34b), by Craig A. Evans, © 2001 Thomas Nelson Publishers.]

Dr. Evans also stated that these verses “were added at least two centuries after Mark first began to circulate.” [See p. 30 of *Fabricating Jesus*, by Craig A. Evans, © 2006 by Craig A. Evans, published by InterVarsity Press. If the Gospel of Mark’s production-date is placed in the mid-60s, that means that verses

9-20 were attached to Mark 16:8 some time after 260.

Robert H. Gundry wrote, “The earliest and best manuscripts end with Mark 16:8, and the rest hopelessly disagree concerning what follows.” [See p. 205 of *A Survey of the New Testament*, by Robert H. Gundry, ©1970 Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI.]

C. F. D. Moule wrote that in some manuscripts, the Shorter Ending is all that follows Mark 16:8. [See p. 132 of *The Gospel According to Mark* by C. F. D. Moule, in the *Cambridge Bible*

Commentary series, © 1965
Cambridge University Press.]

A footnote in the *English Standard Version* (2010 edition) at Mark 16:9 stated, “Some manuscripts end the book with 16:8; others include verses 9-20 immediately after verse 8. A few manuscripts insert additional material after verse 14; one Latin manuscript adds after verse 8 the following: *But they reported briefly to Peter and those with him all that they had been told. And after this, Jesus himself sent out by means of them, from east to*

west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation. Other manuscripts include this same wording after verse 8, then continue with verses 9-20.”

[See p. 52 of *The New Testament, English Standard Version*, © 2001, 2007 Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.]

Footnotes in the *New Living Translation* mention that “various endings” to Mark exist and that “Some early manuscripts add” extra material between verses 14 and 15.
[See p. 1664 of *New Living*

Translation (Life Application Bible), © 1996, 2004 Tyndale House Publishers. The NLT's translation-team for the Gospel of Mark consisted of Robert Guelich, George Guthrie, and Grant R. Osborne.]

Philip Wesley Comfort told his readers that according to Clement and Origen (two important writers in the early church), Mark's text ends at 16:8. [See pp. 137-138 of *The Quest for the Original Text of the New Testament* by Philip Wesley Comfort, © 1992 Baker Book House.]

Dr. Bruce Metzger and Dr. Bart Ehrman wrote, “Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Ammonius show no knowledge of the existence of these verses.” [See p. 226 of *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, fourth edition, by Bruce Metzger and Bart Ehrman, © 2005 Oxford University Press. (In the first edition Metzger very ignorantly made this claim about Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Eusebius.)

Dr. Robert Stein told his readers that the ending at 16:8

is witnessed to by Clement of Alexandria and Origen. [See p. 81 of *The Ending of Mark* by Robert Stein, in *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 18.1 (2008).]

J. Harold Greenlee wrote that “the second-century Church Father Cyril of Alexandria” omitted these verses. [See p. 90 of *Scribes, Scrolls, and Scriptures* by J. Harold Greenlee, Copyright © 1985 by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids.]

Ralph P. Martin wrote that Eusebius and Jerome (two important writers in the early church) “say that the passage

was unknown in all copies of Mark to which they had access.” [See p. 152 of *Where the Action Is - A Bible Commentary for Laymen - Mark*, © 1977 by Regal Books, USA.]

W. R. Telford wrote that Mark 16:9-20 was lacking “from all Greek manuscripts known to Eusebius and Jerome.” [See p. 25 – p. 144 of *The Theology of the Gospel of Mark*, by W. R. Telford, © Cambridge University Press, 1999, in the *New Testament Theology* series edited by James Dunn.]

Ben Witherington III wrote, “Eusebius and Jerome both tell us these verses were absent from all Greek copies known to them.” [See pp. 412-413 of *The Gospel of Mark – A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* by Ben Witherington III, © 2001 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing.]

