

WORD AND WITNESS: AN ANALYSIS OF THE LAWSUIT MOTIF IN REVELATION BASED ON THE WITNESS TERMINOLOGY*

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The admonition to “be a witness for Jesus,” may conjure up several connotations in the mind of a twenty-first century Christian. Most common, perhaps, is the idea of telling someone about Jesus in an evangelistic presentation. This may include sharing one’s personal testimony about coming to faith in Christ, or it may simply involve being a good neighbor. However, one may observe a formal disjunction between the concept of witness in the New Testament [NT] and its modern usage. On one hand, the concept of witness in the NT may include the proclamation of the apostles, which would indubitably involve an evangelistic component.¹ On the other hand, however, it includes strong legal and judicial connotations.² In other words, those who are witnessing are doing so as if they are standing trial for the veracity of their testimony. The disjunction, therefore, results from the absence of the connotation of standing on trial in the modern conception.

The noun μάρτυς (“a witness”) almost always occurs in the NT in the context of (1) a legal or public declaration about something that has happened, and (2) those who are witnesses claim personal knowledge and experience of the facts that they assert.³

Another important noun, μαρτυρία (“testimony”), typically refers to the content of what

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¹ Edward G. Selwyn, “Eschatology in I Peter,” in *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology: Studies in Honor of C. H. Dodd*, ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), 395. He argues: “I sometimes wonder whether the term κήρυγμα has not been worked too hard, and whether the word μαρτυρία and its cognates would not better describe the primitive and indispensable core of the Christian message. At any rate, if we examine the comparative occurrences in the New Testament of the two sets of terms, we find the occurrences of the verbs alone which speak of ‘witness’ considerably outnumber the occurrences of κηρύσσειν, while the occurrences of the noun μαρτυρία outnumber those of the noun κήρυγμα by more than six to one.”

² Allison A. Trites, *The New Testament Concept of Witness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 2.

³ Occurrences of forms of the root for μάρτυς: Matt 18:16; 26:65; Mark 14:63; Luke 11:48; 24:48; Acts 1:8, 22; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 6:13; 7:58; 10:39, 41; 13:31; 22:15, 20; 26:16; Rom 1:9; 2 Co 1:23; 13:1; Phil 1:8; 1 Thess 2:5, 10; 1 Tim 5:19; 6:12; 2 Tim 2:2; Heb 10:28; 12:1; 1 Pet 5:1; Rev 1:5; 2:13; 3:14; 11:3; 17:6.

the witnesses testify and often occurs in a trial setting.⁴ Significantly, the greatest distributional weight of μαρτυρία is found in the Johannine writings (fourteen times in the Gospel, seven times in the Epistles, and nine times in Revelation). This suggests that witness is a prominent aspect in Johannine theology.

The book of Revelation employs μαρτυρία as a key term with both the verb and noun forms present.⁵ One phrase, τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ (“the word of God and the testimony of Jesus”), has garnered a significant amount of scholarly attention.⁶ The discussion concerning the interpretation of this phrase has primarily centered on addressing two issues. The first is whether or not the use of the μαρτ- word group carries the martyrological connotations apparent in its use by the end of the second century (e.g. *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*). The second issue is what kind of genitive is μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ? Without doubt these are essential questions for exegesis, however, two additional questions are also necessary, namely, *why* and *how* did John intend to use this phrase in the broader context and purpose of the book of Revelation?

⁴ Forms of the root of μαρτυρία: Mark 14:55f, 59; Luke 22:71; John 1:7, 19; 3:11, 32f; 5:31f, 34, 36; 8:13f, 17; 19:35; 21:24; Acts 22:18; 1 Tim 3:7; Tit 1:13; 1 John 5:9ff; 3 John 1:12; Rev 1:2, 9; 6:9; 11:7; 12:11, 17; 19:10; 20:4. The verb form μαρτυρέω often occurs in a similar context: Matt 23:31; Luke 4:22; John 1:7f, 15, 32, 34; 2:25; 3:11, 26, 28, 32; 4:39, 44; 5:31ff, 36f, 39; 7:7; 8:13f, 18; 10:25; 12:17; 13:21; 15:26f; 18:23, 37; 19:35; 21:24; Acts 6:3; 10:22, 43; 13:22; 14:3; 15:8; 16:2; 22:5, 12; 23:11; 26:5; Rom 3:21; 10:2; 1 Co 15:15; 2 Co 8:3; Gal 4:15; Col 4:13; 1 Tim 5:10; 6:13; Heb 7:8, 17; 10:15; 11:2, 4f, 39; 1 John 1:2; 4:14; 5:6f, 9f; 3 John 1:3, 6, 12; Rev 1:2; 22:16, 18, 20.

⁵ Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 56. cf. Rev 1:2, 9; 6:9; 11:7; 12:11, 17; 19:10; 20:4; 22: 16, 18, 20. For the less frequent noun, μάρτυς: Rev 1:5; 2:13; 3:14; 11:3; 17:6.

⁶ Allison A. Trites, “Μάρτυς and Martyrdom in the Apocalypse: A Semantic Study,” *Novum Testamentum* 15 (1973): 72–80; B. Dehandschutter, “The Meaning of Witness in the Apocalypse,” in *L’Apocalypse johannique et l’Apocalyptique dans le Nouveau Testament*, ed. J. Lambrecht (Paris-Gembloux: Leuven University Press, 1980), 283–288; Petros Vassiliadis, “The Translation of Martria Iēsou in Revelation,” *Bible Translator* 36 (1985): 129–134; G. W. H. Lampe, “The Testimony of Jesus Is the Spirit of Prophecy,” in *The New Testament Age: Essays in Honor of Bo Reicke*, ed. William C. Weinrich (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1984), 245–258; Frederick D. Mazzaferri, “Martyria Iēsou Revisited,” *Bible Translator* 39 (1988): 114–122; Paul Ellingworth, “The Marturia Debate,” *Bible Translator* 41 (1990): 138–139.

It will be argued, therefore, that Revelation exhibits a lawsuit motif in which Christians and the world stand trial before God's court with Jesus as the presiding judge.⁷ The sociological background for the law-court imagery stems from some sort of persecution inflicted on Christians now facing the possibility of standing trial for not worshipping Caesar.⁸ Christians who are faithful witnesses to Christ will face persecution that may involve execution.⁹ However, in Revelation, the world will ultimately stand trial for not worshipping Jesus and for persecuting his witnesses. As a result, the inhabitants of the world and Satan's hordes will be found guilty and thus incur God's judgment. This lawsuit motif corresponds very well with the same phenomenon in the Fourth Gospel

⁷ George B. Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine*, Harper's New Testament Commentaries, ed. Henry Chadwick (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 17–18. So Trites, *Concept of Witness*, 154.

⁸ An argument for the nature of the persecution and Imperial cult during the time of Revelation is beyond the scope of this paper. Most modern scholars deny that the churches were facing real external persecution stemming from the imperial cult, but it is nonetheless a significant part of the societal structure in the first century. See Dominique Cuss, *Imperial Cult and Honorary Terms in the New Testament*, Paradosis, vol. 23 (Fribourg: University Press Fribourg Switzerland, 1974), 50–154; J. Nelson Kraybill, *Imperial Cult and Commerce in John's Apocalypse*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 132 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996); S. R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Philip Harland, "Honours and Worship: Emperors, Imperial Cults and Associations at Ephesus (first to third centuries C. E.)," *Studies in Religion* 25 (1996): 319–34; *idem*, "Honouring the Emperor or Assailing the Beast: Participation in Civic Life among Associations (Jewish, Christian and Other) in Asia Minor and the Apocalypse of John," *JSNT* 77 (2000): 99–121; *idem*, "Imperial Cults within Local Cultural Life: Associations in Roman Asia," *Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 17 (2003): 85–107; Steven J. Friesen, *Twice Neokoros: Ephesus, Asia and the Cult of the Flavian Imperial Family* (Leiden: Brill, 1993); *idem*, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John: Reading Revelation in the Ruins* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); *idem*, "The Cult of the Roman Emperors in Ephesus: Temple Wardens, City Titles, and the Interpretation of the Revelation of John," in *Ephesus: Metropolis of Asia: An Interdisciplinary Approach to its Archaeology, Religion, and Culture*, ed. H. Koester (Valley Forge: Trinity Press, 1995), 229–50; *idem*, "Satan's Throne, Imperial Cults and the Social Settings of Revelation," *JSNT* 27, no. 3 (2005): 351–73; H.-S. Klauck, "Das Sendschreiben nach Pergamon und der Kaiserkult in der Johannesoffenbarung," *Biblica* 73 (1992): 152–82. See especially, A. N. Sherwin-White, "The Early Persecutions and Roman Law Again," *Journal of Theological Studies* 3 (October 1952): 199–213; Jan Lambrecht, "Jewish Slander: A Note on Revelation 2,9-10," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 75, no. 4 (1999): 421–29.

⁹ J. P. M. Sweet, "Maintaining the Testimony of Jesus: The Suffering of Christians in the Revelation of John," in *Suffering and Martyrdom in the New Testament: Studies Presented to G. M. Styer by the Cambridge New Testament Seminar*, ed. William Horbury and Brian McNeil (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 101.

