







24. God's Invitation – Part 1

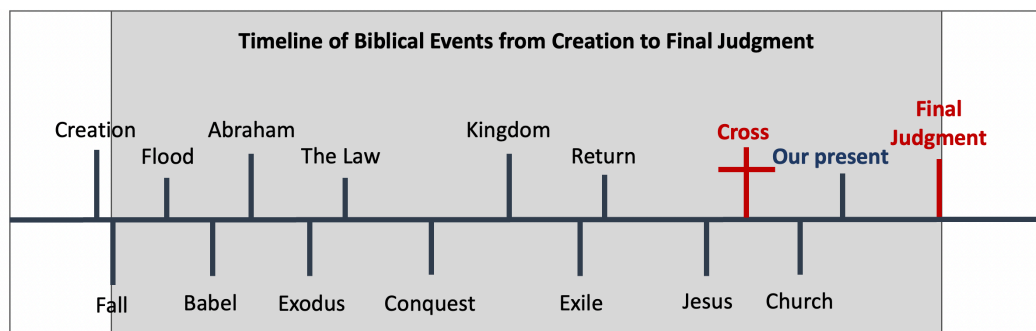
THE JOURNEY

In our journey through *Come and See*, we have attempted to accomplish the following:

 <p>1. Gain a good overview of the message of the Bible.</p>	 <p>2. Gain an understanding of the God of the Bible.</p>	 <p>3. Learn the Bible's perspective on mankind.</p>
 <p>4. Understand who Jesus Christ is.</p>	 <p>5. Understand what a Christian is.</p>	 <p>6. Learn what the Bible says about the future.</p>

The Bible says a lot more than what has been covered in this series.

However, what we have gone through is an attempt to help you understand one of the reasons Yahweh gave the Bible to mankind: it is so that all can understand His invitation.



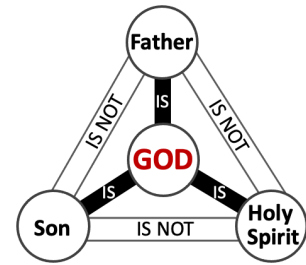
1 How the world came to be	2 Why there is evil in the world	5 God revealed His standards	6 God taught about Himself	9 The Saviour's work	10 The present age
3 God judged the evil world	4 God's plan to reach the world	7 How God's people failed	8 God's rescue plan	11 How the world ends	12 God's invitation

But what is God inviting mankind to?

IT'S ABOUT RELATIONSHIP

The Creator-God of the Bible is wholly independent and self-contained. Yahweh did not need to create anything or anyone. It was not as if He were lonely.

He is a triune God, meaning there is only one God, but in Him are three divine Persons—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They love each other, communicate with each other and are always in harmony with each other. They do not need mankind, anyone else or anything else.



This is what Paul says of God.

Acts 17:24–25

²⁴ “He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn’t live in man-made temples, ²⁵ and human hands can’t serve his needs—for he has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need.”

The Creator-God is totally unique. This is what Yahweh said as recorded by the prophet Isaiah.

Isaiah 46:9

Remember the things I have done in the past.

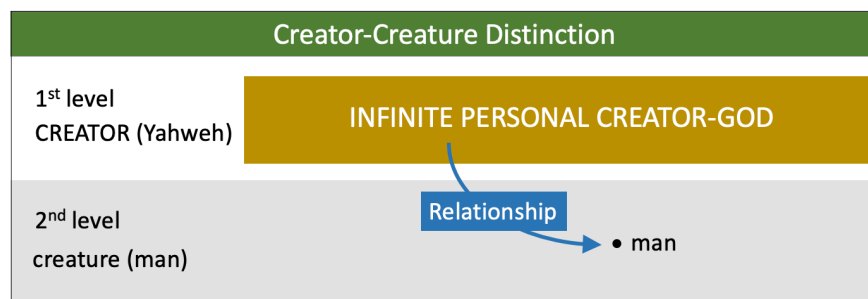
For I alone am God!

I am God, and there is none like me.

