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## Where did Cain's wife come from?

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We are told, in Genesis 4:1-2, of two sons born to Adam and Eve, i.e., Cain and Abel; and of the respective relationships of these two sons with God. This is a very familiar story to all. But once the story of Abel's death through the wicked hands of Cain is told in the first fifteen verses of Genesis, chapter 4, we read in Genesis 4:16-17 of Cain moving to the east of Eden and of the conception of his wife.

In this short historical account of events, it is not revealed to us how much time elapsed, nor are we told of the time sequence of the events recorded in the verses that follow. We only know that the human race continued to increase over the face of the earth.

Genesis 3:20 explains this question in part, quite succinctly: "And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living." Although we don't fully comprehend how God guided the increase of humans on the earth, it is apparent that His purpose was to establish the entire human population through Adam and Eve. Eve, herself, was created from the rib of Adam (Compare Genesis 2:22-23). In the recent emergence of science, we understand that cloning can actually be used to reproduce life forms. Of course, much more was involved when God first formed man of the dust of the ground and created mankind, both male and female.

It is clear from Scripture that Adam and Eve had children other than Cain and Abel. We read of Seth being begotten when Adam was 130 years old (Genesis 5:3); and we see in the very next verse that Adam lived another 800 years and begat sons and daughters. The total number of sons and daughters, who were begotten of Adam over his

930 years total, is not revealed to us.

Thus, Adam and Eve were the first man and woman on the earth and Scripture reveals they were created by God. Scripture does not reveal that any other human beings were so created. In Genesis 1:28 God commanded the man and woman to "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over... every living thing that moves on the earth." Adam and Eve were the ones who were to multiply, and it was their offspring who were to fill the earth--God did not create any other human being in the way that He created Adam and Eve.

Beyond the genetic, social and moral problems arising from inbreeding in modern times, we know that God places tremendous importance on the family structure. In reviewing the New Testament record, we note that Paul admonished the Church of God at Corinth that: "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles--that a man has his father's wife" (1 Corinthians 5:1). This Scripture does not expressly say that this relationship existed between a mother and her son, although this is possible; but it may also imply that the relationship was between the young man and his step-mother. The issue would then be one of morality--not genetics.

Returning to the Old Testament times of Adam and Eve, and based on all the revealed information we have, we must conclude that Cain married a female descendant of Adam--perhaps one of Adam's daughters, or even one of Cain's nieces. We understand that God had not declared such a union to be contrary to His will at that time. As newly created, physically perfect human beings, a danger of genetic problems did not really exist. Notice in Genesis 20:12 that Abraham explains to Abimelech that Sarah, in addition to being his wife, was his sister, the daughter of his father, but not the daughter of his mother (i.e., his half-sister). Even though Abram had married his half-sister, that of itself is not conclusive evidence that such a marriage was permitted. Abram could have sinned by marrying Sarai, but we don't read that God condemned him for that.

In light of the fact that God commanded Adam and Eve to multiply, and that God expected Adam and Eve's descendants to multiply; we must conclude that it was not wrong, at the time of Adam and Eve, nor during Noah's time (compare Genesis 9:1), to marry someone closely related by blood--a practice which God would later expressly prohibit.

That God directly intervened in man's populating the earth is clearly evident from the fact that God controlled the lifespan of mankind. However, Genesis 6, verses 1 and 2, indicates that the family structure was already in jeopardy--it appears that the people of this later time were marrying in ways that would be very harmful to mankind. The key issue here is that mankind was marrying whomever he wanted--implying rejection of God's commands.

However, God did bless marriages with children. Note, for example, that God granted Abraham and Sarah the child Isaac. At this point marrying within families (a relative) under certain circumstances was still allowed. When the lineage of Abraham and Sarah through Isaac grew into the nation of Israel, God established laws to govern them, including laws that specifically set limits on whom one could marry and how the family was to be structured.

Apparently, certain laws governing incest did not become established until the time of Moses. Any such requirement of God is not revealed until Leviticus 18:6-17, where God described--from that time forward--those type actions as "wickedness." Verses 9 and 11 specifically forbid marriage with one's step-sister, or with one's half-sister, and verse 6 forbids incest between father and daughter and between a brother and his full sister (compare The Nelson Study Bible, comments to verses 6, 9 and 11).

It does appear, therefore, that Cain did in fact marry a female descendant of Adam, perhaps one of his sisters or nieces. And it is evident from the Biblical facts that all of mankind is descended from Adam and Eve.