[FG].¹⁰ Therefore the possible correlation between the FG and Revelation provides a plausible link for interpreting the phrase “the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.”

The Μάρτ- Word Group

The masculine noun, μάρτυς, occurs five times in Revelation:

Revelation 1:5 καὶ ἀπὸ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὁ μάρτυς, ὁ πιστός, ὁ πρωτότοκος τῶν νεκρῶν καὶ ὁ ἄρχων τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς. Τῷ ἀγαπῶντι ἡμᾶς καὶ λύσαντι ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν ἐν τῷ αἵματι αὐτοῦ,
Revelation 2:13 Οἶδα ποῦ κατοικεῖς, ὅπου ὁ θρόνος τοῦ Σατανᾶ, καὶ κρατεῖς τὸ ὄνομά μου καὶ οὐκ ἠρνήσω τὴν πίστιν μου καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις Ἀντιπᾶς ὁ μάρτυς μου ὁ πιστός μου, ὃς ἀπεκτάνθη παρ’ ὑμῖν, ὅπου ὁ Σατανᾶς κατοικεῖ.
Revelation 3:14 Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Λαοδικείᾳ ἐκκλησίας γράψον· Τάδε λέγει ὁ Ἀμὴν, ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός καὶ ἀληθινός, ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ·
Revelation 11:3 καὶ δώσω τοῖς δυσὶν μάρτυσίν μου καὶ προφητεύσουσιν ἡμέρας χιλίας διακοσίας ἑξήκοντα περιβεβλημένοι σάκκου.
Revelation 17:6 καὶ εἶδον τὴν γυναῖκα μεθύουσαν ἐκ τοῦ αἵματος τῶν ἁγίων καὶ ἐκ τοῦ αἵματος τῶν μαρτύρων Ἰησοῦ. Καὶ ἐθαύμασα ἰδὼν αὐτὴν θαῦμα μέγα.

Twice Jesus is the obvious referent of the substantive noun and both times it is followed by the attributive adjective ὁ πιστός.¹¹ Twice the word is used to refer to Christians who are witnesses belonging to Jesus.¹² The final occurrence depicts the harlot who is

¹⁰ Although it may be contested, this paper will assume that a common author composed both the Gospel and Revelation. Cf. Austin Farrer, *A Rebirth of Images: The Making of St John's Apocalypse* (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1949), 23–35; Craig S Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, vol 1 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003), 126–138; Stephen S. Smalley, “John’s Revelation and John’s Community,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library* 69 (1986–87): 550–551; Vern S. Poythress, “Johannine Authorship and the Use of Intersentence Conjunctions in the Book of Revelation,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 47 (1985): 329–336; Otto Böcher, “Das Verhältnis der Apokalypse des Johannes zum Evangelium des Johannes,” in *L’Apocalypse johannique et l’Apocalyptique dans le Nouveau Testament*, ed. J. Lambrecht (Paris-Gembloux: Leuven University Press, 1980), 289–301; Elbert Russell, “Possible Influence of the Mysteries on the Form and Interrelation of the Johannine Writings,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 51 (1932): 336–351.

¹¹ All major English translations, including NIV, KJV, NKJV, NAU, NLT, translate both Rev 1:5 and 3:14 as “faithful witness.”

¹² Both 2:13 and 11:3 are followed by the possessive genitive μου.

intoxicated with the blood of the saints who are “witnesses belonging to Jesus.”¹³ When used to designate Christians (2:13; 11:3; 17:6), they not only belong to Jesus, but each reference involves the witnesses having been executed. In 2:13, Antipas is called a witness whose faithfulness to Christ resulted in his execution. In 11:3, the two witnesses are given prophetic power, however, once they finished their testimony (τελέσωσιν τὴν μαρτυρίαν αὐτῶν) they are slain and their corpses left in the streets (11:7–8).

Another word, μαρτυρία, features prominently among terms drawn from the μαρτ- word group with a total of nine occurrences. Four times it occurs in conjunction with τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ (“the word of God”):

Revelation 1:2 ὃς ἐμαρτύρησεν τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ὅσα εἶδεν.
Revelation 1:9 Ἐγὼ Ἰωάννης, ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὑμῶν καὶ συγκοινωνὸς ἐν τῇ θλίψει καὶ βασιλείᾳ καὶ ὑπομονῇ ἐν Ἰησοῦ, ἐγενόμην ἐν τῇ νήσῳ τῇ καλουμένῃ Πάτμῳ διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ.
Revelation 6:9 Καὶ ὅτε ἤνοιξεν τὴν πέμπτην σφραγίδα, εἶδον ὑποκάτω τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν ἐσφαγμένων διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ διὰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἣν εἶχον.
Revelation 20:4 Καὶ εἶδον θρόνους καὶ ἐκάθισαν ἐπ’ αὐτοὺς καὶ κρίμα ἐδόθη αὐτοῖς, καὶ τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν πεπελεκισμένων διὰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ καὶ διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ οἵτινες οὐ προσεκύνησαν τὸ θηρίον οὐδὲ τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἔλαβον τὸ χάραγμα ἐπὶ τὸ μέτωπον καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν χεῖρα αὐτῶν.

The fact that this phrase recurs at a number of significant places throughout Revelation indicates that it refers to the contents of the book.¹⁴ Osborne argues that the phrase “word

¹³ Interestingly translations differ drastically over the interpretation of τῶν μαρτύρων. Both the KJV and the NKJ translated it as “with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.” Thus implying the martyrological sense. The NAU differs only in that it exchanges “martyrs” with “witnesses.” All three translate the genitive Ἰησοῦ with a simple “of.” The NIV differs significantly by translating the whole phrase as a subjective genitive: “the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus.” The NLT takes the phrase τῶν ἁγίων καὶ ἐκ τοῦ αἵματος τῶν μαρτύρων Ἰησοῦ and translated it as an appositional or exegetical genitive: “God’s holy people who were witnesses for Jesus.” Based on the other uses of μάρτυς as referring to Christians it seems best to translate Ἰησοῦ as a possessive genitive (replacing μου), thus rendering it “the witnesses belonging to Jesus.”

¹⁴ Joseph Comblin, *Le Christ Dans L’Apocalypse*, Bibliothèque De Théologie, vol. 6, no. 3 (Tournai: Desclée, 1965) 132–42. He reviews the various occurrences of words in the μαρτ- word group to assess the sense of its meaning in Revelation. He takes the repeated phrase, τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ (Rev 1:2, 9; 12:17; 17:6; 19:10; 20:4; 22:16) often coupled with τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ, exegetically so that the “testimony of Jesus” is equivalent to the “Word of God.” This testimony of Jesus constitutes the same thing as the contents of the book (Rev 1:2; 22:16, 18, 20) and is that which causes the persecution and martyrdom

of God” has the same force it has in Acts (cf. 4:31; 6:2; 8:14; 11:1), referring to Christian witness and proclamation of the gospel message and therefore argues that it constitutes “a semitechnical [*sic*] formula for gospel truth and faithful Christian witness to it.”¹⁵

However, a more plausible understanding for the phrase “word of God” is to connect it with the OT prophets and prophecy. David E. Aune is perhaps correct when he observes that “John’s use of this phrase suggests that he considers himself a prophet in the tradition of the OT prophets who received the word of God (Hos 1:1; Joel 1:1; Jer 1:2, 4, 11)” and “In the LXX the phrase ‘word of the Lord’ is a stereotypical formula used to categorize a sequence of revelatory experiences (Zech 1:1; Jonah 1:1; Mic 1:1; Zeph 1:1).”¹⁶ This link to prophecy is further supported in 19:10 where the “testimony of Jesus” (ἡ μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ) is identified as “the spirit of prophecy.”¹⁷

Μαρτυρία also occurs in two variations of the same phrase in chapter twelve. In Revelation 12:11, τὸν λόγον is followed by the genitive phrase τῆς μαρτυρίας αὐτῶν (“the word of their testimony”). In 12:17 the phrase τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ is replaced with τὰς ἐντολάς τοῦ θεοῦ (“the commandments of God”). Both references occur in a context of Christians facing death as the objects of Satan’s wrath.¹⁸ Chapter twelve contains two

of the Christians. See also B. Dehandschutter, “The Meaning of Witness in the Apocalypse,” in *L’Apocalypse johannique et l’Apocalyptique dans le Nouveau Testament*, ed. J. Lambrecht (Paris-Gembloux: Leuven University Press, 1980), 284 see also note 4; George K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary, ed. I. Howard Marshall and Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 184; David E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 52a (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 19; R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Revelation of St. John*, The International Critical Commentary, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920), 7; Caird, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine*, 11; George E. Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 23.

¹⁵ Osborne, *Revelation*, 56. Both Ladd and Osborne limit the usage in 1:2 to the contents of the book, but in 1:9; 6:9; and 20:4 it refers to the gospel message.

¹⁶ Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 19.

¹⁷ The interpretation of the phrase “the word of God and the testimony of Jesus,” will receive more detailed attention further below.

