

it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.” As for the **DRINKING THE DEADLY THING WITHOUT HARM**, none of the Apostles ever consumed poison during the Acts period either. Why? That too is for Daniel’s 70th Week, when Earth’s waters are poisoned and Israel’s Little Flock need potable water to live. Revelation chapter 8: “[10] *And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; [11] And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.*” Mark 16:18 would have been practiced during Acts, but our Dispensation of Grace interrupted that prophetic program. Israel is temporarily fallen (Romans chapter 11). The Antichrist is still delayed.

Once more, read Mark 16:18: *“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.”* As for the **LAYING HANDS ON THE SICK TO RECOVER THEM**, the Bible says they “*shall*” recover. (As opposed to what the Pentecostals and Charismatics tell us, this is ***not*** conditional, “maybe so, maybe not.” There is **no** “lack of faith” excuse mentioned here either. Bodily healing is **guaranteed** for them. Why?) Israel’s 12 Apostles and rest of the Little Flock healed the sick in Acts 3:1-11 and Acts 5:12-16. They continued performing bodily healings like Jesus did during His earthly ministry. Healing the sick is one of the two great signs of the Kingdom (the other is casting out devils—Mark 3:14-15; Luke 8:1). As touching the Tribulation, or Daniel’s 70th Week, various diseases will outbreak and cause substantial loss of life.

*“For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and **pestilences**, and earthquakes, in divers places”* (Matthew 24:7). *“And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and **pestilences**; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven”* (Luke 21:11). This is the first course of chastisement, found in the Law of Moses.

Leviticus 26:14-17: “[14] *But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments; 15 And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant: [16] I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague [inflammation/fever], that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. [17] And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you.*”

Also, Deuteronomy 28:20-22,27-29: “[20] *The LORD shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do, until thou be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly; because of the wickedness of thy doings, whereby thou hast forsaken me. [21] The LORD shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee, until he have consumed thee from off the land, whither thou goest to possess it. [22] The LORD shall smite thee with a consumption, and with a fever, and with an inflammation, and with an extreme burning, and with the sword, and with blasting, and with mildew; and*

they shall pursue thee until thou perish.... [27] The LORD will smite thee with the botch of Egypt, and with the emerods, and with the scab, and with the itch, whereof thou canst not be healed. [28] The LORD shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart: [29] And thou shalt grope at noonday, as the blind gropeth in darkness, and thou shalt not prosper in thy ways: and thou shalt be only oppressed and spoiled evermore, and no man shall save thee."

Israel's believing remnant will use this spiritual gift of healing to overcome these diseases and prove the Gospel of the Kingdom they are preaching. As James 5:14-15 says, "[14] *Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: [15] And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.*" In Christ's Millennial Kingdom, the heart of the Gospel of the Kingdom, there will be no bodily sickness. "*And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity*" (Isaiah 33:24). "*Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert*" (Isaiah 35:4-6).

More could be said, but we must move on.

J. Without Mark 16:19, is not Luke the only Gospel Record to mention Christ's Ascension?

"So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God" (Mark 16:19). Without this Scripture, the Ascension of Christ is excised from one of the two Gospel Records that contain it. Matthew and John do not refer to the Ascension. Luke 24:51 in the King James Bible has it: "*And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.*"

As a matter of fact, the New American Standard Bible followed Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Bezae, and other witnesses, to read here: "And it came about that while He was blessing them, He parted from them." A center-column note reads: "Some mss. [manuscripts] add, and was carried up into heaven." This is quite a **stunning** difference, is it not?! We will remind ourselves the NASB reflects the Critical Text or Alexandrian (corrupt Egyptian Greek) in Mark 16:9-20. These verses are bracketed off from the rest of the text, with the center-column note: "Some of the oldest mss. do not contain vs. 9-20." Thus, in the NASB—the so-called "conservative" formal equivalent Bible—we have one reference to Christ's Ascension **omitted** (Luke) and the other reference labeled **dubious** (Mark). Considering the Four Gospel Records in the NASB, we are left to wonder if Christ ascended to His Father in Heaven **at all!** We have Acts 1:9-11 unmutilated in the NASB—for now. (It should also be noted that the NASB adds the "shorter ending," also in

brackets, after the bracketed longer [King James] ending. A center-column note reads here: “A few later mss. and versions contain this paragraph, usually after v. 8.”)

