



Skeptics and critics have claimed the gospels contradict about what time Jesus was crucified.

Alleged “contradiction”:

Where was Jesus at the sixth hour on the day of the crucifixion?

(a) On the cross (Mark 15:23)

(b) In Pilate’s court (John 19:14)

The issue here is:

What was the time of day when Jesus handed over to be crucified and put on cross:

- **Mark 15:25** - “It was the third hour when they crucified him” (ESV). *“That is, 9 A. M.”* - *ESV footnote on Mark 15:25*

- **John 19:14-16** - “Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, ‘Behold your king!’ They cried out, ‘Away with him, away with him, crucify him!’ Pilate said to them, ‘Shall I crucify your king?’ The chief priests answered, ‘We have no king but Caesar.’ So he delivered him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus” (ESV). *“That is, about noon”* - *ESV footnote on John 19:14*

We notice that John reports that, **“it was about the sixth hour”**, that is, he’s not trying to identify the exact time with the utmost precision. The events reported on actually occurred, but their exact timing is not the most important factor.

The “third hour” and “the sixth hour” 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 hour” (**Matthew 20:3; Acts 2:15**), or “the sixth hour” (**Mark 15:33; Matthew 20:5; Matthew 27:45; Luke 23:44; John 4:6; John 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 about midday, or noontime.

Matthew, Mark and Luke agree in stating that there was a remarkable **“darkness”** over the whole land from the **“sixth”** to the **“ninth”** hour, (**Matthew 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44**). Notice that Luke reports, that the time was approximate. **“It was about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon” (Luke 23:44 NIV)**. This fact would seem to indicate that the actual crucifixion continued only during that time – that Jesus was suspended at about the sixth hour, though the preparations for crucifying him had already been going on for a couple of hours. The fact that **Mark 15:33** and **Luke 23:44** mention this darkness beginning at the “sixth”, and not the “third” hour, is one of the circumstances undesignedly occurring that seems to indicate that the crucifixion then had “actually” taken place, though the various arrangements for it had been going on from the “third” hour (**Mark 15:25**)..

“This report is from an eyewitness giving an accurate account. He speaks the truth”—John 19:35 NLT

One thing is conclusively proved by this – that the gospel writers did not “conspire together” to embellish anything concerning Jesus. They are honest, independent witnesses, and the circumstances discussed here are of great value in testimony in courts of justice –

“circumstantial variation with essential agreement.”