Scrutinizing Mark 16:
Why not let it end as the Codex Sinaiticus tells, with verse 8?

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It is no secret that the Pentecostals and Charismatics, worldwide, have two of their favorite verses in Mark 16. Namely, verses 17 and 18 in particular.
And why is that?
Because it gives the Bible student the **impression** that *'anyone' can just go out and preach the Gospel, with mighty signs and wonders following.*

Verse 17: "*These signs will accompany* ***those who have believed****: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues.*

Verse 18: *"They will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them;* ***they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."***

In all the history of Pentecostalism, since it started with the Scottish-Australian immigrant, the charlatan *John Alexander Dowie (1847 – 1907)* a few years before the Azusa Street revival in L.A. 1906, - then continued with Charles Fox Parham and William Seymour – you know…."*Pentecost Has Come*"… as their slogan went; the two verses quoted has been their 'mantra' – the magical wand – with which to have **miracle ministry and the sign gifts**, including of course the gift of tongues as seen in Acts 2 at Pentecost.

These two verses are read as if this was spoken to each and every Christian believer, no matter of the context and the fact that Jesus spoke *especially* to His elect disciples, and not the common believer worldwide; right before His ascension. And not only do many Christian believers read the two verses as a 'certificate to perform miracles' – but on top of that, due to human errors, the verses are NOT found in the original texts. The verses were added much later than when Mark wrote his Gospel.

That is why several translations have notifications of this when Mark 16 is looked up. I have a list of that at the end of this article.

THE LONGER ENDING OF MARK

Thus many scholars gave these verses a nickname: the longer ending of Mark.

Mark 16:17-18 are part of the "Longer Ending of Mark" (verses 9–20), which most modern biblical scholars agree was added by later scribes rather than written by the original author of the Gospel.

I have already introduced them above, and summing it up, Jesus promised that specific miraculous signs will follow believers:

Driving out demons and speaking in new tongues (languages).

Picking up snakes with their hands and drinking deadly poison without being harmed.

Healing the sick by placing hands on them.

Regarding the textual background, we have these blunt facts to learn:

Missing from early manuscripts: The earliest and most reliable Greek manuscripts (such as Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus) end abruptly at Mark 16:8, where the women flee the empty tomb in fear. We have been 'had' – for as many as 12 verses are added!

Vocabulary differences: Words and phrases in verses 9–20, including the unique mention of snakes and poison, do not appear anywhere else in the Gospel of Mark, reflecting a style closer to Luke or Acts.

Why this addition of 12 verses: Scribes likely added a post-resurrection conclusion to smooth out the abrupt and fearful ending of verse 8, aligning Mark with the resurrection appearances found in the other Gospels.

As for the interpretation and practice in regard to the added verses:

Charismatic and symbolic views: Most Christian traditions view these signs (like healing and casting out demons) as descriptions of early apostolic authority or general divine protection rather than literal daily commands.

Literal snake handling: A tiny minority of Appalachian Pentecostal groups historically used these verses to *justify ritual snake handling* and drinking poison as literal tests of faith, though mainstream Christian denominations reject this practice, thank God.

Let me here remark that when checking Acts for the apostolic ministries, looking for this peculiar sign of not being harmed by snakebite, we can find ONLY ONE incident! The

Viper, which bit Paul at Malta, Acts. 28:3.

Nor can we find any precedence of anyone who got saved miraculously from accidentally drinking deadly poison. Acts report of no such incident at all! This leaves Mark 16:17-18 as irrelevant indeed.

At best, we can only read the added verses *as words of general value:* Jesus taught His disciples of many things which God would do for them, in terms of divine protection in ministry, and the power to be able to convince those who doubted their message of the Messiah Jesus as the King of Israel. Reading Acts confirms such a narrative. Chapter 5 is exemplary: whole towns were influenced by the apostolic miracles and signs; as is Acts 8 and Philip in Samaria performing extraordinary signs and miracles. But still: the 12 added verses in Mark 16 are never the less made by human hand and thought.

The very *limited incidents of snake-bite, and poisoning not reported, raising the dead, casting out of demons,* must be read in the terms of things which NOT necessarily MUST be happening, but IF it would happen. In other words, the apostles could not just announce in advance, that when they arrived in certain places, people could just bring their sick ones, or the possessed, or those who had been bitten by snakes…and simply promise to them the miraculous healing of their problem. Miracles and signs never were as per 'program' – something one could rely on as soon as an apostle came to town.