It is not easy for people to understand that Yahweh has no needs. This is because all people have many needs. Right from the moment of birth, people are totally dependent on others for shelter, food, relationship and companionship. Even as independent adults, people have various kinds of physical, emotional, social, mental and spiritual needs. But Yahweh is not like that. He is complete in Himself.



Despite not needing anyone, Yahweh created mankind and “came down” to the creature level to have a relationship with mankind.



This relationship was not a “master-slave” relationship nor an “employer-employee” relationship. Yahweh defined it as a close and intimate family relationship.

We’ll look at some of His relationships with people in the Bible.



Adam and Eve

Right from the beginning, when Yahweh created the first man and woman, He established the type of relationship that they were to have with Him.












God was extremely hands-on, personable and intimate with Adam and Eve. Even though He was the Creator-God who was all-knowing and everywhere present at the same time, He chose to have a personal relationship by going to the garden of Eden to be with them. He spent time with them and conversed with them. Yahweh was very interested in them.



Not only that, just as a loving father would, He shared the work that He enjoyed with mankind.

Consider this: the first image we see of God in the Bible is as a labourer. He was working and creating in the first workweek in history.

What Yahweh created in the first six days

First 3 Days: Domains		Second 3 days: Occupants	
	 Domain of light and darkness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sun for day Moon and stars for night 	 
	 Domain of sea and atmosphere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fish for sea Birds for atmosphere 	 
	Domain of land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Animals for land Man to rule fish, birds, animals 	 

Similarly, to reflect God's own image, God assigned man creative labour in the garden of Eden.

Genesis 2:8, 15

⁸ Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he placed the man he had made. ¹⁵ The LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it.

God planted a garden and then placed Adam there to take care of it. Looking around the garden, Adam could see a model of what God meant by responsibly caring for the land.

Adam was then given the task of carefully tending the garden that God had planted as well as subduing the wilderness outside the garden so that it would no longer be wild, but fruitful and full of resources for living. Yahweh didn't just tell Adam what to do. He modelled it and then told Adam to do the same. God shared with Adam the work of responsibly governing the earth.

Here is another aspect of God sharing His work with man. During the creation of the world, God started naming what He created. Again, as the Creator, He had the authority to name what He had made. The ability to name something demonstrates one's ownership of that thing.

Genesis 1:5a, 10

⁵ God called the light "day" and the darkness "night."

¹⁰ God called the dry ground "land" and the waters "seas." And God saw that it was good.

But after that initial naming exercise, God handed to man the responsibility and enjoyment of naming the creatures because Adam was God's representative.



Genesis 2:19

So the LORD God formed from the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would call them, and the man chose a name for each one.

The relationship between Yahweh and Adam was like that of a father and son. The father first created something for the son to enjoy, taught the son how to care for it and then allowed the son to actually do it.



Yahweh was very committed and serious about the relationship He had with Adam and Eve. Though they rebelled and ruined their relationship with Him, God was not going to abandon them. He committed Himself to rescuing them by sending a promised Saviour. And He also immediately and personally made clothes for them to cover their nakedness.

Genesis 3:21

And the LORD God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife.



Yahweh created the world to enjoy with His creation, mankind. He did not sit back and watch His creation from a distance. Rather, He chose to engage in a personal relationship with them.

Let's look at another example of how He engaged with mankind, this time with Abraham.



Abraham

When Yahweh approached Abraham and made a contract with him, it was not an impersonal “supplier-client” relationship. It was not a cold, heartless contract. Rather, the contract showed that God was formally entering into a relationship with Abraham. Yahweh was serious and fully committed to their relationship. He was defining the type of relationship that He, as the God of the universe, wanted to have with Abraham.



In the following event that happened some time after the Global Flood, Yahweh was very angry with two evil cities called Sodom and Gomorrah. He planned to utterly destroy them. However, observe how Yahweh interacted with Abraham as they discussed the two cities.



Let's turn to our Bibles and read Genesis 18:1–33.

(The leader reads aloud. For reference, the verses are also here.)

