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Title: Christology, vindication, and martyrdom in the Gospel of Mark and the
Apocalypse: Two New Testament views

Date: 2014

Originally published in: Mark, manuscripts, and monotheism: Essays in honor of
Larry W. Hurtado

Example citation: Middleton, P. (2014). Christology, vindication, and martyrdom in
the Gospel of Mark and the Apocalypse: Two New Testament views. In C. Keith, &
D. Roth (Eds.) *Mark, manuscripts, and monotheism: Essays in honor of Larry W.
Hurtado* (pp. 219–237). London, United Kingdom: T & T Clark.

Version of item: Author's pre-press

Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10034/345149>

Christology, Martyrdom, and Vindication in the Gospel of Mark and the Apocalypse:

Two New Testament Views¹

Paul Middleton

Any reader of the NT quickly gets the impression that persecution and suffering was an ever-present danger that the early Christian had to face.² Paul warned the followers of Christ to expect persecution that had to be endured for the sake of the gospel, and describes his own experiences of imprisonment, beatings, lashings, and stoning.³ Words attributed to Jesus suggest that members of the nascent church would be arrested, beaten, and stand trial before both Jewish and Gentile authorities.⁴ Jesus' prediction that Christians would "be hated by all" (μισούμενοι ὑπὸ πάντων) on account of his name⁵ is echoed in Acts, where Luke has a crowd say of the Christian sect "we know it is spoken against everywhere" (πανταχοῦ ἀντιλέγεται).⁶

Early Christian presentation of suffering led to a popular contemporary belief that Christians lived in constant fear of being dragged off to the local magistrate, or being subjected to incessant bouts of state-sponsored persecution, and famously thrown to the lions. At one extreme, Bramley-Moore declared that "the history of Christian martyrdom is, in fact,

¹ I am delighted to offer this essay in honour of Larry Hurtado, my PhD supervisor, with gratitude, admiration, and affection, even though I am confident he will wish to take issue with at least some of the positions argued below.

² See the classic studies, W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: A Study of a Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965); William Horbury and Brian McNeill, eds., *Suffering and Martyrdom in the New Testament: Studies Presented to G. M. Styler* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

³ Paul catalogues his hardships at Rom 8:35–36; 1 Cor 4:9–13; 2 Cor 4:8–9; 6:4–5; 11:23–29; 12:10. For discussion, see Paul Middleton, "'Dying we Live' (2 Cor. 6.9): Discipleship and Martyrdom in Paul" in *Paul, Grace and Freedom: Essays in Honour of John K. Riches* (eds. Paul Middleton, Angus Paddison, Karen Wenell; T&T Clark Biblical Studies; London: T&T Clark, 2009), 82–93.

⁴ Mark 13:9//Matt 24:17–18//Luke 21:12.

⁵ Mark 13:13//Matt 24:9//Luke 21:17.

⁶ Acts 28:22. Biblical citations from the RSV with modifications.

the history of Christianity itself.”⁷ However, in the last fifty years there has been general recognition that there was little in the way of State-sponsored persecution in the first three centuries, and where it happened at all, it tended to be “local, sporadic and random.”⁸ Indeed, some scholars have now gone so far as to argue that Christians “manufactured” persecution.

Christians needed Roman persecutions, or at least stories about persecutions, rather more than Romans saw the need to persecute Christians... [The Christians] nurtured a sense of danger and victimisation.⁹

Most recently, in her provocatively titled book, *The Myth of Persecution: How Early Christians Invented the Story of Martyrdom*, Candida Moss notes that even counting for Roman “persecutions” that were not specifically directed at Christians, there were “fewer than ten years out of nearly three hundred during which Christians were executed as the result of imperial initiatives.”¹⁰ In terms of official, emperor-inspired, empire-wide actions, this observation is indeed accurate. Nevertheless, Christians would have experienced both mob violence and trials before magistrates outside these periods.¹¹ While the actions of magistrates such as Pliny may fall into the category of “local prosecution” rather than “imperial persecution,” the Christians would not have made any distinction; members of the church were being brought before Roman officials with the threat of execution if they did not offer sacrifice to the emperor or curse Christ.¹² Given the imperial apparatus employed in these prosecutions, Christians, not unreasonably, imperialised what might well have been

⁷ John Foxe, *The Book of Martyrs, revised with notes by W. Bramley-Moore* (London: Cassell, Petter and Galpin, 1872), 2.

⁸ Timothy D. Barnes, “Legislation against the Christians,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 58 (1968): 32–50. See also the important article by G. E. M. de Ste Croix, “Why were the Early Christians Persecuted?” *Past and Present* 26 (1963): 5–23.

⁹ Keith Hopkins, “Christian Number and its Implications,” *J ECS* 6 (1998): 185–226, here 198.

¹⁰ Candida R. Moss, *The Myth of Persecution: How Early Christians Invented the Story of Martyrdom* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2013). Importantly, despite her title, Moss does acknowledge, “There is no doubt that Christians did die, that they were horrifically tortured and executed in ways that would appal people today” (160).

¹¹ Paul Middleton, *Martyrdom: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 31–56.

¹² Pliny (*Ep.* 10.96) explains to Trajan that he has freed those accused of being Christian who subsequently offer worship to the emperor’s image or curse Christ.

local initiatives.¹³ To insist upon a persecution/prosecution distinction is artificial; to the Romans *all* actions taken against Christians were prosecution for misdemeanour rather than persecution, while Christians would interpret all such action as manifestations of the suffering anticipated in the NT on account of Jesus' name.

It is unsurprising then that themes of suffering, discipleship, and martyrdom became interwoven in Christian consciousness as they accounted for their mistreatment from both Jewish and Gentile quarters. In their second- and third-century reflections the figure of the martyr thrust centre stage. Through a new genre of martyrology, the martyr became the ultimate paradigm of Christian discipleship, providing "perhaps the most vivid form in which devotion to Jesus was expressed in the earliest centuries."¹⁴

Christians, of course, could point to Jesus' suffering and death as a model for a faithful disciple to imitate. Ignatius of Antioch links his own experience of impending martyrdom with the suffering and death of Christ.

