

## Three levels of the knowledge of God

- The Innate Knowledge of God.
  - As Christians, we believe there is actually a simple assumption of God built into human existence.
  - Robert Duncan Culver, in his Systematic Theology
    - "The most striking statement in the whole Bible may be the first one: 'In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.'"
      - Why is this so striking as the first statement?
      - "There is no preliminary introduction to the leading person or 'idea.' God is simply encountered at the start. It is assumed those who hear the Bible read for the first time already have the idea of a person called God in their world of thought. God's name appears twenty-eight times in the first chapter- God did this or said that- yet not a single sentence is devoted to identifying or defining Him. Nothing is said about where God came from or what He is like."
      - "Most informed students of the Bible are convinced that people do not need to be told that God exists. We already know too painfully well He does exist. The Christian mission is, in part, to address this painful awareness, to clear up the garbled understanding of God with correct information and to relieve the conscience of its weight of guilt, provided, of course, that the 'good news' is received into the heart."
  - God of course, agrees. Psalm 14:1 reads- "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.'" The fool is someone who denies wisdom, who denies the truth. Here he is a fool because he is denying what he knows. Sin causes us, as we just saw, to flee God and to think irrationally.
    - The two tenets of atheism are 1.) There is no God, and 2.) I hate him.
  - Romans 2:15- Paul teaches that the Gentiles, without ever having received the law, acted on it because it was written on their hearts. We innately know God because of the moral law He has written on our hearts, in other words.
- General Revelation
  - Romans 1:18-25; For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth

about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.(Romans 1:18-25 ESV)

- What do we see from this text about how God has made himself known to people?
  - v. 19- First, we see that God has revealed himself. He has plainly shown humanity that He is there. The Bible clearly teaches that God has not hidden himself, or made it difficult to see His existence
  - v. 20- "In the things that have been made." Creation necessarily points to a creator
- What are some things we can know about God from creation?
  - A Brilliant intelligence unlike any thing else
  - Creative beyond our own imaginations (giraffes?! Hippos? Venus fly traps?)
  - Logical and ordered
- Before we go past the innate knowledge of God, and the general revelation, we have to stop and see something. Are these types of knowledge adequate?
  - We can know God exists
  - We can know truth exists because God exists
  - We can know that we are guilty, and have broken the moral law
  - But we can't know for sure what to do about our guilt
  - We can't know how God plans to relate to us
  - We can't know how God redeems us.
  - We can't know the personality and nature of God.
- That would take God telling us. And it's so vital for us to study Theology because a practical knowledge (emphasis on practical- one that effects how we practice living) has a massive impact on our lives and our world.
  - "Over a half century ago, while I was still a child, I recall hearing a number of old people offer the following explanation for the great disasters that had befallen Russia: "Men have forgotten God; that's why all this has happened." Since then I have spent well-nigh 50 years working on the history of our revolution; in the process I have read hundreds of books, collected hundreds of personal testimonies, and have already contributed eight volumes of my own toward the effort of clearing away the rubble left by that upheaval. But if I were asked today to formulate as concisely as possible the main cause of the ruinous revolution that swallowed up some 60 million of our people, I could not put it more accurately than to repeat: "Men have forgotten God; that's why all this has happened." -A. Solzhenitsyn

- Special Revelation

- We'll end this week with our need for this special revelation. Christian theology is ultimately built on the Bible because it has to be.

- 2 Cor. 4:4- *In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*
- 1 Cor. 2:6-14; 6 Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. 7 But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. 8 None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 But, as it is written,
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  - “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
  - nor the heart of man imagined,
  - what God has prepared for those who love him”—
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- 10 these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. 11 For who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. 13 And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.
- 14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.
- So, next week we'll look at the basis for all Christian Theology- God's Revelation in Scripture.