

THE END OF MARK'S GOSPEL

Was Mark 16:9-20 originally written by Mark or was it added later?

- All manuscripts include Mark 16:1-8.
- Almost all manuscripts go on to include Mark 16:9-20.
- Some manuscripts include an alternative, shorter ending which reads, “And they promptly reported all these instructions to Peter and his companions. And after that, Jesus Himself sent out through them from east to west the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.”

Translator’s Marginal Notes:

NIV: The earliest manuscripts and some other ancient witnesses do not have verses 9-20.

ESV: Some of the earliest manuscripts do not include 16:9-20.

NKJV: Verses 9-20 are bracketed in the NU (that's a description of a modern critical text) as not in the original text. They are lacking in Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, although nearly all other manuscripts of Mark contain them.

NASB: Later manuscripts add verses 9-20.



An Extremely Odd Gap

This image is from the Codex Vaticanus (copied about 300-325 AD). It shows the final page of Mark's Gospel ending at verse 8, including a blank column, unlike any other found in its New Testament. The column could provide just enough space to include verses 9-20.

What Does The External Evidence Have To Say?

Papias (60-130 AD)

Records that Justus Barsabbas (Acts 1:23) survived a poisonous drink – which may be a reference to Mark 16:18.

Justin Martyr (100-165 AD)

Quotes from Mark 16:9-20.

Tatian (120-180 AD)

Included verses 9-20 in his Diatessaron (harmony of the Gospels) in about 170 AD.

Irenaeus (130-202 AD)

Quotes Mark 16:9 in his writings.

Epistula Apostolorum

A document written against Gnosticism in about 140-150 AD, quotes these verses.

Eusebius (260-340 AD)

Reveals that he's acquainted with copies of Mark that both contain and eliminate the final 12 verses. He both questions them and quotes them.

Jerome (345-420 AD)

Included Mark 16:9-20 in the Latin Vulgate he produced in about 380 AD. He also notes they are missing from some manuscripts.

About Those Oldest Manuscripts:

Codex Vaticanus (Codex B)

Produced Approximately 300-325 AD

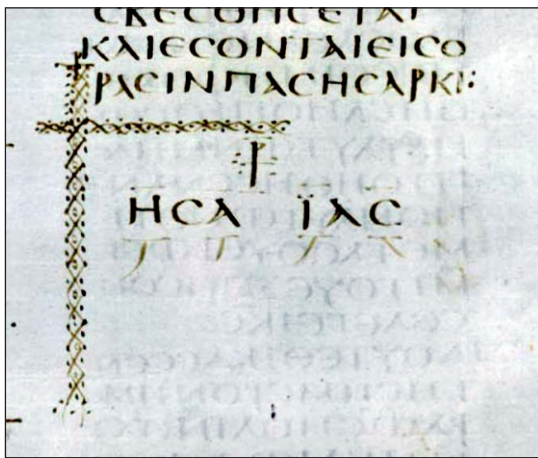
- It ends at Mark 16:8, and is followed by a large blank column unique to its New Testament. (see front page)
- There does not appear to be any erasures on that page. It seems likely a scribe was copying from a manuscript without Mark 16:9-20, but was familiar with those verses and left room for them.
- The blank space is long enough so that, if slightly condensed lettering was used, it would allow verses 9-20 to fill that space.

Codex Sinaiticus (Codex Ⲙ - Aleph)

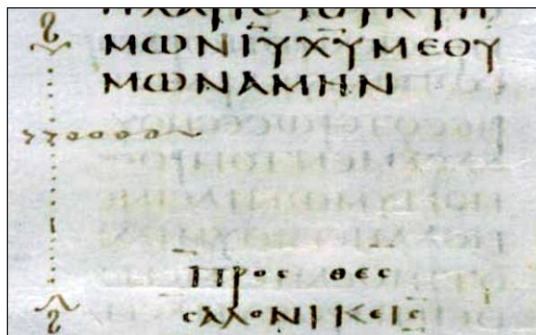
Produced Approximately 350 AD

- The four-page-sheet containing the end of Mark's Gospel and the beginning of Luke has been removed and replaced.
- The handwriting on those pages is distinct from the handwriting of the scribe originally copying Mark and Luke.
- The handwriting of this scribe can be identified in other places in the manuscript, including distinct flourishes he would add at the end of a book. (see below)

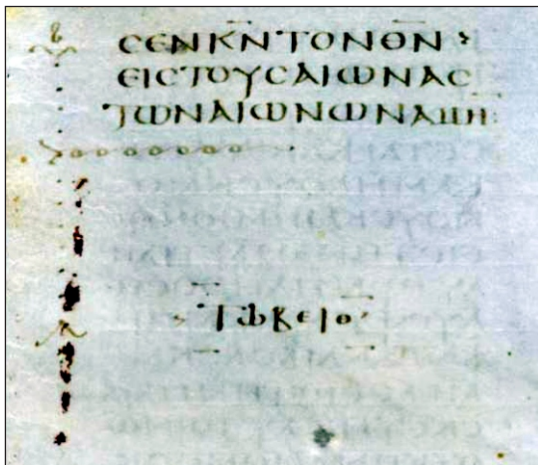
A Telling Scribal Flourish?



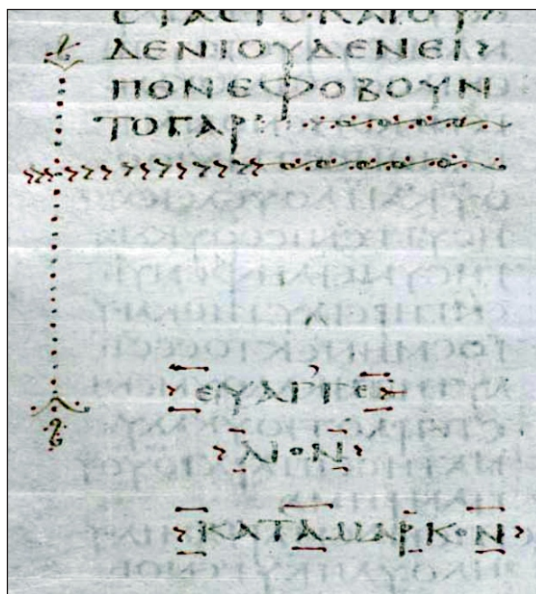
Scribe "A" from the end of Isaiah.



Scribe "B" completes 1st Thessalonians.



Scribe "B" concludes the Apocryphal Book of Tobit.



Scribe "B" appears determined to clearly identify the ending of Mark.

In the earliest manuscripts, scribes would sometimes add a flourish called an "arabesque" to denote the ending of a book. These arabesques are from Codex Sinaiticus. Paleography (handwriting) experts have noted different scribes at work. Does it appear the scribe working at the end of Mark's Gospel intended to make a statement?