Paul wrote a wise sentence on how the Holy Spirit worked in the apostolic ministries, **1 Cor. 12:11, NASB,**

"But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one ***individually just as He wills".***

The apostles could never just perform miracles at their private choice and will. They had to take direction from the Holy Spirit.

Such an important detail is not seen in that added text in Mark 16. The added words are in error, and therefore a Bible student will often become a victim of it, and think that the miracle-promises is a 'package' given to all who chooses to go preaching the Gospel. A guarantee from God - that He, in each and every minister's life, would always perform miracles.

In the three other historic Gospels there is no mention of miraculous things whatsoever. Have you thought of that?

No miracles promised in Matthew 28:19-20, NASB,

19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the

Holy Spirit,

20 *teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

No miracles promised in Luke 24:46-49, NASB,

46 *and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day,*

47 *and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.*

48 *"You are witnesses of these things.*

49 *"And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."*

Luke was ***extra thoroughly in the research*** *of background writings for his Gospel and for the Book of Acts, as he made a* *strong remark* *in the intro,* ***Luke 1,*** *informing his friend Theophilus, - - -*

3 *it seemed fitting for me as well,* ***having investigated everything carefully from the beginning,*** *to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus;*

4 *so that you may* ***know the exact truth*** *about the things you have been taught.*

Luke checked out EVERYTHING, and yet: no miracles, no signs, no casting out of demons, and so forth. Why? Because, as I already said above, these things were **not a specific 'program' package**, given to each and every Christian believer. The Holy Spirit took care of God's business in *inspiring* the apostles for each individual case at hand, whether it was sickness, demon possession, the infilling of the Holy Spirit and the like.

No miracles promised in John 21:15-17, NASB,

These two verses is the 'great commission' as John was given it: they were to go to the "Lost sheep of the house of Israel" – *Tend My lambs, shepherd My sheep, Tend My sheep.*

His command to Peter (and the eleven) is mirrored in Mat. 15:24 as Jesus told the Canaanite woman in Sidon, *I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* Thus He ordered them to continue the same ministry to ISRAEL'S lost sheep. And Acts displays this clearly when reading of Peter and the eleven, what they said, what they did, and where they were ministering. Peter is found to have stayed in Israel (including his flight to Antioch, Syria, when persecuted by Herod Agrippa in 44 CE, Acts 12) for a total

of 21 years. No ‘world-wide mission’ ministry for him and the eleven.

Luke 24:52-53, NASB, says a lot of the whereabouts of the twelve,

52 And they, after worshiping Him, returned to Jerusalem with great joy,
53 and were continually in the temple praising God.

As well as **Acts 5:12,**

*“At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and **they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico.”** **(In the temple, Jerusalem).***

Here we are served signs and miracles. More than in the four Gospels regarding their ministry for Christ. The entire chapter 5 in Acts shows us an abundance of miracles and wonders…so whole cities were shaken by God’s great move using His apostles. Paul had same kind of miracle-rush when he was in Ephesus, Acts 19. Miracles, signs and wonders, so that the whole big city of Ephesus was shaken by the power of the Holy Spirit.

When Paul and Barnabas was sent out by the order from the Holy Spirit, at Antioch in Acts 13, we find – just as in the four Gospels – no particular promise of any ‘miracle program’ for them. And yet, we follow Paul on his travels in the Roman Empire outside the land of Israel, and learn of a multiple number of signs and miracles.

Have you ever thought of that?

Mark 16 and the added 12 verses cannot ever be any norm for any ministry, regarding miracles promised. Because He has never promised these miracles (as a given program) like we want to extract from the Bible-verses.

In apostolic times, the miracles came to the apostles according to the inspiration given by the Holy Spirit in each and every case of sickness-incidents and demon possessions. And not by the will of man.

And even if it was in the apostolic times that the nine sign-gifts were operational, - still – nobody could perform all these things. They had *different abilities* with miracles, all according to what the Spirit wanted to do.

Paul’s rhetoric is found in **1 Cor. 12:7-10, 29-30, NASB,**

“7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

8 For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit;

9 to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts

of healing by the one Spirit,

10 and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.

29 All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they?

30 ***All do not have gifts of healings, do they?*** *All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?"*

Reading Paul's teaching show us one thing very clearly: unless one could **explain systematically** how it is with miracles, signs, wonders and these sensational power effects of the Holy Spirit, - it would be of no use just to say to someone – the twelve disciples for instance – *"these signs shall follow he who believes" ….*none of the twelve (minus Judas=11) would comprehend it. And THEREFORE it is sure that Jesus never said it like Mark 16:17-18 puts it. It wouldn't mean zip to any of them. This goes to confirm that the verses in Mark 16, 9-20 – are added by human hand and do not belong in God's word as such.