Genesis 18:1–33

¹ The LORD appeared again to Abraham near the oak grove belonging to Mamre. One day Abraham was sitting at the entrance to his tent during the hottest part of the day. ² He looked up and noticed three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he ran to meet them and welcomed them, bowing low to the ground.

³ “My lord,” he said, “if it pleases you, stop here for a while. ⁴ Rest in the shade of this tree while water is brought to wash your feet. ⁵ And since you’ve honored your servant with this visit, let me prepare some food to refresh you before you continue on your journey.”

“All right,” they said. “Do as you have said.”

⁶ So Abraham ran back to the tent and said to Sarah, “Hurry! Get three large measures of your best flour, knead it into dough, and bake some bread.” ⁷ Then Abraham ran out to the herd and chose a tender calf and gave it to his servant, who quickly prepared it. ⁸ When the food was ready, Abraham took some yogurt and milk and the roasted meat, and he served it to the men. As they ate, Abraham waited on them in the shade of the trees.

⁹ “Where is Sarah, your wife?” the visitors asked.

“She’s inside the tent,” Abraham replied.

¹⁰ Then one of them said, “I will return to you about this time next year, and your wife, Sarah, will have a son!”

Sarah was listening to this conversation from the tent. ¹¹ Abraham and Sarah were both very old by this time, and Sarah was long past the age of having children. ¹² So she laughed silently to herself and said, “How could a worn-out woman like me enjoy such pleasure, especially when my master—my husband—is also so old?”

¹³ Then the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh? Why did she say, ‘Can an old woman like me have a baby?’ ¹⁴ Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return about this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”

¹⁵ Sarah was afraid, so she denied it, saying, "I didn't laugh."

But the LORD said, "No, you did laugh."

¹⁶ Then the men got up from their meal and looked out toward Sodom. As they left, Abraham went with them to send them on their way.

¹⁷ "Should I hide my plan from Abraham?" the LORD asked. ¹⁸ "For Abraham will certainly become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him. ¹⁹ I have singled him out so that he will direct his sons and their families to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just. Then I will do for Abraham all that I have promised."

²⁰ So the LORD told Abraham, "I have heard a great outcry from Sodom and Gomorrah, because their sin is so flagrant. ²¹ I am going down to see if their actions are as wicked as I have heard. If not, I want to know."

²² The other men turned and headed toward Sodom, but the LORD remained with Abraham. ²³ Abraham approached him and said, "Will you sweep away both the righteous and the wicked? ²⁴ Suppose you find fifty righteous people living there in the city—will you still sweep it away and not spare it for their sakes? ²⁵ Surely you wouldn't do such a thing, destroying the righteous along with the wicked. Why, you would be treating the righteous and the wicked exactly the same! Surely you wouldn't do that! Should not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?"

²⁶ And the LORD replied, "If I find fifty righteous people in Sodom, I will spare the entire city for their sake."

²⁷ Then Abraham spoke again. "Since I have begun, let me speak further to my Lord, even though I am but dust and ashes. ²⁸ Suppose there are only forty-five righteous people rather than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?"

And the LORD said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five righteous people there."

²⁹ Then Abraham pressed his request further. "Suppose there are only forty?"

And the LORD replied, "I will not destroy it for the sake of the forty."

³⁰ "Please don't be angry, my Lord," Abraham pleaded. "Let me speak—suppose only thirty righteous people are found?"

And the LORD replied, "I will not destroy it if I find thirty."

³¹ Then Abraham said, "Since I have dared to speak to the Lord, let me continue—suppose there are only twenty?"

And the LORD replied, "Then I will not destroy it for the sake of the twenty."

³² Finally, Abraham said, “Lord, please don’t be angry with me if I speak one more time. Suppose only ten are found there?”

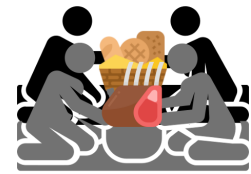
And the LORD replied, “Then I will not destroy it for the sake of the ten.”

³³ When the LORD had finished his conversation with Abraham, he went on his way, and Abraham returned to his tent.

Let’s make some observations about this incident.

