

COMING TO KNOW GOD: Reason, Revelation, and Faith

Intro

- I. What Reason tells us about God
- II. What Revelation tells us about God
- III. Faith: Accepting God and His Truth

Intro

- **Image of a Dance**
 1. Imagine a girl is at a formal ball. While she's there, she sees a man across the dance floor. She can't see him too clearly, but she recognizes that there's something special, something unique about this man.
 2. Then imagine the man sees her, and walks across the dance floor towards her. He introduces himself, and asks her to dance.
 3. Finally, imagine she accepts his invitation, and their relationship begins.

- **These three steps correspond to the three phases of coming to know God**
 1. First, we can know about God through our own **reason**. This knowledge isn't very clear, but it's enough to know that God is unique, and the most important thing there is.
 2. Secondly, God comes to introduce Himself directly through **revelation**. He tells us who He is, and invites us into a relationship with Himself.
 3. Thirdly, by **faith**, we accept God's revelation, and our personal relationship with Him begins.

So let's look at those three steps in greater detail

I. What Reason tells us about God

- a. When we talk about “reason” in this context, we’re talking about our natural human intelligence.¹
 - i. Our ability to make observations and draw inferences from our common experiences.

- b. Reason can come to know that God exists in *two ways*²:
 - i. *First: By looking at the external world*
 - If the universe had a beginning, what caused that beginning?
 - If things in the universe don’t have to exist, why *do* they exist?
 - How did the universe get to be so orderly and predictable if there was nobody to organize it?

 - ii. *Second: By looking at the human person*
 - Why does everyone want to be perfectly and permanently happy if there is no perfect and permanent happiness?
 - Why does everyone want to be in a loving relationship with a perfect person if there is no perfect person?
 - A “good” thing is something that achieves the purpose it was given by its maker (e.g., a pen manufacturer makes a pen to write clearly, and it’s a good pen if it does that). But then how can we talk about people being “good” or failing to be good unless we were given some purpose by a Maker?

- c. These are all ways that we can know that God exists, and that’s He is supremely powerful, wise, necessary, etc... So we can know by reason that there is a God, and that He’s incredibly important.
 - i. But our understanding of Him, just based on reason, is pretty vague. We can’t see Him, we can’t talk to Him, we don’t know where He is.

 - ii. More importantly, we can know *what* God is, but we can’t know *who* God is.

Which is why, if we’re going to enter into a relationship with Him, He’s going to need to take the initiative step. Which He does, in Revelation.

II. What Revelation tells us about God

¹ The textual support for this material is found in Lesson 2, “**We can know God through reason**”

² The textual support for this material is found in Lesson 2, “**We can know God through His Creation**”

- a. So God comes to us, and introduces Himself. When God reveals Himself directly to the human race, that's called **Divine Revelation**.³
 - i. It begins in the Old Testament, where God reveals Himself slowly to the patriarchs and prophets.
 - ii. Then, He reveals Himself *fully* by coming to meet us in the flesh, in Jesus Christ.
 - iii. But how do we know about Jesus?
 - Because the **Magisterium**
= Peter and the Apostles and their successors (the pope and bishops)
 - gave us **Scripture (The Bible)**
= the sacred books written, commissioned, and collected by the magisterium
 - and **Tradition**
= the official teachings of the Church down through the centuries
- b. Now revelation tells us *who* God is. In fact, it tells us that God is 3 whos, or 3 persons⁴
 - i. It tells us that God is a **Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit**.
 - God is a infinitely happy, loving community of persons
 - ii. This is the central mystery of our faith. It tells us:
 - Who God is
 - The kind of relationship we are invited to enter
 - iii. In other words, the doctrine of the Trinity answers the two ultimate questions:
 - Where does everything come from?
 - What is the purpose of life?

³ The textual support for this material is found in Lesson 2, "**We can know God through Divine Revelation**"

⁴ The textual support for this material is found in Lesson 2, "**The Blessed Trinity is the central mystery of our Faith**"

Now the only question is: will we accept God's invitation to join Him?

III. Faith: Entering into Relationship with God

- a. Faith means first of all: *believing that what God has revealed is true*; and secondly: *acting according to your faith*
 - i. If you don't believe what God has told you, then you can't be in relationship with Him
 - ii. And if you don't *act* like you believe, then your belief doesn't do you any good.
- b. *Believing that what God has told you is true*⁵
 - i. If you reject somebody's testimony, it means you don't trust them personally – and you can't be in a loving relationship with someone you don't trust.
 - That's why accepting God's testimony is so crucial for your relationship with God.
 - ii. Also, don't think that "faith" or "belief in God" mean uncertain opinion
 - God can't lie or be mistaken, so you can be absolutely certain that what He reveals through the Bible and Church teaching is completely true.
 - iii. Of course, there's a lot of stuff in the Bible and two thousand years of official Church teaching – but there are plenty of places to find summaries, like the Creeds and the Catechisms.
 - That's why there's no reason for any Catholic to be ignorant about the basic truths of faith. There's no reason you shouldn't know about the God who's done so much to make Himself known to you.
- c. *Acting according to your faith*⁶
 - i. A couple who knows their having a child, but doesn't do anything to get ready, is in *denial*. Their knowledge isn't doing them any good.
 - ii. So if you know who God is, what He's done for you, and His instructions for your happiness – but you don't do anything about it – what good does it do you?!
 - iii. Over the course of this program, don't forget that all this *information* is meant to lead you deeper and deeper into a *relationship* with God.

Don't keep it at the theoretical level – let it change your life!

⁵ The textual support for this section is found in Lesson 1, "What is Faith," "Faith is a theological virtue," and "Faith means the body of truths we believe"

⁶ The textual support for this section is found in Lesson 1, "Faith requires obedience"