Tim Geddert wrote, “Not only do “*some* of the most ancient authorities” lack these verses (as NRSV says) – they *all* do.” [See p. 150 of *Beginning Again (Mark 16:1-8)* by Tim Geddert in *Direction Journal*, Fall 2004, Vol. 33 #2.]

Eugene Nida (in a book written for Bible-translators) mentioned that important Ethiopic copies omit Mark 16:9-20. [See p. 506 of *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of Mark* by Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene A. Nida, © 1961 by UBS, published by E.J. Brill, Leiden.]

Ron Rhodes told his readers, "These verses are absent from the Old Latin manuscripts." [See p. 31 of *The Complete Book of Bible Answers* by Ron Rhodes, © 1997 by Ron Rhodes, published by Harvest House Publishers, republished

in 2007 as *What Does the Bible Say About...?*]

James Edwards told his readers that the Old Latin version omits Mark 16:9-20. [See pp. 497-498 of *The Gospel According to Mark: Pillar Commentary Series* by James Edwards, © 2002 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.]

Apologist James R. White (of Alpha & Omega Ministries) wrote that Mark 16:9-20 is not in “some manuscripts of the Sahadic Coptic version, manuscripts of the Armenian translation, and some versions of the Georgian translation.”

[See p. 255 of *The King James Only Controversy*, © 1995 James R. White, published by Bethany House Publishers.] I confess that I am unfamiliar with the “Sahadic” version. Surely “Sahidic” was intended.

All the materials currently in circulation spreading these false claims must be retracted and withdrawn from public circulation.



As an additional postscript, which John MacArthur and the professors at Masters Seminary are welcome to share with their students and congregations, I now present some evidence of the utilization of Mark 16:9-20 by early church writers and their contemporaries.

Philip Wesley Comfort told his readers that according to Clement and Origen (two important writers in the early church), Mark's text ends at 16:8. [See pp. 137-138 of *The Quest for the Original Text of the New Testament* by Philip

Wesley Comfort, © 1992 Baker Book House.]

Dr. Bruce Metzger and Dr. Bart Ehrman: “Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Ammonius show no knowledge of the existence of these verses.” [See p. 226 of *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, fourth edition, by Bruce Metzger and Bart Ehrman, © 2005 Oxford University Press. (In the first edition Metzger made this claim about Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and

Eusebius – which was a very ignorant thing to write.)]

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University Press, 1999, in the *New Testament Theology* series edited by James Dunn.]

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Geddert in *Direction Journal*,
Fall 2004, Vol. 33 #2.]

Bruce Metzger (in his extremely influential *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*) mentioned that the text of Mark ends at 16:8 in “about one hundred Armenian manuscripts, and the two oldest Georgian manuscripts (written A.D. 897 and A.D. 913).” [See p. 122-123 of *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* by Bruce Metzger, © 1975 United Bible Societies, Stuttgart, Germany.]

In the fourth edition of *The Text of the New Testament*, Bruce Metzger and Bart Ehrman stated that “a number of manuscripts of the Ethiopic version” do not contain Mark 16:9-20. [See p. 226 of *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, fourth edition, by Bruce Metzger and Bart Ehrman, © 2005 Oxford University Press.]

Eugene Nida (in a book written for Bible-translators) mentioned that important Ethiopic copies omit Mark 16:9-

20. [See p. 506 of *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of Mark* by Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene A. Nida, © 1961 by UBS, published by E.J. Brill, Leiden.]

Ron Rhodes told his readers, “These verses are absent from the Old Latin manuscripts.” [See p. 31 of *The Complete Book of Bible Answers* by Ron Rhodes, © 1997 by Ron Rhodes, published by Harvest House Publishers, republished in 2007 as *What Does the Bible Say About...?*]

James Edwards told his readers that the Old Latin version omits Mark 16:9-20. [See pp. 497-498 of *The Gospel According to Mark: Pillar Commentary Series* by James Edwards, © 2002 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.]

