

Does Mark 16: 9–20 Belong In the New Testament?

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In the spring of 1987, I was a senior Bible major in my last semester at Freed-Hardeman College (now University) in Henderson, Tennessee. One of the classes I took was Critical Introduction to the New Testament. Having already taken the companion class on the Old Testament, I looked forward with eager anticipation to delving into the questions of authorship, dating, and other issues. In the course of our study, we addressed the ending of the Gospel of Mark. The Greek courses I had previously taken served to introduce me to the problem. Now, we entered into it in more detail. When the time came for us to choose a topic for the paper we were to write, I made sure I chose the ending of Mark. Our professor guided me with patience and understanding, pointing me to the proper sources and gently giving me reminders to allow the evidence to speak. I thoroughly enjoyed the process. My conclusion at that time was that Mark 16:9–20 should be included in the text, with a footnote indicating that the two oldest manuscripts did not contain the passage—indicating doubts about its originality with Mark. However, I remember being bothered by the fact that Irenaeus' second-century testimony in favor of Markan authorship was given less weight than I thought it should. At any rate, I thought at the time that this was as far as the evidence could go.

I did not revisit the issue for over twenty years. By that time, I was now a doctoral student at the Turner School of Theology at Amridge University in Montgomery, Alabama. In the course I took on the Synoptic Gospels, I chose to write my paper on Mark 16:9–20. I expected to arrive at the same conclusion from twenty years before. In the course of my research, though, I was surprised to discover two things: first, some of the pieces of evidence that had been cited against the passage were shown by Bruce Metzger to actually favor it. Second, the amount

of material that had been written in the intervening years concerning Mark 16:9–20 was huge. As a result, my interest in the passage was rekindled. This also greatly helped me to make my decision concerning my dissertation topic. The more I delved into the articles and books written on the problem, the more I was convinced this was the subject that needed to be addressed. What settled the matter for me was reading *Perspectives on the Ending of Mark: 4 Views*, by David Alan Black, Darrell Bock, Keith Elliott, Maurice Robinson, and Daniel Wallace. Published in 2008, this was the summary of a conference, previously held, which addressed the ending of Mark. To say that I was pleasantly surprised is an understatement. I was now convinced that the issue had to be revisited, and that a different perspective from the norm was ripe for presentation. Thus it was that in 2012, I finished work on the dissertation that serves as the bulk of my book. My dissertation committee, headed by Dr. Jim Smeal, was vital in focusing my research and strengthening my arguments. While Jim did not necessarily agree with my conclusion, that did not prevent him from offering helpful suggestions and encouragement throughout the process. He fully supported me all the way, as did the committee. I owe a debt of gratitude to them. They are all Christian gentlemen and scholars of the very best sort.

During the process of working on the dissertation, I at times was frustrated by certain attitudes and positions adopted by many of the scholars who wrote the articles and books I used concerning Mark 16:9–20. While I could not include my thoughts at the time in my work, I mentally filed them away for future use, if and when I was approved for publication. That time is now.

As indicated above, I was bothered by my perception that the testimony of second – century witnesses (such as Irenaeus) were given less weight than I thought they deserved. Why was this so? Were these witnesses telling the truth when they testified that Mark wrote the

passage? There is absolutely no indication that they were doing otherwise. Were they mistaken? While such is within the realm of possibility, it is unlikely—given the attitude of the early church concerning the integrity of Scripture, and the biblical prohibitions against adding to the Word of God. How could such early witnesses knowingly proclaim that the passage was from Mark, if they knew that the opposite was true?

It is a presupposition on my part that the Holy Spirit fully inspired Mark, as well as all of the New Testament writers. The conservative position (or “high view”) of Scripture is simple: The Holy Spirit fully inspired the writers of the New Testament, down to the words they chose, without overriding their individual skills and abilities. Without impugning the beliefs of any scholar, it is my strong conviction that the process of inspiration must be factored into the discussion concerning Mark 16:9–20, or for that matter, the study of any biblical book or passage.