¹⁸ Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 663. Beale views both the two witnesses and the women (with her offspring) as representative of the church both in a corporate and individual sense. In addition he connects these references to the group of martyred souls underneath the altar in 6:9. He comments: “Consequently, the point of vv 13–17 is that the *one* heavenly church being persecuted *one earth* cannot be destroyed because it is heavenly and ultimately inviolable spiritually, but the *many* who individually compose the church can suffer physically from earthly dangers. In relation to Revelation 11 this means that

intertwined metaphors. A metaphor of war (the Dragon waged war against the saints) and that by referring to Satan as “the accuser” (ὁ κατήγωρ—a legal term used for a prosecutor in a court of law) John also employs a courtroom metaphor.¹⁹ The main point is that, in 12:7–10, victory in war also becomes victory in God’s legal courtroom.²⁰ This mixed metaphor of a holy war²¹ and a courtroom accounts for the frequent references to execution accompanying witnessing. Many of the instances, then, of μαρτυρία are followed by persecution (1:9; 6:9;²² 11:7; 12:11; 20:4).

Judicial Versus Martyrological Connotations

At this juncture the question concerning the martyrological usage of μάρτυς and its cognates becomes extremely pertinent. By the late second century the μαρτ- word group almost exclusively denotes martyrdom in the sense of dying for the cause of Christ. The most famous example is *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* that tells the story of Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, who was burned to death after refusing to revile Christ and

the woman is equivalent to the spiritually invincible inner court of the temple and her ‘seed’ equivalent to the outer court, which is susceptible to physical harm” (677).

¹⁹ Osborne, *Revelation*, 474–75.

²⁰ Ibid., 475–76. They “overcame” all this builds on the “overcomer/conqueror” sayings in the letters to the seven churches (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21) that promised eschatological rewards to the faithful in the churches who persevered and “conquered” the forces arrayed against them. The two metaphors of “victory” in a courtroom battle (1 Enoch 50.2; 2 Esdr. [4 Ezra] 7:115) and a military war (2 Esdr. [4 Ezra] 7:127; 1QM 4.13) are found in Rev 12:7–10 are closely connected in the “conquering” theme as well. “Thus, John demythologizes the holy war and remythologizes it via the warrior as a suffering servant . . . In other words, the basic message of the Apocalypse is that Satan has already been defeated at the cross, and the victory of the saints is assured.”

²¹ For understanding the book of Revelation in the context of a war see also Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (London: T. & T Clark, 1993), 210–237; Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*, Harvard Theological Review Harvard Dissertations in Religion, no. 9 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976), 207–231.

²² Much debate revolves around the significance of the sacrificial implications. Therefore, in this instance one may find a similarity with the use of the μαρτ- word group with its use in 2 Macc 2:37; 6:22. See also Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 405–7.

worship Caesar when placed on trial before the proconsul.²³ In 19:1, three words from the μαρτ- word group occur with the martyrological sense:

Such was the lot of the blessed Polycarp, who though he was, together with those from Philadelphia, the twelfth martyr [μαρτυρήσας] in Smyrna, is alone especially remembered by all, so that he is spoken of in every place, by the heathen. He was not only a famous teacher, but also a notable martyr [μάρτυς], whose martyrdom [τὸ μαρτύριον] all desire to imitate, for it followed the Gospel of Christ.²⁴

In addition, glancing at *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* reveals a martyrological usage common by the mid-second century in the writings of Justin Martyr (ca. 100–165), Irenaeus (ca. 140–202), and Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–215).²⁵ Based on early church usage coupled with the close association between witness and execution in Revelation, some have subsequently argued that a martyrological connotation is intended in Revelation.²⁶ One translator concluded that every occurrence of μαρτυρία “has a clear martyrological nuance” and that it “is thus in the final stage of becoming a technical term,” with the sense of martyrdom.²⁷

However, to read the martyrological sense into the use of the word in Revelation is semantically anachronistic and therefore inappropriate. Many major commentators reject the use of μάρτυς in the technical sense of a martyr.²⁸ Several scholarly treatments

²³ “The Martyrdom of Polycarp,” translated by Kirsopp Lake, in *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 2, Loeb Classical Library, 2 vol., (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1913), 313–334.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 336–39. Cf. Trites, “Μάρτυς and Martyrdom in the Apocalypse,” 73.

²⁵ G. W. H. Lampe, ed., *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 828–33.

²⁶ Vassiliadis, “The Translation of Martria Iēsou in Revelation,” 132–33; T. W. Manson, “Martyrs and Martyrdom,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 39 (1956–57): 464; Ernst Lohmeyer, “Die Idee Des Martyriums im Judentum und Urchristentum,” *Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie* 5 (1928): 232–49 tentatively Ladd, *Revelation*, 47; Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 37–38;

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 133. See also Ellingworth, “The Marturia Debate,” 138–139, and Ernst Günther, “Zeuge und Märtyrer,” *ZNW* 47 (1956): 145–61.

²⁸ Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 190; Osborne, *Revelation*, 62; Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 35; J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation: Introduction, Translation and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 38 (New York: Doubleday, 1975), 374; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 70.

also argue against the martyrological concept in Revelation.²⁹ Trites presents the most convincing and cogent argument based on his semantic study of every occurrence of the μαρτ- word group. He identifies five distinct diachronistic stages in the semantic development of μάρτυς with the fifth stage referring absolutely to martyrdom.³⁰ Most significant is the observation that the execution is always subsequent to the witness as a penalty. One should separate death from the actual testimony of the witness (1:9; 2:13; 6:9; 11:7; 12:11; 20:4).³¹ Trites consistently maintains the juridical context and connotation of these terms indicates that metaphors “drawn from the lawcourt are never far from the author’s mind.”³² Witherington concludes “the use of legal language helps set the forensic rhetorical tone from the outset. It is going to be a document about faithful witnesses under pressure and prospect of death, and so a document about justice and vindication of those mistreated.”³³ Not all persecution that the believers faced resulted in execution.³⁴ Therefore, a martyrological understanding should be soundly discarded.³⁵

²⁹ Trites, “Μάρτυς and Martyrdom in the Apocalypse,” 72–80; A. A. Trites, “Μάρτυς, μαρτυρέω,” *NIDNTT* 3:1038–50; H. Strathmann, “Μάρτυς, μαρτυρέω,” *TDNT* 4:474–514; Frederick D. Mazzaferri, *The Genre of the Book of Revelation from a Source-critical Perspective*, Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentlich Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche, vol. 54 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1989), 306–310; Dehandschutter, “The Meaning of Witness in the Apocalypse,” 283–88; Mazzaferri, “Martyria Iēsou Revisited,” 114–22; Paul Ellingworth, “The Marturia Debate,” *Bible Translator* 41 (1990): 138–39.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 72–73. (1) Originally, it meant a witness in a court of law with no expectation of death. (2) Then it came to mean a man who testified to his faith in a law court and suffered death as the penalty for his witness. (3) Next, death is regarded as part of the witness. (4) It becomes equivalent to “martyr.” Here the idea of death is uppermost, though the idea of witness is not entirely lacking. (5) The idea of witness, disappears, and the words μάρτυς, μαρτύριον, μαρτυρία, and μαρτυρεῖν are used absolutely to refer to martyrdom.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 76.

³² Trites, *The New Testament Concept of Witness*, 162.

³³ Ben Witherington III, *Revelation*, The New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 67.

³⁴ For example, John was merely in exile because “of the word of God and testimony of Jesus” rather than martyred. So Beale, *Revelation*, 391; David A. deSilva, “Honor Discourse and the Rhetorical Strategy of the Apocalypse of John,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 71 (1998): 82, see also n. 9; Sweet, “Maintaining the Testimony of Jesus,” 106.

³⁵ However, one can still label those who die for Christ as martyrs, but the concept of bearing witness is not martyrological in Revelation.

The judicial or legal connotation for the μαρτ- word group is firmly attested as the normal usage in the secular writings, the LXX, and the NT. In secular Greek writings it is used almost exclusively in a legal or forensic sense.³⁶ In the OT the legal aspect of “witness” can hardly be overstated. The prophets often drew upon Jewish legal proceedings and terminology to illustrate God’s controversy and accusations against Israel (Amos 2:4–16; Hos 2:1ff; Isa 1:1-18; 3:12–15; 5:1-7; Mic 2:6–11; 6:1–2; Jer 2:9; 12:1; 15:10; Eze 17; 20:33–44).³⁷ The particular legal model employed by the prophets is the covenant lawsuit (*Gerichtsrede*)³⁸ based on the use of the word *rîb*.³⁹ In the NT the μαρτ- word group occurs most frequently in the Johannine writings and Acts.⁴⁰ The typical usage retains its strong legal connotations as in the LXX, but in some places it

³⁶ Trites, *The New Testament Concept of Witness*, 4–15. See also Trites, *NIDNTT*, 3.1038–40; Strathmann, *TDNT*; BDAG.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 20–34. So. Andrew T. Lincoln, *Truth on Trial: The Lawsuit Motif in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2000), 38; Martin Asiedu-Pepurah, *Johannine Sabbath Conflicts as Juridical Controversy*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 132 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001).

