

Comparison of Themes in the Four Canonical Gospels

Mark (ca. 65-75CE)	Matthew (ca. 75-85CE)	Luke (and Acts) (ca. 85-95CE)	John (ca. 85-110CE)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Not clear where this was written. Geography is flawed and understanding of Judaism / traditions around 1st Century Palestine seem forced (not clear) 2. Probably the lowest Christology. Jesus has God's authority to forgive sins but is not seen as God. In fact the Holy Spirit DRIVES Jesus – Jesus has no control. 3. The disciples do NOT get it! Don't be like them! The Gospel ends with the women disciples not getting it, as they are afraid and don't tell the good news. 4. Discipleship, Discipleship, Discipleship! Jesus is the perfect example! 5. Has little concern for “sin” or “sins” (not even mentioned as a topic after chapter 3). 6. There is much immediacy in this Gospel as Jesus will “immediately” do something else after completing a task. 7. No ascension story. 8. Only one Passover is mentioned. Is Jesus' ministry only 1 year long? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Likely written in Palestine. 2. Christology slightly higher than Mark. The Holy Spirit only guides Jesus. 3. Has a more positive view of the Disciples. They are sometimes slow in understanding, but they get it eventually. Probably has the highest view of Peter. 4. Definitely the most Jewish Gospel while sadly having strong anti-Semitic themes. 5. Jesus is the “new and better Moses” who gives a new or re-interpreted law. The two are often compared. 6. Conflict of Kingdoms (i.e. the Kingdom of God / Heaven vs. the kingdoms of this age / Caesar / Satan / etc.) 7. The Church / Community (Matthew is the only Gospel with the word <i>eklesia</i> – i.e. Church / assembly in Greek) 8. How to continue now that there is separation between Judaism & Christianity. 9. Discipleship. 10. No ascension story; thus, Jesus is with us always until the end of the age (when two or more are gathered). 11. Probably used Mark and possibly other sources such as Q. 12. Matthew is the ONLY Gospel that says the “cup of the covenant” is for the forgiveness of sins. 13. Contains birth narrative focusing on Joseph & Wise Men 14. Only one Passover is mentioned. Is Jesus' ministry only 1 year long? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Not clear where this was written but likely not Palestine as architectural references (i.e. tiles on roofs) imply knowledge of only metropolitan / Gentile influence / understandings. 2. Christology slightly higher than Mark. The Holy Spirit only guides Jesus. 3. Has a more positive view of the Disciples. They are sometimes slow in understanding, but they get it eventually. 4. God desires to redeem people. 5. Salvation is equally available to all, including sinners, tax collectors, Samaritans, women, the poor, etc. 6. God will (and we should) bless and lift up the poor, but there are dangers in wealth. 7. Table fellowship – share your food and fellowship with all people, including the outcast, for there you experience Christ. 8. Discipleship. 9. Prayer. 10. The Holy Spirit is important. 11. Luke and Acts have two quite different ascension stories. 12. Probably used Mark and possibly other sources such as Q. 13. Contains birth narrative focusing on Mary (and her family) and Shepherds. 14. Only Gospel with adolescent Jesus 15. Only one Passover is mentioned. Is Jesus' ministry only 1 year long? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Long thought to have been written in Ephesus, so it is influenced by Gentile understandings. 2. Definitely the highest Christology. The Word (Logos) was God and (literally) pitched tent in the body of Jesus and lived among us. God is in the <i>Logos</i> and the <i>Logos</i> is in us (and vice versa). Jesus is always in control – even of the Holy Spirit. 3. Has a fairly positive view of Disciples with emphasis given to the un-named “beloved disciple” and NOT Peter. 4. Against the “Jews.” This has led to much anti-Semitism (sadly) 5. No ascension story, though it is implied. 6. Seems to go to lengths to show differences (? perceived discrepancies ?) with other Gospels. 7. Contains no story of “Holy Communion” at the last supper, only a foot washing. This may be because John has Jesus being crucified the day the lambs are being prepared (slain), making the Passover meal taking place the night AFTER Jesus' death (not before as in the other Gospels). However, Communion theology is found in John 6:22-59. 8. Implies Jesus' ministry lasts 3 years as 3 Passovers take place. 9. Jesus is ALWAYS in control in John! 10. The <i>Logos</i> ABIDING in us and vice versa (as God abides in the <i>Logos</i> & vice versa) is important in John.