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What Does the Bible Say About Good and Evil? — The Foundation • KJV Scriptures with Strong's Numbers

THE FOUNDATION • THE ORIGINAL STUDY, IN THE HOUSE ORDER

Good and Evil — Foundational Biblical Doctrine

OPENING WORD

Two things stand before every person under heaven: life and good on one side, death and evil on the other. The Lord wants his people, when they are fully grown, to train their senses to tell the two apart. Look closely at the people who do evil, for Scripture shows them plainly. They know how to do evil but have no knowledge of how to do good. They plan harm on purpose. They grow so used to it that it becomes part of them, like their own skin. In the end they cannot even sleep unless they have done something wrong. Where did a heart like that begin? Go back to the garden. There stood the tree of life, and there stood the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and one plain command. The serpent said death would not come, and that their eyes would be opened. The woman saw, took, ate, and gave; and the eyes of them both were opened indeed. But that knowledge gave them more than they could carry. They knew the good, but had no power to do it. They knew the evil, but had no power to stand against it. Shame came, and fear came, and they hid from the very presence they were made to stand before. Within a few generations, every plan formed in the human heart was bent toward evil all the time, and it grieved the Lord at his heart. Yet when the judgment had passed, one man built an altar, and the Lord smelled the offering, and spoke a promise in his heart. How did Noah know that a sacrifice would answer the evil? Hold that question until the end, for it is answered at another tree, by another offering, once for all. The promise stands sure: whoever will listen shall live safely, and shall rest from the fear of evil. Search it out.

THREE QUESTIONS THIS STUDY ANSWERS:

1. What are the two things that stand before every person today, and what kind of heart does evil?
2. What did the knowledge of good and evil do in the man and the woman, and why did they hide from the presence of the Lord?

3. When every plan of the human heart was only evil all the time, what answered the evil, and who shall rest from fear of evil?

GREEK KEYWORDS

- “discern” — **G1253 diakrisis** — a discerning, a judging between
the whole study in one word: senses trained to discern both good and evil (Hebrews 5:14)
- “senses” — **G145 aistheterion** — the power of perceiving, the sense
discernment grows by being used — the senses must be trained
- “good” — **G2570 kalos** — good, honest, worthy
the good a full-grown person is able to discern
- “evil” — **G2556 kakos** — evil, bad, harmful
the evil a full-grown person is able to discern and refuse
- “tree” — **G3586 xylon** — wood, a tree, a staff
by a tree came the knowledge that was more than man could bear; on a tree his sins were carried (1 Peter 2:24)

HEBREW KEYWORDS

- “evil” — **H7451 ra** — evil, bad, adversity, affliction, misery
the word of the whole study, set again and again against the good
- “good” — **H2896 towb** — good, pleasant, well
set before us with life (Deuteronomy 30:15) — what the Lord calls good is good indeed
- “know” — **H3045 yada** — to know, to perceive, to discern
knowing good and evil — the serpent's word, and man's burden
- “knowledge” — **H1847 daath** — knowledge, discernment
the name of the tree — the tree of the knowledge of good and evil
- “afraid” — **H3372 yare** — to fear, to be afraid; to revere
the first fruit of disobedience: I was afraid, and I hid myself
- “presence” — **H6440 panim** — the face, the countenance
to hide from his presence is to hide from his face
- “trust” — **H982 batach** — to trust, to have confidence, to feel safe
the answer set against fear: what time I am afraid, I will trust (Psalm 56:3)
- “distress” — **H6869 tsarah** — trouble, affliction, anguish
the narrow place evil shuts a person into (Proverbs 1:27)
- “anguish” — **H6695 tsuqah** — distress, anguish
the pressure of the enemy upon the soul (Proverbs 1:27)
- “accustomed” — **H3928 limmud** — taught, used
evil learned until it is like a person's own skin (Jeremiah 13:23)
- “imagination” — **H3336 yetser** — imagination, frame, purpose
what God saw in man's heart before the flood, and after it (Genesis 6:5; 8:21)

OPENING ANCHOR

Hebrews 5:14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses [**G145 aistheterion**] exercised to discern [**G1253 diakrisis**] both good [**G2570 kalos**] and evil [**G2556 kakos**].

STRONG MEAT = THEM OF FULL AGE → SENSES EXERCISED BY REASON OF USE, TO DISCERN BOTH GOOD AND EVIL.

(My personal thoughts — this is the frame of the whole study: good and evil are named together in Scripture. Not that a person should taste the evil, but that the senses should be trained to tell it apart and refuse it. The study looks first at the people who do evil, then at the garden where the knowledge entered, then at the altar where the evil was answered.)

