

Men in Christ – November 2019

The Hour: The Historic Time Jesus was on the Cross

Crucifixion was an execution designed by the Romans to kill, torture, and humiliate its victims. Some people suffered for days on a cross before dying. Jesus was on the cross for a brief time.

The Romans started each day's hours at midnight. Using the Roman system of time: John tells us that Jesus' trial began about the sixth hour, 6 a.m. (John 19:14). The Gospel writers Matthew, Mark, and Luke seem to use the Jewish system of beginning each day at 6 a.m. Mark tells us Jesus was crucified at the third hour, 9 a.m. (Mark 15:24-25). Matthew tells us the day turned to darkness from the sixth hour to the ninth hour, noon to 3 p.m. (Matthew 27:45). Jesus died about the ninth hour (Matthew 27:46-50). A Roman soldier checked to see if he was really dead by pushing a spear into his side, and water and blood came out. He was taken off the cross (John 19:34-38).

The source of the confusion is an apparent contradiction between the Gospel of St. Mark and the Gospel of St. John regarding when Jesus was crucified. The Gospel of Mark 15:25 specifically states that Jesus was crucified on the "third hour" which in Jewish time is 9:00 AM. The Gospel of John 19:14 states the Jesus was on trial and handed over to be crucified on the "sixth hour" which would be noon if St. John was also referencing Hebrew time. Consequently, since Matthew 27:46-50, Mark 15:33-37, and Luke 23:44-46 state that it was the "ninth hour" Jewish time (3:00 PM) that Jesus gave up his life, the claim that Jesus suffered on the Cross for three hours has its origin from the testimony of the Gospel of John 19:14. However, the Gospels of Matthew 27:45, Mark 15:33, and Luke 23:44 all state that the world turned dark on the "sixth hour" Jewish time (12:00 PM), and when the world went dark, Jesus had already been on the Cross for some time. So how could it be that the Gospel of John 19:14 testifies that around the "sixth hour" Jesus had yet to be crucified and had just began to carry his Cross while the synoptic Gospels record that he was already on the Cross for some time when the world turned dark on the "sixth hour"? Here it seems that the synoptic Gospels are in agreement on the details of the Crucifixion:

1. Jesus was condemned and crucified after (9:00 AM) – Mark 15:25
2. All turns dark during the "sixth hour" (noon) while Jesus was hanging on the Cross – Matthew 27:45, Mark 15:33, Luke 23:44
3. Jesus died on the Cross during the "ninth hour" (3 PM) – Matthew 27:46-50, Mark 15:33-37, and St. Luke 23:44-46

While the Gospel of John seems to be in disagreement with the synoptic Gospels: *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." Then he handed him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called the place of a skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. — **John 19:14-18** (RSV)*

Jesus spoke different words - depending on the witness - together they are “**The Seven Words.**” Will