

WHERE DID CAIN GET HIS WIFE?

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Many infidels and skeptics have used this apparent inconsistency as evidence for the allegorical or mythological nature of the early Genesis record, in opposition to plain historicity as advocated by biblical conservatives. While it is true the Bible is not specific on this matter, there is no difficulty in suggesting a reasonable solution that does no violence to the interpretation of Scripture.

The most common solution is to propose that Cain married a near relative—perhaps a sister. Initially this may seem like a radical idea, but as we will note, it is the most realistic option. We are told in specific terms that Adam and Eve had three sons—Cain, Abel, and later, Seth. However, we also are told that Adam was the father of “other sons and daughters” (Genesis 5:4). Eve had borne Cain and Abel soon after leaving Eden (Genesis 4:1-2), but she could have had other children between their birth and Abel’s death, and between that murder and the birth of Seth. In any case, one female offspring could have become Cain’s wife sometime later. [Some have inquired as to whether or not Cain could have married someone else, not of Adam and Eve’s family—viz., a woman of other people whom God had created. In light of Scripture, this is not a possibility. The Bible makes it plain (Genesis 3:20) that Eve was to be the “mother of **all** living” (emp. added). If Adam was the first man (1 Corinthians 15:45), and if Eve was to be the mother of **all**, then it is clear that there were no “other people” for Cain to marry. The population of the Earth came directly through the lineage of Adam and Eve.] There would have been no shortage of potential mates. A glance at the rapidly growing population of the antediluvian world (Genesis 4-6) shows that the people of those times were extremely prodigious; they apparently took seriously God’s command to “be fruitful, and multiply” (Genesis 1:28)!

Many people immediately see a problem with marriages that must, of necessity, be incestuous in nature. However, in those early days of Earth’s history, mankind obviously was much more physically robust than is the case currently (cf. Genesis 5:3ff.). [NOTE: The physical vigor of the patriarchs is attested by the fact that King Abimelech wanted Sarah for his harem—even at her age of ninety (Genesis 20:2; 17:17).] And it is clear that marriages between those of close kin were not all that unusual. Abraham and Sarah were half-brother and -sister (Genesis 20:12). Moreover, Isaac and Rebekah were second cousins (Genesis 22:20ff.; 24:4), and Jacob was wed to the daughters of Laban, his mother’s brother (Genesis 24:43), hence, to his first cousins.

Incest itself was outlawed only with the coming of the Mosaic covenant (Leviticus 18). [Observe, however, that even in patriarchal times such incestuous acts as that engaged in by Lot and his daughters were strongly condemned (Genesis 19:30ff.).] There was no need for strict laws on marriage partners in the early Patriarchal Age (apart from the divine “one man, one woman, for life” institution), and for at least one good reason: during this time, man was in a relatively pure state, at least physically, having left not long before the perfect condition in which he was created, and the Garden that had sustained his life. Adam and Eve could have lived forever had it not been for their corruption by sin, and their consequent expulsion from Eden (Genesis 3:1-6). Hence, no harmful genetic traits had emerged at that point that could have been expressed in the offspring of closely related partners. However, after many generations, (and especially after the Noachic Flood—Genesis 6-9), solar and cosmic radiation, chemical and viral mutagens, and DNA replication errors, led to the multiplication of genetic disorders. God protected His people by instituting strict laws against incestuous marriages in the eighteenth chapter of Leviticus. Needless to say, more genetic disorders have arisen in the world population since the time of Moses, and thus it is even more important today to avoid marrying a close relative. Christianity thus far has insured that such rules have been carried forward into modern laws in the western world.

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