

Did Cain marry an intelligent animal?

by [Andrew Sibley](#)

Writing in the February edition of Christianity Magazine (UK), [local-flood advocate David Instone-Brewer](#) suggests that Cain was forced to marry an intelligent animal. In other words, a being with a human form and soul (Hebrew: *nephesh*; Greek: *psuchē*) that looked like him, but without a spirit (Hebrew: *ruach*; Greek: *pneuma*).¹ He claims that like humans, animals possess souls which gives emotions and individuality, but they lack a spirit which gives the capacity for a personal relationship with God, and he comments that the Bible is consistent on this distinction.²

Cain had been driven away from Adam's family after murdering his brother Abel and became a wandering resident in the land of Nod ([Genesis 4](#)). Here Instone-Brewer suggests Cain encountered these non-spiritual beings and took one for his wife. His further justification for the presence of non-spiritual people living at the time is that Cain formed a city, that Cain was fearful that someone might kill him, and that there were already people living in Nod for it to have been named. But are these valid arguments?

Cain's wife

The question of who Cain married has long been raised amongst believers and non-believers alike. And yet the answer is quite simple, and *Creation Ministries* has long responded to this in its material (e.g. [Cain's wife explanation 'gross and disgusting'?](#),



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The Bible tells us that Cain had a wife with him after his exile into the land of Nod ([Genesis 4:17](#)). AI generated image.

The answer is that Cain would have married a sister ... And

Cain's wife and brother-sister intermarriage, and, chapter 8 of *Creation Answers Book Who was Cain's wife?*³ The answer is that Cain would have married a sister, as would his younger brother (although it is also possible that Cain and Seth married their nieces). And this seems the far more satisfactory explanation than proposing an elaborate narrative that is simply not there in the Bible. There are other examples where marrying a close relative occurred in the early chapters of the Bible. Abraham married his half-sister Sarah, Jacob married his two first cousins, and even Moses' father Amram took an aunty named Jochebed for his wife. Some may raise moral objections to these relationships. But such moral questions do not arise when we recognise that the Law of Moses, which prohibits marriage between close relatives, had not been given at the time. Instone-Brewer fails to respond to this obvious response to the moral objection, perhaps to do so would weaken his own argument. And equally we may ask, in terms of the Mosaic Law, which is worse, for Cain to have married his sister, or an animal, even if an intelligent one? The possible bestial human-animal marriage aspect has previously been raised by the organisation Reason to Believe, which CMI has [critiqued here](#).

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In the article Instone-Brewer goes on to propose that Adam and Eve had lived up to 30,000 years ago, inferring possible gaps in the biblical genealogies. But even this accommodation doesn't go far enough to meet the claims of secular science. For example, Neanderthals are claimed to have lived in caves in France 175,000 years ago, even displaying a degree of culture, and possibly were engaged in spiritual practices involving stone circles.⁴ Such genealogical gaps allow theologians to insert additional, superficially attractive narratives into the biblical text. But such an approach fails to ask more searching questions of the accuracy of dating methods—in effect, it is a science stopper if we accept scientific claims without question. It also ignores the direction of science, which in terms of understanding Neanderthals is leading to

Reconstruction of Neanderthal Man, in the
Natural History Museum, London, UK.

the realisation that [they were more like ordinary humans than previously thought](#).

His proposal is also that the races of
intelligent animals, which he suggests

included Neanderthals and Denisovans, have now died out, although some of their DNA is still within us. He believes spiritual man had a competitive advantage and outcompeted the soulless intelligent animals because they were more cooperative and altruistic. From this claim, it is theoretically possible that some tribes may yet be discovered that do not possess a spirit, but he suggests there is no evidence for this—all people groups discovered so far are spiritually inclined towards worship of some form, whereas animals have no inclination to worship because they lack a spirit. As such, he believes that all humanity is now possessive of a soul and spirit, overcoming any possible issues around racial equality.

Cain's fear and city

And what about Cain's fear of being killed ([Genesis 4:13-15](#)) and the founding of a city in Nod ([Genesis 4:17](#))? In the context, a city is not necessarily a place full of buildings, but a settlement of a single dwelling that grew over time. Remember that the first people of this period lived for centuries. As such children and grandchildren would have established dwellings near to their forefather, thus extending the size of the township. Also, the fact that Adam and Eve's later-born children may have been interested in avenging Abel's death meant that Cain would always have been fearful of a revenge attack ([How old was Cain when he killed Abel?](#)). But God prevented this by placing further divine judgement on anyone who would harm Cain. The naming of the land of Nod (נֹד [Genesis 4:16](#)), meaning a place of wandering, is also a reference to Cain's punishment to be a wanderer (נֹד *nud* [Genesis 4:12](#)).