It is better for me to die for Jesus Christ (ἀποθανεῖν διὰ Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν) than to rule over the ends of the Earth. Him I seek, who died on our behalf; him I long for, who rose again for our sake. The pains of birth are upon me.... Allow me to be an imitator of the suffering of my God (μιμητὴν εἶναι τοῦ πάθους τοῦ θεοῦ μου).¹⁵

For Ignatius, suffering was imitation of Jesus' own Passion. In another letter, he claims Christians had to embrace Jesus' suffering by choosing martyrdom in order to distinguish them from the unbelievers (οἱ ἄπιστοι) who bore the mark (χαρακτήρ) of the world. On the other hand, Christians,

¹³ On this point, see Paul Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom and Cosmic Conflict in Early Christianity* (LNTS 307; London: T&T Clark, 2006), 40–70.

¹⁴ Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 619.

¹⁵ Ign. *Rom.* 6:1, 3. Unless otherwise stated translations by Michael W. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations* (3rd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007).

the faithful in love (οἱ...πιστοὶ ἐν ἀγάπῃ), bear the stamp of God (χαρακτῆρα τοῦ θεοῦ) the Father through Jesus Christ, whose life is not in us unless we voluntarily choose (αὐθαρπέτως) to die into his suffering (ἀποθανεῖν εἰς τὸ αὐτοῦ πάθος).¹⁶

Just as Jesus suffered and died, so those who wish to become his disciples must do likewise; martyrdom and discipleship are closely linked in the mind of Ignatius.¹⁷

Let me be food for the wild beasts, through whom I can reach God... Better yet, coax the wild beasts, so that they may become my tomb and leave nothing of my body behind, lest I become a burden to anyone once I have fallen asleep. Then I will truly be a disciple of Jesus Christ (τότε ἔσομαι μαθητῆς ἀληθῶς Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ), when the world will no longer see my body.¹⁸

Christ calls Christians through his suffering,¹⁹ and so Ignatius “strongly desires to suffer”²⁰ because it is only through death that he will finally *become* a disciple.²¹ The death of Jesus, therefore, underpins Ignatius’ theology of suffering. The Christian becomes a disciple through the act of imitating the suffering and death of Christ.

Martyrdom as a re-enactment of the Passion is a common theme throughout later second- and third-century martyr acts.²² In the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, the martyrs (μάρτυρες) are praised as “disciples and imitators of the Lord (μαθητὰς καὶ μιμητὰς τοῦ κυρίου).”²³ Moreover, the number of explicit parallels between the Passion and Polycarp’s trial and execution suggests that the martyrology is consciously modelled on gospel tradition.²⁴ For example, both Polycarp and Jesus predict their deaths (*Mart. Pol.* 5:2; cf.

¹⁶ Ign. *Magn.* 5:2.

¹⁷ William. R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 42.

¹⁸ Ign. *Rom.* 4:1–2.

¹⁹ Ign. *Trall.* 11:2.

²⁰ Ign. *Trall.* 4:2.

²¹ This explicit link between martyrdom and discipleship is found throughout Ignatius’ letters, for example: *Rom.* 3:2; *Eph.* 3:1; *Trall.* 5:2.

²² See especially Candida R. Moss, *The Other Christs: Imitating Jesus in Ancient Christian Ideologies of Martyrdom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

²³ *Mart. Pol.* 17:3.

²⁴ Lists of parallels can be found in Boudewijn Dehandschutter, “Le Martyre de Polycarp et le développement de la conception du martyr au deuxième siècle” in *Studia Patristica* 17 (ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone; Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982), 659–68; Paul Hartog, ed., *Polycarp’s Epistle to the Philippians*

Mark 8:31) and are betrayed by close acquaintances (*Mart. Pol.* 6:2; cf. Mark 14:18). Both ride into the city on a donkey (*Mart. Pol.* 8:2; cf. Mark 11:7–11), pray for the church (*Mart. Pol.* 7:3–8:1; cf. Jn 17), and pray that God’s will be done (*Mart. Pol.* 7:1; cf. Mark 14:36). There is a voice from heaven (*Mart. Pol.* 9:1; cf. John 12:27–28), and Polycarp is eventually killed by being pierced by a dagger (*Mart. Pol.* 16:1; cf. John 19:34).²⁵ Moreover, Polycarp is said to be a “sharer in Christ” (6:2; Χριστοῦ κοινωνός), and Christ is the helmsman (κυβερνήτης) of his body (19:2).

A similar *imitatio Christi* model of martyrdom is found in Luke’s account of Stephen.²⁶ Like Jesus, Stephen refutes his opponents (Acts 6:10; cf. Mark 12:34), is seized by officials (Acts 6:12; cf. Mk 14:43, 46), tried by the Sanhedrin (Acts 6:12; 7:1; cf. Mark 14:53), false witnesses make charges against him (6:13; cf. Mark 14:56–57), accusing him of threatening the temple (Acts 6:14; cf. Mark 14:58) and of blasphemy (Acts 6:11; Mark 14:58). Furthermore, at his death he commits his spirit to Jesus (7:59; cf. Luke 23:46 where Jesus commits his spirit to God), cries aloud (Acts 7:60; cf. Mk 15:34), and prays for his executioners (Acts 7:60; Luke 23:34).

Throughout the NT, the suffering and death of Jesus is employed as a model for Christians to imitate, or a paradigm by which Christians could understand their experiences of suffering.²⁷ In Hebrews, Jesus is the direct inspiration for Christians to embrace suffering:

and the Martyrdom of Polycarp: Introduction, Text, and Commentary (Oxford Apostolic Fathers; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 205–6.

²⁵ Many scholars have pointed out that there are also significant differences between the depictions of the two characters. see for example, Jan Willem van Henten, “Zum Einfluß jüdischer Martyrien auf die Literatur des frühen Christentum” *ANRW* 27.1: 700–23; Michael W. Holmes, “The *Martyrdom of Polycarp* and the New Testament Passion Narratives” in *Trajectories through the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers* (eds. Andrew Gregory and Christopher Tuckett; The New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 407–32.