John Mark is held forth by many to have written a masterpiece; sometimes to the point that his Gospel seems to be elevated by scholars above those written by Matthew, Luke, and John. That said—if the Holy Spirit chose the words for Mark to use, without overriding his skills and abilities—is it sensible to limit the way in which Mark wrote? To put it another way: John wrote his Gospel, as well as the epistles of John and Revelation; there is a huge difference in style between the Gospel of John and Revelation, yet both came from the same author. Even scholars who do not hold Mark to have written 16:9–20 nevertheless admit similarities between the passage and the rest of the Gospel of Mark.¹ Is it thus a leap of reasoning to say that the same

¹ James A. Kelhoffer, *Miracle and Mission : The Authentication of Missionaries and Their Message in the Longer Ending of Mark* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 49: “(N)umerous parts of 16:9–20 bear a striking resemblance to Mark 1:1–16:8;” Helmut Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels* (London: Scm, 1990), 295: The “vocabulary and style” of the passage “are fully compatible with the Gospel of Mark.”

author could have written both? If the Holy Spirit chose the words, and utilized the intelligence, skills, and abilities of John Mark, such is entirely reasonable. John Mark quite obviously was a very gifted author. The Holy Spirit realized this, and utilized him to the fullest—as He did with the rest of the authors of the Gospels. Each author was chosen to write a unique Gospel for a unique audience for a unique purpose. They each told the same story from unique perspectives.

Yet, this very idea—that each author of the Gospels wrote his own eyewitness account, by the full inspiration of the Holy Spirit (which would account for similarities)—seems all too often to be lost in the discussion. Thus it is that Green-Armytage’s observations ring true:

There is a world—I do not say a world in which all scholars live but one at any rate into which all of them sometimes stray, and which some of them seem permanently to inhabit—which is not the world in which I live. In my world, if *The Times* and *The Telegraph* both tell one story in somewhat different terms, nobody concludes that one of them must have copied the other, nor that the variations in the story have some esoteric significance. But in the world of which I am speaking this would be taken for granted. There, no story is ever derived from facts but always from somebody else’s version of the same story . . . In my world, almost every book, except some of those produced by Government departments, is written by one author. In that world almost every book is produced by a committee and some of them by a whole series of committees.²

In commenting on the relationship between the Gospel of John and the Gospel of Mark, Carson’s remarks have bearing on the discussion:

Regardless of whether John depends on Mark, the easiest explanation as to why John 6 and Mark 6 preserve the same order of events *is that they actually occurred in that order*. It is important to remember that the Gospels were written within the lifetime of someone who knew Jesus himself. The studies on which so much form-and redaction-criticism have been based, the works on which so much effort to delineate the ‘descent of the oral tradition’ turn, were careful examinations of the passing on of traditions within a pre-literate society (the Maoris) over three hundred years or more. But in the Gospels we are dealing with a literate society (as the prologue of Luke attests), with books written within decades, not centuries, of the matters they describe.³

² A. H. N. Green-Armytage, *John who Saw: a Layman's Essay on the Authorship of the Fourth Gospel* (London: Faber And Faber, 1952), 12–13.

³ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 49–50. Emphasis in the original.

To hold one Gospel above the others does the rest a disservice, and in turn seems to overlook the process of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. For all that has been written concerning the “Synoptic Problem,” a larger point has been missed. The four accounts that have been preserved are masterpieces in their own right. Instead of focusing on “who copied whom,” and “who wrote first,” attention should rather be given to each Gospel as a unit to itself. Such is not the prevailing view among scholars by far, but it must be considered. If biblical scholarship is to have relevance in the lives of people, it must get “back to the Bible,” as it were, and steer away from theories of relatively recent origin. Having said that, it seems that some scholars are resistant to real change.

In 1970, the landmark book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* appeared.⁴ While Thomas S. Kuhn originally was attempting to perceive the physical sciences, his work had major ramifications across many academic disciplines. Terms now considered normal—“paradigms,” “paradigm shift”—were revolutionary when Kuhn first used them. The “paradigm” in this context is a commitment to a framework that both defines the world and what the scientist would expect to see. It provides a model of reality by which a thing can be determined to be “true.” Scientists operate within the rules of the paradigm as they work. Yet, although paradigms are necessary, dogmatic adherence to a paradigm makes scientists very sensitive to anything discovered that does not conform to the paradigm. Thus, over time anomalous results accumulate until a paradigm change is inevitable. Such is not at first accepted, but over time takes place. Biblical studies were not immune from scrutiny. In 2000, Shedinger wrote an article asking

⁴ Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed., Enlarged (Chicago: University Of Chicago, 1970).