³⁸ Hermann Gunkel, *Einleitung in die Psalmen: Die Gattungen der religiösen Lyrik Israels* (Göttingen: 1933), 329; Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1991), 215–16. contra. Dwight R. Daniels, “Is There a »Prophetic Lawsuit« Genre?,” *Zeitschrift für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 99–100 (1987–88): 339–60; Michael De Roche, “Yahweh’s *RÎB* Against Israel: A Reassessment of the So-Called “Prophetic Lawsuit” in the Preexilic Prophets,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 102 (1983): 563–74.

³⁹ B. Gemser, “The *Rîb*- or Controversy-Pattern in Hebrew Mentality,” in *Wisdom in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. M. Noth and D. Winton Thomas (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1955), 134–35; Ernst Würthwein, “Der Ursprung der prophetischen Gerichtsrede,” *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 49 (1952): 1–16; Herbert B. Huffmon, “The Covenant Lawsuit in the Prophets,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 78 (1959): 285–95; G. Ernest Wright, “The Lawsuit of God: A Form-Critical Study of Deuteronomy 32,” in *Israel’s Prophetic Heritage: Essays in honor of James Muilenburg*, ed. Bernhard W. Anderson and Walter Harrelson (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), 26–67; Julien Harvey, “Le *Rîb*-Pattern, réquisitoire prophétique sur la rupture de l’alliance,” *Biblica* 43, no. 2 (1962): 172–96; Jared J. Jackson, “Yahweh v. Cohen et. al,” *Pittsburgh Perspective* 7, no. 4 (December 1966): 28–32; James Limburg, “The Root ריב and the Prophetic Lawsuit Speeches,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 88 (1969): 291–301; Limburg, “The Lawsuit of God in the Eighth Century Prophets” (Ph.D. diss., Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, VA), 1969; Kirsten Nielsen, *Yahweh as Prosecutor and Judge: An Investigation of the Prophetic Lawsuit (Rib-Pattern)*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 9, ed. David J. A. Clines, Philip R. Davies, and David M. Gunn (Sheffield: University of Sheffield, 1978);

⁴⁰ Trites, *NIDNTT*, 3.1042. He writes: “Thus of the 76 instances of the vb. *martyreō*, 43 are found in John and the Johannine Epistles alone, a further 4 in Rev, 11 in Acts and 8 in Heb., whereas only 6 fall to Paul and only 2 to the Synoptics. Of the 37 instances of *martyria*, 21 belong to John and the Johannine Epistles, and 9 to Rev, whereas the word is entirely lacking in Paul and Heb. With 35 instances, the noun *martyrs* is found a total of 13 times in Act, 9 in Paul (including 3 in the pastorals) and 5 times in Rev”

seems to indicate two additional nuances: (1) as a proof of authenticity (e.g. Mark 1:44; Matt 8:4; Luke 5:14); and (2) as an attestation to a good reputation (e.g. Acts 6:3; 16:2; 22:5, 12).⁴¹ Therefore, one may safely assert that the vast majority of occurrences of this word group predominantly carry a legal connotation.

In addition to the noun forms, the verb μαρτυρέω only occurs at the beginning and end of the book (Rev 1:2; 22:16, 18, 20), which functions as a solemn oath to “tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.” In 1:2, the verb (ἐμαρτύρησεν)⁴² is coupled with the phrase “the word of God and the testimony of Jesus,” and clarified by the relative clause “everything he saw” (ὅσα εἶδεν).⁴³ The relative clause limits the identification of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus to the contents of the vision that is recorded in the rest of the book.⁴⁴ Furthermore, this verse places John within the chain of command by which he received this prophecy: (1) God gave the revelation to Jesus; (2) Christ is the agent of the revelation; (3) the revelation is given to the prophets (John); and (4) the prophet gives the message of revelation to the churches.⁴⁵ Rev 22:16, 18, 20 reasserts that ultimately Jesus through his angel and through John is the one who is testifying. Beale aptly notes the legal nuances implicit with the threefold occurrences of μαρτυρέω. He writes, “The forensic sense of ‘testify’ is brought out clearly in 22:18–19, where the penalty for disobeying the testimony is stated.”⁴⁶ Therefore, the impact of

⁴¹ Ibid., 1043.

⁴² Charles, *The Revelation of St. John*, 7. He observes that “μαρτυρεῖν, which is found four times and always with the acc. in our author—for this is the best way of treating [22:18]—occurs frequently in the Johannine Gospel and Epistles than elsewhere in the N. T. (i.e., 33 + 10 = 43 times).”

⁴³ Thus the translation “who testifies to everything he saw-- that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.” (NIV)

⁴⁴ Virtually all commentators agree that this phrase refers to the contents of the book. Beale, *Revelation*, 184; Osborne, *Revelation*, 56; Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 19; Witherington, *Revelation*, 66; Charles, *The Revelation of St. John*, 7; Swete, *Commentary on Revelation*, 3; Mounce, *Book of Revelation*, 66; Caird, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine*, 11; Ladd, *Revelation*, 23.

⁴⁵ Beale, *Revelation*, 183. So M. E. Boring, *Revelation*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox, 1989), 64–65; Ladd, *Revelation*, 294.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 1143.

μαρτυρέω at both the beginning and end of the book, which may be an *inclusio*, is to attest to its truthfulness.⁴⁷

Addition Judicial Language in Revelation

If Revelation should be viewed in the context of a cosmic courtroom, it is necessary to find evidence of a judicial vocabulary.⁴⁸ According to Trites, Revelation is written to believers to encourage them in the midst of persecution stemming from the Imperial cult.⁴⁹ He writes, “[u]nder these conditions one would expect that words with forensic overtones would be given their full weight in any message of encouragement.”⁵⁰ He then provides a list of words in Revelation that convey legal connotations:

The use of such nouns as μάρτυς (1:5; 2:13; 3:14; 11:3; 17:6), μαρτυρία (1:2; 3:9; 12:9), σατανᾶς (2:9; 3:9; 12:9), διάβολος (2:10; 12:9, 12), κατήγωρ (12:10), κρίσις (14:7; 16:7; 18:10; 19:2), κρίμα (17:1; 18:20; 20:4), θρόνος (2:13, 20:4, 11f.), υἱός (τοῦ) ἀνθρώπου (1:13; 14:4; cf. Jn 5:27), νεφέλη (1:7; 11:12; 14:14–16; cf. Mark 14:62 par.), βιβλία (used twice in 20:12 to refer to the ‘record books’; cf. Dan. 7:10); of verbs such as ‘bear witness’ (μαρτυρεῖν, 1:2; 22:16, 18, 20), ‘confess’ (ὁμολογεῖν, 3:5), ‘deny’ (ἀρνεῖσθαι, 2:13; 3:8), ‘accuse’ (κατηγορεῖν, 12:10), ‘judge’ (κρίνειν, 6:10; 11:18; 16:5; 18:18, 20; 19:2, 11; 20:12f.), ‘avenge’ or ‘vindicate’ (ἐκδικεῖν, 6:10; 19:2; cf. Luke 18:3, 5), ‘have against’ (ἔχειν with κατά in 2:4, 14, 20), ‘find’ (εὐρίσκειν, 3:2); and of adjectives such as πιστός (1:5; 2:10,

⁴⁷ Dehandschutter, “The Meaning of Witness in the Apocalypse,” 284. He argues that “Already in 22, 6–9 the reliability and the truth of the book is involved. After the concluding vision of the New Jerusalem, the *angelus interpretis* confirms: ‘these words are trustworthy and true’, repeating what had been said in 19,9 and 21, 5 about the things the seer had to write down. As a whole 22, 6 stresses the divine origin of the revelation . . . It is not surprising that John adds again in 22, 18 that he testifies to ‘the words of the prophecy of this book to every one who hears them’, this formula recalling also the introduction of the book.”

⁴⁸ See Giesen's essay on Christ and the lawcourt for an excellent discussion of legal imagery in Revelation. Heinz Giesen, *Studien zur Johannesapokalypse*, Stuttgarter Biblische Aufsatzbände 29, ed. Gerhard Dautzenberg and Norbert Lohfink (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk GmbH, 2000), 34–47.

⁴⁹ Trites, *New Testament Concept of Witness*, 161. So Caird, *Revelation*, 85: “Justice must not only be done; it must be seen to be done . . . John . . . cannot avoid legal language when he is dealing with men who have been condemned before a pagan tribunal and writing for the benefit of others who must face a like jeopardy.”

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

13; 3:14; 17:14; 19:2; 21:5; 22:6) and ἀληθινός (3:7, 14; 6:10; 15:3; 16:7; 19:2, 9, 11; 21:5; 22:6) show that this is in fact the case.⁵¹

Mazzaferrri highlights the judicial language by noting the “primary purpose of the eschaton is all too apparent, and repeated throughout . . . The book is largely consumed from beginning to end with divine judgment upon the wicked, especially as they persecute believers.”⁵² He cites forensic vocabulary associated with God’s punitive judgment on the wicked: “ὀργη, κρίνειν (6:10; 11:18; 16:5; 18:8, 20; 19:2, 11: 20:12f.), διδόναι (2:7, 10, 17, 23, 26; 3:21; 6:11; 11:18; 16:6, 19; 18:7; 19:8; 20:4; 21: 6), μισθός (11:18; 22:12), and διαφθείρειν (11:18. cf. φθείρειν, 19:2).”⁵³ Interestingly, he also posits that Christ speaks to his churches as an eschatological judge. Judgment is clearly implied with the repeated οἶδα.⁵⁴ To be sure, judicial language plays such a prominent role in the Apocalypse that one would be remiss not to see some sort of lawsuit motif.