²⁶ The following list is from Richard I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary* (Heremena; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 168. See also the important treatment by Shelly Matthews, *Perfect Martyr: The Stoning of Stephen and the Construction of Christian Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

²⁷ See especially Larry W. Hurtado, “Jesus’ Death as Paradigmatic in the New Testament,” *SJT* 57 (2004): 413–33, and Moss, *Other Christs*, 19–44. Both Hurtado and Moss make the important observation that the Passion serves as a model for patterns of discipleship that go far wider than suffering and martyrdom.

So Jesus also suffered (ἔπαθεν) outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore, let us go forth to him outside the camp and bear the abuse he endured (τὸν ὀνειδισμόν αὐτοῦ φέροντες).²⁸

As Christ suffered so Christians should likewise suffer abuse. While the author reports that his recipients have not yet suffered to the point of shedding their blood (12:4), he affirms that they participate in the same struggle against sin as Jesus, and offers his endurance as the ideal model for Christians (12:3). Similarly, for the author of 1 Peter, Christ's Passion becomes a template for faithful Christian discipleship:

If when you do right and suffer (πάσχοντες) for it you endure (ὑπομενεῖτε), you have God's approval. For to this you have been called (ἐκλήθητε), because Christ also suffered (ἔπαθεν) for you, leaving you an example (ὑπογραμμόν), that you should follow in his steps (ἵνα ἐπακολουθήσητε τοῖς ἰχθεσιν αὐτοῦ).²⁹

The author goes so far as to claim that because Christ suffered, Christians are actually called to suffer. The theme of persecution pervades the letter, and the sufferings of Jesus provide a helpful context in which to understand Christian hardship.

Paul also reads Christian suffering in the light of the Passion. Paul and his fellow-workers share in both the suffering and comfort of Christ (2 Cor 1:3–7), with Paul carrying in the body the death of Jesus (2 Cor 4:10), and bearing the marks of Jesus on his own body (Gal 6:17). While Paul rarely encourages churches to imitate Christ directly, he often offers himself or other Christians as an exemplar.

For you, brothers, became imitators (μιμηταί) of the churches of God in Christ Jesus which are in Judea; for you suffered (ἐπάθετε) the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out (1 Thess 2:14–15).

The Thessalonians copy the sufferings of their fellow churches, which received the same abuse that was directed against Jesus. Paul explicitly links imitating Jesus with suffering at the beginning of his first letter where he says that in receiving the word in much affliction (ἐν

²⁸ Heb 13:12–13

²⁹ 1 Pet 2:20–21. The same idea is found explicitly in 3:17–18 and 4:1.

θλίψει πολλῇ) the Thessalonians became imitators of not only Paul and his colleagues, but also of the Lord (ὁμοίως μιμηταὶ ἡμῶν ἐγενήθητε καὶ τοῦ κυρίου), and through their experiences of suffering, in turn became a mould (τύπος) for other Christians in Macedonia and Achaia.³⁰

In a range of early Christian literature, therefore, the Passion of Jesus serves as a pattern by which Christians could understand their own experiences of persecution and suffering. Furthermore, it could also function as a model to imitate and encourage endurance in the face of affliction, or indeed, to encourage martyrdom.³¹ However, not all early Christians appear to have placed the same value on suffering and martyrdom. Irenaeus complains of certain “false brothers” who

have reached such a pitch of audacity that they even pour contempt upon the martyrs, and vituperate those who are killed on account of confessing the Lord, and who ... thereby strive to follow in the footsteps of the Lord’s passion, themselves bear witness to the one who suffered.³²

Similarly, Tertullian and Clement identify and attack groups of fellow Christians who downplayed the importance of martyrdom.³³ The attitude they attack is reflected in some of the texts from Nag Hammadi, such as the *Testimony of Truth*, which appears to denigrate those who confessed before authorities and were martyred.

The foolish—thinking [in] their heart [that] if they confess, ‘We are Christians’, in word only not with power, while giving themselves over to ignorance, to a human death ... thinking that they will live, when (really) they are in error—hasten towards the principalities and the authorities. They fall into their clutches because

³⁰ 1 Thess 1:6–7.

³¹ For treatments of “voluntary martyrdom,” see de Ste. Croix, “Why were the Early Christians Persecuted?”; Christel Butterweck, *Martyriumssucht in der alten Kirche? Studien zur Darstellung und Deutung frühchristlicher Martyrien* (BZHT 87; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1995); Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom*. The extent of voluntary martyrdom has been questioned by P. Lorraine Buck, “Voluntary Martyrdom Revisited,” *JTS* ns 63 (2012): 125–35; and the ideological nature of scholarly treatments of the subject explored by Candida R. Moss, “The Discourse of Voluntary Martyrdom: Ancient and Modern,” *Church History* 81 (2012): 531–51. See in response, Paul Middleton, “Early Christian Voluntary Martyrdom: A Statement for the Defence,” *JTS* ns 64 (2013): 556–573.

³² Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 3.18.5.

³³ For example: Tertullian, *Val.* 30; *Scorp.* 1, 5, 7; Clement, *Strom.* 4.16–17.

of the ignorance that is in them. . . . If the [Father were to] desire a [human] sacrifice, he would become [vainglorious].³⁴

The author goes on to complain of “[empty] martyrs” who “bear witness only to themselves” and who believe “if we deliver ourselves over to death for the sake of the Name we will be saved.” However, “they do not have the word which gives [life].”³⁵ Similar anti-martyr sentiments are found in the *Apocalypse of Peter* and the *Gospel of Judas*.³⁶ Nonetheless, while the view that “Gnostics” generally opposed martyrdom has persisted, Pagels noted some time ago that attitudes to martyrdom in the Nag Hammadi texts were “astonishingly diverse. Some advocated it; others repudiated it on principle.”³⁷ Positive assessments of martyrdom are found in the *Apocryphon of James*, *2 Apocalypse of James*, and the *Letter of Peter to Philip*, while the Valentinian texts are ambiguous.³⁸

Nonetheless, Pagels has convincingly argued that even for those Christians whose attitude to suffering and martyrdom was lukewarm, this view was still linked to the Passion of Jesus. The less enthusiastic tended to believe that Jesus did not really suffer. Indeed, in their responses to these anti-martyrdom positions, advocates of martyrdom often explicitly link the reality of Jesus’ suffering to their pro-martyrdom stance.³⁹ Ignatius, for example, urges the Trallians to

be deaf, therefore, whenever anyone speaks to you apart from Jesus Christ, who was of the family of David, who was the son of Mary; who really was born, who

³⁴ *Testim. Truth* 31.21–32.21. Trans. Søren Giversen and Birger A. Pearson, *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (ed. James M. Robinson; 2nd ed.; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1984), 406–16.