Yahweh came to have a meal with Abraham

Yahweh took on the form of a man and, along with two angels, went to visit Abraham. The God of the Bible who created and owned everything in the universe, lowered Himself to go to Abraham’s tent to spend time with him and even have a meal with him. He is not a God who is far away and uninterested in mankind. Yahweh took the initiative to seek out and continue a personal relationship with Abraham.



How did Abraham respond? Abraham too, related to God personally and intimately by running to meet Him and bowing before Him. Then he personally arranged for a lot of food to be prepared and he spent time with God.

Yahweh chose to have an authentic relationship with Abraham by revealing His heart to him

God defined what an intimate, personal relationship with Him looked like by sharing His own heart with Abraham. This was shocking.

God and man are on totally different levels. As the Creator-God, He has every right to choose how to interact with mankind. He does not owe mankind anything. And He does not need to tell mankind anything.



Biblical Creation: Creator-Creature Distinction	
1 st level	CREATOR
2 nd level	Creature: what God created

Yet, we see Yahweh’s sincerity in being a friend to His own creation, Abraham. God chose to communicate and share His plans with him.

Yahweh offered Abraham the opportunity to intercede for the two cities of Sodom and Gomorrah

After God shared His plan with Abraham about destroying the two cities, He intentionally stayed behind while the two angels left. It was almost as if God was inviting Abraham to talk to Him about the plan.

Abraham approached God boldly but respectfully to plead for Sodom and Gomorrah. He knew that God was a righteous and just Judge and therefore, he appealed to God's own character. And God encouraged him by agreeing to his request. In fact, Abraham persisted in his request till God agreed to spare the cities even if only ten righteous people were found in them.

One thing we observe from this account is that Yahweh was approachable. He wanted a genuine relationship with His creation and He encouraged it. Also, He was intentional about allowing Abraham into His plan: not just telling Abraham about it, but encouraging him to be involved in it by being a mediator and asking for God's mercy for Sodom and Gomorrah.

Let's learn more about God's desire for a personal relationship by going to another account in the Bible, this time in the New Testament.



The Disciples

After Jesus died and resurrected, He appeared to His disciples multiple times. Here was one occasion when He showed Himself to them.



Let's turn to our Bibles and read John 21:1–17.

(The leader reads aloud. For reference, the verses are also here.)

John 21:1–17

¹ Later, Jesus appeared again to the disciples beside the Sea of Galilee. This is how it happened. ² Several of the disciples were there—Simon Peter, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples.

³ Simon Peter said, "I'm going fishing."

"We'll come, too," they all said. So they went out in the boat, but they caught nothing all night.

⁴ At dawn Jesus was standing on the beach, but the disciples couldn't see who he was.

⁵ He called out, "Fellows, have you caught any fish?"

"No," they replied.

⁶ Then he said, "Throw out your net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you'll get some!" So they did, and they couldn't haul in the net because there were so many fish in it.

⁷ Then the disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, "It's the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his tunic (for he had stripped for work), jumped into the water,

and headed to shore. ⁸ The others stayed with the boat and pulled the loaded net to the shore, for they were only about a hundred yards from shore. ⁹ When they got there, they found breakfast waiting for them—fish cooking over a charcoal fire, and some bread.

¹⁰ “Bring some of the fish you’ve just caught,” Jesus said. ¹¹ So Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net to the shore. There were 153 large fish, and yet the net hadn’t torn.

¹² “Now come and have some breakfast!” Jesus said. None of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Then Jesus served them the bread and the fish. ¹⁴ This was the third time Jesus had appeared to his disciples since he had been raised from the dead.

¹⁵ After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” Peter replied, “you know I love you.”

“Then feed my lambs,” Jesus told him.

¹⁶ Jesus repeated the question: “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

“Yes, Lord,” Peter said, “you know I love you.”

“Then take care of my sheep,” Jesus said.

¹⁷ A third time he asked him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, “Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Then feed my sheep.

Now let’s make some observations about this incident.