whether “Kuhnian paradigms” had application to biblical scholarship.⁵ Shedinger’s thesis was that “the academic discipline of biblical studies constitutes a poor arena for the application of Kuhn’s notion of paradigms.”⁶ He further argued that the concept of paradigms “has little place in the discipline of biblical studies.”⁷ Interestingly, Shedinger pointed to the discipline of Synoptic Gospel studies as one reason why. He contrasted scientific work as “normally not marked by a debate over paradigmatic fundamentals” to “precisely the characteristic of scholarly work in biblical studies, a discipline frequently characterized by debate between adherents of differing paradigms.”⁸ He offered the example of the predominant presupposition of the priority of Mark and the existence of Q. “But while this is the dominant paradigm, it is not the only one.”⁹ He pointed to debate between the two groups, a growing number of scholars who advocate the Griesbach hypothesis, and “in biblical studies, contradictory paradigms can and do coexist within the same academic community.”¹⁰

Yet, Shedinger acknowledged some similarities between Kuhnian paradigms and biblical research; in so doing, he seemed to contradict his assertion concerning the Mark/Q understanding of the Synoptics. He observed, “The paradigm has commanded the allegiance of a significant majority of scholars and has provided the framework for an enormous amount of detailed,

⁵ Robert F Shedinger, “Kuhnian Paradigms And Biblical Scholarship: Is Biblical Studies A Science?” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 119, no. 3 (2000): 453–71.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 454.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, 458.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

paradigm-based research.”¹¹ He pointed out that those who differed with this understanding were still held to be members of the scholarly community, unlike in the scientific community, though he interestingly added, “those dissenting from the Mark/Q understanding of Synoptic relationships have not created a paradigm shift; they are merely engaging in healthy inter-paradigm debate.”¹²

The relevance of all of this to the question of the ending of Mark can be seen in two ways. First, the prevailing view—that 16:9–20 does not belong in the Gospel of Mark—is promoted by many of those who hold to the prevailing paradigm of Synoptic studies. Shedinger perhaps unwittingly admitted more than he intended when he said that those who dissent from Mark/Q are still working within the accepted paradigm. The presuppositions of the Mark/Q approach (developed by German scholars in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) thus affect the approach to the problem.

The fact is, the centerpiece of this “solution” to the Synoptic Problem—the so-called “Q” document—is a chimera; a will-o’-the-wisp that exists only in the minds of those willing to accept it as true. Such a document has never been discovered, or has ever been shown to even exist. Second, any major challenge to the prevailing view is often met with resistance. Such may be observed in the study of the ending of Mark by the comments of several scholars. John Christopher Thomas—in commenting concerning the work of William Farmer—said in 1983, “Farmer’s work will probably inspire more research among those who for theological reasons *feel compelled to cling* to 16:9–20.”¹³ In 1986, J. Lee Magness briefly noted the passage and

¹¹ Ibid., 469.

¹² Ibid., 470 f30.

¹³ John Christopher Thomas, “A Reconsideration of the Ending of Mark,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 26, no. 4 (December 1983): 418–19.

asserted, “(O)verwhelming evidence demands that we reject verses 9–20 and look elsewhere for the original ending.”¹⁴ Writing three years later, Andrew Lincoln stated, “This reading of the ending will work with the text that ends at 16:8 and will proceed on the assumption that it is no longer necessary to argue in any great detail either that 16:8 is the original ending or that an author could have intended to end a work with the clause ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ.”¹⁵ In 1993, Paul L. Danove was dismissive of patristic evidence for the passage, categorizing it as “redundant.” Concerning the possibility that such evidence might pinpoint a date for any particular ending, he offered this response: “This, however, is not a necessary conclusion but only a possible one, since knowledge of these endings does not imply any given context for them.” J. K. Elliott perhaps was the most outspoken of those criticizing the passage. In the midst of his 2008 presentation in connection with the conference on the ending of Mark, he wrote these words: “It is self-deceiving to pretend that the linguistic questions are still ‘open.’”¹⁶ Not content to stop there, he added that the passage was “an inferior piece of writing, plodding and grey.”¹⁷ He continued: “I am unwilling to credit Mark with the incorporation of this allegedly previously composed ending into his new Gospel...I am disinclined to believe that it was Mark, the

¹⁴ J. Lee Magness, *Sense and Absence: Structure and Suspension in the Ending of Mark's Gospel* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 6.

¹⁵ Andrew T. Lincoln, "The Promise and the Failure: Mark 16:7, 8," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 108, no. 2 (1989): 284.

