

Scholarly views: what do theologians say about God?

Here are six theological comments about the texts in Resource 3.1.

- Which comment goes with which text? (Comments may refer to more than one text.)
- What can we learn from these comments about what the Bible says about God, and how Christians interpret it?

In God's revelation to Moses, we see that injustice does not escape God's anger. At the right time, God speaks, sends a messenger and saves his people. This is similar to the message of the first chapter of John, where God's light enters the world of humanity to bring us out of darkness. So Christian theology claims that God might break into human affairs at any time to bring light or justice, using those with faith to bring about a more loving community.

The Bible gives many different pictures and images of the Divine, and they can be connected. God is Creator and loves the world he has made. The fallen world has lost its relationship with God, falling for falsehood and darkness instead of truth and light, but the initiative to repair relations between God and humanity is taken in Jesus, the 'Word who became flesh'. Creation's fall into darkness is reversed by the coming of the Light in Jesus.

Here, a depressed person running away and afraid for his life finds himself at the end of his tether, in an isolated cave, full of fear, starving. This is when God can meet him in stillness and silence. And it is interesting that God does not make demands, or condemn – instead, a question: what are you doing here? This is a gentle and loving God who comes to help humanity when we have no other help – in our weakness, the strength of God is opened up for us.

What does God do? Christians learn from the Bible that God is a world-making, straight-talking, slave-liberating, people-rescuing, depression-sympathising kind of God. Christians teach that the love of God can rescue you, can give your life a purpose, can drive out your fears and bring light into the darkest parts of life. This is why, given one word only, Christians believe that God is love.

Religions all recognise a tension between love and justice. Will God be our judge, or will God let us off our sins? These Bible verses leave little room for Christian theologies of judgement because the writer asserts that God's essence is love. The implication of this is that anyone who wishes to live a 'godly life' must also love other humans. The true, profound depth of the love of God is revealed in the sacrifice of Jesus, which is a model for Christian living.

What is God like? How can humanity possibly know? Christians learn from the Bible that God is like a flame, like a light, like a just judge, like a lover, like a voice, like a silence, like a mystery, like a word that creates or a word that recreates. God is unknown – but known a little bit as well. God is sometimes found when you are sure you have failed, or when you are broken.