Read Mark 16:19 again: “*So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.*” This verse alone reports Jesus sat on the right hand of God. Luke 24:51 has Him carried up into Heaven, but it provides no further explanation. Would Christ ascending and sitting on Father God’s right hand not be an important doctrine? How could we say that this omission in no way affects any doctrine, or any major doctrine? A fulfillment of Psalm 110:1 has been completely eliminated from the Bible text—sometimes twice!

K. Does not Mark 16:20 reinforce the “servant” theme of Mark’s Gospel Record?

It is universally agreed Mark’s Gospel Record highlights the **Servanthood** of Jesus Christ. Mark structured his Book to focus on Jesus’ **actions** rather than His **sermons**. Thus, the large discourses found in Matthew are either omitted or abbreviated in Mark. Under the leading of the Holy Spirit, Mark stresses the **activities of the busy Son of God**—teaching, preaching, healing, and so on. How suitable then is Mark 16:20: “*And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.*” Without this passage, we do **not** have the “*working*” of the Lord Jesus Christ to stress Mark’s “Servant” theme. This is just one more reason to consider Mark 16:9-20 as inspired of God and worthy of our acceptance.

L. Without Mark 16:9-20, is not this second Gospel Record left open-ended?

Let us consider the pattern established in Matthew, Luke, and John:

- Matthew 28:6: “*He is not here: for he is risen, as he said.*” To confirm this, Christ Himself in His resurrected body then appears twice in verses 9-20.
- In Mark 16:6: “*He is risen; He is not here.*” As proof of this fact, Jesus appears thrice in verses 9, 12, and 14 (these verses being in the Longer Ending).
- Now Luke 24:6: “*He is not here, but is risen.*” To validate this message, Jesus appears in His resurrected body on three occasions in verses 15-31, 34, and 36-43.
- Regarding John, while no angel is in the tomb to foretell it, we expect Christ being raised again. As it turns out, He appears post-resurrection four times (20:14-18; 20:19-25; 20:26-29; 21:1-14).

If we accept Mark 16:8 as the original closing verse of the Book, we remove any

and all validation of the claim of His resurrection. We are forced to ***assume*** He resurrected because He is ***said*** to be resurrected, but lacking verses 9-20, there is **no definitive, corresponding proof**. The absence of a meaningful conclusion to Mark is more awkward than any supposed disjointedness between Mark 16:8 and 9! With verses 9-20 in the King James Bible, however, we see validation of the message of Christ's resurrection. Proof is thus present in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Having outlined the arguments against and for Mark 16:9-20, we now proceed to manuscript evidence—including the examination of the two alleged “oldest and best” witnesses so often cited as proof the last 12 verses of Mark do not belong in the Bible.

IV. Consideration of Witnesses

Having provided a “quick” (!) summary of the debate from both sides, we now want to get into yet more detail. This part of the treatise is especially technical, but please make every attempt to follow it as closely as possible. Lengthy quotes from scholars are provided, and you are strongly urged to read at least the bolded statements within the quotes.

A. Manuscript Evidence for Mark 16:9-20

Author and Bible linguist David W. Daniels reminds us again of the manuscript evidence, as found in *Your Bible Version Questions Answered*, pages 117-118:

“Overwhelming Evidence

“Wherever you look, the evidence, including Alexandrian manuscripts, is over 99% in favor of keeping the words of God in Mark 16:9-20.

“Ancient Manuscripts

Out of 620 manuscripts that contain Mark’s gospel, only 2 omit the last 12 verses. Here’s how it breaks down.

“**Miniscules (lower-case letter manuscripts):** Out of 600 miniscules that have been investigated, **all 600 miniscules have 16:9-20.**

“**Uncials or Majuscules (upper-case letter manuscripts):** Out of 15 uncials that have the gospel of Mark, **all 15 uncials have Mark 16:9-20.**

“**Codices (not a scroll, but in book form):** Out of the five codices that have Mark, **3 out of 5 codices have Mark 16:9-20.**

“Only the Vaticanus and Sinaiticus remove it. (Vaticanus *suddenly appeared* in the Vatican library in 1475; and the Sinaiticus is a *19th century fake*.) But the codices Ephraemi Rescriptus and Bezae have it in its place, as well as Alexandrinus.

“**That means less than one third of 1% of these cited manuscripts omit Mark 16:9-20. ONLY TWO!** And they’re not “better” manuscripts. They’re chock-full of errors.” (Bold, italic, underline, and capitalize emphases in original.)

