

Genesis 3:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

Analysis

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:... 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

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What theological truths about The Fall emerge from this passage?
2. What specific changes in thinking or behavior does this verse call us to make?
3. In what ways does this narrative foreshadow or typify aspects of Christ's redemptive work?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמֶר	הַנָּחָשׁ	אֶל	הָאִשָּׁה	לֵאמֹר	תִּמְתּוֹן:
said	And the serpent	H413	unto the woman	H3808	Ye shall not surely
H559	H5175		H802		H4191
	תִּמְתּוֹן:				
	Ye shall not surely				
	H4191				

Additional Cross-References

John 8:44 (Parallel theme): Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

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.

1 Timothy 2:14 (Parallel theme): And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.

2 Corinthians 2:11 (Parallel theme): Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

Genesis 3:13 (Parallel theme): And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.