³⁵ *Testim. Truth* 34.4–25.

³⁶ See Karen L. King, “Martyrdom and its Discontents in the Tchacos Codex” in *Codex Judas Papers: Proceedings of the International Congress on the Tchacos Codex held at Rice University, Houston Texas, March 13-16, 2008* (ed. April D. DeConick; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2009), 23–42; Jesper Hyldahl, “Gnostic Critique of Martyrdom” in *Contextualising Early Christian Martyrdom* (eds. Jakob Engberg, Uffe H. Erikson, and Anders K. Petersen; Early Christianity in the Context of Antiquity; New York: Peter Lang, 2011), 119–38.

³⁷ Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Random House, 1979), 90.

³⁸ For an excellent survey of “Gnostic” attitudes to martyrdom, see Philip Tite, “Voluntary Martyrdom and Gnosticism,” *J ECS* 23 (2015, forthcoming).

³⁹ Elaine Pagels, “Gnostic and Orthodox Views of Christ’s Passion: Paradigms for the Christian’s Response to Persecution?” in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the Conference at Yale, March 1978* (ed. Bentley Layton; 2 vols; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1980), 262–83.

ate and drank; who really was persecuted under Pontius Pilate, who really was crucified and died while those in heaven and on earth and under the earth looked on; who, moreover, really was raised from the dead ... Apart from him we have no life. But if some atheists (ἄθεοι), that is, unbelievers (ἄπιστοι) say he suffered in appearance only (while they exist in appearance only!),⁴⁰ why am I in chains? And why do I want to fight with wild beasts. If that is the case, I die for no reason.⁴¹

Ignatius' suffering is grounded in the reality of Jesus' Passion. The letter to the Smyrnaeans focuses even more sharply on those "unbelievers" (ἄπιστοι) who say that "Jesus suffered in appearance only."⁴² Ignatius again insists that if Jesus only appeared to suffer, then his chains would not be real. But because Jesus really did suffer, Ignatius may "suffer together (συμπαθεῖν) with him."⁴³

There is, therefore, a clear correlation between an early Christian group's view of the Passion and their attitude to martyrdom. As in some "Gnostic" texts where Jesus escapes crucifixion, so Christians following his example should naturally avoid death. Both groups, therefore, imitate Jesus, one by welcoming and undergoing suffering and death, while the other avoids it. Jesus is the first and foundational martyr or indeed "anti-martyr" for both groups of Christians. The interpretation of Jesus' death determines, or at least influences the value placed on martyrdom.

Can we further calibrate the relationship between Christology and martyrology among groups who affirm the value of suffering? If views of Jesus' Passion shape the presentation of suffering and discipleship, to what extent do subtle differences in the way the death of Christ is narrated affect the advocacy of suffering and martyrdom? Taking the Gospel of Mark and the Apocalypse as test cases, I argue that Christology and martyrology are even more closely entwined than simply on the level of acceptance or rejection of suffering. In both NT texts,

⁴⁰ Τουτέστιν ἄπιστοι λέγουσιν, τὸ δοκεῖν πεπονθέναι αὐτον, αὐτοὶ ὄντες τὸ δοκεῖν (!). Ignatius also makes the same pun in *Smyrn.* 2:1.

⁴¹ Ign. *Trall.* 9:1–10:1.

⁴² Ign. *Smyrn.* 2:1.

⁴³ Ign. *Smyrn.* 4:2.

the themes of following Jesus and imitating his death are particularly pronounced. Yet, as I will demonstrate, the ways in which the deaths of Jesus and the martyrs are portrayed are quite different in each.

The Gospel of Mark

In Mark's Apocalyptic Discourse, Jesus warns his disciples to expect persecution:

But take heed to yourselves; for they will deliver you up to councils; and you will be beaten in synagogues; and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear testimony before them.... And brother will deliver up brother to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved (Mark 13:9–13).

Persecution will come from Jews, Gentiles, and family members, and lead to capital punishment. But Mark goes further than simply warning about a theoretical possibility of suffering; he makes it a condition of discipleship: "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me" (8:34).⁴⁴ We note again that discipleship and martyrdom are closely linked, and that Jesus' own death serves as a model for faithful disciples. For those who want (θέλει)⁴⁵ to follow after Jesus (ὀπίσω μου ἀκολουθεῖν), there are two conditions: renounce self (ἀπαρνησάσθω ἑαυτόν); take up cross (ἀράτω τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ); and only then can one follow (καὶ ἀκολουθεῖτω μοι). In other words, those who follow without taking up the cross are not following at all. The same force is also found in the Q version of the saying: "The one who does not take one's cross and follow after me cannot

⁴⁴ Despite the call to take up one's cross, Hurtado notes that there are few early stories of Christians actually being crucified outside Tacitus' account (*Ann.* 15.44) and the allusion to Peter's crucifixion in John 21:18–19. He suggests that the memory of the Roman crucifixions may account for the evangelists presenting crucifixion as a possible danger ("Jesus' Death," 418). It is also possible, given Jesus' crucifixion, that "taking up the cross" is being used proverbially for any kind of death. Luke's insertion of καθ' ἡμέραν to the logion (9:23) gives the saying a clear metaphorical meaning. For discussion, see Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom*, 146–56.

