

Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil

I. What is it?

Clues:

Distinguishes between good and evil.

if take it you are dead, under a curse.

Those in Adam experience its affect.

In contrast to the tree of life.

Opens the eyes of people, make them wise

I am going to suggest to you that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, is the Law of God. On account (as of now) two lines of evidence: 1) parallel description, 2) parallel result.

1) Parallel Description

How is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil described

A. It will give the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:17, 3:4)

Romans 2:17-20 “But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God¹⁸ and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law;¹⁹ and if you are sure that you yourself are a **guide to the blind**, a **light to those who are in darkness**,²⁰ an **instructor of the foolish**, a **teacher of children**, having in the law the ***embodiment of knowledge and truth***—”

Romans 7:7 Yet if it had not been for the law, **I would not have known** sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.”

Romans 3:20 For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes **knowledge** of sin.

B. Opens the eyes of people, makes them wise. (Gen 3:4-6)

Deut 4:6 Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’

Psalms 19:8 the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, **enlightening the eyes**;

2) Parallel Result (Both the result of taking of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and for those who are under the law as the same)

A. If you partake of it you are dead and cursed (Gen 2:17, 3:14-19)

Deut 30:14-16 See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. ¹⁶ If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you today, by loving the Lord your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. (contrast to vs. 17-18) **But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them,** ¹⁸ I declare to you today, that **you shall surely perish** (almost identical language as the warning in the garden). You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess.

Deut 27:26 “**Cursed** be anyone who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

B. All affected in Adam because of it (Gen 3:22-24)

When Adam and Eve ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it affected all of humanity. As we go through the scriptures, is there any commonality we see? Indeed, the law of God.

Romans 2:12,14-15 “For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law.” “For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵ They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them”

I am proposing to you that the eating of the the tree of knowledge of good and evil resulted in the universal conscienceness of God’s law where afterwards this law was then written on the hearts of all the descendants of Adam Jew and Gentile.

3) Why was this a bad thing that God did not want man to have? Because it brought something to life that was dead.

Genesis 4:6-7 Right after Adam and Eve eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they a curse is placed and they are kicked out of the garden with their fates sealed because they no longer have access to the tree of life. Immediately after this we are taken to a scene where we see the offspring of Adam; Cain and Able. Cain brings an offering and Able brings an offering. Able’s is accepted, Cain’s is rejected. Yet suddenly something is different in man and a word is introduced that did not exist before. As well notice how it is described. “The Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? “If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, **sin** is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.” Adam and Eve eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil and suddenly what comes? Sin. Not in terms of a particular act, like “I did this thing and

it was a sin” but here it is described as a living thing. Well, how did this happen? Was there something in knowing the law of God that was evil?

Romans 7:7-11

“What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.”⁸ But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For **apart from the law, sin lies dead.**⁹ I was once alive apart from the law, **but when the commandment came, sin came alive** and I died.”

Do you see? When Adam and Eve ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The problem wasn't the knowledge. The problem was what having the knowledge/ the law did. Without the knowledge of the law, sin was dead, there was no inclination toward evil, so we were fine. When we took of the law, we made alive this sin principle within us, the reason why God told us, “Do not eat of it, or you will surely die!”

Romans 5:12-13 “Therefore, just as **sin came into the world through one man**, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—¹³ for sin indeed was in the world before the law (meaning the physical law Moses gave) was given, **but sin is not counted where there is no law.**”

Romans 4:15 “For the law brings wrath, **but where there is no law there is no transgression.**”

We ate of the tree, we received God's law on our hearts, this awareness of God's law on our hearts brought to life this sin principle, so that we now are inclined to sin.

4) Where does this craving affect us?

Remember, as we mentioned, man, like God, exists in three basic states (Body, Soul/ Spirit, Mind). So where did this sin principle entered man?

Romans 6:12 “Let not sin therefore reign **in your mortal body**, to make you obey its passions.”

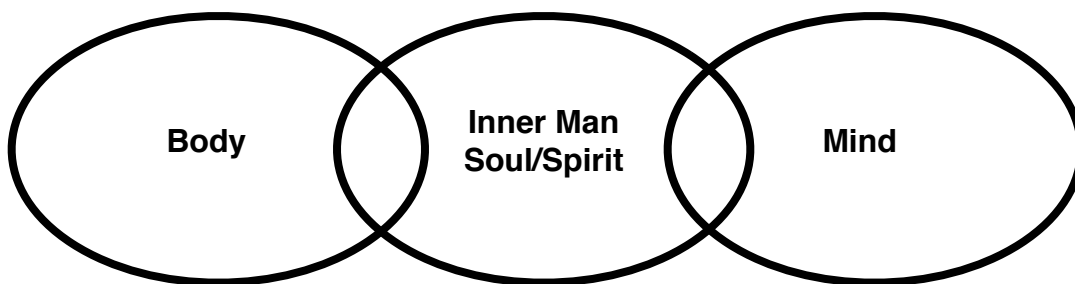
Romans 7:14-18 “For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am **of the flesh, sold under sin.**¹⁵ For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.¹⁶ Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good.¹⁷ So now it is no longer I who do it, but **sin that dwells within me.**¹⁸ For I know that **nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh.** For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.

