

**The Perfect Ending [Mark 16]**  
Draft by Steve Carr [[www.houseofcarr.com/thread](http://www.houseofcarr.com/thread)]

## INTRODUCTION

1. I'm going to show you a bar graph without the pertinent information.
  - a. You can see a definitive decline in whatever is being graphed. Now, let me show
  - b. It's [a graph of the profitability of M Night Shyamalan's movies](#).
    - 1) Spoiler alert: in 1999, the Sixth Sense was an amazing movie with a twist ending.
    - 2) Unfortunately for the movie maker, it's difficult to replicate that experience.
    - 3) It's almost like, the more he tried, the more he couldn't equal it.
    - 4) People wanted that perfect ending but Shyamalan just couldn't deliver it.
2. Today is a great day for our church:
  - a. We wrap up our study of the Passion Week.
  - b. We wrap up our months-long study of the gospel of Mark.
  - c. This culmination SHOULD be perfect, but it's not. And we need to ask why?
  - d. It's pretty simple: We've arrived at Sunday, the day Jesus rose from the dead.
3. In Mark 16, if you turn there in your Bible, you'll likely see something peculiar.
  - a. It states that the earliest most reliable manuscripts don't have the end of the book.
    - 1) If you're unfamiliar with the development of the Bible, this could be frightening
    - 2) Issue: if this is in doubt, how can we trust all of the Bible?
  - b. So even though this is a deeper topic, we're going to wade into this issue.
  - c. Let's use the first part of this message to look at what's happening here.

## PART ONE: TEXTUAL QUESTIONS

1. In understanding where your Bible came from, there is a distinct issue:
  - a. None of the original manuscripts exist
    - 1) We don't have anything that Paul, Mark, or Moses actually wrote themselves.
    - 2) That said, it doesn't mean that this is all made up on the fly
      - a) Over 5,600 Greek manuscripts exist containing all or part of NT
      - b) Over 10,000 Latin manuscripts still exist
      - c) Around 500 other manuscripts of various other languages.
      - d) There are hundreds of Patristic writings (written by early church leaders) which contain copious quotes, across the early centuries, of the scriptures.  
\*\*\*NOTE: there are only 600 manuscripts remaining of Homer's *Illiad*.
    - 3) The importance of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Bible textual accuracy is amazing!
      - a) It rises to the 99<sup>th</sup> percentile, while the *Illiad* is at about 90%
  - b. The earliest manuscript evidence comes on paper called "papyrus."
    - 1) Large proportions of papyrus of individual New Testament books
    - 2) Many dating as early as 2<sup>nd</sup> century
    - 3) The oldest existing is The Rylands Library Papyrus P52 [A.D. 125]
      - a) Papyrus codex, measuring only 3.5 by 2.5 inches
      - b) Here is a text from John 18
    - 4) A Roman invention: the codex—books which were easy to carry.
  - c. BIG THREE CODICES Alexandrinus, Vaticanus, Sinaiticus,  
\*\*\*These are complete collections of the O.T. and N.T.
    - 1) Vaticanus [4<sup>th</sup> century]
    - 2) Sinaiticus [4<sup>th</sup> century]
    - 3) Alexandrinus [5<sup>th</sup> century]

\*Bringing it back to the text: the first two do not include the longer ending to Mark.

\*\*Many early church fathers (including Jerome) do not include it either.

\*\*\*Looking at the language and structure, it's clear this is added later.

\*\*\*If this is the case, what does this mean to us on micro/macro levels?

## 2. SOME THOUGHTS ON THIS

### 1. This inclusion of the ending of Mark ought not shake our faith:

- a. Common belief is that this was added at some point in the second century
  - 1) We'll see that the ending to Mark leaves some questions & they wanted completion
- b. The honesty surrounding the inclusion of the text is refreshing.
  - 1) Translators aren't fearful of admitting the questions surrounding it.
  - 2) Even blind believers have the opportunity to confront this text.
  - 3) Juxtapose this with the state of the Koran

### 2. Early church concept of the meaning of the resurrection was formed

- a. Generally, almost all of these concepts exist in other gospels.
- b. The theme of the extended text is overcoming doubt.

### 3. Understand the difference between *Infallible*; it's not necessarily *inerrant*.

- a. Nothing included at the end of Mark, if applied to one's life, would cause one to sin.
- b. That said, we have to look to the verse that receives the greatest view here.

### 4. The only thing included that is peculiar is verse 18.

*"They will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all."*

- a. There are those literalists in deep Appalachia who believe this to be very important.
  - 1) Their worship includes snake handling, and if bitten, they won't receive aid.
  - 2) This is yet another textual issue that happens: it's a poor *hermeneutic*.
    - a) Nowhere else in the NT is this snake handling mentioned.
    - b) Constructing a whole theology around verse is a horrible decision.

NOW, UNDERSTANDING THIS, LET'S LOOK AT WHAT'S ACTUALLY WRITTEN IN MARK 16

### Verses 1-3

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

1. They couldn't shop on the Sabbath, so they had to wait until it was over.
  - a. It's subtle, but the first day of the week is an important Christian concept.
    - 1) The day of the discovery of the empty tomb is a marker for Christian worship
    - 2) In the ancient world, this set Christians apart from all other worshippers.
2. Who will roll away the stone?
  - a. There's an element of faith here: somehow, everything is gonna work out.

### Verses 4-7

*But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"*

1. The women's worries were alleviated. But they saw a much scarier sight.
  - a. Seeing an angel is frightening enough.
    - 1) Being the first witnesses to the greatest event in human history is another.
  - b. The angel's declaration: Jesus is on the move.
2. The most important lesson: death has been defeated.

### **1 Corinthians 15:54-56**

*"Death has been swallowed up in victory. 'Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."*

## **Verse 8**

*Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.*

1. Despite being told not to be afraid, they were fearful.
  - a. WHY? The gravity of the situation. You can be excited but frightened.
  - b. WHY THEY ADDED THE ENDING: they didn't want the book ending in fear.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **1. Can you find contentment when the story ends differently than you prefer?**

- a. We become convinced in our preferred story that we can't imagine it a different way.
  - b. REALITY WE MUCH FACE: we all respond differently to different stories.
  - c. If we get wrapped up in creating the perfect ending, we're destined to fail.
  - d. That's the point of Jesus: he's the one who redeems and makes our endings perfect.
2. Gilda Radner was a comedienne who died of cancer. Late in her fight, she wrote this:  
*"I wanted a perfect ending. Now I've learned, the hard way, that some poems don't rhyme, and some stories don't have a clear beginning, middle, and end. Life is about not knowing, having to change, taking the moment and making the best of it, without knowing what's going to happen next."*