

Contrasts between John and the Synoptic Gospels

1) Material found *only* in the Fourth Gospel (John), *not* in the Synoptic Gospels (Matt, Mark, Luke):

Prologue (1:1-18)
 “Signs,” beginning with the Wedding at Cana (2:1-12)
 Dialogue with Nicodemus (2:23—3:21)
 Jesus and/or his Disciples Baptize People (3:22-26; 4:1-2)
 Samaritan Woman at the Well (4:1-42)
 Jesus Heals a Sick Man at the Pool of Bethesda (5:1-18)
 New Details at the Feeding of the 5000; followed by Bread of Life Discourse (6:1b, 3-6, 8-9, 12b, 14-15; 6:22-65)
 [Woman caught in Adultery (7:53—8:11)]
 Jesus Gives Sight to a Man Born Blind (9:1-41)
 Jesus Raises Lazarus from the Dead (11:1-44)
 Jesus Washes the Disciples’ Feet (13:1-20)
 “Disciple Whom Jesus Loved” (13:23-25; 19:26-27; 20:2-10; 21:7, 20-24; cf. 18:15-16?)
 Last Supper Discourses, incl. “Paraclete” & “Vine and Branches” (13:31—16:33)
 Great Prayer of Jesus (17:1-26)
 New Details at the Trial before Pilate, and at the Crucifixion (18:28—19:16; 19:20-24, 26-28, 30-37, 39)
 First Resurrection Appearance to Mary Magdalene alone (20:11-18; cf. Matt 28:9)
 Resurrection Appearance to Thomas (20:24-29)
 Another Resurrection Appearance at Sea of Tiberias/Galilee; Dialogue between Jesus & Peter (21:1-25; cf. Luke 5:1-11)
 First and Second Endings to the Gospel (20:30-31; 21:24-25)

2) Material familiar from the Synoptics but *not* found in John:

No Infancy Narrative (cf. *John 1:14* – “the Word became flesh”)
 No Childhood Episodes (cf. *1:12; 13:33; 21:5* – believers called “children”)
 No Baptism of Jesus (cf. *1:19-34* – John testifies about Jesus)
 No Temptation in the Desert (cf. *8:44; 13:2, 27* – the role of Satan & the Devil)
 No Calls to Repentance (cf. *1:29; 5:14; 9:41; 15:22; 20:23* – on sin and forgiveness)
 No Sermon on the Mount or Beatitudes (cf. *13:17; 20:29* – Jesus calls believers blessed)
 No Lord’s Prayer (cf. *17:1-26* – the Great Prayer of Jesus)
 No List of “Twelve Apostles” (cf. *13:16* – messengers; *1:35-51; 6:67-71; 20:24; 21:2* – disciples; “the Twelve”)
 No Mission of the Disciples during Jesus’ Lifetime (cf. *13:20; 14:12; 20:21* – risen Jesus sends them out)
 No Parables (cf. *10:6; 15:1-8; 16:25, 29* – a few “figures of speech”)
 Few “Kingdom of God” Sayings (only *3:3-5; cf. 1:49; 6:15; 12:13-15; 18:33-39* – Jesus’ role as “King of Israel”)
 Few “Ethical” Teachings (only *13:34-35; 15:12, 17; cf. 14:21-24* – “Love One Another” and “Love Jesus/God”)
 Few Predictions of Jesus’ Return (only *14:3; 21:22-23* – Jesus will “come again” or “come”)
 No Exorcisms (cf. *7:20; 8:48-52; 10:19-21* – Jesus accused of having a “demon”)
 No Transfiguration Story (cf. *1:45; 3:14; 5:45-47; 9:28-29* – Jesus associated with Moses)
 No Passion Predictions (cf. *5:18; 11:50-53 & 18:14; 12:24-25, 32-33; 18:31-32* – talk of Jesus’ death)
 No Institution of Eucharist at the Last Supper (cf. *6:22-59; 13:1-20* – Bread of Life Discourse; Washing of Feet)
 No Ascension Narrative (cf. *3:13; 6:62; 20:17* – Jesus talks about descending and ascending)

3) Material significantly *different* in John and in the Synoptics:

Synoptics	John
Jesus’ ministry lasts only about one year	Jesus’ ministry spans three Passovers (2:13; 6:4; 11:55)
John the Baptist is “Elijah”; preaches repentance	John [the baptizer] is <i>not</i> Elijah but a “witness” to Jesus (1:19-36)
Jesus’ ministry begins <i>after</i> John the Baptist’s arrest	Jesus’ ministry <i>overlaps</i> with John’s (3:22-30)
First <i>four</i> disciples Jesus <i>calls</i> are two pairs of brothers: Simon & Andrew, James & John	First <i>five</i> disciples: Andrew, an anonymous second one, Simon Peter, Philip, Nathanael (1:35-51)
<i>Many</i> “miracles” but <i>few</i> longer speeches	Only a <i>few</i> “signs” but <i>several</i> long monologues and dialogues
Jesus’ opponents include <i>Sadducees, Herodians</i> , etc.	Jesus’ opponents usually called “ <i>the Jews</i> ” or “ <i>the world</i> ”
Opponents plot to destroy/kill Jesus for various reasons	Opponents try to stone Jesus for blasphemy (8:59; 10:31-33; cf. 11:8)
Only one journey to Jerusalem	Multiple visits to Jerusalem (2:13; 5:1; 7:10)
Temple cleansing occurs <i>one week before Jesus’ death</i>	Temple cleansing at the <i>beginning</i> of Jesus’ ministry (2:13-22)
Anointing at Bethany by <i>anonymous</i> woman, and objection by <i>anonymous</i> people	Anointing at Bethany by Lazarus’ sister <i>Mary</i> , and objection by <i>Judas Iscariot</i> (12:1-8)
Last Supper <i>is</i> the Passover Meal; Jesus is crucified <i>on</i> the Day of Passover	Last Supper is <i>before</i> the Passover (13:1; 18:28); Jesus dies on the Preparation Day <i>before</i> Passover (19:14, 31, 42)
“Love your <i>neighbors</i> ”; “Love your <i>enemies</i> ”	“Love <i>one another</i> ” (13:34-35; 15:12, 17; focus within community)
Peter is first and most prominent of the “ <i>apostles</i> ”	Mary Magdalene, Martha of Bethany, and the “Beloved Disciple” are more prominent as “ <i>disciples</i> ”
<i>Future</i> Eschatology: “Kingdom of God” is coming	<i>Realized</i> Eschatology: “Eternal Life” now (3:36; 5:24; 6:47-54)
“ <i>Gethsemane</i> ”: betrayal through <i>Judas’ kiss</i>	“ <i>Garden</i> ” in Kidron Valley: <i>Jesus IDs himself</i> for arrest (18:1-11)
Women prepare spices to anoint Jesus’ body after his burial	Joseph Arim.& Nicodemus anoint Jesus’ body before burial (19:38-42)

4) “So What?” - Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

- Why does the Fourth Gospel omit so many stories found in the Synoptic Gospels?
- Does the Fourth Evangelist presume that the reader knows the material contained in the Synoptics?
- What is the significance of all the new material found only in the Fourth Gospel?
- What is the significance of the changes or additions made in the stories found both in John and the Synoptics?