Federal Heads?

The proposals of Instone-Brewer's article are somewhat similar to that of the *Federal Head* argument, where Adam is considered to be *Homo divinus*—this was presented by John Stott and Denis Alexander for example^{5,6} (and perhaps with some similarity to [Josh Swamidass' *The Genealogical Adam and Eve*](#)). In Alexander's view, God chose Adam and Eve out of an existing group of Neolithic farmers about 10,000 years ago, and breathed into them his spirit, thus electing Adam and Eve to be God's image bearers. This consecrated couple were then federal heads of the rest of humanity; that is, divinely called priestly representatives. Other hominids alive at the time were then spiritually covered so that they effectively became fully human. For Instone-Brewer, it was non-spiritual intelligent animals that merely shared their DNA with

Adam's line, but subsequently died out. Such arguments are of course designed to fit the biblical text with the evolutionary narrative of human origins, but they fail to deal with the New Testament teaching, and that of early Christian theologians. So, what are the additional problems with this approach?

Adam the first-formed man (or proto-plast)

The Genesis account tells us that Adam was the [first-formed man](#), very clearly from the dust of the earth ([Genesis 3:19](#)), and not from some evolutionary process. This was confirmed by the writers of the New Testament. Paul in the letter to Timothy, writes that "... Adam was first formed, then Eve" ([1 Timothy 2:13](#)), and in [Acts 17:26](#) that God "... made from one man every nation of mankind." And this was accepted by most of the early church theologians.

Athanasius wrote: "... he alone was made and fashioned by God alone, and we all spring from Adam ..." ⁷, and Augustine, "But whoever is anywhere born a man ... no Christian can doubt that he springs from that one protoplast [first-formed man]." ⁸

The problem of death

The claim is made by Alexander, that the Fall only led to spiritual death and not to physical death. But the text of Genesis is very explicit in terms of physical death ([3:19](#)) "By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." And this is how the New Testament writers understood it; that physical death came through Adam's sin. [Romans 5:12](#) "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned."

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If the Federal Head argument were valid, then we would have a situation where Adam and Eve, as elected *Homo divinus*, were taken from a group of intelligent hominid animals that were subject to violence, suffering, death and decay. The

couple would then experience a brief time of immortality prior to the Fall, after which they would again be subject to death and suffering—all within the foreknowledge of the Creator. But a straightforward reading of [Genesis 1–3](#) and [Romans 5](#) holds that death came from Adam's sin.

Summary

The plain sense reading of Genesis can answer the question of where Cain, and for that matter Seth, got their wives. They married their sisters (or nieces), and we should note that close-relative marriage was common until the giving of the Mosaic Law when it was outlawed. Attempts to accommodate the biblical account with evolutionary theory fail in terms of the biblical text and theological implications.

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References and notes

1. Instone-Brewer, D., Who did Cain marry?, premierchristianity.com, 31 January 2024. [Return to text.](#)
2. Officially CMI doesn't take a position on whether humans have a soul and spirit or just a soul. The word *ruach* can be used for natural breath in Scripture for both humans and animals. In [Ecclesiastes 3:19–21](#) Solomon seems to draw upon a comparison between the spirit or breath of man and animals, but this could be interpreted as a rhetorical question which arose from his crisis of faith. [Return to text.](#)
3. Batten, D., Catchpoole, D., Sarfati, J., Wieland, C., [Creation Answers Book](#), 8th ed., Creation Book Publishers, Ch. 8., 2019. [Return to text.](#)
4. Barras, C., Neanderthals built mystery underground circles 175,000 years ago, newscientist.com, 25 May 2016. [Return to text.](#)
5. Stott, J., *Understanding the Bible*, Scripture Union, 1977, p. 63. [Return to text.](#)
6. Alexander, D., *Creation or Evolution: Do we have to choose?* Monarch Books, Oxford, Ch.10, 2008, and Alexander, D., The Case for Adam & Eve as Recent Representatives, scienceandfaith.org, (no date). [Return to text.](#)
7. Athanasius of Alexandria, *Defence of the Nicene definition (De Decretis)*, Ch. III. 8–9; in: Schaff, P. (Ed.), NPNF, series 2, vol. 4. T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1891, p. 493. [Return to text.](#)
8. Augustine, *City of God*, XII, chap. 21—That there was created at first but one individual, and that the human race was created in Him; in: Schaff, P. (Ed.), NPNF, series 1, vol. 2, T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1886, p. 550. [Return to text.](#)

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