I. LIFE AND GOOD, DEATH AND EVIL — THE TWO SET BEFORE YOU

A. Deuteronomy 30:15 See, I have set before thee this day life and good [H2896 towb], and death and evil [H7451 ra];

SET BEFORE THEE THIS DAY: LIFE + GOOD → DEATH + EVIL.

(My personal thoughts — evil, ra (H7451, evil), is named opposite good, towb (H2896, good), again and again through Scripture. The two are set side by side so a person can learn to tell them apart, the way light was divided from darkness.)

B. Micah 3:1 And I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; Is it not for you to know [H3045 yada] judgment? (2) Who hate the good [H2896 towb], and love the evil [H7451 ra]; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones;

IS IT NOT FOR YOU TO KNOW JUDGMENT? → WHO HATE THE GOOD, AND LOVE THE EVIL.

C. Proverbs 1:24 Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; (25) But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: (26) I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; (27) When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress [H6869 tsarah] and anguish [H6695 tsuqah] cometh upon you. (28) Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me:

I HAVE CALLED, AND YE REFUSED → THEN SHALL THEY CALL, BUT I WILL NOT ANSWER.

(My personal thoughts — distress, tsarah (H6869, distress), comes from a root meaning narrow: the tight, shut-in place of a soul under siege. Anguish, tsuqah (H6695, anguish), is the pressure of that siege. Into that narrow darkness the Lord brings the light of his salvation, if a person will listen.)

D. Proverbs 1:29 For that they hated knowledge [H1847 daath], and did not choose the fear of the LORD: (30) They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. (31) Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. (32) For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. (33) But whoso hearkeneth [H8085 shama] unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil [H7451 ra].

THEY HATED KNOWLEDGE + DID NOT CHOOSE THE FEAR OF THE LORD → BUT WHOSO HEARKENETH SHALL BE QUIET FROM FEAR OF EVIL.

E. Isaiah 5:20 Woe unto them that call evil [H7451 ra] good [H2896 towb], and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

WOE = EVIL CALLED GOOD + GOOD CALLED EVIL → DARKNESS PUT FOR LIGHT.

II. THE MEN THAT DO THE EVIL — FOUR MARKS, AND THE PATH OF THE JUST

A. Jeremiah 4:22 For my people is foolish, they have not known [H3045 yada] me; they are sottish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.

WISE TO DO EVIL + TO DO GOOD THEY HAVE NO KNOWLEDGE = THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN ME.

B. Proverbs 24:8 He that deviseth [H2803 chashab] to do evil shall be called a mischievous person.

HE THAT DEVISETH TO DO EVIL = A MISCHIEVOUS PERSON.

C. Jeremiah 13:23 Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed [H3928 limmud] to do evil.

ACCUSTOMED TO DO EVIL = THE ETHIOPIAN'S SKIN + THE LEOPARD'S SPOTS, NOT CHANGED.

D. Proverbs 4:14 Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil [H7451 ra] men. (15) Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away. (16) For they sleep not, except they have done

mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall. (17) For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence.

ENTER NOT + TURN FROM IT → FOR THEY SLEEP NOT, EXCEPT THEY HAVE DONE MISCHIEF.

E. Proverbs 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. (19) The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble.

THE PATH OF THE JUST = SHINING LIGHT, MORE AND MORE UNTO THE PERFECT DAY → THE WAY OF THE WICKED = DARKNESS.

(My personal thoughts — these are the marks of people who do evil. They lack the knowledge to do good. They plan harm on purpose. They grow so used to it that it becomes like their own skin. In the end they cannot sleep unless they have done wrong. And part of what they fail to understand is this: they do not see, until it is too late, the harm they do to their own soul.)

III. THE PENTATEUCH — GENESIS: THE TREE, THE FALL, AND THE EVIL HEART

A. Genesis 2:8 And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. (9) And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good [H2896 towb] for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge [H1847 daath] of good and evil [H7451 ra].

EVERY TREE PLEASANT TO THE SIGHT AND GOOD FOR FOOD + THE TREE OF LIFE + THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL.

(My personal thoughts — notice the trees. Every tree was good for food. Then the tree of LIFE stood apart. And the tree of the KNOWLEDGE of good and evil stood apart too. Two trees stood in the middle, and only one was forbidden.)

B. Genesis 2:15 And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

THE LORD GOD TOOK THE MAN + PUT HIM INTO THE GARDEN → TO DRESS IT AND TO KEEP IT.

C. Genesis 2:16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: (17) But of the tree of the knowledge [H1847 daath] of good [H2896 towb] and evil [H7451 ra], thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

OF EVERY TREE FREELY EAT → BUT NOT OF THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL → IN THE DAY THOU EATEST THEREOF, THOU SHALT SURELY DIE.

