

In this sub-thread I'm trying to explain why I do not use the fourth Gospel extensively in trying to decide what Jesus actually taught (specifically about the afterlife, but about much of anything else as well). One of the main issues involves the differences between John and the three Synoptic Gospels (all of them earlier than John), Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Here I discuss one aspect of these differences: at the very fundamental level, John simply has Jesus say and do different things than he does in the others. This is how I put it in my introductory textbook.

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Even to the casual reader, the Fourth Gospel may seem somewhat different from the other three within the canon. Nowhere in the other Gospels is Jesus said to be the Word of God, the creator of the universe, the equal of God, or the one sent from heaven and soon to return. Nowhere else does Jesus claim that to see him is to see the Father, that to hear him is to hear the Father, and that to reject him is to reject the Father. Exactly how different is the Fourth Gospel from the others? The comparative approach seeks to answer this question.

### Comparison of Contents

Despite the important and significant differences among the Synoptic Gospels, they are much more similar to one another than any one of them is to John. Suppose we were to list the most significant accounts of the Synoptics. In two of them Jesus is said to be born in Bethlehem, to a virgin named Mary. In all three, his public ministry begins with his baptism by John, followed by a period of temptation in the wilderness by the Devil. When he returns ...

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