

## Appendix E

### The Cain Controversy

A few weeks ago, a pizza-truck driver showed up at our house church. The woman who answered the back door was confronted by the young deliveryman, whom we'll call Ross. After handing over the cache of warm pies and receiving payment, Ross somewhat tentatively ventured a question: "Is this by any chance a Christian-group meeting here?"—an obvious assumption, since it was a Sunday morning. When gently informed that it was, he volunteered the information that he had at one time been a Christian, and had in fact attended seminary for a short while. But, he said, he had lost his faith while studying the book of Genesis, *because no one could answer his questions about Cain*.

How unfortunate. The church has done a poor job of meeting honest questions face to face, at least in some areas. This theory attempts to rectify that.

Keep in mind that this is just a theory. But the church should at least admit there are some unusual questions here and wrestle with them. Some have, and we applaud them for it. At least they've faced the issues squarely. We may not always agree with their conclusions, and I'm sure not everyone will agree with ours either. But at least we're not hiding the problem under the rug.

We realize there's a tendency for all of us to want to convince others that what we believe is right and watertight. That's human nature. It takes a certain level of maturity to honestly admit and assess the strengths and weaknesses of what we believe and then be willing to dialogue about them, without fear. Sometimes we strut about like a peacock with fluffed feathers trying to convince everyone we've got it all figured out, because deep down we know there are some unanswered questions in our own hearts. We would all like to think that what we believe is more than a fraction of the truth, but, in reality, we know so little.

For example, in the first eleven chapters of the Bible, a mere 15 pages in my version, we're dealing with approximately 2000 years of human history, from Adam to Abraham. That's pretty compact reporting. The

remainder of my Bible, 1715 pages, is devoted to reporting the *next* 2000 years of history (as well as some still-future prophecies). My point? There was a lot going on in this early period that did not get recorded. Genesis 1-11 only gives us a teeny tiny sliver of pre-Abrahamic history, and represents less than 1% of the entire Bible. There's a lot of conjecture needed, then, if we want to flesh out the barebones of this story.<sup>1</sup>

Some would caution us not to speculate about those unrevealed truths. "If God had wanted us to know, He would have told us." But on the other hand, God does not just hand us the deeper truths of His Word on a silver platter. He does give us hints, though, as to where they are buried, so that those who want more can dig for them. If we refuse to dig because we don't want to be guilty of speculation or because we expect everything to be lying on the surface, then we won't find the hidden treasures of wisdom and knowledge that God desires for us to have. So forgive us if we throw up some dirt while we're dragging up the gold.

This theory makes one major assumption, one that is consistent with Scripture and actually with science. That is that there was one common ancestor for all the living, just as the Bible says. This has been validated by several DNA studies in recent years, which have concluded that all genotypes hark back to one original "mother." I'll cite just one.

Quoting from *Nature* magazine," Sept. 2005: "A recent statistical study of the genetics of human population revealed "the most recent common ancestor (MRCA) for a randomly mating population would have lived in the very recent past....In particular, the MRCA of all present-day humans lived just a few thousand years ago in these models."<sup>2</sup> This is consistent with the biblical timeframe of approximately 6,000 years.

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<sup>1</sup> We are not advocating flights of fancy here into indefensible realms. Our conjecture should stand as firmly as possible on the revelation we are given, and in any case should not be dogmatic.

<sup>2</sup> Douglas L. T. Rohde, Steve Olson and Joseph T. Chang, "Modeling the Recent Common Ancestry of all Living Humans," *Nature* magazine (vol.431, Sept.30,2005), p.562, 565.

You may find the following theory laughable or untenable. That's okay. It resonates with me and maybe it will with some of you, too. This concept is not one I've heard elsewhere, but nevertheless, to me it makes quite good sense and explains things in a reasonable way. (If you've already read Genesis 1-3, you may want to read Genesis 4 and 5 at this point, unless you are already familiar with the story of Cain and Abel.)

A cursory reading of the creation story in Genesis 1-3 makes it look like Adam and Eve didn't last long in the Garden (what, a month?) without disobeying the one rule they were given (not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil). After all, their failure is reported right at the beginning of the third chapter of the Bible. And these are not long chapters, folks. A page and a half? Fourteen verses span the period from the giving of the command to the violation of it. Doesn't *sound* like too much happened before they fell, does it, besides maybe a few turns around the orchard. Apparently the Devil didn't waste much time getting down to the business of deceiving. At least that's how it looks.

And it appears, again from a quick read, that Adam and Eve got pregnant immediately after the Fall, as Cain's birth is reported right at the beginning of chapter four, just one verse after they are driven out of Eden. So, obviously, the reader tends to conclude that all of this took place in relatively short order, because 1) that's how it reads at first glance, and 2) if Adam and Eve were prime specimens of humanity, vital and healthy, it's safe to say it wouldn't have taken long for them to get down to the business of *conceiving*. So the entire narrative has this sort of truncated appearance.

