

Genesis 3:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?

Analysis

And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded th... This chapter narrates humanity's tragic fall from innocence through temptation, sin, and divine judgment. The serpent's subtle questioning of God's word, Eve's addition to and misquotation of God's command, and Adam's passive participation demonstrate the progression from doubt to disobedience to disaster.

The consequences affect every dimension of human existence: spiritual death (separation from God), physical death (mortality), relational dysfunction (shame, blame, conflict), vocational difficulty (cursed ground, painful labor), and cosmic disruption (groaning creation). Yet within the curses, God provides gracious provisions: proto-evangelium promise of redemption, clothing to cover shame, and preservation of life despite deserved death.

Theologically, this chapter establishes the origin and nature of sin, the reality of Satan's activity, the universality of human fallenness, the justice of divine judgment, and the necessity of redemption. Understanding the fall illuminates why the world contains suffering and evil, why humans rebel against God, why salvation requires divine intervention, and how Christ as the second Adam reverses the first Adam's failure (Romans 5:12-21, 1 Corinthians 15:22, 45).

Historical Context

The serpent in Genesis 3 reflects ancient Near Eastern associations between serpents and chaos, evil, or deceptive wisdom. Unlike pagan myths where serpents might be deified, Genesis presents the serpent as a mere creature, though Satan's instrument (Revelation 12:9, 20:2). Ancient curse formulas from various cultures parallel God's pronouncements, but Genesis uniquely embeds redemptive promise within judgment.

The agricultural curses (thorns, sweat, difficult labor) would have resonated deeply with ancient subsistence farmers for whom crop failure meant starvation. The pain in childbearing acknowledges a universal female experience that ancient cultures attributed to various causes, but Genesis traces it to sin's consequences rather than divine cruelty or inherent evil in creation or sexuality.

Archaeological evidence of humanity's ancient struggles with agriculture, disease, death, and violence aligns with Genesis's portrayal of a fallen world. Ancient wisdom literature from Mesopotamia and Egypt grappled with suffering's origins, but Genesis alone provides the theological explanation: human rebellion against God brought cosmic corruption. This account would have answered Israelite questions about why their promised land required hard labor, why they suffered pain and death, and why they needed redemption.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does this verse contribute to the biblical doctrine of creation, fall, or redemption?
2. How can we apply the principles from this passage to contemporary challenges in family, work, or church?

3. How does this passage point forward to Christ and the gospel of redemption?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמֶר	אָמָר	מִן	נָאָמֵן	מִן	אָמָר	בְּמַן	אַתָּה	מִן	עִיר	מִן	בְּמַן	אַתָּה	מִן	
And he said	Who	told		H0	H3588	thee that thou wast naked		H5903			H859		H4480	
H559	H4310	H5046												
זֶה	רַקְעֵן	אֲשֶׁר	צָוָת	בְּךָ			לְבָלָת	בְּךָ						
of the tree		H834	whereof I commanded thee			that thou shouldest not		H1115						
H6086				H6680										
אָכַלְתָּם	מִן	אָכַלְתָּם												
Hast thou eaten		H4480	Hast thou eaten											
H398			H398											

Additional Cross-References

Romans 3:20 (Parallel theme): Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Genesis 4:10 (Parallel theme): And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

Psalms 50:21 (Parallel theme): These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.