The Four Gospels: Some Comparative Overview Charts

Literary, Stylistic and Thematic Comparisons:

GOSPEL according to	MARK	MATTHEW	LUKE	JOHN
No. of chapters (verses/words)	16 (678 / 11304)	28 (1071/18345)	24 (1151/19482)	21 (879/15635)
Style of Greek	grammatically poor	Semitic influenced	good, elegant, literary	simple, but highly symbolic
Geographical Focus	Galilean towns; some Gentile territory	Galilee, esp. mountains; Jewish areas	one long journey to goal: Jerusalem	multiple visits back & forth to Jerusalem
Literary Features	quick action ("immediately; and then") loosely connected episodes	five major discourses; well-organized sections of collected pericopes	stories often in pairs (esp. male/female characters); many more parables	"Amen, Amen, I say to you"; irony; paradox; double-meanings
Literary Introduction	"Beginning of Good News" (1:1)	"Book of Genealogy" (1:1)	"Orderly Account" (1:1-4)	Cosmic Hymn (1:1-18)
Gospel Beginning	John the Baptist's preaching; Jesus' ministry begins (1:2-15)	Jesus as Emmanuel (1:2—2:23); "King of Jews" vs. King Herod	Elizabeth & Mary; parallel birth stories John Baptist & Jesus (1:5—2:52)	John Bapt. points to "Lamb of God"; first disciples come to Jesus (1:19-51)
Inaugural Event	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	 Pharisees & Herodians; chief priests, scribes & elders 	"scribes & Pharisees"; "hypocrites & blind guides"	unjust authorities (civil & religious); rich & corrupt people	"Jews" (esp. leaders in Jerusalem); Pharisees; High Priest Caiaphas
Jesus' Last Words on the Cross	"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (15:34)	(27:46 – same as in Mark)	"Father, forgive them" (23:34); "You'll be with me in Paradise" (23:43); "Into your hands I commit my Spirit" (23:46)	"Behold your son; behold you mother" (19:26-27); "I am thirsty" (19:28); "It is finished" (19:30)
Focus of Passion	Ch. 14—15: Jesus' death as tragedy	Ch. 26—27: plots & treachery vs. Jesus	Ch. 22–23: Jesus' innocence	Ch. 18—19: Jesus' exaltation
Last Major Event	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)]
Final Literary Ending	women leave tomb in fear & silence (16:8) [16:9-20 added only later]	Jesus tells 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]
Christology I: Main Titles for Jesus	Christ/Messiah & Son of God; Suffering Son of Man; Eschatological Judge	Son of David & Son of Abraham; Great Teacher; New Lawgiver (like Moses)	Great Prophet; Lord (of all nations); Savior (esp. of the poor)	Eternal <i>Logos</i> ; Divine Word made Flesh; Unique Son, sent from the Father; Passover Lamb; "Equal to God"; "I Am"
Christology II: Jesus' Major Actions	miracles; overcoming evil powers; arguing with religious authorities	teaching his disciples; decrying religious hypocrisy	healing sick & impaired people; forgiving sinners & debtors	speaking God's words; doing God's works; revealing God and himself
Discipleship	persevere in faith despite suffering; follow Jesus "on the way" to the cross; be ready for his return	be righteous; forgive always; live the Golden Rule; fulfill God's laws, esp. law of charitable deeds	leave everything to follow Jesus; share with poor; accept everyone, esp. outcasts, women, enemies	see, believe, know, remain in Jesus & God, despite hostility; love one another; be in unity; serve humbly
Pneumatology	Holy Spirit at Baptism; unclean spirits	H.S. at Jesus' birth, baptism, speech	Infancy narrative; prophetic anointing	Spirit of Truth; Paraclete/Advocate
Eschatological Expectations	imminent & sudden, 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 and 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)
Basis for Final Judgment	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)
Other Major Themes	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" = "becoming children of God"; Xn unity; mutual indwelling of God/Jesus/us
Symbol – Feast – Lectionary	Lion – April 25 – Year B	Angel/Human – Sept. 21 – Year A	Ox – Oct. 18 – Year C	Eagle – Dec. 27 – esp. Lent & Easter