Romans 7:22-24 “For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being,²³ but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to

the law of sin that **dwells in my members**. ²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this **body of death**?

It seems then, that this sin principle actually takes resident in our bodies. Not that the biological structure itself is evil, that if I cut off a portion of my body I will sin less, but that this sin principle is somehow **bound** to it. That our bodies, the thing which consists of all our parts which commit action, actually craves sin! This is likely why the term “the flesh” was used in the scriptures to describe this inclination toward sin, because it is so closely linked to our physical bodies. This principle of sin is not our bodies, but is bound to it.

Let’s make a diagram here that we will refer back to, just to visually help us.



1) The Mind = Our architect. The mind consists of our desire. What we want to do.

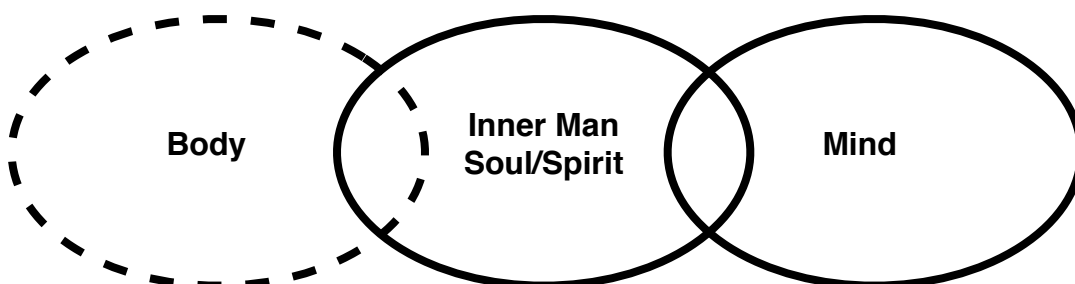
2) The Inner Man (soul/spirit (sometimes heart))= The connection which empowers the body to do what the mind is wanting it to do. In essence are ability to will something. That which forces our body to respond in the way our mind is wanting. (notice that the soul/spirit is holding hands with both the mind and body.)

3)The Body= Our action. That which manifests the mind and soul/spirit.

So, our mind has a desire, the inner man holding hands with both, empowers and wills the body to enact that desire.

5) Where does the flesh/sin reign? Our Body

Body craves sin. Why (again) does our body crave sin? Because we took of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, became people under the law of God and therefore made this sin principle alive in us.



The Flesh/Sin principle

1) What was the affect of the flesh?

In the garden, man was designed to experience life and power by constantly eating of the tree of life, the gift of God in the garden (we established this last time).

Righteousness was lived out because there was no power of sin. It was not alive. So literally, mankind, in the garden had no ability or power in and of themselves, but only in so much as they ate of the tree of life. When we ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, a new power was made alive. Sin. Well, since we were not created with power in and of ourselves, we need to rush back to the tree of life in order to overcome the power of sin. Of course what happened to the tree of life after we ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? It was guarded. If we have no access to the power of the tree of life, what power rules now? Sin. Therefore sin became our master? Human kind is a slave to sin. It reigns in our bodies and our inner man and mind have no power to overcome it. So, we put ourselves under the law, sin is made alive (because we are under the law), we crave sin as a result and because we do not have power in and of ourselves to overcome the craving, what do we do? We sin. What is the penalty of sin? Death. Death reigns over man.

Read these words again.

Romans 7:7-24

What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet."⁸ But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead.⁹ I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died.¹⁰ The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me.¹¹ For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.¹² So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

¹³ Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.¹⁴ For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin.¹⁵ For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.¹⁶ Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good.¹⁷ So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

²¹ So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.²² For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being,²³ but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that

dwells in my members. ²⁴ Wretched man that I am! **Who will deliver me from this body of death?**

Freedom from the body of death

1) What is the solution?

Romans 7:25 “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

2) How does this work?

We need access to the tree of life again. We need the power of God in us in order to overcome the power of this sin principle in our body. Have you ever thought of this question. Did Jesus Christ have the sin principle in Him? Did He have the flesh?

Galatians 4:4 “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.”



This is where our diagram gets interesting. Do you notice that Paul tells us that Christ was born, how?...Under the law. If we are right then, this would essentially be as though Christ came not as Adam and Eve before they took of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but after. Remember, having access to the knowledge of good and evil wasn't the problem in and of itself. The problem is not God's law. The problem is that when one puts themselves under the law, sin is made alive. If Christ then came under the Law, what would that mean then? That the Sin principle was made alive in Christ. Romans 8:3 (and do not look this up yet because there is a second part you cannot read...yet). “For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the **likeness of sinful flesh**” Paul says indeed Christ had the sinful flesh. Indeed, if Christ had not come under the law, he would not be able to redeem those under the law.

