

# GENESIS—WEEK 6

## SIN SPREADS



F. Michael Slay  
*A DEEP Study*

**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

*The Cover Picture is The Creation by Michael van der Borch (~1300 – 1370)  
On display at the Museum Meermanno in The Hague, Netherlands*

Adam and Eve are kicked out of the garden, thus terminally ending their access to the tree of life. Things go from bad to worse. Cain murders Abel, and that's just the beginning.

But then something beautiful happens. People start to call on the name of the LORD (YHVH or Adonai).

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Thank you.

Genesis 3:21–4:26 — Sin Spreads  
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1 Genesis 3:21-24 (ESV)

*And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.*

*Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—” therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.*

Focus on the Family has a wonderful video series where Ray Vander Laan takes a group of students around Israel and gives context to many Bible passages. It’s great, but here I’m only interested in the title—*That the World May Know*. The word “World” is clearly referring only to people; they’re the only ones who watch the videos. “World” means “everyone” there. It’s a common English colloquialism.

So it is in Greek. The word translated as “world” is κόσμος (kosmos). There are eight definitions for kosmos in the BDAG lexicon and the fifth one is “the world as mankind.” This is important because of the great weight given to Romans 5:12 in interpreting today’s passage.

*Therefore, just as sin came into the world [kosmos] through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned. — Romans 5:12 (ESV)*

Some Bible commentators use a narrow interpretation of this passage to argue that there was no death of any kind before Adam and Eve sinned. But the plain reading of this passage is that death was normal. The making of *garments of skins* is not described as a big deal, even though animals died in the process. Also, we’re told that Adam and Eve won’t live forever because they can’t eat of the tree of life, not because something about them changed. If they didn’t need the tree of life to begin with, why is it even there?

But the strongest case against the “no death before the fall” view is the behavior of the serpent.

*But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die.” — Genesis 3:4 (ESV)*

The serpent directly contradicting God’s word is blasphemy; that’s sin. Sin wasn’t yet in the “kosmos” as mankind, but it was definitely in the “kosmos” as the Earth or as all of creation.

And the view that there was no death of any kind before the fall assumes that a huge miracle occurred where the whole world was transformed. Lions suddenly stopped eating grass and started eating sheep.

But none of this is mentioned in the Bible. Could one of the largest scale miracles in history be left out of inspired scripture? Even Adam and Eve’s transformation is described simply as their eyes were opened and they knew good and evil. Instead, the support for the “no death before the fall” view leans on a specific view of Romans 5:12. Even worse, many people consider this to be the “literal” interpretation.

## 2 Genesis 4:1–7 (ESV)

*Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD.” And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. The LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.”*

Here, God warns Cain about an enemy he isn’t aware of. This sounds a lot like the “Star Wars” concept of the dark side of the force. In those movies, you can “give yourself” to the dark side, but you should resist. In Genesis 4:7, sin’s *desire is for you, but you must rule over it*.

This is chilling. Sin is more than some little demon sitting on your shoulder. It *desires* you. *You must rule over it*. If you don’t, it will rule over you. This is like giving in to the dark side. It’s more than a temporary slip-up; it’s enduring. In the movies, it’s called “turning to” the dark side.

Sin isn’t exactly the same, but giving in to sin does have an enduring effect. Each of us is in a life-long battle against sin, and with each victory or defeat, one side gains ground. Small sins grow into habits, and then into greater sins. Small victories establish trends too. A temptation is less tempting after it has been resisted.

This is easier to see in others than in ourselves. Watching friends slide into sin is gut-wrenching. You see them become comfortable with things they used to be repulsed by. The worst thing is that they’re oblivious to the transformation that’s apparent to others.

That’s what going on here with Cain. Simple disappointment is turning into rage. It’s his own fault that his sacrifices aren’t up to snuff—and God says that it’s an easy fix. But Cain is letting sinful resentment run loose in his heart, and he doesn’t see the danger.

Sin is taking over.

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Almost everyone will, at some point, grieve for someone we love who is caught in sin’s clutches. It’s heartbreaking and infuriating to see them slip-sliding away. Still, very few of these cases lead to an intervention. Most often, they’re just left to rot.

It is especially important to pray for these extreme cases. If you are personally connected to one, pray for supernatural deliverance. Also, ask God to help you reach out to the one in need. Just making contact and chatting with someone can be huge. If you ask them how they’re doing, they might just tell you.

You never know how God will use you. His unpredictability can be thrilling.

3 Genesis 4:8–16 (ESV)

*Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?” And the LORD said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.” Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.” Then the LORD said to him, “Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.” And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him. Then Cain went away from the presence of the LORD and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.*

This is sin run amok. Abel didn't do anything to Cain. He only offered a more acceptable sacrifice to God. Cain kills him for that?!?

Cain is angry about his failure to please God, and he's jealous of Abel, but escalating this to murder is nuts. Has Cain lost his mind? He should realize that God will find out what he did. Does he really think that killing Abel will fix his problem?

Of course not; he doesn't “think” anything. This isn't about thinking; it's about blindness of sin. As God warned in verse 7, sin's *desire is for* Cain. Now Cain is owned by sin; it has taken control.