The Lawsuit Motif in the Fourth Gospel

Several significant monographs and articles have demonstrated that the FG use of juridical language indicates a strong case for a lawsuit motif throughout the entire narrative structure of the book.⁵⁵ In particular the use of the μαρτ- word group carries

⁵¹ Ibid., 161–2. One may question the validity of some of the words that Trites designates as forensic. For example one wonders how the word νεφέλη (“cloud”) may function in a judicial sense.

⁵² Mazzaferrri, *The Genre of the Book of Revelation*, 243.

⁵³ Ibid., 244.

⁵⁴ Ibid., See 243–44 for analysis of the language of Judgment to the seven churches. “Repeatedly, therefore, John’s opening vision portrays Christ as judge investigating his people in the very shadow of the Advent.”

⁵⁵ Theo Preiss, *Life in Christ* (London: SCM, 1957), 9–31; Josef Blank, *Untersuchungen zur johanneischen Christologie und Eschatologie* (Freiburg: Lambertus, 1964); James Montgomery Boice, *Witness and Revelation in the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970); Johannes Beutler, *Martyria* (Frankfurt: J. Knecht, 1972); A. E. Harvey, *Jesus on Trial: A Study in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1976); Severino Pancaro, *The Law in the Fourth Gospel*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum, vol. 42 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975); Robert Gordon Maccini, *Her Testimony is True: Woman as Witnesses According to John*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 125 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996); James Montgomery Boice and Philip Graham Ryken, *Jesus on Trial* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2002). Keener, *John*, 2:1030–35; Ridderbos, Herman, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary*, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 531–32; Trites, *New*

strong judicial connotations.⁵⁶ Not only does the vocabulary have “strong juridical” connotations, but it also contains legal themes that “are intricately interwoven” and which constitutes the major metaphor that is “arguably the most distinctive, pervasive, and comprehensive motif.”⁵⁷ Trites describes the FG as a lawsuit calling forth several testimonies to authenticate Jesus.⁵⁸ Lincoln also views the lawsuit as the overall shape of the narrative discourse:

The very first words of the section of public ministry, in 1:19, are “This is the testimony given by John”; 1:19–28 contains John’s testimony about himself, while 1:29–34 contains his testimony about Jesus. At the end of the public-ministry section, after the trial motif has been mentioned in 12:17, 31, the final pericope—12:44–50—in its discussion of judgment highlights Jesus’ word as judge. So there

Testament Concept of Witness, 78–127; for a helpful survey of the treatment of the subject see Lincoln, *Truth on Trial*, 4–11. Cf. J. R. Donahue, *Are You the Christ?: The Trial Narrative in the Gospel of Mark*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1973), 58–63; James W. Jordan, “The Theme of Judgment in John’s Gospel within the Framework of Johannine Eschatology” (master’s thesis, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, NC), 2002.

⁵⁶ Trites, *New Testament Concept of Witness*, 80. Trites also cites other occurrences of judicial vocabulary. For an analysis of juridical vocabulary in the FG see Maccini, *Her Testimony is True*, 45–62. For information about the μαρτ- word group in the FG see C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 171–72; Boice, *Witness and Revelation*, 25.

⁵⁷ Lincoln, *Truth on Trial*, 12.

⁵⁸ Trites, *New Testament Concept of Witness*, 90–122. (1) the testimony of John the Baptist (1:6–8, 15, 19–34); (2) the testimony of the first disciples (1:35–51); (3) the testimony of the first sign (2:1–11); (4) the testimony of the Resurrection (2:12–25); (5) Christ’s testimony before the representative teacher (3:1–21); (6) the final testimony of John the Baptist (3:22–30); (7) the testimony of the Samaritans (4:1–42); (8) the testimony of the second sign (4:46–54); (9) testimony of the third sign (5:1–47); (10) testimony of the fourth and fifth signs (6:1–71); (11) the conflict in chapters seven and eight; (12) testimony of the sixth sign (9:1–41); (13) the conflict in chapter ten; (14) testimony of the seventh sign (11:1–57); (15) the climax of the conflict ministry (12:1–50); (16) the post-resurrection lawsuit (chapters 13–17); (17) the witness of the Apostles; (18) the witness of the Holy Spirit; (19) the importance of the dual witness. Cf. Boice, *Witness and Revelation in the Gospel of John*, 26–27: (1) the witness of John the Baptist; (2) the testimony of other human witnesses; (3) the witness of the Father; (4) the witness of Jesus Christ; (5) the witness of Christ’s works; (6) the witness of the Scriptures; (7) the witness of the Holy Spirit.

is an inclusio using our motif, and it provides an interpretative frame for the public ministry.⁵⁹

This is not just another theological theme among many, but it is “judgment as story or drama.”⁶⁰ The lawsuit scheme runs through the overarching framework of the FG.⁶¹ Virtually all proponents of the lawsuit motif identify its background as the covenantal lawsuit pattern prevalent in the OT prophets, especially Isaiah 40–55.⁶²

Although the FG and Revelation share a common use of judicial language as well as a lawsuit motif does not necessitate an intentional overlap between the two books, it does, however, indicate that it is at least plausible. A possibility exists to view the trial motif as an interpretative nexus for reading the two books. One reason stems from the semantic similarities.⁶³ Revelation and the FG exhibit a variety of common features of vocabulary [see Appendix A], despite the distinct syntactical characteristics of their respective genres and style.⁶⁴ Caird noting the repeated use of “witness” and “testimony” in Revelation and the FG argued “both these books use the words in their primary,

⁵⁹ Lincoln, *Truth on Trial*, 21–22. In addition he argues: “The trial motif is also explicit at the heart of the controversy with ‘the Jews’ in the third discourse in 5:19–47 (cf. vv. 22, 24, 27, 29–39, 45) and the sixth discourse/dispute in 8:12–59 (cf. vv. 13–18, 26, 50). It has featured previously in 2:25; 3:11, 17–19, 26–28, 32, 33; and 4:39, 44 and occurs again in 7:7, and so it is now dominant enough to color the way in which the reader interprets the dispute and its aftermath in 7:14–52 (cf. v. 51) and the interrogation of the blind man in John 9 (cf. 9:39).

⁶⁰ John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 226.

⁶¹ Maccini, *Her Testimony is True*, 35.

⁶² The relationship between the OT prophets and the trial motif will receive greater attention in the section on Rev 19:10 in this paper. Cf. Trites, 35–47; Lincoln, 38–56; Maccini, 35; et. al.

⁶³ Reinier Schippers, *Getuigen van Jezus Christus* (Franeker, 1938), 188; quoted in Trites, *New Testament Concept of Witness*, 155. Schippers argues (1) In the Apocalypse the phrase μαρτυρεῖν περί is lacking, in contrast to its frequent use in the other Johannine writings. (2) Μαρτυρεῖν governs the accusative case while it does not in the other Johannine writings. (3) The use of the genitives and the phrase “the testimony of Jesus” is unique only to Revelation. (4) Μάρτυς is used five times in Revelation and completely absent in the FG. (5) The phrase ἔχειν τὴν μαρτυρίαν of Rev 6:9; 12:17 and 19:10 cannot be identified with the same phrase in John 5:36.

⁶⁴ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1.129.

forensic sense.”⁶⁵ Also both books employ a possible inclusio as a solemn oath of truthfulness in the opening and closing of their “testimony” (John 1:7; 21:24; Rev 1:2; 22:16, 20).⁶⁶

Finally, both books framed the lawsuit motif within the *mise-en-scène* of a cosmic courtroom. Concerning the FG, Lincoln posits, “the lawsuit can be described as cosmic because it is not confined to the relationship between God and Israel but concerns God and the whole world, as the rest of the world is represented by the nations.”⁶⁷ The aspect of a cosmic war in Revelation has received a considerable amount of attention as a viable option for interpreting the symbols of the dragon, martyrs, 144,000 and Christ as the eschatological judge.⁶⁸ Yet, the cosmic nature of the courtroom should also receive equal merit. Because of the cosmic scope of the final judgment where Christ is presented as the judge, Satan as the accusing prosecutor,⁶⁹ the saints as the witness/defendants, and the nations which will all stand before the great white throne. Therefore, it may be plausible to argue that both Revelation and the FG with their shared cosmologies, vocabulary, and motifs should not be read in isolation from each other.

⁶⁵ Caird, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine*, 17–18. He continues: “The author of the Fourth Gospel, perhaps inspired by the example of Second Isaiah, presents his arguments in the form of a lawcourt debate, in which one witness after another is summoned, until God’s advocate, the Paraclete, has all the evidence he needs to convince the world that Jesus is the Son of God, and so to win his case. In the Revelation the courtroom setting is even more realistic; for Jesus had borne his testimony before Pilate’s tribunal, and the martyrs must face a Roman judge. What they have to remember as they give their evidence is that that evidence [*sic*] is being heard in a court of more ultimate authority, where judgments which are just and true issue from the great white throne.”

