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## **Was Salome at the Markan Tomb? Another Ending to Mark 16**

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### **Abstract**

It is somewhat known (though not widely discussed) that the number and names of women at the tomb fluctuate from manuscript to manuscript of Mark 16.<sup>1</sup> Although the received text of Mark 16:1 states that three women (Mary Magdalene, Mary of James, and Salome) visited the empty tomb, there is significant variation on this detail in the earliest text transmission. A fourth-century copy of Mark (Codex Bezae/k) mentions only two women at the tomb: “...Mary Magdalene and Mary of Joses saw where he was laid. And when the Sabbath had passed, they went out and brought spices so that they might go and anoint him...”<sup>2</sup>

Salome is also absent from the Markan empty tomb scene in Codex Bezae (5<sup>th</sup> century) and two other important Old Latin witnesses (*n* and *c*). Jerome knew the two-woman version of the Markan story; in *Against Helvidius*, he writes “Mark states, ‘And Mary Magdalene and Mary of James and Joses beheld where he was laid. And when the sabbath was past, they bought spices, that they might come and anoint him...’”<sup>3</sup> The fifth-century Old Latin *Antiphonale Mozarabicum* similarly relates that “Mary Magdalene and Mary of James bought spices, and came to anoint Jesus.”<sup>4</sup> Obviously Salome is not a participant in a minority textual strand of Mark 16.<sup>5</sup> Why might early editors have altered the text here? And why is such a significant variant so rarely addressed by text critics and exegetes? This paper will argue that the varying names and number of women in 16:1 should be seen as part of the broader problem of the ending of Mark. It will also explore potential editorial motives in earliest Christianity that led to the creation of yet another ending to our oldest Gospel.

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<sup>1</sup> For occasional mentions of the issue see Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and John Reumann, *Mary in the New Testament: A Collaborative Assessment by Protestant and Roman Catholic Scholars* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 68n; C.S. Mann, *Mark: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1986), 658.

<sup>2</sup> *et abiit maria autem magdalene et maria iacobi notauerunt locum ubi poneretur et abeuntes emerunt aromata ut eum ungerent et ueniunt mane una sabbati ad monumentum oriente sole...*

<sup>3</sup> Jerome, *Against Helvidius* 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Antiphonale Mozarabicum*, 190-R, 143: *maria magdalene et maria iacobi emerunt aromata et uenientes ut ungerent iehesum.*

<sup>5</sup> The name of the second Mary varies in these witnesses. In *Vetus Latina c* she is “Mary of James and Joseph,” in *Vetus Latina k* she is “Mary of Joses,” and in *Vetus Latina n*, just as in *Bezae*, she is “Mary of James.” The *Antiphonale Mozarabicum* says she is “Mary of James,” and Jerome says she is “Mary of James and Joses.”