(My personal thoughts — the Lord gave much: of EVERY tree, eat freely. He forbade only one tree. And the command was given to THE MAN, because the woman was not yet formed.)

D. Genesis 3:1 Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? (2) And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: (3) But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. (4) And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: (5) For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing [H3045 yada] good and evil.

GOD HATH SAID → THE SERPENT SAITH: YE SHALL NOT SURELY DIE + YE SHALL BE AS GODS, KNOWING GOOD AND EVIL.

E. Genesis 3:6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good [H2896 towb] for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. (7) And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew [H3045 yada] that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

SHE SAW + TOOK + DID EAT + GAVE → THE EYES OF THEM BOTH WERE OPENED, AND THEY KNEW THAT THEY WERE NAKED.

(My personal thoughts — there was no shame before this. The knowledge came, and the first thing it showed them was their own nakedness. Knowledge of good and evil, without power against the evil, produces shame.)

F. Genesis 3:8 And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool [H7307 ruach] of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence [H6440 panim] of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

THEY HEARD THE VOICE OF THE LORD GOD → AND HID THEMSELVES FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD GOD.

(My personal thoughts — presence is panim (H6440, presence), the face. Disobedience made them hide from the very face they were made to stand before. And "the cool of the day" is, in the Hebrew, the wind of the day.)

G. Genesis 3:9 And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? (10) And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid [H3372 yare], because I was naked; and I hid myself.

I HEARD THY VOICE + I WAS AFRAID, BECAUSE I WAS NAKED → AND I HID MYSELF.

(My personal thoughts — afraid, yare (H3372, afraid): the first fear in all of Scripture follows the first disobedience. Fear entered with the knowledge of evil.)

H. Psalm 56:3 What time I am afraid [H3372 yare], I will trust [H982 batlach] in thee. (4) In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.

WHAT TIME I AM AFRAID = I WILL TRUST IN THEE → I WILL NOT FEAR WHAT FLESH CAN DO UNTO ME.

I. Psalm 56:11 In God have I put my trust [H982 batlach]: I will not be afraid [H3372 yare] what man can do unto me.

TRUST PUT IN GOD = I WILL NOT BE AFRAID WHAT MAN CAN DO UNTO ME.

(My personal thoughts — set the two lines of this one psalm side by side. At the first: "what time I am afraid, I will trust." Further on: "I will not be afraid." Trust stands between the two — the will set over the fear, to guard the heart. This answers Adam's "I was afraid, and I hid myself": not to hide from the presence, but to trust the word.)

J. Genesis 3:22 And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know [H3045 yada] good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: (23) Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. (24) So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

THE MAN IS BECOME AS ONE OF US, TO KNOW GOOD AND EVIL → DRIVEN OUT + A FLAMING SWORD, TO KEEP THE WAY OF THE TREE OF LIFE.

(My personal thoughts — something in the knowledge of good and evil gave man more than he could bear. His knowledge went beyond his power. He could now know the good, but not do it. He could know the evil, but not stand against it. And the sword guarded the way of the tree of life, so that he would not eat and live forever in that broken state.)

K. Genesis 6:5 And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination [H3336 yetser] of the thoughts of his heart was only evil [H7451 ra] continually. (6) And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved [H6087 atsab] him at his heart.

EVERY IMAGINATION OF THE THOUGHTS OF HIS HEART = ONLY EVIL CONTINUALLY → AND IT GRIEVED HIM AT HIS HEART.

(My personal thoughts — imagination is yetser (H3336, imagination), the thing formed: the purposes and desires formed in the heart. God saw wickedness, which is the fruit of evil. The evil comes from the heart's formed purposes. And it grieved him at his heart. Even now, when the Holy Spirit is grieved, it is because evil thoughts, desires, and purposes are kept inside.)

L. Genesis 8:20 And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings [H5930 olah] on the altar. (21) And the LORD smelled a sweet [H5207 nichoach] savour [H7381 reyach]; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination [H3336 yetser] of man's heart is evil [H7451 ra] from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. (22) While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

NOAH OFFERED BURNT OFFERINGS → THE LORD SMELLED A SWEET SAVOUR → I WILL NOT AGAIN CURSE THE GROUND.

(My personal thoughts — a question worth searching out: how did Noah know to sacrifice? Did he hear a voice? Did the sacrifice have to do with the evil? The heart of man was still evil from his youth. Yet when the burnt offering was made, the Lord spoke peace in his heart, as though only a sacrifice would answer the evil, for the fire consumed the offering. Hold the question. Scripture answers it at another tree.)