Jesus prepared breakfast and served His disciples

The God of the universe is not a proud, arrogant God who treats His creation like slaves. Not at all. Throughout the Bible, we see Yahweh taking the initiative, engaging with mankind and providing for people.

And when Jesus came to earth, He continued interacting with His creation in the same way. In fact, we see that Jesus showed great love in taking care of His disciples. He was not too “high up” to cook breakfast for them and serve it.



In the Bible, there are many other examples of how Jesus genuinely cared for people. In Lesson 16, we saw Jesus feed more than 5,000 people, working to personally break the loaves of bread and then getting His disciples to distribute the food.



On another occasion, He took on the job of a servant by washing each of His disciples' dirty, muddy feet before a meal. It was totally unheard of for a respectable Jewish teacher to do such a thing for his disciples. In the culture of that time, feet washing was a job meant for the lowliest servant in the household. But the God of the world thought nothing of stooping down to do this menial task for His own creatures.



But we know that was not all. Jesus offered Himself as the ultimate sacrifice, to die in order to save mankind whom He had created.

This is what the Bible says about Jesus.

Philippians 2:6–8

- ⁶ Though he was God,
 he did not think of equality with God
 as something to cling to.
- ⁷ Instead, he gave up his divine privileges;
he took the humble position of a slave
 and was born as a human being.
- When he appeared in human form,
⁸ he humbled himself in obedience to God
and died a criminal's death on a cross.



Yahweh had planned that Jesus, the second Person of God, would die for all mankind. Jesus willingly became a “humble slave” and went to the cross.

But even after His death on the cross and His resurrection, Jesus continued to relate lovingly and personally to His disciples. He made breakfast for them, then sat and chatted with them.

Jesus invited His disciples to share in His love for the world

After breakfast, Jesus asked Simon Peter three times if Peter loved Him. Although Peter answered His question with a “yes” each time, he was also getting increasingly upset, wondering why Jesus kept asking him the same question over and over.

Each time Peter answered “yes”, Jesus told him: “feed my lambs”, “take care of my sheep” and “feed my sheep”.

What was the meaning of this conversation?

Jesus loved His disciples. While living on earth, He showed the depth of His love through His words and actions.

Now, He asked Peter three times if Peter loved Him. Peter answered “yes” all three times. Based on this love that Peter had for Him, Jesus told him to feed and take care of His sheep.

Jesus was saying that love for Him should motivate how Peter and the other disciples lived. If they loved Jesus, then they would care for those whom He cared for.

But Jesus wasn't talking about animals. He used sheep to refer to all who believe in Him and follow Him. Jesus was telling Peter that based on the loving relationship that they shared, Peter was to care for others.

Relationships are very important to Jesus. Jesus does not want mechanical, legalistic obedience to a list of dos and don'ts. Jesus wants His disciples to have a personal relationship with Him and then extend their loving relationship to include others around them.



YAHWEH'S INVITATION

The Bible is a record of who Yahweh is and what He is like. In reading the Bible, everyone is able to observe His character and personality. Throughout the Bible, we see Yahweh take the initiative to engage with people. We see that He is very interested in a personal relationship with each and every person. And that includes each one of us.



Yahweh chooses to engage with people in an honest, genuine and authentic way. He has made contracts to show His commitment and seriousness to the promises He has made. And He ensures that mankind can observe how He behaves with regards to His promises in the contracts.

Aside from the contracts, we also see how He personally engages with different kinds of people: those who believe in Him and those who do not—men, women, children, Jews and non-Jews.

In reading the Bible, a person should be able to have a better understanding of **Yahweh's character and personality**:

- Who is Yahweh?
- What is He like?
- What track record does He have?
- Does He make and keep promises?
- Is He dependable and reliable?
- Is He trustworthy?

The Bible is also Yahweh's **record of history and truth**. From the pages of Scripture, we learn Yahweh's explanation of:

- How the world came about.
- Where mankind came from.
- When and why evil, sin, pain and suffering came into the world.
- The meaning and purpose of life.
- What happens after mankind's life on earth.
- Mankind's eternal destiny.

We've taken 23 lessons to go through a brief overview of all this.