James R. White (of Alpha & Omega Ministries) wrote that Mark 16:9-20 is not in “some manuscripts of the Sahadic Coptic version, manuscripts of the Armenian translation, and some versions of the Georgian translation.” [See p. 255 of *The King James Only Controversy*, ©

1995 James R. White, published
by Bethany House Publishers.]



In addition I list a few more patristic references which show how widespread Mark 16:9-20 was in the early Christian church.

Macarius Magnes (c. 405) cited Mark 16:18 in his book *Apocriticus*:

“We must not take the words about the ‘sickness’ and the ‘deadly drug’ in too literal a sense. Otherwise we shall find them contradicted by two facts. First, those who are unbelievers may likewise recover from deadly drugs Secondly,

many unbelievers run away at the first sign of sickness, but we must not therefore argue that those who stay to tend the sick are believers in consequence. Such literal and manward tests will not do, or we shall have people boasting of their faith simply because they have some skill in nursing. So the 'deadly drug' must be taken in a less literal sense, and this 'death' is like that wherein St. Paul says, 'We are buried with Him in baptism.' Here there is a 'deadly drug' which actually saves men from the tyranny of sin. For to drink this in faith

means the death of the savage nature within, without any harm being received. So that which harms unbelievers does not harm the faithful.”

Jerome (347 to 420) included Mark 16:9-20 in the Vulgate, and attested to the existence of an interpolation (now known as the Freer Logion) between Mark 16:14 and 16:15 “especially in Greek codices.”

The Lection-Cycle Used by Augustine In the city of Hippo, in North Africa, in featured

Mark 16:1-20 as a reading for Easter, alongside Isaiah 53:5 to 7, Acts 1, and Psalm 145. John Burgon and F.J.A. Hort agreed about this. Hort noted, “Three of Augustine’s sermons (236:1, 233 *passim*, 239:2) shew that in his time, early in Cent. 5, the narratives of all four evangelists were read at Easter in North Africa, and that verses 9 to 20 was included.”

In his treatise *On the Soul*, Book Two, Augustine used Mark 16:18 to make a point about the permissibility of reading dangerous books:

“What else are listening, and reading, and abundantly placing things in one’s memory, than several processes of drinking? The Lord, however, foretold concerning His faithful followers that even “if they should drink any deadly thing, it should not hurt them.” And so it happens that they who read indiscriminately, and give their approval to whatever is commendable according to the rule of faith, and disapprove of things which ought to be rejected, even if they memorize statements which are declared to be worthy of disapproval,

they receive no harm from the poisonous and depraved nature of the sentences.”

Philostorgius (c. 425) wrote the following:

“Eugenius struck up a conversation with the Jew about belief in the only begotten Son of God. The Jew was ridiculing this, when they came across a dead snake lying in the road. The Jew immediately said to them, ‘If you eat this dead snake and do not die, I will become a Christian.’ Eugenius took the snake at once and divided it

into three parts for himself and the two others with him, and they ate it in front of the Jew and went on living. Thus there was fulfilled with them the salvific Gospel-saying, 'And they will pick up snakes with their hands, and if they eat anything deadly, it will not harm them.' And the Jew went into the hospice with them, stayed there, and became a Christian of good repute."

This represents support for Mark 16:18, with the reading "And in their hands." Although this could reasonably be assigned to the Anonymous

Homoean in the late 300s, I have attributed it to Philostorgius in the early 400s, since it is possible that the reference to Mark 16:18 is Philostorgius' own interpretive comment upon the story.

Codex Alexandrinus (c. 450), a very significant Greek manuscript of the Bible, contains Mark 16:9-20 as part of the Gospel of Mark in the same format as the rest of the book.

Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus (c. 450) is another important

Greek manuscript. It is damaged but a page containing Mark 16:14-20 has survived.