⁶⁶ Osborne, *Revelation*, 778.

⁶⁷ Lincoln, *Truth on Trial*, 256.

⁶⁸ Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 210–37; Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*, 207–31; Osborne, *Revelation*, 37–38.

⁶⁹ So Beale, *Revelation*, 661–2, for an insightful discussion of the Jewish legal background of Satan as an accuser

The Testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy

Revelation 19 plays a significant role, not only in the narrative flow but may also serve as the key to identifying the much-repeated phrase “the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.”⁷⁰ Revelation exhibits a vast array of intratextual links through the repetitions of various words and phrases. Bauckham posits that these “repetitions create a complex network of textual cross-reference, which helps to create and expand the meaning of any one passage by giving it specific relationships to many other passages.”⁷¹ This internal network of cross-references is similar to the Jewish hermeneutical principle of *gezera sawa*.⁷² Bauckham argues that “John wrote a work to which he expected the technique of *gezera sawa* to be applied, a work which would yield much of its meaning only to the application of this exegetical technique.”⁷³ Revelation 19:1–8 consists of the hallelujahs from the saints and angels at the judgment and destruction of Babylon the harlot city (cf. 18:1–24). Most significant for this analysis is what happens next in 19:9–13:

⁷⁰ Thomas B. Slater, *Christ and Community: A Socio-Historical Study of the Christology of Revelation*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 178 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 207–35. Slater offers a salient analysis of the “Image of the Divine Warrior in Revelation 19.11–21.” First he argues that Rev 19:11 contains the definitive theme for interpreting vv. 11–21: “to judge and make war in righteousness,” and as such he vindicates the Christian community. Second, he argues that Christ’s role as judge is usually reserved for God Almighty in Jewish literature. Slater notes, “Some commentators have recognized the juridical dimensions of the images but few have recognized the connection between the names and the images.” (p. 209–10). Third, he contends that the divine warrior and his host convey judgment and punishment to God’s opponents and vindication to God’s people. Finally he demonstrates a consistency between the divine warrior and all the other Christological images in Revelation.

⁷¹ Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 22.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 29. Bauckham argue, “One way of understanding John’s literary technique of repeating phrases is to relate it to the Jewish exegetical technique of *gezera sawa*, which John, like many of his Jewish contemporaries, used to interpret the Old Testament Scriptures. This technique depended on observing verbal coincidences between scriptural texts. Texts containing the same words or phrases could be used to interpret each other. In effect, Scripture was treated as containing the same kind of network of internal cross-reference by repetition of phrases.”

⁷³ *Ibid.*

Then the angel said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed [Μακάριοι]⁷⁴ are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!’ And he added, ‘These are the true words of God [οἱ λόγοι ἀληθινοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσιν].’ At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, ‘Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus [τῶν ἐχόντων τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ]. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy [ἡ γὰρ μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ ἐστὶν τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς προφητείας].’ I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True [πιστὸς καὶ ἀληθινός]. With justice he judges and makes war.⁷⁵ His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God [τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ].”

Within this pericope the “testimony of Jesus” is identified with the “spirit of prophecy,” and the “word of God”⁷⁶ is identified as Jesus.

μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ

The phrase “word of God and testimony of Jesus” in 1:2 refers to the contents of the revelation given to John by Jesus. However, the enigmatic expression μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ comes into sharp focus in 19:10.⁷⁷ The precise meaning depends on how one

⁷⁴ Interestingly, the seven “beatitudes” of Revelation occur in close proximity to the context of “testimony.” Cf. Rev 1:3 (1:2); 14:13 (14:12); 16:15 (?); 19:9 (19:10); 20:6 (20:4); 22:7, 14 (22:16, 20).

⁷⁵ Note the dual aspect of both a courtroom setting (justice he judges) and war.

⁷⁶ Although an analysis of the meaning of “word of God” and its relationship to Jesus warrants a complete discussion, this paper will not address it in detail. Most commentators reject associating this to John’s *Logos* in the FG. However, given the prophetic nature and genre of the book a case could be made for associating both as Johannine. In the FG, the most plausible background is Isaiah 55:9–11. Köstenberger explains, “As a detailed comparison shows, Isaiah 55:9–11 matches the message conveyed by the term ‘Word’ in John’s prologue very closely indeed. In both instances, God’s Word is portrayed as effective speech. It is more than a mere utterance; it inexorably leads to action in accordance with God’s will. Arguably, Isaiah’s portrayal of the personified Word of God thus provides the conceptual framework for John’s theology of the Logos. This is further supported by the fact that John frequently uses motifs from the Book of Isaiah in his Gospel (cf. esp. 12:38 quoting Is 53:1; 12:40 quoting Is. 6:10; and 12:41 alluding to Is. 6:1–4).” Andreas J. Köstenberger, *Encountering John: The Gospel in Historical, Literary and Theological Perspective*, Encountering Biblical Studies (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 54. As will be demonstrated below, Revelation 19 is also dependent on Isaiah for some of its conceptual framework. For an excellent discussion of Jesus as the Word of God in Revelation see Beale, *Revelation*, 958–59; so Mazzaferri, *Genre of the Book of Revelation*, 304–5.

⁷⁷ Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1038. He observes several other parallel or otherwise related phrases: “(1) ἡ μαρτυρία αὐτῶν, “their testimony” (11:7 and 12:11), (2) τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἣν εἶχον, “the testimony

interprets the genitive Ἰησοῦ.⁷⁸ Most commentators have typically suggested three options. First, some commentators favor the objective genitive, “testimony about Jesus,” asserting that the testimony in question has Jesus for its object.⁷⁹ The strength of the objective genitive is that it seems to best account for the general content of the testimony.⁸⁰ The problem with the objective genitive is that while it may seem like a viable interpretation, a consistent application of it proves to be too problematic. A strict objective genitive interpretation of this phrase on contextual grounds may limit the fuller nuances in the reading of its other occurrences.

Next, the subjective genitive conveys the meaning “the testimony borne by Jesus.”⁸¹ As a subjective genitive the testimony is one that Jesus maintained. The testimony that Jesus maintained could either be the contents of the prophecy (i.e. Revelation) or it may also include his testimony before Pilate. The latter is attractive because it could be a potential link between Revelation and the FG. John 19:1–16 records Jesus’ trial before Pilate. Jesus was being tried for blasphemy and treason. Pilate,

which they bore “(6:9), (3) τοῦ αἵματος τῶν μαρτύρων Ἰησοῦ, “the blood of the witnesses to Jesus” (17:6), and (4) τὴν πίστιν Ἰησοῦ, “faith in (or, faithfulness to) Jesus” (14:12).”

⁷⁸ For a survey of various treatments see Thomas Michael, “Evangelistic Motifs in the Book of Revelation: A Critical Analysis of the Book of Revelation with Regard to its Various Evangelistic Motifs” (PhD diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, NC, 2000), 10–18.

⁷⁹ F. F. Bruce, “The Spirit in the Apocalypse,” in *Christ and the Spirit in the New Testament*, ed. Barnabas Lindars and S. S. Smalley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 338; J. M. Ford, “For the Testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 42 (1975): 285; Ford, *Revelation*, 312; Vassiliadis, “Translation of *Martyria Iēsou*,” 131; Lampe, “The Testimony of Jesus Is the Spirit of Prophecy,” 253; The NET Bible consistently translates this phrase as an objective genitive, yet never provides reasons why the objective genitive is preferable. A slightly different suggestion is offered by Charles, *The Revelation of St. John*, 2.130, in which he takes the γάρ as explanatory thus rendering it “the testimony to Jesus.”

⁸⁰ Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1038–9 also favors an objective genitive for this particular instance. He argues that a subjective genitive would presumably refer to Jesus’ earthly trial that was characterized by evasive answers or silence. Also, if it is a subjective genitive it would be the only reference to the historical Jesus in Revelation. Finally, the references in 6:9; 11:7; 12:11, and 17:6 depict Christians bearing witness about Christ.

