

FOUR GOSPEL COMPARISON SHEET

Historical Background Issues:

GOSPEL acc. to...	MARK	MATTHEW	LUKE	JOHN
<i>WHO? traditionally attributed author?</i>	"John Mark of Jerusalem" (Acts 12:12; 15:37; Col 4:10; Phlm 1:24; 1Pet 5:13)	tax collector & apostle (Mark 3:18; Matt 9:9; 10:3; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13)	physician & companion of Paul (Col 4:14; 2Tim 4:11; Phlm 1:24 only)	John, son of Zebedee; one of 12 apostles (Mark 1:19; 3:17; cf. John 21:2)
<i>WHO? implied author?</i>	bilingual (Aramaic & Greek) Christian of the 2nd generation; "young man" of 14:51-52?	multi-lingual (Aramaic & Greek) early Jewish Christian; trained "scribe" of 13:52?	Gentile Christian convert; well educated Greek "historian"; client of Theophilus (1:1-4)?	the "beloved disciple" and his Jewish Christian followers (19:35; 21:20-24)
<i>TO WHOM? implied audience?</i>	mostly Gentiles, fairly new in their faith, and facing persecutions	better educated Jews who believe in Jesus, but argue over the Law	wealthier Gentile Christians in an urban setting, becoming complacent	very mixed: mostly Jews, some Gentiles, Samaritans, etc.
<i>WHAT? subtype of "Gospel" genre?</i>	narrated "good news" (1:1) about Jesus, esp. his actions & his death	book of "heritage" of Jesus (1:1) & much of his "teaching" (28:20)	an "orderly account" for attaining "secure knowledge" (1:1-4)	much "testimony" and "signs" for believers (20:30f; 21:24f)
<i>WHERE? written from and/or to?</i>	probably Rome; possibly Decapolis, Syria or Alexandria?	possibly Galilee; probably in or near Antioch in Syria	probably Greece; possibly Syria/Antioch (Pauline missions)	originally Galilee or Syria; traditionally Ephesus (Asia Minor)
<i>WHEN? approximate date?</i>	first written "Gospel"; very late 60's or early 70's (Jewish War 66-70)	late 70's or 80's (w/ older sources, incl. one written by Matthew?)	mid to late 80's (incl. "many" earlier written sources)	main edition 90's (early edition 50's? epilogue after 100?)
<i>WHY? community circumstances & author's purpose?</i>	to encourage a group undergoing difficult trials and persecutions	to teach a community with internal divisions and external enemies	to challenge believers to put their faith into practice more fully	to strengthen a group ostracized by other Jews for their faith

Literary, Stylistic and Thematic Comparisons:

GOSPEL acc. to...	MARK	MATTHEW	LUKE	JOHN
<i>Number of chapters</i> (verses and words)	16 (678 / 11304)	28 (1071 / 18345)	24 (1151 / 19482)	21 (879 / 15635)
<i>Style of Greek</i>	grammatically poor	Semitic influenced	good, elegant, literary	simple, but highly symbolic
<i>Geographical Focus</i>	Galilean towns & villages; some Gentile territory	Galilee, esp. mountains; mostly Jewish areas	one long journey to the goal: Jerusalem	multiple visits back and forth to Jerusalem
<i>Literary Features</i>	quick action ("and then"; immediately.); loosely connected episodes	five major discourses; well-organized sections of collected pericopes	stories often in pairs (esp. Male/Female characters); many extra parables	" Amen, Amen , I say to you."; irony; paradox; double-meanings
<i>Literary</i>	"Beginning of Good"	"Book of Genealogy"	"Orderly Account" (1:1-	Cosmic Hymn (1:1-18)