Then, when God pronounces sentence, which is lenient, Cain starts whining. If this were a movie and Cain were to fall to his death at this point, the audience would cheer. What a loser.

Imagine how Adam and Eve must feel right now. The horrors of sin—their sin—is now on full display. They never imagined it would get this bad. Their loss is unbearable, and it's all their fault.

Imagine the arguments they must have had. They must have gotten over them though because they had at least one other child.

Fortunately, divorce wasn't much of an option at this point.

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Of course, divorce is way too much of an option now. Marriages are dissolved at a rate of over one per minute, and that's just in the US. It's a national tragedy.

Like Adam and Eve, many folks are less than fully informed about the consequences of their choices. Sin clouds our minds and leads us down terrible paths. We don't know what will come of our sinful actions, and we don't want to think about it anyway.

Always pray for marriages that are on the rocks and for the people hurt by them—especially the children.

4 Genesis 4:17–24 (ESV)

*Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. When he built a city, he called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch. To Enoch was born Irad, and Irad fathered Mehujael, and Mehujael fathered Methushael, and Methushael fathered Lamech. And Lamech took two wives. The name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah. Adah bore Jabal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock. His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe. Zillah also bore Tubal-cain; he was the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron. The sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.*

*Lamech said to his wives: “Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; you wives of Lamech, listen to what I say: I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me. If Cain's revenge is sevenfold, then Lamech's is seventy-sevenfold.”*

This passage raises one of the most famous Bible issues in history. Where did Cain's wife come from?

That question was part of the Scopes Trial, and William Jennings Bryan's failure to answer it has proved unfortunate.

Funny thing is, Bryan should have known at least one common answer—Cain married his sister (or, possibly, some other close relative). Three references support this view.

- 1) In Genesis 1:28, God tells Adam and Eve, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the Earth.”
- 2) In Genesis 2:21, God makes Eve from Adam's rib, which makes no sense if He made other women some other way.
- 3) In Genesis 3:20, Adam calls Eve the mother of all living.

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/cains-wife>

The human genome is destined to degrade over time. Marrying your sister will become risky. It can yield very unhealthy offspring.

It's eventually prohibited (see Leviticus 18:9 and 20:17).

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In the Scopes Trial, William Jennings Bryan was being confronted with an alternative view called Theistic Evolution. Might Cain's wife have been created through evolution?

While I do not subscribe to that view, I would caution against too much certainty on issues like this.

The Bible's description of these events is brief. Trying to tease out details that are notably absent from scripture can be a fool's errand. Such things may be omitted because they are over our heads.

The exception is when those details are essential to understanding something else.

Where Cain's wife came from does not meet that test.

5 Genesis 4:25–26 (ESV)

*And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, “God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him.” To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time people began to call upon the name of the LORD.*

God has a name and it’s not “the LORD.” In Hebrew, his name is spelled YHVH (יהוה, yode, hey, vav, hey.) This is God’s personal name, known as the Tetragrammaton.

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tetragrammaton>

We don’t know how this is pronounced because of two rules in Hebrew grammar. First, all the vowels in Hebrew are written as dots and dashes around the letters, called “pointing.” The letters are all consonants. Many ancient Old Testament manuscripts are unpointed.

Second, all four letters in the Tetragrammaton can be pronounced multiple ways. The sound of a “yode” can either be a “Y” or silent, taking on only a vowel sound from the previous pointing. The sound of a “hey” can be “H” or just a vowel sound. The “vav” can be a “V” or just a vowel sound.

So, the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton can only be guessed at, and people tend to deliberately guess wrong because the third commandment prohibits misusing God’s name. Germans substitute “W” for “V” and “J” for “Y”, adding to the confusion. Thus, the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton ranges from “Yahweh” to “Jehovah”—all for the same word. Most Bible translators just use “the LORD” to be safe.

But that ruins the feel of some beautiful passages. In today’s reading, people started calling on God’s name. This means they were speaking it directly—not mispronouncing it. In the same way, Ruth and Naomi use God’s name in conversation (cf., Ruth 1:8, 9, and 17). There’s nothing irreverent about that.

One way to maintain the proper feel of a verse, while respecting God’s holiness, is to say the word “Adonai” whenever you see “the LORD” in the text. (Adonai is the Hebrew word for Lord.) *At that time people began to call upon the name of Adonai.* Some Jewish translations do this.

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=gen+4&version=CJB>

To an English speaker, Adonai sounds like a name. I like that. It retains the beauty of the passage.

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If the LORD really is our lord, most of our prayers should focus on what we’re to do for Him, not on what He’s to do for us. As JFK might say, “Ask not ...”

It’s OK to ask the LORD for favors; we’re commanded to do just that. (See John 14:13 and 15:7.)

It just shouldn’t be all the time. Most of the time should be spent in praise and in trying to discern what He wants us to do.

Seeking His will for you is seeking your destiny. That’s exciting.

*Questions for reflection or discussion*

1. What does it mean to interpret the Bible literally?
2. Recall someone you knew who slid down the slope into serious sin. Could it have been prevented?
3. What kills marriages?
4. Where do you think Cain's wife came from?
5. When you pray privately, how do you start?