Jesus would have had to <u>lay it out for them</u>, just like we find with Paul when teaching the Corinthians!

Regarding the Holy Spirit, Jesus knew of course that the Spirit would start working/performing the miracles and wonders once He had come upon the flock, like we find in Acts 2 and the day of Pentecost.

This is why **Jesus kept it short and without any complicated class-room exercises:** Acts 1:4-5, NASB,

4 Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me;
*5 for John baptized with water, but you will <u>**be baptized with the Holy Spirit**</u> not many days from now.*

He referred to what he already had told them, earlier in those forty days He was with them after the resurrection. He must have gone into some *important details on miracles and such*, obviously. But to be able to do miracle-ministry, the disciples had to be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.
His referring to what He told them early in His teaching during these forty days, proves clearly that He had never spoken the words to them found in Mark 16:17-18. It was not needed, since He had a detailed seminar with them those

forty days. But we **cannot guess** what exactly He spoke to them, - but it is this type of guessing we thus find with these added verses in Mark 16.

I find it proven as a Biblical truth that Mark 16 should actually end with verse 8, like it does in Codex Sinaiticus, giving us the narrative of the upset women at the tomb. That Codex is considered the most reliable Greek writing in existence.

EXAMPLES OF TRANSLATIONS WITH NOTIFICATION OF THE ADDED VERSES 9-20

New International Version (NIV): Places a bold bracketed warning right after verse 8 stating: *[The most reliable early manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have Mark 16:9–20.]*

English Standard Version (ESV): Inserts a prominent italicized note after verse 8: *[Some of the earliest manuscripts do not include 16:9–20.]*

Trinitarian Bible Society

New Revised Standard Version / Updated Edition (NRSV / NRSVue): Encloses the entire ending in double square brackets [[ ]] with an explanatory footnote.

ResearchGate

Christian Standard Bible (CSB) / Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB): Prints verses 9–20 inside square brackets in the main text stream accompanied by a textual footnote.

New American Standard Bible (NASB): Puts verses 9–20 in brackets or includes a prominent marginal/footnote notification.

Cold Case Christianity

Berean Standard Bible (BSB): Uses bracket formatting or specific inline notations around the disputed verses.

New Century Version (NCV): Encloses the section in brackets with an explanatory note.

TRANSLATIONS WITH FOOTNOTE-ONLY NOTIFICATIONS

Other modern versions keep the text in the main body without brackets, but provide a direct textual note at the bottom of the page or verse-number area:

NET Bible (New English Translation): Extensive textual footnote detailing the manuscript evidence for omission.

New Living Translation (NLT): Footnote noting that some ancient manuscripts do not include these verses.

Revised Standard Version (RSV): Historically moved the text out of the main body into a footnote or set it off with a space and a note in early editions.

E.W. BULLINGER'S DEFENSE OF THE VERSES 9-20
IN COMPANION BIBLE APPENDIX 168

In The Companion Bible, editor E.W. Bullinger defends the authenticity of Mark 16:9–20 in **Appendix 168**, arguing that the verses belong in the inspired text despite being absent from the two oldest fourth-century Greek uncial manuscripts.

> **Manuscript Ratio:** Bullinger stresses that while Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus omit the verses, over 600 other cursive and uncial Greek manuscripts include the longer ending.
>
> **Ancient Versions:** He points to early translations like the ancient Syriac versions (such as the Peshitto) as proof that the verses existed in very early textual streams.
>
> **Internal Harmony:** He asserts that the style and details—such as references to the Lord only after His ascension—fit the theological scope of Mark as portraying Christ as Jehovah's servant.

That defense by Bullinger seem to me as shallow, and I have explained it above – like what you already have read – by for instance, the fact that Jesus referred to what *He earlier told the twelve*, as He was with them for 40 days after His resurrection, **Acts 1:4, NASB**,
*"Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, **"you heard of from Me."***

Luke did not specify what exactly Jesus told them in detail. Thus it leaves us automatically to conclude that He probably taught them of the sign-gifts in same manner as Paul did, reading 1 Cor. 12. If He did not do this, they certainly would not be able to comprehend the anointing coming upon them at Pentecost Acts 2. The apostles were not made to become robots! Mark 16 and verses 9-20 were added. The fact that it is ONLY Mark 16 which has this 'promise of miracles' among the four Gospels, confirms that adding of verses 9-20. Mark stands alone, like a small island in the midst of the Pacific Ocean.

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