Here's a summary of the salvation message of the Bible:

- Yahweh is an infinitely righteous and sovereign God. He created mankind to have a personal and close relationship with Himself.
- But mankind chose rebellion and sin and as a result, all people are bound for eternal separation from Yahweh.
- In His love, Yahweh sent Jesus to die as the sufficient substitute payment for all of mankind's sins.
- In order to benefit from Jesus' substitutionary death and gain Jesus' righteousness for themselves, God says that people will have to make a decision to put their faith in Jesus.
- Those who put their faith in Jesus will be reconciled to Yahweh for eternity. They will immediately enter into a relationship with Him.

A RIGHTEOUS GOD

Helpless Sinners

A Sufficient
Substitute

A Faith Decision

RECONCILIATION
WITH YAHWEH



What is faith in Jesus?

But what exactly does “putting faith in Jesus” mean? Or, asked another way: what does it mean to trust in Jesus?

In general, when most people think about those in their lives whom they trust, they would be able to say: (i) what the person they trust is like and (ii) what they trust about that person.

Similarly, when people say they trust in Jesus or have put their faith in Jesus, this is what they mean:

1. They understand and believe that Jesus is the Creator-God and He is perfectly righteous.
2. They understand and believe that they themselves are helpless sinners and will be rightly judged by God with eternal punishment.
3. They understand and believe that Jesus died as a sufficient substitute for them personally so that they would not need to die the eternal death.

The Bible says that those who understand and believe these things have “put their faith in Jesus”.

As a result, Yahweh takes the work of Jesus on the cross and applies it to their lives. Their sin penalty is removed and Jesus' righteousness is credited to them. They are now reconciled to God and have a personal relationship with Him. They are no longer separated from God. Now, they will live the rest of their lives on earth having a personal relationship with Yahweh and when their mortal lives on earth are finished, they will live face-to-face with Yahweh for all eternity.

John 3:16

“For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”

“Putting faith in Jesus” is what makes someone a Christian and is what creates a relationship between God and that person.

Those who trust Jesus would make statements like:

- “I put my faith in Jesus for my salvation.”
- “I trust in Jesus as my Saviour.”
- “I believe Jesus died on the cross for my sins.”

These statements (and others like them) all mean that a person believes in Jesus.

People cannot do anything to “earn” this relationship and eternal life. They do not need to do any ritual, say any specific prayers or words, respond to church invitations for events, raise their hand, walk down the aisle of the church, donate things to the church, make promises to do or not do certain things, etc. They simply need to trust in Jesus.

God is inviting all mankind to put their faith in Jesus.

Yahweh, the God of the Bible, wants to have a personal relationship with you.



- He is inviting you into the intimate relationship that was experienced but then lost in the garden of Eden.
- He is inviting you to turn away from restless human effort and striving, and turn to Him for salvation, peace and security by trusting in Jesus and His work of dying on the cross.
- He is inviting you to turn away from your own man-made standards of right and wrong, and unrighteous living which leads to feelings of meaninglessness, unsettledness, frustration, fear, guilt and shame. Instead, He invites you to follow Him in His path of righteousness which leads to peace and joy.
- He is inviting you to spend the rest of your life on earth in close fellowship with Him where He will lead and guide you through the struggles and challenges of life and involve you in working with Him to love and serve others.
- And He is inviting you to spend eternity with Him.

Since Yahweh created mankind to have free will or responsible choice, you now have the choice to accept His invitation or reject it.

Have you accepted this invitation?

If not, are you ready to accept His invitation?

The decision you make is entirely up to you. Yahweh has given each person responsible choice so everyone has the right to make their own decision on what to do with Yahweh and His invitation.

If you have more questions or would like to have more information, ask the leader for recommended books and websites that will be helpful.

The life of a Christian

In the final lesson of this series, we will look at eight practical characteristics of the Christian life. Those who have put their faith in Jesus will find it of practical help. Those who have not will gain an understanding of what it is like for someone to live as a follower of Christ.



Bible reading for review

Genesis 18:1–33; John 21:1–17, John 3:1–21