

Comparative Details

Explanation

The trial of Jesus is one of the most complicated historical matters in the entire New Testament and perhaps in all of legal history. Commentators have greatest difficulty dealing with varying details in the four accounts, particularly when those variations contradict each other. Chart 10-9 spells out the varying details. In these cases, it is possible to reconcile the accounts by assuming that both are correct, even though this may produce puzzling or awkward results. Chart 10-10 shows twenty ways in which the accounts of the trials of Jesus contradict each other. In these instances, reconciliation is less obvious. Usually a reader must choose to follow one account or another. Chart 10-11 points out well-attested elements in the trial of Jesus that are absent in some of the Gospels but are present in all three of the other accounts. John contains by far the greatest amount of unique information, but Luke also has expanded his account well beyond those of Mark and Matthew.

Reference

Kurt Aland, *Synopsis of the Four Gospels: Greek-English Edition of the Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*, 10th ed. (Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 1993).

Unresolved Differences

1. Did Judas actually kiss Jesus (Mt 26:49; Mk 14:45), or only try to (Lk 22:47)?
2. Did the disciples escape (Mk 14:50), or did Jesus negotiate their release (Jn 18:8)?
3. Did they take Jesus to Caiaphas (Mt 26:57), or to Annas and then Caiaphas (Jn 18:13, 24)?
4. Were men gathered at the house of the High Priest (Mt 26:57; Mk 14:53), or was the High Priest alone (as Jn 18:13–16 and Lk 22:54 imply)?
5. Was the whole Sanhedrin gathered (Mt 27:1; Mk 15:1), or did some simply gather together (Lk 22:66)?
6. Were there two meetings of the council of the Sanhedrin—one at night and one at daybreak (Mt 26:59; 27:1; Mk 14:55; 15:1), just one meeting at daybreak (Lk 22:66), or just one before the arrest of Jesus (Jn 18:3)?
7. Did a council of the Sanhedrin meet at night (Mt 26:59; Mk 14:55), or only when day came (Lk 22:66)?
8. Did Jesus answer nothing about his teaching about the temple (Mt 26:62–63; Mk 14:60–61), or did he converse with the High Priest about his teaching (Jn 18:20–23)?
9. Did the High Priest say “what further need have we of witnesses?” (Mt 26:65; Mk 14:63), or did the assembly say this (Lk 22:71)?
10. Did the assembly all condemn Jesus (Mk 14:64; 15:1), or did some abstain (Lk 23:27)?
11. Did Jesus remain silent before Pilate (Mt 27:14), or did he speak much (Jn 18:34–37)?
12. Did Pilate propose to release Barabbas in place of Jesus (Mt 27:17), or did the crowd ask him to (Mk 15:11; Lk 23:18; Jn 18:40)?
13. Was it Pilate’s custom to release a prisoner on Passover (Mt 27:15), or did Pilate think it was the Jews’ custom (Jn 18:39), or did the people bring up the idea of releasing Barabbas (Lk 23:18)? Some manuscripts say that Pilate had to release a prisoner (Lk 23:17).
14. Did the soldiers put Jesus’ clothes back on him right after they had mocked him (as Mt 27:31 and Mk 15:20 imply), or did he wear the robe and thorns as Pilate took him out and presented him again to the Jews (Jn 19:5)?
15. Did Pilate order his soldiers to scourge Jesus in the Praetorium and then crucify him (Mt 27:26; Mk 15:15), or did he hand Jesus over to the Jews for execution (Lk 23:25; Jn 19:16)?
16. Did Pilate simply hand Jesus over to the Jews (Jn 19:16), or did he give a formal sentence to grant their demand (Lk 23:24)?
17. Did the Jews alone (Mk 15:29–32) or both Jews and soldiers (Mt 27:31; Lk 23:35–39) mock Jesus?
18. Was the wine mixed with gall (Mt 27:34; Mk 15:23 JST), or with myrrh (Mk 15:23)?
19. Did one (Lk 23:39) or both robbers on the cross mock Jesus (Mt 27:44; Mk 15:32)?
20. Did the veil of the temple tear before Jesus died (Lk 23:45), or after (Mt 27:51; Mk 15:38)?