

Topic	Mark	Matthew	Luke	John
Author	Not identified. Must translate Aramaic to Greek audience	Not identified; Greek-speaking Christian Jew, most skilled in biblical exegesis. Perhaps a scribe.	Anonymous; Non-Jewish gentile, most learned in Greek. Probably not Paul's companion (doesn't know his letters).	A disciple of John? "Beloved disciple" shown in competition with Peter; perhaps an outsider
Date	Approx. 66-70 CD	80's CE, at least 10 years after Temple destruction	85-90 CE; movement now mainly gentile	Between 90-100 CE; knowledge of Temple layout suggests existence of earlier drafts
Historical context	Imminent destruction of the Jerusalem temple and expectations of "end-time." Abomination: Zealots' occupation of temple 67-68; sacrifice of Christians. Vesuvius erupts 79 CE	High tensions between Jews and Christians at this time; references	Gentile Christians dispersed throughout empire	Knew of expulsion by Jews of Christians from synagogue (85-90 CE)
Place	Rome or Syria-Palestine.	Antioch in Syria	Ephesus?	Palestine. Greatest knowledge of Palestinian geography, lots of connections with Essenes of Qumran (John the Baptist)
Audience /Purpose	Gentile Christians suffering persecution. Audience not familiar w. Jewish purity laws 7:3	Large Jewish and Jewish-Christian community	Dedicated to Theophilus, either a Roman official, a patron, or a symbol of Church.	Proto-Gnostic group familiar with idea of Jesus' previous existence as Cosmic Wisdom of Proverbs (Logos)
Sources	Primarily oral. Some believe made use of books of parables or apocalyptic prophecies	Mark, book of quotations (Q), and special Matthean material (M)	Mark, book of quotations (Q), and special Lukan material (L)	Oral teachings of "Beloved disciple;" Jewish wisdom literature, compilations of "acts" and "signs"; ideas expressed in Colossians. Essenes and Samaritans. Probably knew of Synoptic gospels.
Relation to Apostles	Apostles seem clueless; cannot understand Jesus' parables.			Apostles are equated with Johanine community; seen reclining on couches like in the Symposium.
Relation to Family	Family, like apostles, is downright hostile. Jesus denies his family.			Mother mentioned in Cana wedding.
Relation to Jews	Jewish-Christian split not yet formalized. Romans, not Jews, bear chief responsibility.	"Most Jewish" of gospels uses more parallels to Hebrew bible than any other. Also, most virulent attacks on Jews. Respects Pharisees, rejects Mark's claim that all foods are clean. Jesus' teachings are midrash on Torah.	Primarily concerned with gentile community and Paul's acts (not his writing).	Jewish hierarchy a target, equated with "the world." Pilate portrayed sympathetically.
Writing style, organization	"Bipolar"—first half in Galilee, 2 nd in Jerusalem. Two halves linked by Passion predictions and by journey to Jerusalem. Parable organization, but fewer "teachings" than any other gospel. Relies on irony.	Five major discourses (Sermon on Mount, Instructions to Apostles, Parables on Kingdom, Instructions to church, Final judgment), alternating with narrative sections	Greco-Roman biographer; inserts speeches that illustrate vital themes (prayers by Zechariah and Simeon), Magnificat and other prayers taken from early Christian worship and attributed to angels in nativity scene.	No parables, just stories and "figures of speech"; best synthesis of classical philosophy and Jewish Wisdom tradition. Lots of journeys back and forth to Jerusalem. 2 main divisions: Book of signs, book of Glory.

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Themes	“Son of man” (means mortal in Ezekiel, celestial figure in Daniel): earthly, suffering, and eschatological. Suffering equates audience with Jesus.	Emphasis of Greek Septuagint (Hebrew bible) to identify Jesus as Hebrew Messiah (Strong connections--hence placement as first gospel), emphasis on Torah, Hebrew Hell (Gehenna),	Theodicy: Evil and undeserved suffering permeate human existence. Social and Economic justice, treatment of the poor, women, sinners, and downtrodden, activity of Holy Spirit, importance of prayer, universality of faith, Christianity as “lawful religion,” importance of Jerusalem temple in Jesus’ life and as “radiant” center of new church	Paraclete (Advocate), replaces HS, emphasizes love shared by Johanine community, ways to resurrection and eternal life, nature of Jesus’ divinity. “I am” speeches link Jesus to YHWH.
Unique material	Mark is main source for Matthew and Luke. Only gospel in which Jesus claims to be the messiah at his trial. (Mark 14:62)	Beatitudes, Lord’s Prayer; New characters (Magi from the east, Satan as speaking character, Herod the great, different 12 apostles) Jesus’ genealogy (Jewish), different nativity story than Luke, several parables (pearl of great price, wise and foolish virgins, sheep & goats), dream of Pilate’s wife, Easter morning earthquake. Antitheses: series of “intensifications” of Torah teachings.	Beatitudes, Lord’s Prayer. New characters (Elizabeth & Zechariah, parents of Baptist; Emperor Augustus; Anna, Simeon, Mary & Martha, Zacchaeus (tax collector), Herod Antipas, Cleopas, other minor characters); distinctive nativity story, distinctive genealogy, sympathetic criminal, parables (fish, debtors, Satan falling from heaven, Prodigal Son, Good Samaritan, fig tree, Lazarus and the Rich man) etc.	“I am” sayings, signs (Cana wedding, blind man, raising of Lazarus), Doctrine of spiritual rebirth (Nicodemus), last supper differences (feet washing, Paraclete), post-resurrection appearances to Mary Magdalene, Thomas, Peter, and Beloved Disciple.
Omissions	No parable of the banquet, few quotations		Sermon on the mount moved to plain. Events reordered.	No tradition about hostile family, virgin birth; no reinterpretation of Mosaic Law (one new commandment is to “love one another”), no temptation in wilderness by Satan, no baptism by John, no imminent return of Jesus, no communion ritual (feet-washing replaces), no agony in the garden.
Death and last words	“Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani” (My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?)”	“Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani” (My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?)”	“Father, forgive them (Roman executioners); they do not know what they are doing. “Truly I tell you: today you will be with me in Paradise. “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”	“Mother, there is your son (Johanine community). . . there is your mother (Mary/ church) “I am thirsty. “It is accomplished.”
Beginning	Prelude to public ministry	Introduction to the Messiah, genealogy and infancy narrative.	Formal Preface and Infancy Narrative.	Prologue: Hymn to Logos, testimony of Baptist, call of the disciples
Ending	Postlude: the empty tomb	Passion and post-resurrection appearances	Post-Resurrection appearances in Jerusalem (Road to Emmaus).	Epilogue: post-resurrection appearances in Galilee, parting words to Peter & beloved disciple