¹⁶ David Alan Black, ed., *Perspectives on the Ending of Mark: 4 Views*, by David Alan Black, Darrell Bock, Keith Elliott, Maurice Robinson, and Daniel Wallace (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2008), 89.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 91.

innovative composer and creative theologian, who took over, unrevised, a paragraph such as vv. 9–20, especially as it may well have disagreed with his own theological stance.”¹⁸

By contrast, there were those who expressed concern about the evident hostility toward dissenting voices. Writing in 2000, James Kelhoffer described the consensus prior to 1969 among scholars concerning the passage: “Like their nineteenth century counterparts, most recent scholars, having reached this conclusion concerning the non-Markan authorship of Mark 16:9–20, have been content to abandon its investigation. Since Mark did not write the LE, it is either a “false” (and embarrassing) interpolation or not worthy of serious attention by NT scholars.”¹⁹ In 2010, Travis B. Williams offered his own take on how the issue is addressed by scholars:

Are the last 12 verses of Mark 16 authentic? Could vv. 9–20 have originally been composed by the hand of the evangelist? When questions like these are posed within the world of biblical scholarship, ordinarily they are met with a resounding “No!” For the most part, the inauthenticity of the longer ending of Mark’s Gospel has become almost an accepted axiom. In fact, this position is so widely held that one would assume that the evidence against its legitimacy is overwhelming. To some, even raising the possibility of the passage’s authenticity might seem gratuitous, especially in light of the modern consensus to the contrary.²⁰

This was enlightening, in light of what Kelhoffer had pointed out (from whom Williams then quoted directly on this aspect), and what had already appeared in print—from some who hardly disguised their frustration with having to address the questions. Williams went on to criticize the methods previously used by critics of the passage:

¹⁸ Ibid., 91–92. In a footnote, Elliott explained: “For instance, the teaching that believers will be granted miraculous powers and that signs will prove the truth of the preaching is against Mark 8:11–13.” This overlooks that Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees who were not interested in proof; it also overlooks all of the miracles (signs) that Jesus had already performed and would perform.

¹⁹ Kelhoffer, *Miracle and Mission*, 32.

²⁰ Travis B Williams, “Bringing Method to the Madness: Examining the Style of the Longer Ending of Mark,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 20, no. 3 (2010): 397.

From a text-critical perspective, style has been one of the major reasons why scholars have rejected the authenticity of the longer ending. Yet the problem with much of the previous argumentation is that it has been based on methodological assumptions that have yielded a somewhat less-than-convincing result. Numerous exegetes have been content with building their cases on a surface-level assessment of Markan style that consists either of the recitation of comments from past examiners or of a limited number of statistical observations. Thus, the strength of their conclusions often greatly exceeds the evidence from which the deductions are extracted.²¹

Williams even went so far as to accuse the critics of being “stuck in the ruts of the past.”²² As is evident, the comments by Kelhoffer and Williams along these lines are revealing. This has ramifications as to how the evidence concerning 16:9–20 is presented in both popular and scholarly works.

Norman Geisler, who served as President of the Evangelical Theological Society wrote that the twelve verses “are lacking in many of the oldest and most reliable manuscripts.”²³ Ben Witherington III wrote that Eusebius and Jerome said that the verses were “absent from all Greek copies known to them.”²⁴ These statements, as can be shown, are false. The *Archaeological Study Bible* article on Mark 16:9–20 acknowledged that the passage is included in most texts and “several” translations, but goes on to claim that it is not in a “number” of versions; concerning Clement and Origen, it said that they “show no knowledge of any ending . . . beyond verse 8;” of Eusebius and Jerome, it went on to affirm “nearly all Greek manuscripts known to them

²¹ Ibid., 398.

²² Ibid.

²³ Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe, *The Big Book of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 377.

²⁴ Ben Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 412–13.

concluded with verse 8.”²⁵ France’s comments are little better. He began by stating that it was the “virtually unanimous verdict of modern textual scholarship” that the text of Mark ended at verse 8; in his listing of external evidence, he affirmed that Clement and Origen “do not appear to have known” the text past verse 8, and that Eusebius and Jerome stated that verses 9–20 “was not found in the majority of the Greek MSS available to them.” France also referred to the versions which include the passage and have the marginal signs and comments, and claimed this indicated “its textual status is doubtful.” Concerning the evidence in favor, France mentioned it in two sentences and said, “on the whole are later than those mentioned above” in favor of omission.²⁶ While it must be stressed that the majority of published scholars who oppose 16:9–20 do not overstate the case, it is disturbing that too many seem to have not taken the time to investigate whether some of their statements are accurate.