By the way, in 2017, Daniels wrote a book titled *Is the ‘World’s Oldest Bible’ a Fake?* In it, he provides abundant evidence to suggest Sinaiticus—one of the two major

“anti-King James” manuscripts—is ***not* 16 centuries** old but actually **no more than two centuries old**. Another good resource here is David Sorenson’s *Neither Oldest Nor Best*, also published in 2017. We will tackle Vaticanus and Sinaiticus shortly in this Part IV.

Dr. Floyd Nolen Jones informs us of one 12th century miniscule (lowercase manuscript) also removing Mark 16:9-20. Then he adds:

“The external evidence is massive. Not only is the Greek manuscript attestation ratio over 600 to 1 in support of the verses (99.99%)—around 8,000 Latin mss, about 1,000 Syriac versions as well as all of the over 2,000 known Greek Lectionaries contain the verses. They were cited by Church ‘Fathers’ who lived 150 years or more *before* B or Aleph were written i.e.: Papias (c.100), Justin Martyr (c.150), Irenaeus (c.180), Tertullian (cf.195), and Hippolytus (c.200).” (Italic emphasis in original.) (*Which Version is the Bible?*, page 31).

His footnote furnishes us with additional insight. One late Latin manuscript, one Syriac, and one Coptic version omit Mark 16:9-20. Overall, however, **just a handful** of ancient witnesses lack the passage. The testimony **in favor of** these verses is **tremendous**, to say the least.

Dr. Lunn, on pages 25-27 of *The Original Ending of Mark*, apprises us as follows:

“If an actual figure were calculated, as regards Greek manuscripts (uncials, minuscules, lectionaries) that included the ending, **it would probably be in excess of a thousand**. Elliott estimates ‘a thousand or so.’ Simply in terms of numbers then, **the support for the longer Markan ending seems very impressive, more so when the comparable list of manuscripts lacking the passage is seen to be a mere handful, and with respect to Greek copies only, literally just two or three....**

“Besides number and antiquity, diversity is another crucial factor. It is not simply the case that Mark 16:9-20 is better attested numerically, but **is also better represented in more diverse forms of evidence....** Whether in **Greek manuscripts or lectionaries, in other language versions, or in the writings of the church fathers, the longer ending dominates across the board....**

Even within the Greek testimony itself the longer conclusion to Mark is much more diversely attested than the other endings. In the four textual families, or ‘text-types,’ that scholars have identified, that is, **the Byzantine, Western, Caesarean, and Alexandrian, Mark 16:9-20 is present in all. This is not so with respect to the shorter or abrupt endings, which are much more localized.** The Byzantine text-type, in its hundreds of witnesses to Mark, shows almost total unanimity in its inclusion of the ending. Pointers to any

alternative ending in this particular tradition are negligible. One manuscript (minuscule 274) contains the shorter ending in the lower margin. Another manuscript (minuscule 304) is sometimes claimed not to include the ending, but there might be a valid explanation for this, as will be discussed below. Two manuscripts (minuscules 1420 and 2386) break off at the end of 16:8, but this appears to be due to damage in both cases. A small number of other Byzantine texts contain scribal symbols or notes between Mark 16:8 and 9, which are often assumed to indicate the spurious nature of vv. 9-20, a questionable assumption to be addressed presently. Codex Bezae (D), the principal Greek witness for the Western text-type contains the ending. All Caesarean manuscripts display the ending, among which is the early fifth-century Codex Washingtonianus (W), with a few also showing scribal notations before v. 9. Moreover, with regard to the Alexandrian text-type also, apart from the two primary negative witnesses, Codices Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, the remainder of manuscripts in this family all incorporate the longer ending, though a number place the shorter ending before it in addition. In contrast to this, within the confines of the Greek evidence both the abrupt and the shorter endings are restricted to the Alexandrian text-type. No Greek copies of Mark among the Byzantine, Western, or Caesarean textual families, bear witness to a version of that Gospel which finished at 16:8. If this latter were in fact the original ending, it is quite extraordinary that absolutely none of the hundreds of Greek manuscripts of diverse dates, locations, and text-types, other than two Alexandrian copies, should exhibit such a thing. Even when the range of evidence is enlarged to cover the earliest versions, the evidential base for the absence of the ending has not expanded a great deal; apart from one Coptic manuscript, also of the Alexandrian textual family, plus one Old Latin and one Old Syriac, the longer ending remains ubiquitous. It is only when later versions, the Armenian, Georgian, and Ethiopic, are brought into the equation that the negative testimony begins to take on a broader shape, yet even then not nearly as broad or diverse as the evidence for inclusion."