⁴⁵ Joel Marcus, *Mark 8–16* (AB 27; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 615–27, suggests θέλει may be Markan. The word is not present in the versions of the saying preserved in Q 14:26 or John 12:25 (cf. Mk 9:35; 10:44). Mark's readers must, therefore, actively choose to embrace the way of suffering.

be my disciple (14:27).”⁴⁶ In other words, bearing a cross is a condition, not simply a consequence of being a disciple.

Significantly, given the conflict that will be directed at the faithful from family members (Mark 13:12), the Q version of the cross saying is linked with an instruction that a disciple must also hate (μισεῖ) family members in order to be worthy of Jesus (14:26).⁴⁷ In responding to Jesus’ initial call to “come after me” (Mark 1:17; δεῦτε ὀπίσω μου), James and John abandoned (ἀφέντες) not only their nets, but also their father before they followed (ἀπῆλθον ὀπίσω) Jesus (1:20). Later, Peter reminds Jesus that the disciples have abandoned everything (ἀφήκαμεν πάντα) and followed (ἠκολουθήκαμεν) him (10:28), to which Jesus responds that true followers are those who abandon (ἀφῆκεν) house, brothers, sisters, mother, father, children, and land for the sake of Jesus and the gospel (10:29). The reward for abandoning them is to receive the same back again “now and in the age to come” with persecutions (10:30; διωγμῶν), which may be a hint at the familial persecution mentioned at 13.12.

There are further indications that those who do not accept the way of suffering cannot be disciples. In the interpretation of the parable of the sower (4:13–20), Jesus explains that those who appear to be disciples at first hear and receive the word with joy (μετὰ χαρᾶς). However, they “have no root” and are unable to endure tribulation (θλίψις) or persecution (διωγμός) that comes on account of the word (διὰ τὸν λόγον), and so fall away (4:16–17). Persecution reveals true and false followers. Such fair-weather followers, who fall away and attempt to save themselves are warned, “Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and for the gospel’s will save it” (8:35). This saying

⁴⁶ Matthew’s version “is not worthy of me” (10:37) is preferred by James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffman, and John S. Kloppenborg, eds., *The Critical Edition of Q* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 454–5.

⁴⁷ *Gos. Thom.* 55 also retains the link between hating family and carrying the cross.

anticipates perfectly the sort of judicial context ubiquitous in the martyr acts, where Christians can either deny Christ and live or deny themselves by confessing Christ, and face execution. The warning that losing one's life is the better option is reinforced by the eschatological threat contained in Mark 8:38: "Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." Failure to deny oneself and confess Jesus has eschatological consequences.

The predictions of persecution and trial contained in Mark 13 form a believer's Passion. As in the martyr acts, there are parallels between the fate of the disciples and Jesus.⁴⁸ Like him, a true disciple will be betrayed (παράδωσει) by a brother (13:12; cf. 14:10, 20, 43 where Judas is "one of the twelve"), appear before councils (13:9; cf. 14:53, 55), be beaten (13:9; cf. 14:65; 15:15), and be killed (13:12; cf. 15:37). In going to the cross, Jesus models discipleship for would-be followers, who must themselves take up the cross and accept the road of suffering. In Mark, "discipleship is shaped by Jesus himself, his death being the benchmark of commitment."⁴⁹

However, the Passion also shows the disciples to be "rootless" followers. Peter had already verbally rejected the path of suffering in rebuking Jesus after the first Passion prediction (8:32). Moreover, even though he appears to understand that true followers will have to die with Jesus to fulfil the terms of their discipleship (14:31), when offered the opportunity to deny self, confess Jesus, and lose his life (cf. 8:34–35), Peter instead denies (ἡρνήσατο), and in his attempt to save his own life, even begins to curse (ἀναθεματίζειν)

⁴⁸ For extensive lists of parallels between chapter 13 and chapters 14–15, see R. H. Lightfoot, *The Gospel Message of St Mark* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950), 48–59; Dale C. Allison, *The End of the Ages has Come: An Early Interpretation of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1985), 36–39; Marcus, *Mark 8–16*, 885.

⁴⁹ Larry W. Hurtado, "Following Jesus in the Gospel of Mark—and Beyond," in *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament* (ed. Richard N. Longenecker; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 9–29, here, 14.

Jesus (14:71).⁵⁰ Similarly, while the other disciples had abandoned everything (ἀφήκαμεν πάντα) to follow Jesus (10:28), at the time of testing (cf. 4:17), they all abandon him and flee (ἀφέντες αὐτὸν φεύγω πάντες; 14:50).⁵¹

The necessity of the suffering that the disciples must endure is paralleled by Jesus' own suffering. From the early notice that his enemies plot to destroy him (3:6), the inevitability of the cross is emphasised in the central section of the gospel in which the three "passion predictions" are contained.⁵² Significantly, the first of these immediately follows Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ (8:29). Jesus' insistence that he must (δεῖ) suffer many things (πολλὰ παθεῖν) and be killed redefines traditional understandings of Messiahship (8:31). Further predictions of his death (9:12–13; 10:45; 12:1–12; 14:8; 14:22–25; 14:32–42) reinforce the centrality of suffering and death to Mark's understanding of Christology. To be sure, there are also predictions of resurrection (8:31; 9:9; 9:31; 10:34; 14:28) and at least hints of glorification (10:37; 12:11; 13:26–27; 14:62), but there are no resurrection appearances, and thus no narrative presentation of this promised vindication. The scene in Gethsemane (14:32–42) and the cry of abandonment from the cross (15:34) emphasise the

⁵⁰ The verb has no object, but it is likely Peter here curses Jesus (Marcus, *Mark 8–16*, 1024).