Mark 16:9–20 has ancient attestation. One of the three oldest manuscripts—Alexandrinus—contains the passage. It is present in all four textual “families” of the Greek New Testament. Irenaeus and Justin Martyr, two second century Christians, quoted from the passage and attributed it to Mark. A second century document, *Epistula Apostolorum* (“The Epistle of the Apostles”) quotes directly from the passage. Several third century witnesses also either quote directly or allude to the passage. In at least four of Tertullian’s writings (*Against Praxeas*, *Scorpiace*, *Apology*, *Persecution*) he at the least alludes to the passage, although not directly quoting from it. Two of the citations seem to point directly to 16:9–20. From Tertullian’s *Apology*: “Thereafter, having given them commission to preach the gospel through the world, He

²⁵ Walter C Kaiser, ed., *Archaeological Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 1661.

²⁶ France, 685–86.

was encompassed with a cloud and taken up to heaven.” From *On Running Away From Persecution*: “So we preach throughout all the world; nay, no special care even for Israel has been laid upon us, save as also we are bound to preach to all nations.” These two quotes utilize phraseology similar to what is said by Jesus in 16:15: “Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.” Kurt Aland was convinced; he affirmed that Tertullian used 16:9–20. In 257 A.D., Vincentius of Thibaris seemed to refer to verses 17–18 of the passage: “We know that heretics are worse than Gentiles. If, therefore, being converted, they should wish to come to the Lord, we have assuredly the rule of truth which the Lord by His divine precept commanded to His apostles, saying, ‘Go ye, lay on hands in my name, expel demons.’ And in another place: ‘Go ye and teach the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.’ Therefore first of all by imposition of hands in exorcism, secondly by the regeneration of baptism, they may then come to the promise of Christ. Otherwise I think it ought not to be done.” The *Gospel of Nicodemus* also includes citations from verses 15–19. Two places utilize it—the first being from *Part I: The Acts of Pilate*: “We have seen Jesus and his disciples sitting on the mountain called Mamilch; and he was telling his disciples, Go into all the world, and preach to all creation. The one who believes and is baptized will be saved, but the one who disbelieves will be condemned. These signs will accompany those who believe: they will cast out demons in my name; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes; and if they drink anything poisonous, it will not harm them; they will lay their hands on the sick and they will become well.” The second citation is found in *Part II: The Descent of Christ into Hell*. It places Jesus on the Mount of Olives saying: “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel. Whoever will believe and be baptized will be saved; but whoever will not believe will be condemned.” One other third century witness to 16:9–20 is *On Rebaptism*, which was

anonymously composed ca. 258 A. D.: “And some of themselves, when they had seen Him, believed not, but doubted; and they who were not then present believed not at all until they had been subsequently by the Lord Himself in all ways rebuked and reproached.” The date of composition of the second and third century witnesses to 16:9–20 for the most part predates the earliest Greek manuscripts and provides attestation as to the existence, acceptance, and circulation of the passage.

I have been preaching and working with Churches of Christ for over 35 years. My father and grandfather (both deceased) also preached over fifty years and forty years, respectively, within Churches of Christ. Our brethren by and large hold to a high view of Scripture. They are skeptical of modern philosophies that seem to them to strike against the integrity of the Bible and the sovereignty of God. I share that conviction—not because I grew up in it, or because my ancestors believed it, but because Scripture is the final authority on all things religious. That was true in the first century, and it is still true today. It will remain so until the Lord comes again. Given this conviction, I freely admit to being passionate about maintaining the integrity of Scripture, free from philosophies which have their origin in the eighteenth –century. How can one accept a template which was developed by liberal scholars who rejected the miracles of the Bible? How can one accept an approach to Scripture which was adopted in total by the Jesus Seminar? Surely it is more than a coincidence that the participants in the Jesus Seminar give much space to the “Q” document, and the four-source theory of the Synoptics.²⁷ It is past time for those who profess to believe in the full inspiration of Scripture to call for a paradigm shift in biblical studies. We must allow Scripture to lead us, not the other way around. Our attitude must

²⁷ Funk, Roy W. Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 12-18.

be that of the Bereans in Acts 17:11. If they “checked up” on inspired apostles, how much more should we do on uninspired scholars?

