



Matthew, Mark, Luke and John regarding Jesus' trial and execution contradictions, or evidence of authenticity?

All of the gospels tell the same basic story of Jesus' trial, execution and resurrection, but with divergent details. Are these divergent details contradictions? No. These divergent details give strong evidence the gospel writers are telling the truth, rather than copying from a single fictional account, or writing new fiction, in which the details are harmonized, or smoothed out

Below are some of the divergent, but true, details about the crucifixion of Jesus:

Barrabas

Was described as:

- [Matthew 27:16](#) – notorious, “well-known” (NIV)
- [Mark 15:7](#) – murderer, seditionist
- [Luke 23:18](#) – murderer, seditionist
- [John 18:40](#) – **“revolutionary” (NAB; NLT)**, insurrectionist or domestic terrorist, political extremist, **“bandit” (NJB)**

Jesus mistreated by whipping

- [Matthew 27:26](#) – flogged – flagellum
- [Mark 15:15](#) – flogged
- [Luke 23:22](#) – Pilate offers to have Jesus whipped and released
- [John 19:1](#) – flogged

Color of his robe before Governor Pilate

The appearance is described with slight variations by eyewitnesses:

- [Matthew 27:28](#) – scarlet
- [Mark 15:16-17](#) – purple

- [John 19:2](#) – purple

The color of the **“robe”** with which Jesus Christ was clothed on the day of his trial before Roman Governor Pontius Pilate has caused some skeptics to claim there is a contradiction in the gospels about Jesus' clothes. Matthew said that the soldiers **“stripped him and put a scarlet cloak on him” (Matthew 27:28 NIV)**, while Mark and John record that it was **“purple”**. ([Mark 15:17](#); [John 19:2](#)) However, rather than being a contradiction, such divergent details in describing the garment's color actually gives evidence of the individuality of the Gospel writers, and, more importantly, the fact that they were not in collusion. Matthew described the cloak as it appeared to him, that is, according to his evaluation of color, and he emphasized the robe's red hue. John and Mark subdued the red tint, calling it purple. “Purple” can be applied to any color having components of both blue and red. So, Mark and John agree with Matthew that the garment was red to some extent. Of course, background, the angle from which something is viewed, and light reflection could have given it different casts. For example, a body of water varies in color at different times, depending upon the particular color of the sky and the reflection of light at a given time. So, when such factors are considered, it can be seen that the Gospel writers were not in contradiction in describing the color of the cloak that mocking Roman soldiers clothed Christ with on the day of his trial and execution.

Who carried the crossbeam or pole

- [Matthew 27:32](#) – Simon
- [Luke 23:26](#) – Simon
- [John 19:17](#) – Jesus

Jesus started carrying the beam. He subsequently fell under its weight. Simon was pressed into service to carry it the rest of the way.

Drink offerings

- **Matthew 27:34** – Wine mixed with gall (bitter narcotic), when they arrived at Golgotha (soldiers)
- **Mark 15:23** – Wine mixed with myrrh, a primitive narcotic (soldiers)
- **Luke 23:36** – Sour wine (soldiers)
- **John 19:29** – Sponge soaked with wine vinegar on a hyssop stalk (soldiers?)

Time when Jesus handed over to be crucified and put on cross ..

- **Mark 15:25** – Third hour (9AM)
- **John 19:14-16** – Sixth hour (Noon)

These are approximations, or rough estimates of time. Unlike today, ancient people did not keep precise time. Events in the later morning were typically described as occurring around either the third (**Matthew 20:3; Acts 2:15**), or sixth hour (**Mark 15:33; Matthew 20:5; Matthew 27:45; Luke 23:44; John 4:6; Jn 19:14; Acts 10:9**). By combining the two accounts at **Mark 15:25** and **John 19:14-16**, it appears that Jesus was handed over to be crucified about mid-morning, and was nailed to the cross or execution stake by midday, or noontime.

Thus, the divergent details in the four gospels describing Jesus' trial and execution are not contradictory, but complimentary! And even more important, they give powerful background evidence supporting the historical facts leading up to his death and resurrection.