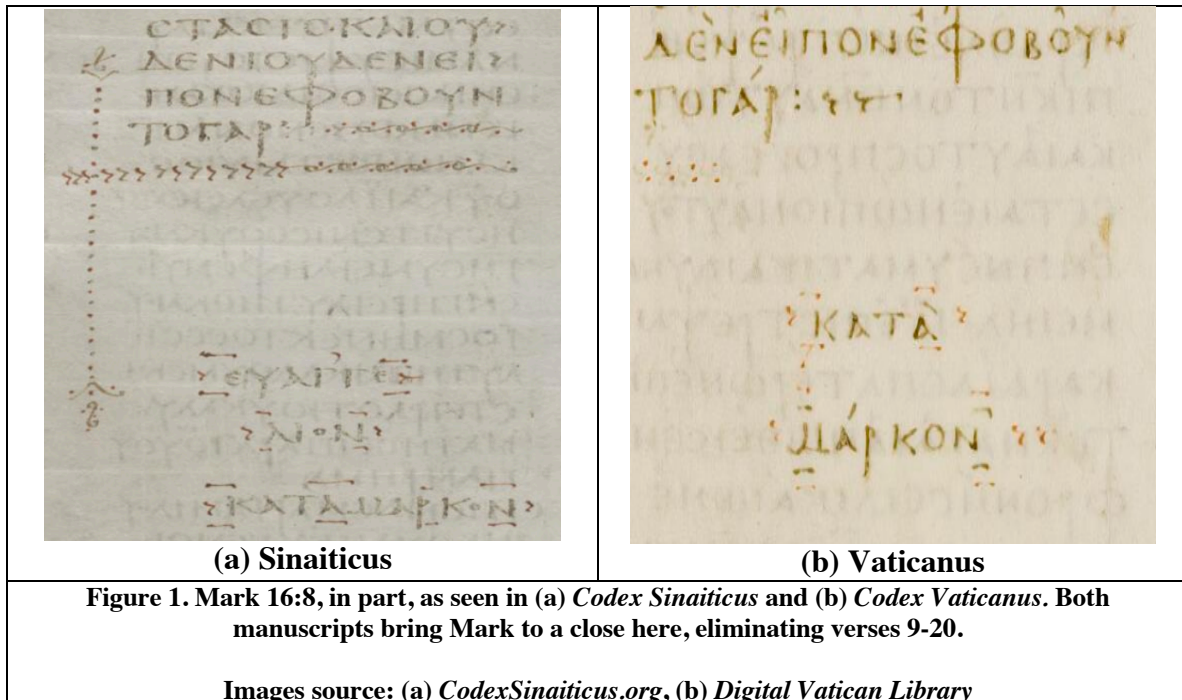
Having provided a brief layout of the manuscript evidence, we want to draw our attention now to Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. As you know all too well, friend, these are the two celebrated "golden calves" of Bible textual critics!

B. A Quick Look at Mark 16 in Codices Vaticanus and Sinaiticus

Remember our comments from Part III Section B, about Vaticanus and Sinaiticus lacking Mark 16:9-20? We will re-read Burgon, *The Last Twelve Verses of Mark*, page 70:

"But the two Manuscripts agree in this,—that *they are without the last twelve verses of S. Mark's Gospel*. In both, after ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ (ver. 8), comes the subscription: in Cod. B [Vaticanus],—KATA MAPKON; in Cod. ⲛ [Aleph/Sinaiticus],—ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ ΚΑΤΑ ΜΑΡΚΟΝ."

Using 21st-century high-definition online photography, we can verify Burgon’s 19th-century observations for ourselves. A decade ago, Vaticanus and Sinaiticus were scanned/photographed and uploaded to their respective websites. Draw your attention now to Figure 1 below, a cursory look at these two codices.



Such detailed images alone do not do justice to the testimonies of Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. Consequently, we will examine these two so-called “oldest and best” manuscripts from another angle. In the next section, we proceed to examine each individually.

C. A Closer Look at Vaticanus and Mark 16:9-20

Dr. Frederick Scrivener, the leader of the conservative forces on the 1881 Revised Version Committee, wrote concerning Codex B:

“The writer’s plan was to proceed regularly with a book until it was finished; then to break off from the column he was writing, and to begin the next book on the very next column. Thus only one column perfectly blank is found in the whole New Testament, that which follows ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ in Mark xvi. 8: and since Cod. B [Vaticanus] is the only one yet known, except Cod. \aleph [Sinaiticus] that actually omits the last twelve verses of that Gospel, by leaving such a space the scribe has intimated that he was fully aware of their existence, or even found them in the copy from which he wrote (see below, Chap. IX.)” (*A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament*, page 104).