

Comparison of the Four Gospels

	Mark	Luke-Acts	Matthew	John
Date Written	70	90	90	110
Story begins...	at Jesus' baptism - the heavens are torn in two	in the temple - Zechariah the priest offering incense	a genealogy showing the generations from Abraham to Joseph	the Word, in the beginning, before creation
Story ends...	women flee from tomb in fear	Paul is in Rome, ministering without hindrance	on the mountaintop with the Great Commission	in a second ending, Peter told to "feed my sheep"
Historical context	war with Rome, Rome has just destroyed the temple	celebrates the pax romana - opportunity to spread the gospel	conflict with rabbinic Judaism	addressing a fully Hellenized community
Role of Peter	fallible, failed disciple	heroic prophetic figure who opens the gentile ministry	the rock on which Jesus builds his church, authoritative teacher	a minor character until the gospel's "second ending"
Luke pushes back against Mark	his gospel begins and ends in fear	repeated assurance: "be not afraid"		
Luke and Matthew disagree about the Torah		agrees with Paul - gentiles need not observe the Torah	whoever neglects even the least commandment and so teaches others = least in the kingdom of heaven	
views about "the end"	the kingdom will come "within this generation"	the kingdom "is within you"	final judgement at end of history - have you kept the Torah?	not a future kingdom - it exists in the spiritual realm above
Shape of the story	classic Greek narrative shape - rise and fall of hero	Luke - from Galilee to Jerusalem; Acts - from Jerusalem to Rome	five discourses paralleling the Torah	spiral story shape - returns to the same place, in a higher dimension
Theological point	encouragement to a church in fearful times	Peter, a devout Jew who opens the gentile ministry, a model to Jewish Christians	a curriculum in five books for teaching the church	the gospel framed to appeal to Hellenistic readers