⁵¹ The question of the disciples' final status has divided scholars, although most accept that Mark's treatment of them is so severe that they act as a foil for some aberrant belief, whether christological (Theodore W. Weeden, "The Heresy that Necessitated Mark's Gospel", *ZNW* 59 [1986]: 145–58), ecclesiological (Etienne Trocmé, *The Formation of the Gospel According to Mark* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975], or eschatological (Ernest Best, *Following Jesus: Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark* [JSNTSS 4; Sheffield: University of Sheffield Press, 1981]). More recently, "pastoral" readings have been advanced, wherein the disciples do fail, but are restored in the end, which, according to this reading, mirrors the experiences of the Markan community. See Bas M. F. van Iersel, "Failed Followers in Mark: Mark 13:12 as a Key for the Identification of the Intended Readers," *CBQ* 58 (1996): 244–63. This reading depends on the assumption that the disciples do get the message contrary to 16:8, "and they said nothing to anyone because they were afraid." Larry Hurtado advances this view in two essays: "Following Jesus" in which he suggests Mark's audience would be aware of the disciples' restoration; and "The Women, The Tomb, and the Climax of Mark" in *A Wandering Galilean: Essays in Honour of Seán Freyne* (eds. Zuleika Rodgers, Margaret Daly-Denton, and Anne F. McKinley; Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 132; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2009), 427–51, where he argues Mark means the women said nothing to anyone other than the disciples. See also the major commentaries by Marcus, *Mark 8–16*, 1095–96; and Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Heremania; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 797. For the argument the disciples remain outsiders at the end of the gospel, see Paul Middleton, "Suffering and the Creation of Christian Identity in the Gospel of Mark," in *The T & T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament* (eds. Brian Tucker and Coleman Baker; London: T&T Clark, 2014), 173–189.

⁵² Mark 8:31–33; 9:30–32; 10:32–34.

cold reality of the persecution and suffering that Jesus and his true followers will have to face.⁵³ There is no suggestion that believers should face persecution with joy as is found in other NT texts.⁵⁴ Before the End, there will be a time of unparalleled distress that appears to pose a threat to the resolve of even the elect (13:19–20). As Marcus notes, the significance of the resurrection “seems to be dwarfed by the massiveness of the suffering that precedes it.”⁵⁵ Furthermore, in Mark it is Jesus’ death, rather than his resurrection, that causes a confession of faith from the Gentile centurion (15:39), when he recognises what the reader has known all along; Jesus is the Son of God.⁵⁶

The reader, therefore, has to imagine the vindication of Jesus which takes place beyond the text. Similarly, there is little by way of reward for faithful martyrs who follow Jesus on the road of suffering and death. Those who have abandoned familial ties are promised eternal life, but not before further persecutions (10:30), while those who are able to endure to the end will be saved (13:13). At the coming of the Son of Man, the beleaguered elect will be gathered from the corners of the earth, but it is not clear whether this is principally vindication or rescue from distress (13:27). There is a hint at martyrological reward in the request of James and John to sit at the right and left hand of Jesus in glory (10:35–37). When Jesus challenges them if they are able to be baptised with his baptism and drink the cup that he drinks, they claim they are (10:38–39). Assuming this is a martyrological reference, Jesus affirms that they will indeed suffer, but he sidesteps the

⁵³ Cf., however, the essay of Holly J. Carey in this volume.

⁵⁴ Matt 5:11–12//Lk 6:22–23; Rom 12:2; 2 Cor 6:10; 8:2; 13:9; Phil 2:17; 4:4–6; Col 1:11, 24; 1 Pet 1:6; 4:13–14; Jas 1:2.

⁵⁵ Marcus, *Mark 8–16*, 746.

⁵⁶ Compare Mark 1:1. There is no need to enter into debate about the possible confession a “historical centurion” might have made, or whether the words should be read ironically, so Donald H. Juel, *A Master of Surprise: Mark Interpreted* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 74 n. 7; Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark’s Story of Jesus* (New York: Orbis, 1988), 393–4. The centurion is primarily a literary character, whose confession reinforces Mark’s Christological view that it is through suffering and death that Jesus fulfils his Messianic office.

question of their reward (10:40).⁵⁷ Jesus is able to confirm the need for suffering, but not subsequent vindication or reward.

So unlike readers of other NT texts, it is not clear in Mark why those who suffer should be joyful. Suffering is set down as a pre-condition for discipleship, yet there is little or nothing promised by way of vindication for those who lose their lives for the sake of the gospel. There is no great reward in the Kingdom of Heaven (Mt. 5:11–12) nor any glimpse of the “glory to be revealed” by which to relativise the “sufferings of this present time” (Rom 8:18). Mark’s rather bleak presentation of discipleship is largely mirrored by his presentation of the Passion, in which Jesus’ suffering is emphasised, but subsequent vindication lies beyond the boundaries of the text. When we turn to the Apocalypse, although there is a similar correlation between the presentation of the Passion and the call for disciples to suffer, the way in which both are presented are quite different.

The Apocalypse

Martyrdom is a major theme in the Apocalypse.⁵⁸ Indeed, Larry Hurtado quips, “In effect, Revelation warns, in the coming crisis the only good Christian will likely be a dead Christian!”⁵⁹ I have argued elsewhere that this is indeed the case (without Hurtado’s qualifying exclamation mark!); the call to conquer issued throughout Revelation is a call to

⁵⁷ The cup is a symbol of martyrdom in *Mart. Pol.* 14:2. Cf. Mark 14:36. For the association baptism and martyrdom, see, for example, *Passion of Perpetua* 21.2.

⁵⁸ See for example, Jan Willem van Henten, “The Concept of Martyrdom in Revelation,” in *Die Johannesapokalypse: Kontexte—Konzepte—Rezeption* (eds. Jörg Frey, James A. Kelhoffer, Franz Tóth; WUNT 287; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 587–618; Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom*, 158–70; Stephen Pattemore, *The People of God in the Apocalypse: Discourse, Structure, and Exegesis* (SNTSMS 128; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 68–116; Michelle V. Lee, “A Call to Martyrdom: Function as Method and Message in Revelation,” *NovT* 40 (1998): 164–94; Mitchell G. Reddish, “Martyr Christology in the Apocalypse,” *JSNT* 33 (1988): 85–95; André Feuillet, “Les martyrs de l’humanité et l’Agneau égorgé: une interprétation nouvelle de la prière des égorgés en Ap 6,9–11,” *NRT* 99 (1977): 189–207.

