

Mark 6:29

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.

Analysis

And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb. John's disciples perform final act of devotion to their martyred teacher. 'When his disciples heard of it' (ἀκούσαντες οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ, akousantes hoi mathētai autou) indicates news spread quickly—John's followers learned of his execution. 'They came' (ἦλθον, ēlthon) shows courage—approaching Herod's officials to request the body involved risk. They honored their teacher even when association with executed criminal could bring suspicion. 'Took up his corpse' (ἦραν τὸ πτώμα αὐτοῦ, ēran to ptōma autou) describes retrieving the body (whether they also recovered the head is unstated). 'Laid it in a tomb' (ἐθήκαν αὐτὸ ἐν μνημείῳ, ethēkan auto en mnēmeiō)—proper burial honored Jewish custom requiring respectful treatment of deceased.

This detail foreshadows Jesus' burial (Mark 15:45-46) where Joseph of Arimathea similarly requests the body for honorable interment. John's disciples' devotion models faithful discipleship extending beyond teacher's death—their commitment survived martyrdom. The burial also testifies that John truly died; later resurrection claims would need to overcome eyewitness knowledge of burial. Reformed theology sees in John's death preview of Christ's: both righteous men unjustly executed by compromised political rulers, both buried by devoted followers, both deaths serving God's redemptive purposes despite apparent tragedy.

Historical Context

Jewish burial customs required interment within 24 hours of death. John's disciples' quick action ensured proper burial according to Torah. Requesting executed criminals' bodies for burial was permitted in both Jewish and Roman practice—family or followers could claim bodies for decent burial. Machaerus fortress, where John died, had tomb areas nearby—Jewish practice placed tombs outside living areas. The fact that Herod released the body suggests he felt some guilt or wanted to avoid further controversy. John's tomb location became matter of tradition and debate. Various sites claim to be his burial place, including Sebastia (ancient Samaria). Early Christian pilgrims visited what they believed was John's tomb. The disciples who buried John likely later became Jesus' followers—several of Jesus' disciples were formerly John's (John 1:35-40). This connection between John and Jesus' movements continued: John's martyrdom foreshadowed Jesus' death, strengthening disciples' understanding that following God's truth might cost everything.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does the disciples' courage in claiming John's body and providing honorable burial model faithfulness that extends beyond a leader's death?
2. What does this burial scene teach about honoring those who have faithfully served God, even when their ministry ended in apparent defeat?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ἀκούσαντες	οἱ	μαθηταὶ	αὐτὸ	ἦλθον	καὶ	ἦραν
And	heard	G3588	disciples	his	of it they came	And	took up
G2532	G191		G3101	G846	G2064	G2532	G142
τὸ	πτῶμα	αὐτὸ	καὶ	ἐθηκεν	αὐτὸ	ἐν	τῷ μνημείῳ
G3588	corpse	his	And	laid	his	in	G3588 a tomb
	G4430	G846	G2532	G5087	G846	G1722	G3419

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 14:12 (Parallel theme): And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus.

2 Chronicles 24:16 (Parallel theme): And they buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, both toward God, and toward his house.