

So where did Cain get his wife?

The background to this question is that Adam and Eve, the first couple created, had a son whom they called 'Cain', Genesis 4:1. Genesis 4:17 refers to Cain's wife. The problem is that if the only people around were the family of Adam and Eve, then where did Cain's wife come from?

...descendants

Genesis 5:4 mentions Adam having other sons and daughters. However, we are not specifically told who Cain's wife was or what her name was. There are clues, though, that help us in thinking about this. We know the name of 3 of his sons: Cain, Abel and Seth. We do not know the names of any of the others. Abel was murdered by Cain, Genesis 4:8, Cain was banished as a consequence, Genesis 4:16 and Seth was born later, Genesis 5:3. We are not told when the other children were born, or how many of them there were. The dispute between Cain and Abel happened when they were grown, not children or babies, as they were farming (Genesis 4:3,4). It is quite reasonable to assume that Adam and Eve had had many other children by this time. Any people on the earth would be the descendants of Adam and Eve – as we all are. So, Cain's wife would be one of these, possibly his sister but certainly a close relative. Does not this present a problem? Is this not banned today? The only reason why close-relative marriage is banned today is because of the severe effects of deleterious mutations. For instance, if a brother and sister procreate then whatever mutations they share are strengthened leading to potential disaster in the offspring. We are all related anyway, but when the relationship is sufficiently far away then it is most likely that the mutations are different and so do not cause such severe consequences. However, in the

beginning, Adam and Eve were created perfect (see Genesis 1:31) – they had no mutations. These would grow with time in their offspring, due to the influence of the principle of sin which entered into the world through their disobedience to God, recorded in Genesis 3. All the created order was affected by this event and from then on there would be mistakes in the DNA copying that would lead to mutations building up – but slowly. It would not be dangerous for Cain to marry his close relative, nor would this be explicitly prohibited until the time of Moses in Leviticus 18-20. Remember that Abram married his half-sister (Genesis 20:12).

When we think clearly through what the Bible actually says we can see that, though we are not told everything explicitly, what we *are* told makes sense.

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