⁵⁹ Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 620.

martyrdom, encouraging Christians to embrace death enthusiastically in order to fill up the number of martyrs required to trigger God's judgment (6:11).⁶⁰

John presents a picture of violent persecution and near certainty of martyrdom. As with other early Christian texts, Jesus functions as a model for martyrdom. The 144,000 of chapter 14 "follow the Lamb wherever he goes" (14:4), a phrase which has martyrological significance in the *Martyrs of Lyons* in relation to Vettius Epagathus, who:

called the Christians' advocate ... possessed the Advocate within him ... which he demonstrated by the fullness of his love, consenting as he did to lay down his life in defence of his fellow Christians. He was and is a true disciple of Christ, following the Lamb wherever he goes (*Mart. Lyons* 1:10).

As with Ignatius, the martyr represents the truest form of discipleship, following Jesus to the point of death. In chapters 13 and 14, John divides humanity into two distinct and mutually exclusive groups: worshippers of the Beast and followers of the Lamb. He reports that the whole earth (ὅλη ἡ γῆ) followed the Beast (13:3), worshipped it (13:8), and its people were marked on their right hand or forehead (13:16). The only group who do not worship the Beast are those whose names were written in the Lamb's book of life (13:8). John signals that endurance and faith will be required (13:10), for the consequence of refusing to engage in Beast-worship and to receive his mark is execution (13:15). Since all those who refuse to worship the Beast are both to be slain and are to be found in the Lamb's book of life, all those in the Lamb's book of life, that is, *all* faithful Christians, are to be martyred. This conclusion is reinforced when John later sees

the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God and who had not worshipped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands (20:4).

In the Apocalypse, one either belongs to the earth, worships the Beast, receives its mark, and is absent from the Lamb's book of life, or alternatively, one is a faithful witness to Jesus, who

⁶⁰ Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom*, 158–70. See also Lee, "Call to Martyrdom"; David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16* (WBC 52B; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 410–13.

does not worship or receive the mark of the beast, whose name is found in the book of life, and who will be martyred.⁶¹

The Apocalypse, like the Gospel of Mark, uses martyrology to divide humanity. Indeed, the cross sayings find parallels in Revelation. Just as Jesus called disciples to take up the cross and follow (ἀκολουθέω) him (Mk 8:34), the martyrs follow (ἀκολουθοῦντες) the Lamb wherever he goes (Rev. 14:4). As Jesus urged these followers to lose their lives in order to save them (ἀπολέσει τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ; Mk 8:35), true disciples in the Apocalypse loved not their lives (οὐκ ἠγάπησαν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτῶν) even to death (ἄχρι θανάτου; Rev. 12:11). As Jesus will deny those who deny him before the Father and the angels (Mk 8:38), in the Apocalypse, he will confess the names of those who conquer before his Father and angels (Rev. 3:5).

However, whereas in Mark any future reward for the martyrs must be inferred, in the Apocalypse rewards given “to those who conquer” (τοῖς νικῶντι) are explicitly listed. Conquerors will have the right to eat of the tree of life (2:7); they will not be hurt by the second death (2:11); God’s and Christ’s names will be written on them (3:12); they will be clad in white, and found in the book of life (3:5). They will be given power over the nations (2:26), become pillars in the temple (3:12) and sit on Christ’s throne (3:22). Each of these rewards are reserved for those who are martyred in the text, especially those beheaded for their testimony, who as priests of God and Christ, are raised at the first resurrection, granting them immunity over the second death (20:4–6).⁶²

⁶¹ This is the logic of the narrative world of the text. Interpreters, however, normally (and without warrant) soften John’s demand to only a “readiness” for martyrdom; so van Henten (“Concept of Martyrdom,” 617) concludes: “It is important to note that a violent death is not a necessary requirement for being victorious, the crucial point is in Revelation the attitude of the believers, the willingness to undergo suffering and death if necessary, not a violent death per se.”

⁶² Other rewards for the martyrs are found in Rev. 6:11; 7:9, 13–14; 20:14.

In Mark's Gospel the lack of explicit vindication for the martyrs mirrors the emphasis on Jesus' road to the cross as the model of suffering. To be sure, commentators concerned by the violence of Revelation stress that violence is offset by a more significant emphasis on suffering and weakness.⁶³ Such readings tend to refract the violence of Revelation through the image of the Lamb presented as if slaughtered (5:6, 9, 12; 13:8). This becomes the controlling metaphor through which all other Christological imagery is to be read.⁶⁴ Followers of the Lamb similarly conquer through non-violent resistance. However, these readings depend on a rather one-dimensional view of John's christological vision, and fail to take account of the function of martyrdom of the Apocalypse, which is not merely passive.

The opening verses of the Apocalypse describe Jesus as the faithful witness (ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός), the firstborn of the dead (ὁ πρωτότοκος τῶν νεκρῶν), and ruler of kings on earth (1:5). In other words, Jesus appears as the one who died, who was resurrected, but is now, in the time-frame of the Apocalypse, glorified. The slaughtered Lamb is one representation of the glorified Christ, who is identified as the Son of Man (1:9–16) and is worthy to open the scroll of eschatological carnage (5:9). Significantly, as the Lamb, he receives worship due to God (5:12–13; 7:9–10);⁶⁵ his wrath invokes terror (6:16); like God, he is a shepherd of his people (7:17; 14:4 cf. Ps. 23); he participates in or is the arbiter of judgement (13:8; 21:27); he leads his army (14:1); defeats his enemies (17:14); and shares God's throne (7:17; 22:1, 3). As King of kings and Lord of lords (19:16), he takes the role of judge, "smiting the nations and ruling them with an iron rod" (19:15). The image of the victorious slain Lamb

⁶³ Among the many non-violent readings of the Apocalypse are Brian K. Blount, *Can I get a Witness? Reading Revelation through African American Culture* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005); Mark Bredin, *Jesus, Revolutionary of Peace: A Non-Violent Christology in the Book of Revelation* (Paternoster Biblical Monographs; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2003).