Introduction	News" (1:1)	(1:1)	4)	
<i>Gospel Beginning</i>	John the Baptist's preaching; Jesus' ministry begins (1:2-15)	Jesus' heritage: David (royal), Abraham (Jewish), Emmanuel (God with us)	parallel birth stories: John the Baptist & Jesus (1:5–2:52)	J. B. points to "Lamb of God"; first disciples come (1:19-51)
Birth of Jesus (narrative emphasis)	[never mentioned!]	men: David, Joseph, Herod, Magi; power: King of Jews? murder of infants!	women: Elizabeth, Mary, Anna; angels; shepherds; Holy Spirit	incarnation: " Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (1:14)
<i>Inaugural Event</i>	Exorcism in Synagogue of Capernaum (1:21-28)	Sermon on the Mount; Fulfillment of Law (ch. 5-7)	Jubilee reading from Isa 61; Rejection at Nazareth (4:14-30)	Wedding Feast at Cana; first of Jesus' "signs" (2:1-11)
Jesus' Major Opponents	1- Pharisees & Herodians; 2- chief priests, scribes & elders	"scribes & Pharisees"; "hypocrites & blind guides"	unjust authorities (civil & religious); rich & corrupt people	"the Jews" (i.e. the leaders usually); esp. Pharisees
<i>Jesus' [Seven] Last Words on the Cross</i>	"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (15:34)	[same as in Mark] (Mt 27:46)	"Father, forgive them..." (22:34); "You will be with me in Paradise" (23:43); "Father, into your hands I commend my Spirit" (23:46)	"Woman, behold, your son"; "Behold, your mother" (19:26f); "I am thirsty" (19:28); "It is finished" (19:30)
Focus of Passion	death as tragedy (ch. 14-15)	plots & treachery (ch. 26-27)	Jesus' innocence (ch. 22-23)	Jesus' exaltation (ch. 18-19)
<i>Last Major Event</i>	Empty Tomb, outside of Jerusalem (16:1-8)	Great Commission, on Mountain in Galilee (28:16-20)	Ascension, from Bethany just East of Jerusalem (24:50-53)	1: disciples & Thomas (20:19-29) 2: [Peter & Beloved Disciple (21:1-23)]
<i>Final Literary Ending</i>	women leave tomb in fear & silence (16:8) [16:9-20 added only later]	Jesus tells the disciples, "I am with you always" (28:20)	disciples return to Jerusalem temple with joy praising God (24:53)	1: many more signs (20:30f) 2: [many other books 21:24f]
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Christology I: Main Titles for Jesus	Christ/Messiah & Son of God; Suffering Son of Man; Eschatological Judge	Son of David, Son of Abraham; Great Lawgiver and Teacher (like Moses); Emmanuel; King of Jews	a great Prophet (in word & deed); Lord (of all nations); Savior (esp. of the poor)	Divine Logos (Word made Flesh); Son sent from Father; Passover Lamb; " I Am ." / "Equal to God"
<i>Christology II: Jesus' Major Actions</i>	miracles; overcoming evil powers; arguing with religious authorities	teaching disciples; decrying religious hypocrisy	healing sick & impaired people; forgiving sinners & debtors	speaking God's words; doing God's works; revealing God and himself
Discipleship I: Teachings about Disc.	persevere in faith despite suffering; follow Jesus "on the way" to the cross; be ready for	be righteous; forgive always; live ethically (Golden Rule); fulfill God's laws, esp.	leave everything to follow Jesus; share with poor; accept everyone, esp. outcasts, women,	see, believe, know, remain in Jesus & God, despite hostility; love one another; be in unity;

	his return	charitable deeds	enemies	serve humbly
<i>Discipleship II: Role Models for Disc.</i>	anon. women (5:25; 7:24; 12:41; 14:3); Jairus (5:21); Bartimaeus (10:46)	Peter (16:13-20); children (18:1-5); faithful servants (24:45–25:46)	Mary (1:26–2:51); Good Samaritan (10:25-37); Zacchaeus (19:1-10)	John Bapt. (ch.1); blind man (ch.9); Martha (11:27); the B.D. (13:23ff)
<u><i>Eschatological Expectations</i></u>	imminent and suddenly, but no one knows when; so "Keep awake" (13:1-37)	false prophets will arise; many will fall away; Gospel must first be preached to all (24:10-14)	after Jerusalem is destroyed & the Gentiles' time is fulfilled; not so soon; pray! (21:20-24, 28, 36)	realized eschatology; all who hear & believe have eternal life already now and are not judged (5:21-25)
<i>Basis for Final Judgment</i>	whether you persevere in faith despite persecutions (13:13)	what you do for "the least" people; Sheep & Goats parable (25:31-46)	how you use wealth / possessions; parables of Rich & Poor (16:1-31)	whether or not you believe in Jesus (3:16-18; 5:19-24; 12:44-50)
<i>Other Major Themes</i>	Messianic secret; main disciples don't understand, but minor characters do believe	fulfillment of Scripture; divisions within the community; final separation of good vs. bad	fulfillment of God's plan; eschatological reversal; tax collectors & sinners favored	"eternal life" = "life in his name"; Paraclete = Holy Spirit; Xn unity; mutual indwelling of God/Jesus
<i>Typical Portrait</i>	<u>Jesus on the Cross</u>	<u>Sermon on the Mount</u>	<u>Jesus Heals the Sick</u>	<u>Christ the Revealer</u>
<i>Emphasized by Whom?</i>	Modern Historians (oldest witness)	Catholics (esp. Church structures)	Protestants (esp. social justice focus)	Orthodox Xns (esp. <i>logos</i> Christology)