However, there is a distinct difference between Christ and Adam. Whereas Adam was created with no ability in and of Himself to resist the sinful flesh, Christ came as it says in 1 Corinthians 15:42 as a “life giving spirit”. That it was the mind of God empowered by the spirit of God which took on Adam's sinful flesh (represented in green). He came as a man once again connected to the forbidden tree of life. What difference would that

make? Well, literally the power of the tree of life was put up against the power of sin. Christ came with the power to resist.

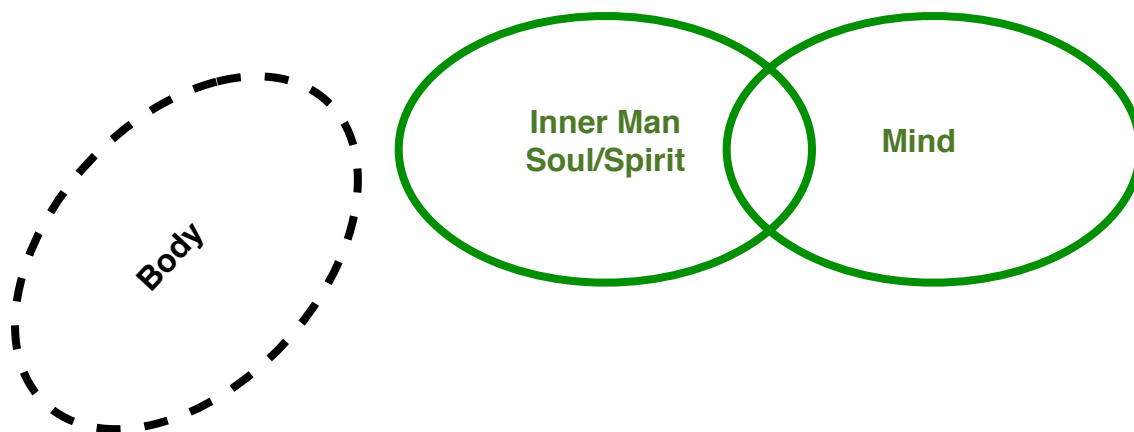
Now let's read the rest of Romans 7:24-8:3 (but don't read 4 yet). "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

Life in the Spirit

8 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ³ For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he **condemned sin in the flesh...**"

He "Condemned sin in the flesh". In other words, Christ came as a man under the law, a man like us, with a conscience of the knowledge of good and evil and therefore had made sin alive in Him. Sin has always been the victor throughout all of history, because no one has been able to resist its power. It is not that this "Sin principle" in and of itself is the grounds for death, it is when the mind and inner man act in accordance to it and commit sin. Why is this? What gives Sin its power? The Law. The knowledge of good and evil. So, when a person submits to the desire of sin and breaks the Law (goes against their knowledge of good and evil), Sin now has the power (from the law) of death. This is why all of us die. Because we cannot upon our death say hey, "I never broke the law, Sin has no rightful claim to give me death" 1 Corinthians 15:22 says "in Adam all die". Romans 5:12 "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—"

Christ on the other hand, with the power of sin in Him, because He possesses the power of life is able to fulfill the law, to fulfill the knowledge of good and evil. Heb. 4:15: For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who **in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.**" Therefore when He was killed, when His body consumed by the flesh (the power of sin) was removed upon that death.



Sin could not appeal to the Law and say “this man is guilty”.
What is the power of sin? the Law.

Because sin could not appeal to the law for its grounds for sentencing death, the check bounced! Sin no longer had power and if sin has now power. Death has no sting! The principle of sin was evicted from the body.

1 Corinthians 15:54-57

Death is swallowed up in victory.”

⁵⁵ “O death, where is your victory?
O death, where is your sting?”

⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Listen now.

We will go to this passage here in a second, but see if you remember. In Deuteronomy 21, we read this kind of bizarre passage that tells us. “cursed is anyone who is hung on a tree”. I always thought. Weird, of all things why is that. Why not a rock, or a cactus? Surely being hung on a cactus is more cursed. Well, I think this passage may be a little more rich than what it might appear on the surface. I believe it is echoing back to the curse given to man as a result to them eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God tells Adam to not eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he then tells them, whoever eats of it will die. After they eat death takes place and God pronounces all these curses on mankind. If the tree of knowledge of good and evil represents the law and those who do not do everything in the law are cursed. Look again at this with this echo in mind. “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.” In other words, possibly, that anyone whose death is associated with the law (the tree of the knowledge of good and evil) is cursed. Now I know it sounds a little like a stretch but open up your bible to Gal 3:10.

Gal 3:10-14 For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.” ¹¹ Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.” ¹² But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.” ¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”— ¹⁴ so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—

Christ embraced the curse which came with eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil so that we might be free from the master of the law.