Eznik of Golb (date: 440), who took part in the translation of the Armenian version in the 400s, wrote this in part 112 of his composition "*Against the Sects*," also known as "*De Deo*," 1:25: "*And again, 'Here are signs of believers: they will dislodge demons, and they will take serpents into their hand, and they will drink a deadly poison and it will not cause harm.'*"

Prosper of Aquitaine (date: 450) in the composition *The Call of All Nations*, Book Two, chapter 2, wrote, *“According to Mark, he speaks thus to the same apostles: go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, and he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned.”*

Codex Bezae (400s or 500s), a damaged Greek-Latin manuscript of the Gospels and Acts (and the Latin text of the last five verses of Third John),

includes a page on which is written Mark 16:6-15.

John Cassian (Date: 425) used a phrase from Mark 16:17 in *On the Incarnation*, Book Seven, chapter 20, between citations of two other passages with a similar theme: “Let us hear God Himself speaking to His disciples: ‘Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils.’ And again: ‘In My name,’ He says, ‘you shall cast out devils.’”

Marius Mercator (Date: around 430) ministered in

northern Africa, Rome, and Constantinople. His writings include a series of sermons against the Nestorians. In *Sermo X*, he wrote “*Exeuentes praedicabant verbum ubique, Domino cooperante, et verbum confirmante, consequentibus eos signis.*”

Marcus Eremita (Date: 435) was a monastery-leader in Ancyra in the early 400s who left his monastery and became a hermit, probably in the desert near the Saint Sabas monastery. He wrote, in *Against Nestorius*, chapter six, “And so these do

not harm those who believe;
even if they die, the deadly
thing does not harm them.”

Leo the Great (Date: 453),
an influential bishop of Rome,
quoted Mark 16:16 in *Epistle
120*, a letter to Theodoret of
Cyrus dated June 11, 453. In
this Latin letter, Leo wrote,

*“So great salvation is of no
avail to unbelievers, as the Very
Truth said to His disciples: ‘He
that believeth and is baptized
shall be saved; but he that
believeth not shall be
condemned.’”*²³⁶ⁿ

Saint Patrick (Date: mid-400s), the famous missionary to Ireland, composed two works which use material from Mark 16:9-20: *The Letter to Coroticus*, and *Confession*. In *Letter to Coroticus* 20, in the course of denouncing Coroticus for attacking a group of new Christian converts, Patrick wrote, “I bear witness before God and his angels that it shall be just as he signified to me, unskilled though I am. That which I have set out in Latin is not my words but the words of God and of apostles and prophets, who of course have

never lied. He who believes shall be saved, but he who does not believe shall be damned. God has spoken.”

In *Confession* 40, Patrick strung together a series of Biblical passages: “We are strictly bound to spread out our nets, so that an abundant multitude and a crowd should be caught for God and that there should be clergy everywhere who should baptize and preach to the needy and expectant masses, just as the Lord says in the gospel, he warns and teaches in the text, *Go therefore and teach all*

nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things, whatever I have taught you. And in another place he says, Go therefore into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature; whoever believes and is baptized will be saved but whoever does not believe will be damned. And in another place: This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony for all nations and then the end will come.”

Peter Chrysologus, bishop of Ravenna from 433 to 450, His works were influential; Thomas Aquinas used his writings in the mid-1200s. In his 83rd Sermon, Peter Chrysologus commented extensively on Mark 16:14 to 20, quoting several complete verses from this passage. He began by stating, *“Thus the holy Evangelist has told us today that within the very time of the Crucifixion the Apostles were concerned about banquets, and forgetful of the Lord’s Passion. He states: ‘He appeared to the*

eleven as they were reclining at table.””²⁴²ⁿ



END

**Be careful of what you say,
John, lest on the day of
judgment you come to a
“bad ending.”**

**REPENT
and trust the word of God.
NOW**

**You can read David Robert Palmer's
response to this document [here](https://bibletranslation.ws/down/Palmer-Response-to-Snapp-RE-MacArthur.pdf).
[https://bibletranslation.ws/down/Palmer-
Response-to-Snapp-RE-MacArthur.pdf](https://bibletranslation.ws/down/Palmer-Response-to-Snapp-RE-MacArthur.pdf)**