

# Genesis 3:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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?

## Analysis

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**Now the serpent was more subtil** (ארעֵל, arum)—The Hebrew arum means "shrewd, crafty, prudent," a wordplay on Adam and Eve being "naked" (arummim, 2:25). The serpent perverts God-given wisdom into deceptive cunning. Revelation 12:9 and 20:2 identify this serpent as Satan, but Genesis presents him as merely a creature—**more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made**. His creaturely status demolishes any dualism: evil has no independent power, only parasitic perversion of God's good creation.

**Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree?**—Satan's opening gambit is masterful: he feigns incredulity, misquotes God (adding "every"), and shifts focus from abundance (eat freely of all but one) to restriction ("shall not eat"). He doesn't openly deny God's word but questions whether God really said it, planting seeds of doubt. This remains his primary tactic—not frontal assault on Scripture but subtle erosion of confidence in its clarity and goodness (2 Corinthians 11:3). Every temptation begins with "Did God really say...?"

## Historical Context

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Genesis was likely composed during or shortly after the Exodus (15th or 13th century BC), providing Israel with theological foundations: why the world is

broken, why serpents are cursed, why humans rebel against God. Ancient Near Eastern creation myths depicted primordial chaos battles, but Genesis shows evil entering through creaturely choice, not cosmic struggle. The serpent as a creature (not a god) would have been countercultural—Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Canaan all featured serpent deities.

## Related Passages

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**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

## Study Questions

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1. How does Satan still use the "Did God really say...?" strategy to undermine your confidence in Scripture today?
2. What does the serpent's creaturely status teach us about evil's ultimate powerlessness before God?

## Interlinear Text

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אָשָׁר	בָּשָׂדָךְ	הַ	אָשָׁר	רָ	בָּשָׂדָךְ	הַ	אָשָׁר	רָ	בָּשָׂדָךְ	הַ
<b>Now the serpent</b>	<b>was</b>	<b>more subtil</b>	<b>ערָם</b>	<b>בִּנְיָמִן</b>	<b>מִכֶּל</b>	<b>פִּי תְּ</b>	<b>מִכֶּל</b>	<b>פִּי תְּ</b>	<b>מִכֶּל</b>	<b>פִּי תְּ</b>
H5175	H1961	H6175	H3605	H2416	<b>than any beast</b>	<b>of the field</b>	H834	H7704		
had made	which the LORD	God	אֱלֹהִים	אֱלֹהִים	אָמַר	אָמַר	אָל	אָל	אָל	אָל
H6213	H3068	H430	H430	H559	And he said	H413	unto the woman	H802	unto the woman	Yea
H3588	<b>And he said</b>	<b>God</b>	לֹא	אֱלֹהִים	לֹא	תֵאכַל	לֹא	תֵאכַל	לֹא	תֵאכַל
	H559	H430	H3808	H398	Ye shall not eat	H3605	<b>of every tree</b>	H6086		
							עַז	עַז	עַז	עַז
	בְּגִן									
	<b>of the garden</b>									
	H1588									

## Additional Cross-References

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**2 Corinthians 11:3** (Parallel theme): But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

**2 Corinthians 11:14** (Parallel theme): And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

**Revelation 12:9** (Parallel theme): And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

**Revelation 20:2** (Parallel theme): And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,

**Matthew 4:3** (Creation): And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

**Matthew 10:16** (Parallel theme): Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

**Matthew 4:6** (References God): And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

**Isaiah 27:1** (References Lord): In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.

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