

# The Portico Notes

## Session 1 [Edited]

Rod: Of all the wonderful things that the apostle John could have said about God at the culmination of the biblical revelation, why did he choose “God is light” and “God is love”?

Kaj: Love is sacrificing oneself for another.

Eric: What is light? The first thing God commands. God’s commands issue from His nature. John draws a contrast between God and a muddy murky world. God is not murky.

Greg: Light exposes every flaw. God is holy. God isn’t “loving”; He is love.

Bekah: The gods of antiquity were tyrants, not gods of relationship. The God of light invites us into intimacy and freedom.

Gene: Light is vital for life.

Will: Jesus was the light of men (Joh 1.4). Light reveals, dark obscures. God reveals Himself to us in his true state. Jesus express image of the Father; God is Jesus Christ; “I am the light of the world.”

Dan: [In view of light exposing flaws, we can observe that] God knows us completely and still loves us.

Eric: [Speaking of the pagan gods as tyrants the were] worse than humans in their morality.

Rod: Here’s a quote,

... the biblical depiction of a God who desires to know his creatures clashes strongly with the pagan concept of divinity. Pagan gods and goddesses, such as the Greek and Roman ones we learned about in grade school, do not love us. The Norse myths present a similar scenario, as do the Celtic, Inuit, Mesoamerican, and gods of other religions — in fact, all pagan religions. One gets the impression that the gods of the ancient Near East don’t particularly like humans — let alone desire a relationship with them.<sup>1</sup>

Rod: When the pagan gods demanded [some ritual or sacrifice] of their worshippers before they would grant rain or whatever, what did that imply about the nature of these gods?

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<sup>1</sup> Copan, Paul; Jacoby, Douglas. *Origins: The Ancient Impact and Modern Implications of Genesis 1-11*, p. 50, (Morgan James Publishing; Kindle Edition).

Eric: The gods were finite, *they had needs*.

Rod: So if we're not providing something God needs ...

Bekah: God doesn't need anything: He loves us because it's His character.

Will: God can love us or ignore us, [He doesn't even need to condemn us, since] we're already self-condemned (John 3.17). [Back to God being light,] God being light helps us see and know Him.

Rod: Amen. Does affirming that God does not need anything imply that He does not desire anything from us? Does God seek something from us?

Eric: **Yes.**

Rod: Okay, summarize what God desires of us in one word.

Bekah: **Intimacy.**

Dan: Does God seek something from us? Yes, God is compelled to reconcile us to Himself; He created a path to relationship. [In one word, He seeks] **Relationship.**

Greg: God desires intimacy and relationship; [being light and love] He is **transparent and reliable!**

Rod: Good. Now, let's add something that may a little troubling to the mix. Deuteronomy 4.24 tells us, and Hebrews 12.29 repeats it, that God is a consuming fire.

Kaj: [It makes me think of] Moses and burning bush that was *not* consumed. [It appears that God is] a consuming fire to things *other than* that which is His.

Rod: Right, the burning bush symbolized the nation of Israel in the "furnace of affliction," and God speaking "from within the bush" conveyed to Moses that God was *with* the Israelites in their affliction. Think also of Daniel's three friends in the fiery furnace, immune to the flames while with one "like a son of God."

Eric: You are either in covenant with this God or you are His enemy: [Think of] Sodom and Gomorrah; wickedness is burned up. Whatever is not of light, whatever is not of love is not of God.

Rod: Good, so can we say that God's wrath is an aspect of His love?

*For a brief exploration of this final point, see the excerpt "The Consuming Fire," on pages 9-10 of the Portico documents.*