James E. Snapp provided another perspective on Mark 16:9–20 in 2007. He addressed the view, advocated by Kelhoffer and others that the author of Mark 16:9–20 purposefully borrowed from the four Gospels in order to end Mark in a way that would imitate the writing–style of Mark and the writers of the other canonical Gospels. Snapp stated:

That theory requires a special sort of author. The author would be bold enough to add his own literary creation to the Gospel of Mark, but timid enough not to adjust the jarring shift between 16:8 and 16:9. He would be thoroughly acquainted with the Gospel of Luke, and yet write that the disciples rejected the two travelers’ report (in 16:13), which is not suggested by Luke, and he would present Jesus’ subsequent appearance to the disciples as if it occurred some time after the two traveler’s report, which also is not suggested by Luke. He would be so cautious that he consulted the Gospels and Acts 60 times, but also so bold that he inserted unparalleled material about serpent-handling (which Mk. 16:18 does not suggest to be accidental) and poison-drinking. Though dependent upon Matthew, Luke, and John, he would differ from all three by relating that main group of disciples rejected Mary Magdalene’s announcement that Jesus was alive and had been seen by her. And this author, though he realized that the Gospel of Mark ended with an explicit forecast of an appearance in Galilee, would decide not to use John 21, and would choose instead to summarize events which anyone acquainted with the Gospel of Luke would locate in and around Jerusalem rather Galilee.²⁸

Snapp was not impressed with this, as evidenced by his response: “Such an author is, I believe, complicated beyond the point of plausibility. The theory of a mad mimic ought to be rejected in favor of a much simpler and more credible explanation of the textual fingerprints in the Long Ending.”²⁹

One of my graduate professors was the late Rex A. Turner Sr. He raised some questions which need to be seriously considered by all of us today:

²⁸ James Snapp Jr., "External Footprints and Internal Fingerprints: Consider All the Evidence about Mark 16:9–20" (Elwood, IN: Curtisville Christian Church, 2007): 11.

²⁹ Ibid.

The issue at stake is inspiration. Are the Old and New Testaments inspired, or are they the product of mere men? A corollary of the issue of inspiration is the question of whether or not there is an omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent God—a creator who is perfect in holiness and righteousness? If the Scriptures are not inspired, how can a mere man, be he, by his own admission ever so intelligent and creative, as to account for the theme of the Bible—that is, God, Man, and Jesus the Son of God?³⁰

Churches of Christ have long been known for their plea to restore New Testament Christianity. It is a plea that I believe to be more relevant today than ever before. Undergirding that plea is an unshakeable faith in the Word of God. The challenge is to present that plea in a way that will appeal to all people. Mark 16:15–16, part of the passage under consideration in this volume, gives the Lord’s marching orders to his disciples: “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” With all my life, I believe those verses to be true. I believe the Lord said it.

My grandfather, S. F. Hester, did not possess a formal degree. Yet he was educated in the Scriptures. His example of faith is etched in my memory even today. In a sermon he preached on “The Gospel of Christ,” he made the point that the Gospel of Christ is plain. That is, it is designed to be understood, whether one is educated or uneducated. Pa Hester said that education is valuable, but if it was essential to our understanding God’s will, He would have told us so. In fact, my grandfather said, education can sometimes be a hindrance (2 Cor. 11:3). And, as he would point out, Christ chose uneducated men to declare his Gospel the first time (Acts 4:13). Now, my grandfather was not against education at all. Indeed, he encouraged all four of his sons (who would all preach) to go as far as they could with their education. Yet his point was that we

³⁰ Rex A. Turner, Sr., *Systematic Theology* (Montgomery, AL: Amridge University, 1990), 42-47.

must guard against the danger of elevating human understanding and reason on the same level with Scripture.

The volume I wrote on this subject is designed to take the reader on a journey. I want you to travel the same path I traveled, and to see how I ended up where I am concerning Mark 16:9–20. It begins by surveying the history of research from 1965–2011. It is almost a survey of my lifetime. I was born in February 1965; in December of that same year, Kenneth W. Clark made his annual presidential address to the Society of Biblical Literature. That address would start some to reexamine the issue of the ending of Mark. In the course of surveying the literature, attention is given to scholarly journals and books, as well as critical introductions and commentaries. Next, the evidence is examined. External evidence and internal evidence is treated separately and seriously. It is my observation that all too often the external evidence is given short shrift. The internal evidence is also examined. Then, a proposal is offered as to both the origin of Mark 16:9–20 and its status. I realize that my conclusion will not be accepted by everyone. I also realize that criticism will come. That is all to be expected. I do want everyone to understand that the conclusion I offer is one which satisfies me, and is one which I know beyond any reasonable doubt does not strike against the inspiration of Scripture or the integrity of the Word of God. I only ask that the conclusion offered be given a fair and complete hearing.

All of what I have said is to make you aware of where I am coming from in the book. Our modern society is in desperate need of ancient Truth. To be able to reach those who need it, we need to cast aside human pride and philosophies, and embrace wholeheartedly Scripture in its fullness. This includes Mark 16:9–20.