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WHO: traditionally attributed author?	"John Mark of Jerusalem"	tax collector & apostle (Mark	physician & companion of	John, son of Zebedee; one
	(Acts 12:12; 15:37; Col 4:10;	3:18; Matt 9:9; 10:3; Luke	Paul (Col 4:14; 2Tim 4:11;	of 12 apostles (Mark 1:19;
	Phlm 1:24; 1Pet 5:13)	6:15; Acts 1:13)	Phlm 1:24)	3:17; cf. John 21:2)
WHO: implied author?	bilingual (Aramaic & Greek) second generation Christian; "young man" of 14:51-52?	bilingual (Aramaic & Greek) early Jewish Christian; trained "scribe" of 13:52?	Gentile Christian convert; educated Greek "historian"; client of Theophilus (1:1-4)?	the "beloved disciple" & his Jewish-Christian followers (John 19:35; 21:20-25)
TO WHOM: implied audience?	mostly Gentile Christians, fairly new in their faith, and facing persecutions	better educated Jews who already believe in Jesus, but argue over the Law	wealthier Gentile Christians in urban settings, in danger of becoming complacent	very mixed: originally Jews; later also Samaritans, Gentiles, etc.
WHERE: written	probably Rome; possibly	possibly Galilee; probably in or near Antioch in Syria	probably Greece; possibly	traditionally Ephesus; maybe
from and/or to?	Decapolis, Syria, Alexandria		Syria (Pauline missions)	originally Galilee or Syria
WHEN: approximate date?	very late 60's or early 70's	late 70's or 80's	mid to late 80's	main edition 90's
	(first written "Gospel")	(core text by Matthew?)	(with "many" earlier sources)	(early edition 50's ?)
WHAT: subtype of	narrated "good news" (1:1)	a book of "heritage" (1:1) & much "teaching" (28:20)	an "orderly account" to attain	"testimony" and "signs" for
"Gospel" genre?	about Jesus and his actions		"secure knowledge" (1:1-4)	believing (20:30f; 21:24f)
WHY: community	to encourage a community	to teach a community that	to challenge believers to put	to strengthen the identity of
circumstances &	undergoing difficult trials and	has internal divisions and	their faith into practice more	a group ostracized by other
author's purpose?	persecutions	external enemies	fully	Jews for their faith

Historical Background Issues:

Structural and Geographical Comparisons:

GOSPEL acc. to	MARK	MATTHEW	LUKE	JOHN
Introduction: Literary Preface Genealogy Infancy Narrative	1:1 1:1 ("good news") xxx xxx xxx	1:1—2:23 xxx 1:1-17 1:18—2:23	1:1–2:52 1:1-4 ("orderly account") [3:23-38] 1:5–2:52	1:1-18 (prologue) 1:1-18 ("Word of God") xxx [1:14]
Preparatory Episodes:	1:2-13	3:1—4:11	3:1-4:13	1:1-51
John Baptist's Preaching	1:2-8	3:1-12	3:1-20	1:19-36
Baptism of Jesus	1:9-11	3:13-17	3:21-22	[1:31-33]
Temptation of Jesus	1:12-13	4:1-11	4:1-13	xxx
Jesus' Early Ministry, mostly to Jews in Galilee: Initial Preaching Call of First Disciples Outside of Galilee	1:14—8:21 1:14-15 1:16-20 5:1-20; 7:24—8:13	4:12—16:12 4:12-17 4:18-22 8:28-34; 15:21-28	4:14—9:17 4:14-30 5:1-11 8:26-39; xxx	[Ch. 2A, 4, 6] xxx 1:35-51 xxx
On the Way to Jerusalem	8:22—10:52	16:13—20:34	9:18–19:27	[xxx]
Initial Stages	8:22—9:50	16:13—18:35	9:18-50	[7:1-9]
1st Passion Prediction	8:31-33	<i>16:21-23</i>	9:22	xxx
2nd Passion Prediction	9:30-32	<i>17:22-23</i>	9:43b-45	xxx
To Jerusalem Itself	10:1-52	19:1—20:34	9:51–19:27	[2:13; 5:1; 7:10]
3rd Passion Prediction	10:32-34	<i>20</i> :17-19	18:31-34	xxx
Ministry in Jerusalem	11 :1— 13 :37	21 :1 —25 :46	19:28—21:38	[Ch. 2B—3, 5, 7—12]
Teachings & Disputes	11:1—12:44	21:1 — 23:39	19:1—21:4	most of this
Eschatological Discourse	13:1-37	24:1-36	21:5-36	xxx
Passion Week	14 :1— 15 :47	26 :1— 27 :66	22 :1 —23 :56	13 :1— 19 :42
Last Supper	14:17-31	26:20-35	22:14- <i>38</i>	<i>13</i> :1—17:26
Crucifixion	15:22-41	27:33-56	23:33-49	19:17-37
Resurrection Narrative Empty Tomb Story Appearance Stories Additions	16:1-8 16:1-8 xxx [16:9-20 added later]	28:1-20 28:1-8 28:9-10, 16-20	24:1-53 24:1-12 24:13-53	20 :1-31 20:1-13 20:14-31 21 :1-25 [second ending]