

THE GENUINENESS OF MARK 16:9-20

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Q: I am disturbed to learn that some now are saying that Mark 16:9-20 are not part of Mark's biography of our Lord and ought to be omitted. Why?

A This by no means is a recent allegation. Denominational theologians, unable to avoid the obvious conclusion that is drawn from Mark 16:15,16 regarding the design of baptism in God's plan to save, sought refuge in unbelief, alleging that Mark 16:9-20 is spurious, and thus is not a part of Mark's original inspired production.

Current controversy about modern versions of the New Testament, some of which either omit the passage or deny its genuineness, has prompted a renewal of the allegation in our day.

Reasons for rejecting the passage result from the fact that two of the oldest manuscripts of the New Testament—the Sinaitic and the Vatican—omit it. Copies derived from these sources, some of which still are in existence, are without the passage. Some ancient writers either opposed the teaching in the verses or denied their reliability. This is the sum of the evidence against the Markian authorship.

It should be observed that when it is said, "two of the oldest manuscripts of the New Testament omit it," this is far from being the same as saying the oldest *copies* of the New Testament are without it. These manuscripts are documents containing the text of the New Testament in Greek. The versions are translations into the languages then in current use. The Old Syriac

translation appeared and was in use in the shadow of the apostolic age—within the lifetime of many early Christians who could and did know John the apostle personally. Mark 16:9-20 is in this translation.

It also appears in the Ethiopic, Egyptian, Old Italic, Sahidic and Coptic translations appearing soon after the end of the first century, all much older than the two Greek manuscripts omitting it, evidencing the fact that the manuscript or manuscripts from which they were made all contained the segment. Two hundred years before the Vatican and Sinaitic manuscripts were copied, it was in the Scriptures then being used.

Irenaeus, an early "church father" often is said to be the most scholarly writer among the Christians in the century after the age of the apostles. A student of Polycarp, who was a close associate of the apostle John, Irenaeus quotes the passage thus demonstrating the fact that it was in the text used in the decades immediately after the death of the last of the apostles.

In the same century Tatian cites it, and the passage appears in more than 500 ancient Greek manuscripts and in works by dozens of Latin and Gothic writers of the day. Hippolytus, a student of Irenaeus and elder in a congregation in Rome in the early portion of the third century, quotes a portion of the passage, thus demonstrating it was in his Bible.

Any documentary evidence against the genuineness of Mark 16:9-20—is greatly weakened by the fact that an abrupt break in the text of the Sinaitic at the eighth verse evidences clearly that addi-

tional material once was attached, and its absence from the text reasonably may be accounted for by the loss from the final section.

The Vatican document, for the same reason, terminates at Hebrews 9:14, thus omitting the remaining portion of that treatise, and the books of James; 1 and 2 Peter; 1,2 and 3 John; Jude; and Revelation. Are we to conclude from this that these books never were part of the original text? The argument against Mark 16:9-20 is no more weighty.

Moreover, a little known fact is that included in the Sinaitic manuscript are apocryphal books with portions of Tobit, Ecclesiasticus and other non-canonical writings. If the omission of Mark 16:9-20 from this document proves the passage to be spurious, does the inclusion of these apocryphal portions establish their reliability?

J. W. McGarvey said in his *Commentary on Matthew and Mark*, "Our final conclusion is, that the passage in question is authentic in all of its details, and there is no reason to doubt that it was written by the same hand which indited the preceding parts of the narrative. The objections which have been raised against it are better calculated to shake our confidence in Biblical Criticism than in the genuineness of this inestimable portion of the word of God."

The best and most conservative scholars through the ages have accepted the authenticity of Mark 16:9-20. Infidels, despisers of truth, and rationalistic "scholars" reject it. Each much decide into which camp his views lead. ■