



Part 1

The Knowledge of Good and Evil.

We begin with the Genesis of account of the behaviour of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden,

Genesis Chapter 2

¹⁵The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. ¹⁶And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; ¹⁷but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.'

3 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God say, "You shall not eat from any tree in the garden"?' ²The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; ³but God said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die."' ⁴But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not die; ⁵for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God,^[a] knowing good and evil.' ⁶So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. ⁷Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

⁸They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. ⁹But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, 'Where are you?' ¹⁰He said, 'I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.' ¹¹He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?' ¹²The man said, 'The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate.' ¹³Then the Lord God said to the woman, 'What is this that you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent tricked me, and I ate.' ¹⁴The Lord God said to the serpent,

²⁰The man named his wife Eve,^[c] because she was the mother of all who live. ²¹And the Lord God made garments of skins for the man^[d] and for his wife, and clothed them.

²²Then the Lord God said, 'See, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever'— ²³therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life.

This story is often known as The Fall, being the story of disobedience of Adam and Eve which was the beginning of the separation of people from God.



Questions

Do you think that God really intend us to be ignorant?

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Does hastily stitching some leaves together demonstrate a good understanding of good and evil?

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Is understanding good and evil the sole province of Christianity?

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Are Good and Evil somehow built into creation?

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A pause for thought -

Some people have suggested that Evil is something that was part of the chaos over which the Spirit of God was hovering at the very beginning of Genesis.

Was it that the chaos was Godless?

So -

Is God essential to good?

Going Further

This tale of disobedience has been understood as the origin of sin as in these words from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians Chapter 15. (We will think about sin in a later session, we are concentrating on Genesis in this one)

²⁰But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.^[1] ²¹For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; ²²for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.

Is this a helpful way to think about the Genesis story?

What about this from 1 Timothy Chapter 2?

¹²I permit no woman^[c] to teach or to have authority over a man;^[d] she is to keep silent. ¹³For Adam was formed first, then Eve; ¹⁴and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.

Is this a helpful way to think about the Genesis story?

There are many more questions to come as we explore the idea of good and evil in the coming weeks. As we ask them we might understand a little more, even though we might never find an answer



Exploration

A different way to think about this story is to see it as a 'daily round'.

We begin each day as is newly created yet through the things that we do and choices that we have to make during the day we run into the conflict between good and evil.

This is illustrated in Psalm 19 which begins with a dramatic dawn and the reminds us that the law is there to guide us through the day. Yet, we know that in the end we all need the prayer that is in verses 11-14.

Psalm 19

¹The heavens are telling the glory of God;
and the firmament^[a] proclaims his handiwork.

²Day to day pours forth speech,
and night to night declares knowledge.

³There is no speech, nor are there words;
their voice is not heard;

⁴yet their voice^[b] goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.

In the heavens^[c] he has set a tent for the sun,

⁵which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy,
and like a strong man runs its course with joy.

⁶Its rising is from the end of the heavens,
and its circuit to the end of them;
and nothing is hidden from its heat.

⁷The law of the Lord is perfect,
reviving the soul;

the decrees of the Lord are sure,
making wise the simple;

⁸the precepts of the Lord are right,
rejoicing the heart;

the commandment of the Lord is clear,
enlightening the eyes;

⁹the fear of the Lord is pure,
enduring for ever;

the ordinances of the Lord are true
and righteous altogether.

¹⁰More to be desired are they than gold,
even much fine gold;

sweeter also than honey,

and drippings of the honeycomb.

¹¹Moreover by them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.



¹²But who can detect their errors?

Clear me from hidden faults.

¹³Keep back your servant also from the insolent;^[d]

do not let them have dominion over me.

Then I shall be blameless,

and innocent of great transgression.

¹⁴Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart

be acceptable to you,

O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

Now that you have read the Psalm what do you think?