⁸¹ Austin Farrer, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964), 194–95; G. R. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, New Century Bible Commentary (London: Marshall, Morgan, & Scott, 1974), 276; Isbon T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1919), 729; Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 342; Trites, “Μάρτυς and Martyrdom in the Apocalypse,” 75; Mazzaferri, *The Genre of the Book of Revelation*, 311.

frustrated by Jesus' silence, said, "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?" (John 19:10) At that Jesus responded by informing Pilate that he does not have any more authority than what God has allowed him. When Pilate tried to release Jesus, the Jews reminded him that any one who claims to be a king opposes Caesar. "Shall I crucify your king," asked Pilate, but the Jews replied, "we have no king but Caesar" (v.15). In this account Jesus' testimony of loyalty to God is starkly contrasted with the unfaithfulness of his accusers. Therefore this passage provides an appealing background for understanding the "testimony borne by Jesus" in Revelation. However, a strict subjective genitive in all instances also proves contextually difficult.⁸²

The final and most probable solution is to regard it as a general genitive, which would read "the witness by and to Jesus,"⁸³ or "our testimony about Jesus in response to his testimony about God."⁸⁴ Essentially this is a combination of both the objective and subjective sense in which the witness was first borne by Jesus and then transmitted to believers, and the witness they bear is about Jesus.⁸⁵ Beale argues that it is best to view the genitive as intentionally ambiguous making it apply both to Christ and the Christians.⁸⁶ To interpret the genitive construction in this manner is preferable for several

⁸² Lampe, "The Testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy (Rev 19:10)," 250–254. So Swete, *Commentary on Revelation*, 249. He argues for a development within Revelation from a subjective to an objective sense: "The question arises in all these cases whether Ἰησοῦ is the genitive of subject or object; in i. 2 the context seems plainly to require the former, and it is natural to make this fact determine the usage of the Apocalypse; on the other hand in several of the later examples 'witness to Jesus' seems more apposite. Here the problem becomes acute, for the meaning of the following words (ἡ γὰρ μαρτυρία κτλ.) depends on the answer it receives. Perhaps the true account of the matter is that the writer, starting in i.2 with the thought of Christ as the supreme μάρτυς (i.5, iii. 14), falls insensibly into that of the Church repeating His witness and thus bearing testimony to Him. While the original sense . . . is not wholly out of sight, the latter probably predominates here [19:10]."

⁸³ Beale, *Revelation*, 947.

⁸⁴ Osborne, *Revelation*, 677.

⁸⁵ Beale, *Revelation*, 947. So Osborne, *Revelation*, 677; Beckwith, *Apocalypse of John*, 279; Swete, *Commentary on Revelation*, 249; Witherington, *Revelation*, 234; Ladd, *Revelation*, 251; Caird, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine*, 238; Boring, *Revelation*, 194; Leon Morris, *The Revelation of St. John*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 228.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 183–184. He reasons that it could be that God and Jesus are the subjects of the revelations (so most commentaries). But they may also express the idea that these visions are "about" God and Jesus (cf. the passages mentioned in the comments on v 1, esp. 1:9; 6:9; and 20:4, where the same genitive phrase may include both a subjective and objective sense). There is undoubtedly a link between the occurrence of

reasons. One reason is because the nature of language defies such a specific use of the genitive and that it can significantly skew exegesis.⁸⁷ Another reason is it provides the best solution to the use of this particular genitive phrase in its various contexts.⁸⁸ Finally, one may account for the objective aspects while maintaining the subjective “testimony of Jesus” (the faithful witness) as having John 19 for its conceptual background.

τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς προφητείας

An equally vexing problem is the identification of the testimony of Jesus as τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς προφητείας (“the spirit of prophecy”). Mark W. Wilson instructively argues that the article τῆς, although omitted in the English translations, should be retained so that προφητείας specifically refers to the contents of the Apocalypse rather than prophecy in general. This corresponds to the use of the phrase “the word of God and the testimony of Jesus” as a shorthand reference to contents of this vision.⁸⁹ Although this phrase

this expression here and its occurrence in 1:9b, which focuses most on John’s own witness *to* the earthly Christ, which whom he was familiar from the Jesus traditions of the Gospels. Therefore, both in 1:1 and 2 and in the similar genitive phrases throughout the book, it is perhaps best to see an intentional ambiguity and therefore a “general” genitive, which includes both subjective and objective aspects.

⁸⁷ Moisés Silva, “The Truth of the Gospel: Paul’s Mission According to Galatians,” in *The Gospel to the Nations: Perspectives on Paul’s Mission*, ed. Peter Bolt and Mark Thompson (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 51–52. Silva perceptively argues “it is one thing to categorize grammatical uses for pedagogical purposes, and quite another to make such categorizations the basis of exegesis. Again, when there is a difference of opinion about the force of a genitive construction, scholars may find it convenient to identify the various options by using the standard textbook labels, but this practice can easily degenerate into a debate that is not true to the nature of language. What needs to be remembered is that the only *grammatical* consideration in these cases is a rather vague one: the genitive links two nouns as having some sort of relationship.”

⁸⁸ For other possible examples of general genitives in the NT see John 5:42; Rom 5:5; 2 Cor 5:14; 2 Thess 3:5; Rev 1:1.

⁸⁹ Mark W. Wilson, “Revelation 19.10 and Contemporary Interpretation,” in *Spirit and Renewal: Essays in honor of J. Rodman Williams*, ed. Mark W. Wilson (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 198–201.

specifically denotes the Book of Revelation, it also may generally include all Christian prophetic activity.

Among the various possibilities⁹⁰ for interpreting this phrase, the best is to view it as something akin to “the spirit that inspires prophecy,” or “the prophetic Spirit.” Aune notes that this “phrase occurs with some frequency in the second-and third-century Christian authors as a way of referring to a mode of prophetic inspiration.”⁹¹ Second Temple Judaism placed a heavy emphasis on Spirit inspired prophecy and a promised messianic era.⁹² As such, it makes this a reference to the Holy Spirit who descended on believers at Pentecost.⁹³ Bauckham acutely remarks on the theology of the Spirit in Revelation and its relationship to prophecy:

All fourteen of the references to the Spirit concern, in various ways, the Spirit’s inspiration of John’s prophecy, the book of Revelation itself. Only one of these cases (19:10) also has a wider reference to Christian prophecy in general, though

⁹⁰ For a concise survey of suggestions offered by most commentators see Osborne, *Revelation*, 677–78.

⁹¹ Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1039. Cf. Justin *I Apol.* 6:2; 13:3; 31:1; *Dial.* 55.1; Athenagoras *Leg.* 10.4; 18.2; Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.* 1.13.4; Clement of Alexandria *Protrep.* 9; Hermas *Mand.* 11.9.

⁹² Osborne, *Revelation*, 678; Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1039; Beale, *Revelation*, 948. Beale notes: “the Spirit of prophecy” in *Targ. Isa.* 61:1 (the phrase also occurs in *Targ. Onk. And Pal. To Gen.* 41:38; *Exod.* 35:31; and *Num.* 27:28 and in *Targ. Pal. Exod.* 33:16, etc.; *Midr. Rab. Num.* 15.19). If this background is operative in Rev 19:10, then the phrase indicates fulfillment of the promised “Spirit of prophecy,” which was to be a witness to the presence of the messianic era and therefore a witness here to Jesus as the only true object of worship (in contrast to angelic mediators of revelation [19:10a], idols, and the like). This Spirit was to be a possession of all those living in the latter-day community of faith (so Joel 2:28–32; Ezek. 39:29).

⁹³ Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 276 in which he states that the favorite name for the Holy Spirit in Judaism was “precisely ‘the Spirit of Prophecy.’” Cf. Lampe, “The Testimony of Jesus,” 255–56: “The witnessing Christian is thus an inspired prophet. It is for witness to the end of the earth that the Spirit is given at Pentecost (Acts 1:8). According to the Fourth Gospel, witness to Jesus is borne by the Spirit sent by Jesus from the Father to the disciples, the Spirit of the truth to which Jesus himself had testified, and the Spirit’s witness is also that of the disciples themselves (John 15:26–27; 18:37; cf. 1 John 5:6).”

we can assume that in all cases the activity attributed to the Spirit could be paralleled in Christian prophecy other than John's.⁹⁴

Revelation 19:10 is paralleled in 22:8–9 in which the angel refusing worship identifies himself as a “fellow servant” with John and with “your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book. Worship God! (22:9)” Bauckham posits that in Revelation the church as a whole fulfills a prophetic role.⁹⁵ The command to worship God only suggests that “[i]t is connected with the idea of the church’s newly revealed role of confronting the idolatry of Rome in a prophetic conflict, like that of Moses with Pharaoh and his magicians or of Elijah with Jezebel and her prophets of Baal, and in the power of the Spirit of prophecy winning the nations to the worship of the true God.”⁹⁶ Therefore, the faithful believers function as prophetic witnesses rendering testimony against all idolatry (i.e., the Imperial cult).

So then, how does this interpretation relate to the lawsuit motif in Revelation and the FG? To begin with, John presents himself within the same lineage and tradition of the OT prophets.⁹⁷ As such, John may have been drawing upon the familiar “lawcourt language in the preaching of the prophets,” especially Isaiah.⁹⁸ Trites observes the prominent use of juridical language with the controversy between Yahweh and Israel and

⁹⁴ Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, New Testament Theology, ed. James D. G. Dunn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 115.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Mazzaferri, *The Genre of the Book of Revelation*, 304–305; François Bovon, “John’s Self-presentation in Revelation 1:9–10,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 62 (2000): 700; Mark Wilson, *Revelation*, Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 251; David Hill, “Prophecy and Prophets in the Revelation of St. John,” *New Testament Studies* 18 (1972): 401–18. et. al.

