

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).

Varying Details

1. Did Jesus speak to Judas (Mt 26:50; Lk 22:48), his arresters (Jn 18:4), or both?
2. Did Jesus say to Judas “wherefore art thou come?” (Mt 26:50), or “betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss” (Lk 22:48)?
3. Was it not just an ear (Mt 26:51; Mk 14:47) but the right ear (Lk 22:50; Jn 18:10) of the servant that was cut off by a disciple in the garden?
4. Did the council seek witnesses who may have been honest (Mk 14:55), or did they perversely seek false witnesses (Mt 26:59)?
5. Regarding being the son of God, did Jesus answer “I am” (Mk 14:62), “Thou hast said” (Mt 26:64; Lk 22:70), or both?
6. Did the High Priest say “You have heard the blasphemy” (Mt 26:65; Mk 14:64), did the assembly say “We ourselves have heard [enough] from his own mouth” (Lk 22:71), or both?
7. Did the High Priest tear his robes (Mt 26:65; Mk 14:63)? Nothing is said of this in Luke or John.
8. Did the Jewish council find Jesus worthy of death (Mt 22:66; Mk 14:64), or did they not reach an explicit verdict (Luke is silent on this point)?
9. Was Jesus bound (Mt 27:2; Mk 15:1), taken (Lk 23:1; Jn 18:28), or both?
10. Was Pilate amazed (Mt 27:14; Mk 15:5), did he simply find no fault in Jesus (Lk 23:4; Jn 18:38), or both?
11. Did the Roman soldiers put a reed in Jesus’ right hand (Mt 27:29), did they strike his head with a reed (Mk 15:19), or both?
12. Did the Roman soldiers mock Jesus after Pilate had consented to his death (Mt 27:27–31; Mk 15:15–20), or did the Roman soldiers do this before Pilate had finished talking to Jesus (Jn 19:2–4), or both?
13. Was the drink offered to Jesus at the outset (Mt 27:34; Mk 15:23), at the end (Jn 19:29–30), or both?
14. Was the robe purple (Mk 15:17; Jn 19:2; Mt 27:27 JST) or scarlet (Mt 27:28), or do the Greek words synonymously describe the same color?
15. Was Jesus struck by the men of the assembly after the trial at Caiaphas’s palace (Mt 26:67–68; Mk 14:65), by the arresters before the trial (Lk 22:64), by a Jewish officer during the trial (Jn 18:23), or by all of them?
16. Did the soldiers say, “This man was the Son of God” (Mt 27:54; Mk 15:39), “This was a righteous man” (Lk 23:47), or both?