⁶⁴ An early example of this exegetical move is found in George B. Caird, *The Revelation of St John* (BNTC; London: A & C Black, 1966), who writes, "It is almost as if John were saying to us at one point after another: 'Wherever the Old Testament says "Lion," read "Lamb"'" (74).

⁶⁵ For discussion of this high Christology, see Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 590–4.

does not represent merely Jesus' suffering, but also his resurrection and glorification. As

Larry Hurtado observes:

In Rev. 5 the Lamb is described as already slain and victorious, and hence able to open the sealed book of eschatological triumph. That is, Rev. 5 does not *describe* the Gospel events but *presupposes* them as having already happened.⁶⁶

The Lamb is not, therefore, an image of weakness and submission. He conquers through death, and is vindicated and glorified. Death is not an indication of powerlessness; Jesus also appears to John in a theophanic vision as 'one like Son of Man' with eyes like fire, feet like bronze, a voice like rushing water, a sword from his mouth, and a face like the blazing sun (1:12–20). Yet this powerful figure is the same one who died, but is now alive, and holds the keys to Death and Hades (1:18). Advocates of non-violent Lamb readings rarely attempt to make the case that this figure represents a model of "suffering love."

Jesus as proto-martyr offers to the reading community of the Apocalypse a model not of passive suffering, but death, resurrection, and glorification, and this is indeed how martyrs are presented in Revelation. Antipas is the faithful martyr-witness (ὁ μάρτυς ... ὁ πιστός; 2:13)⁶⁷ as are the souls under the altar, and the beheaded martyrs slain διὰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν (6:9; 20:4). As Jesus is the firstborn of the dead, so the martyrs are redeemed from the earth (14:3), the first fruits (ἀπαρχή) for God and the Lamb (14:4). This is precisely the same use of ἀπαρχή which Paul uses to speak of Jesus' resurrection; "Christ is raised from the dead, the first fruits (ἀπαρχή) of them that sleep" (1 Cor 15:20). Like Jesus, the martyrs are resurrected, then reign; those who conquer will be given power over the nations (2:26), sit on

⁶⁶ Larry W. Hurtado, "Revelation 4–5 in the Light of Jewish Apocalyptic Analogies," *JSNT* 25 (1985): 105–24, here 117 (emphasis added).

⁶⁷ The term μάρτυς and its Latin transliteration is found as an unambiguous technical term for "martyr" by the mid-second century. However, it is not clear the extent to which it has this technical usage by the time of the Apocalypse. For classic studies, see Norbert Brox, *Zeuge und Märtyrer: Untersuchungen zur frühchristlichen Zeugnis-Terminologie* (Munich: Kösel, 1961); and Allison A. Trites, "Μάρτυς and Martyrdom in the Apocalypse: A Semantic Study," *NovT* 15 (1973): 72–80. For a more recent discussion, see van Henten, "Concept of Martyrdom," 602–8.

Christ's throne (3:22), and the beheaded martyrs will be priests of God and of Christ, and reign with him a thousand years (20:6).

The martyrs also share in the Lamb's role of Judge. They are given authority to rule the nations with a rod of iron (2:27), normally the privilege of the Messiah (12:5; 19:15), and they are ordered to "render to her [Babylon] as she herself has rendered, and repay her double for her deeds; mix a double draught for her in the cup she mixed" (18:6). While it may be hard to imagine just how Christians would be in a position to take such action, when the martyrs are viewed with the eyes of the Seer, they are not a weak and persecuted minority in the midst of a powerful empire; they share the authority of the Lamb, comprise a strong conquering army, and are agents of judgement and retribution.

Discipleship in the Apocalypse has a martyrological orientation; it means following the Lamb to death. However, in Revelation's narrative world, the Lamb is not only slaughtered, he is resurrected, glorified, and judges the world with violent retribution for its evils, including spilling blood of the martyrs.⁶⁸ True disciples of Christ obey his command to follow *wherever* he goes, and share not only in his death, but in his resurrection, glorification, and reign.

Conclusion

We have noted that for early Christian communities Jesus acts as a "first martyr," presenting a model which faithful Christians are called to follow. However, at one extreme this means avoiding death altogether; those who believed Jesus did not really die saw little merit in martyrdom. Nonetheless, among groups that did valorise martyrdom, the way in which the death of Jesus is presented affects their theologies of discipleship, suffering, and martyrdom. In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus' suffering leaves behind a model of discipleship where believers face hardship and persecution from Jew, Gentile, and family. The only authentic way to

⁶⁸ For example, Rev 6:10; 16:6-7

become a follower of Jesus is to take up the cross and embrace persecution and martyrdom. Suffering is *the* sign of faithfulness and Christian identity.⁶⁹ As the vindication of Jesus remains ambiguous within the text—there is no dramatic resurrection appearance or ascent into heaven—so no incentive other than faithfulness and veiled threats for deniers are offered for those who hear Jesus’ call. The Son of Man will come on the clouds at the End, bringing relief for hard pressed Christian communities.

In the Apocalypse, Mark’s “way to the cross” is transformed from weakness and suffering into triumph and glory. The slain Lamb is not a picture of suffering. The Lamb has triumphed through death, and exercises power, authority, and judgement; crucifixion, resurrection, glorification, judgement, and final victory are collapsed into a single martyrological event. As with the Gospel of Mark, disciples follow the martyr. However, by contrast, they follow the same process as the Lamb, leading from martyrdom to resurrection, glorification, and their installation as rulers and judges.

For both Mark and John the function of Jesus as first martyr is identical; faithfulness demands potential disciples to follow his example through imitating his death. However, the contrast in the way the two present this first martyr is striking, resulting in radically different conceptions of *how* martyrdom is promoted, and what it achieves. Both presentations of Jesus’ death inspire true disciples to seek martyrdom. Yet, the Seer’s more developed Christology with his more explicit connection between death and vindication benefits his martyrs. In the face of persecution, Mark’s community were called to be faithful and face martyrdom waiting and watching for the Son of Man to return and end the period of suffering. Readers of the Apocalypse were also called to endure to death, but in following the Lamb, through their martyrdom they achieve victory.

⁶⁹ See Middleton, “Suffering,” 173–89.