⁹⁸ Trites, *New Testament Concept of Witness*, 33. So H. B. Huffmon, “The Covenant Lawsuit of the Prophets,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 78 (1959): 285–95.

his delay of her deliverance in Isaiah 56–66.⁹⁹ He compares “the controversy in Isa 58:1–14, which is similar in character, and the picture of the divine vindicator in Isa 63:1–6, where the juridical image is mingled with those of the treader [*sic*] of the wine press, the warrior and the executioner.”¹⁰⁰ It is precisely this image (Isa 63:1–6) that is alluded to in Revelation 19 and 14:18–20. In Rev 14:18–20 the grapes of God’s wrath are harvested and thrown into the winepress where they are trampled producing a river of blood (as high as the horses bridle and 1600 stadia long). In Revelation 19, Jesus comes as the warrior judge (cf. Joel 3:1–14) whose robe has been dipped in blood (presumably the same blood as in 14:20).

In addition to Isaiah 56–66, Trites also views chapters 40–55 as very significant for understanding the NT concept of witness.¹⁰¹ He summarizes six characteristics of the controversy theme in these chapters: (1) the controversy is between Yahweh and the false gods, but is really between God and the world; (2) Israel serves as God’s witnesses and advocates; (3) Yahweh’s evidence attested by Israel is the validity of predictive prophecy; (4) the false gods lack the any such evidence; (5) the formula ἐγὼ εἶμι (LXX) occurs frequently to “declare solemnly” God’s nature as Redeemer and Lord; and (6) Israel is both God’s witness and servant.¹⁰² This passage becomes the suggested background and framework for the trial motif in the FG.¹⁰³ Lincoln, using primarily a narrative critical approach, argues that Jesus replaces Israel’s role and Israel takes on the role of the pagan nations:

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 45.

¹⁰² Ibid., 46–47.

¹⁰³ Ibid. 35–47. Also Lincoln, *Truth on Trial*, 46. Lincoln states: “The implied reader who is also an informed reader and who not only has received Jesus’ witness that the Scriptures testify on his behalf . . . but has also pick up on the narrator’s three direct citations from Isa 40–55 (40:3 in John 1:23; 53:1 in John 12:38; and 54:13 in John 6:45) will not fail to have heard resounding echoes from these chapters of Isaiah. The placing of the first two of these explication quotations, one right at the beginning of the public ministry, in John the Baptist’s witness, and the other right at the end, in the narrator’s summer, to form an *inclusio*, should give a major clue to the significance of this section of Scripture for the narrative.”

This scriptural depth enable the implied reader to discern clearly that, in the Fourth Gospel's narrative, the two lawsuits of Deutero-Isaiah have been brought together. The lawsuit between God and the nations become that between God and the world and provides the overarching framework within which Israel's controversy with God is now seen to be a part . . . God is now represented by Jesus, God's authorized agent and chief witness. In the trial with the nations, Yahweh had a dual role as both accuser or prosecutor and judge, and in the trial with Israel he was also the accused. Jesus' role combines all these functions.¹⁰⁴

If this is indeed is the conceptual background for the FG, it may also function similarly in Revelation.

In Revelation, Jesus serves as both a warrior and a judge who will exact the full and final judgment on all those who fail to worship the true creator God. The church, then, becomes representative of Jesus who is the exemplar faithful witness. The Holy Spirit indwelling believers enables them to serve as prophetic witnesses. This corresponds both to John 15:27 and Isaiah 43. Commenting on the promised Holy Spirit, Köstenberger notes that in OT prophetic literature (esp. Isaiah), "God's end-time people are called God's 'witnesses' to the nations (e.g., Isa 43:10–12; 44:8)."¹⁰⁵ *Thus, the testimony by and to Jesus is the prophetic spirit of God's people during the inaugurated messianic era prior to the final eschaton.* Believers must remain faithful to Jesus with patient endurance as they witness to the nations in the midst of forced idolatry instituted by the antichrist (13:1–18).¹⁰⁶ Rev 14:6–11 declares the fate of all those who worship the false god as one of eternal suffering and torment.¹⁰⁷ God will vindicate the plea of his star witnesses (Rev 6:9) whose beheaded souls cry out for justice by ultimately allowing them to sit on thrones as judges over the nations (Rev 20:4). Therefore, the lawsuit motif in Revelation encompasses the entire scope of the book (beginning and ending with a solemn oath). Essentially, Revelation contains three separate trials: (1) believers who face judgment from the world's courts where they must overcome as faithful witnesses (i.e.,

¹⁰⁴ Lincoln, *Truth on Trial*, 46.

¹⁰⁵ Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 148.

¹⁰⁶ Sweet, "Maintaining the Testimony of Jesus," 104–5.

¹⁰⁷ So deSilva, "Honor Discourse and the Rhetorical Strategy of the Apocalypse of John," 90–103.

the Imperial cult); (2) Christ as judge of his churches (Ch. 2–4); and (3) the nations on trial for failing to worship the creator God and persecuting his witnesses (4–20).

**Appendix A: A Comparison of Juridical Language in Revelation and the
FG**

Word	Revelation	Fourth Gospel
μάρτυς	Rev 1:5; 2:13; 3:14; 11:3; 17:6	None
μαρτυρία	Rev 1:2, 9; 6:9; 11:7; 12:11, 17; 19:10; 20:4	John 1:7, 19; 3:11, 32f; 5:31f, 34, 36; 8:13f, 17; 19:35; 21:24
μαρτυρέω	Rev 1:2; 22:16, 18, 20	John 1:7f, 15, 32, 34; 2:25; 3:11, 26, 28, 32; 4:39, 44; 5:31ff, 36f, 39; 7:7; 8:13f, 18; 10:25; 12:17; 13:21; 15:26f; 18:23, 37; 19:35; 21:24
σατανᾶς	Rev 2:9, 13, 24; 3:9; 12:9; 20:2, 7	John 13:27
διάβολος	Rev 2:10; 12:9, 12; 20:2, 10	John 6:70; 8:44; 13:2
κατήγωρ	Rev 12:10	John 5:45; 8:6
κρίσις	Rev 14:7; 16:7; 18:10; 19:2	John 3:19; 5:22, 24, 27, 29f; 7:24; 8:16; 12:31; 16:8, 11
κρίμα	Rev 17:1; 18:20; 20:4	John 9:39
θρόνος	Rev 1:4; 2:13; 3:21; 4:2ff, 9f; 5:1, 6f, 11, 13; 6:16; 7:9ff, 15, 17; 8:3; 11:16; 12:5; 13:2; 14:3; 16:10, 17; 19:4f; 20:4, 11f; 21:3, 5; 22:1, 3	None
υἱος ἀνθρώπου	Rev 1:13; 4:7; 13:18; 14:14; 21:17	John 1:51; 2:25; 3:13f; 5:27, 34; 6:27, 53, 62; 8:28; 9:35; 12:23, 34; 13:31; 18:17, 29
βιβλία	Rev 1:11; 5:1ff, 8f; 6:14; 10:8; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12; 21:27; 22:7, 9f, 18f	John 20:30; 21:25
ὁμολογέω	Rev 3:5	John 1:20; 9:22; 12:42
ἄρνέομαι	Rev 2:13; 3:8	John 1:20; 13:38; 18:25, 27
κατηγορέω	Rev 12:10	John 5:45; 8:6
κρίνω	Rev 6:10; 11:18; 16:5; 18:8, 20; 19:2, 11; 20:12f	John 3:17f; 5:22, 30; 7:24, 51; 8:15f, 26, 50; 12:47f; 16:11; 18:31
ἐκδικέω	Rev 6:10; 19:2	None
εὕρισκω	Rev 2:2; 3:2; 5:4; 9:6; 12:8; 14:5; 16:20; 18:14, 21f, 24; 20:11, 15	John 1:41, 43, 45; 2:14; 5:14; 6:25; 7:34ff; 9:35; 10:9; 11:17; 12:14; 18:38; 19:4, 6; 21:6
πιστός	Rev 1:5; 2:10, 13; 3:14; 17:14; 19:11; 21:5; 22:6	John 20:27
ἀληθινός	Rev 3:7, 14; 6:10; 15:3; 16:7; 19:2, 9, 11; 21:5; 22:6	John 1:9; 4:23, 37; 6:32; 7:28; 8:16; 15:1; 17:3; 19:35
ὄργη	Rev 6:16f; 11:18; 14:10; 16:19; 19:15	John 3:36
δίδωμι	Rev 1:1; 2:7, 10, 17, 21, 23, 26, 28; 3:8f, 21; 4:9; 6:2, 4, 8, 11; 7:2; 8:2f; 9:1, 3, 5; 10:9; 11:1ff, 13, 18; 12:14; 13:2, 4f, 7, 14ff; 14:7; 15:7; 16:6, 8f, 19; 17:13, 17; 18:7; 19:7f; 20:4, 13; 21:6	John 1:12, 17, 22; 3:16, 27, 34f; 4:5, 7, 10, 12, 14f; 5:22, 26f, 36; 6:27, 31ff, 37, 39, 51f, 65; 7:19, 22; 9:24; 10:28f; 11:22, 57; 12:5, 49; 13:3, 15, 26, 29, 34; 14:16, 27; 15:16; 16:23; 17:2, 4, 6ff, 11f, 14, 22, 24; 18:9, 11, 22; 19:3, 9, 11; 21:13
μισθός	Rev 11:18; 22:12	John 4:36;
διαφθείρω/ φθείρω	Rev 8:9; 11:18, 19:2	None

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