CLOSING

Proverbs 1:33 But whoso hearkeneth [H8085 shama] unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil [H7451 ra].

WHOSO HEARKENETH = DWELL SAFELY + QUIET FROM FEAR OF EVIL.

1 Peter 2:24 Who his own self bare [G399 anaphero] our sins in his own body on the tree [G3586 xylon], that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

HE BARE OUR SINS IN HIS OWN BODY ON THE TREE → DEAD TO SINS, LIVE UNTO RIGHTEOUSNESS + BY WHOSE STRIPES YE WERE HEALED.

(My personal thoughts — the question of Noah's altar is answered here. By a tree came the knowledge of evil. On a tree the evil was carried away. The sacrifice Noah reached toward, God himself provided: his own self, his own body, one offering. Whoever listens shall rest from fear of evil, for the evil has been answered.)

7 QUESTIONS

1. **Deuteronomy 30:15 — See, I have set before thee this day:**
 - a) blessing and cursing only
 - b) life and good, and death and evil
 - c) the law and the commandment
2. **Genesis 2:16-17 — Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, save of:**
 - a) the tree of life
 - b) every tree pleasant to the sight
 - c) the tree of the knowledge of good and evil
3. **Proverbs 1:33 — Who shall dwell safely, and be quiet from fear of evil?**
 - a) whoso hearkeneth unto me
 - b) they that seek me early
 - c) the simple, in their prosperity
4. **Jeremiah 13:23 — They that are accustomed to do evil may do good, as soon as:**
 - a) they are taught to do well
 - b) the Ethiopian can change his skin, and the leopard his spots
 - c) their skirts are discovered
5. **Genesis 3:8 — Adam and his wife hid themselves from:**
 - a) the presence of the LORD God, amongst the trees
 - b) the flaming sword at the east of the garden
 - c) the voice of the serpent
6. **Genesis 3:22-24 — Wherefore was the man driven out of the garden?**
 - a) lest he eat again of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil
 - b) because the serpent was yet in the garden
 - c) lest he take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever
7. **Genesis 8:21 — When the LORD smelled a sweet savour, he said the imagination of man's heart is:**
 - a) only evil continually

- b) evil from his youth
- c) turned to do good

ANSWER KEY: 1-b, 2-c, 3-a, 4-b, 5-a, 6-c, 7-b

HOW THIS STUDY BRANCHES

→ HOW THE SHADOW BRINGS LIGHT: THE TREE OF LIFE STOOD IN THE MIDST (GENESIS 2:9) → TO HIM THAT OVERCOMES WILL I GIVE TO EAT OF THE TREE OF LIFE (REVELATION 2:7). THE TREE KEPT BY THE SWORD IS OPENED AGAIN IN CHRIST.

→ HOW THE WORDS MATTER: THE SWEET SAVOUR OF NOAH'S OFFERING (GENESIS 8:21) → CHRIST HAS GIVEN HIMSELF AN OFFERING AND A SACRIFICE TO GOD FOR A SWEETSMELLING SAVOUR (EPHESIANS 5:2). THE SAVOUR NOAH GAVE, THE SON FULFILLED.

→ HOW THIS APPLIES TO YOU: THEY HID FROM THE PRESENCE, THE FACE, OF THE LORD (GENESIS 3:8), BUT THE PURE IN HEART SHALL SEE GOD (MATTHEW 5:8), AND HIS SERVANTS SHALL SEE HIS FACE (REVELATION 22:4). FEAR HID THE FACE. TRUST RESTORES IT (PSALM 56:11).

→ HOW THIS TOUCHES THE HEART: EVERY IMAGINATION OF THE THOUGHTS OF THE HEART WAS ONLY EVIL (GENESIS 6:5)

→ THE WORD OF GOD IS A DISCERNER OF THE THOUGHTS AND INTENTS OF THE HEART (HEBREWS 4:12). WHAT GRIEVED HIM THEN, THE WORD SEARCHES NOW.

→ WHAT THIS MEANS FOR ETERNITY: THE KNOWLEDGE THAT WENT BEYOND MAN'S POWER IS ANSWERED BY SENSES EXERCISED TO DISCERN GOOD AND EVIL (HEBREWS 5:14), AND WHOEVER LISTENS SHALL REST FROM FEAR OF EVIL (PROVERBS 1:33). THE FEAR THAT ENTERED IN THE GARDEN IS STILLED IN THE LISTENING HEART.

WHAT MUST YOU DO TO BE SAVED?

Look at our Bible study — "What Must I Do to Be Saved"