However, upon closer examination, we can detect certain HINTS that there's more to the story than meets the eye. Chapter two of the Bible, for example, is full of suggestions that things are not as they seem. For example, verses 5 and 6 alone make a person question how long all this creative business took: "Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the

Lord God had not sent rain on the earth; and there was no man to cultivate the ground. But a mist used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground.”<sup>3</sup>

*Used to rise?* When? If the plants were created on the third day as stated in Genesis 1, that would mean the mist “used to rise” for two days, at most. And what caused the mist to rise before the sun and moon were created? And if man was created on the sixth day, that would mean “there was no man to cultivate the ground” for two days as well? C’mon. Might we not be treating the text a little more literally than it was intended?

And the story in Genesis 2 is really quite different than the story in Genesis 1. The order is different, among other things. It appears that man is created first, then the plants, then the animals, and then Eve. People say, “Oh, it’s just a summary,” or “It’s not giving us the order, it’s just fleshing out some other details.” But clearly, some of those details seem to contradict the details in Chapter 1.

Listen: “Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.’ And out of the ground the Lord God *formed* every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name.”

It clearly sounds like He made the man first and then the animals. That’s the opposite of Chapter 1. And how long did it take for this naming process? Did God really bring “every” animal and “every” bird to Adam, as it says? (If we’re going to be utterly literal as many are wont to do, then that’s what it means.) Granted, speciation would have been limited at that point, but still, it had to have taken awhile. More than a day, I’d wager.

Or, the other option is, this is *not* to be taken hyper-literally. (And that would apply to both chapters.)

Either God didn’t sit Adam down and make him name every single critter until he was done, or creation

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<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, the plants are created on day three, before the sun and moon on day four. What then caused the mist to rise? As you can surmise from this question, I doubt that Genesis 1 is a literal account of the order of creation. This is dealt with in more detail in Chapter 6.

didn't occur in six days. One or the other, because Eve isn't created until this process of naming the animals is finished. Yet chapter one says she was made on the same day as Adam. Listen again: "And the man gave names to *all* the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to *every* beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him."

We need to accept that the creation story is not intended to be a scientific treatise on the order of the creation process, though it *is* intended to assert that God is the Creator of all things, and that there was order and purpose in it, as discussed in Theory #1. Does this mean that God didn't create the world and everything in it in seven literal days? Not necessarily, but maybe.<sup>4</sup> We need to relax a little. If we're honest (and if we want to maintain any credibility as scholars or even as people of faith), we have to admit that there's more to the story than these simple facts and get to the underlying message.

All that to say, what I'm about to share should not be viewed as heretical. It's simply a way of explaining some anomalies in the text that need to be addressed. God has not left us without clues to the fact that there is more here than meets the eye, if we're willing to search for it.

One of the most obvious anomalies is in the story of Cain and Abel (though there are several other less obvious ones preceding it). This story takes place some time after the Fall; we don't know how long. Scripture doesn't tell us. But we do know Adam and Eve had already been evicted from the Garden, and they, along with their children, were slogging it out in the fallen world for some time before this happened. Cain was a tiller of the soil, and Abel was a keeper of the flocks. They are the only children mentioned at this point.

From this chapter (4) we can see a HINT that God has already put in place a sacrificial system to temporarily cover sin, for "the wages of sin is death." We know that, immediately after the Fall, God killed an animal and made skins for Adam and Eve as a covering. This was the first death reported in scripture<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See Theories 1-3 for a more detailed discussion of the literal creation and how and when death entered the world.

<sup>5</sup> It is usually assumed that this is the first death period, because the Bible tells us "death entered the world because of sin." But it could be argued that what God is actually telling us is that human death entered the world because of human sin. As Scripture says: "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread *to all men*,

and the first “**atonement**.” An animal gave its lifeblood to cover the nakedness (symbolic of shame) of these two sinners. Something or someone had to die.

Subsequently, God must have instructed them to periodically sacrifice a firstling of their flocks and use the blood to “cover” their sins. Without a way to atone for their sins, they would not be able to fellowship with Him at all.<sup>6</sup> But Cain decided to opt out of God’s program and offered some produce from his garden instead of the prescribed blood sacrifice. God rejected his offering and this angered Cain.

**Atonement** is a theological term that means basically to “make amends for” wrongdoing or to “satisfy” an injured party. It implies the payment of reparations, the suffering of the wrongdoer “making up for” the wrong done. It comes from a root that means “at one” and implies reconciliation, or becoming one again, united, restoring fellowship. When we sin, the violation must be made right, or paid for, or there can be no fellowship with God or the injured party. Jesus became the atonement for our sins when He suffered and died on the cross. He made a complete settlement for all sin. Faith in Him and His finished work entitles us to partake of that settlement. Until that time, men offered animal sacrifices, as a placeholder if you will, until the “fullness of time” came and Jesus became the human Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Abel, his younger brother, on the other hand, offered one of the firstlings of his flock according to God’s instructions, and his offering was accepted. Cain subsequently took his anger and perhaps jealousy out on his brother and slew him in the field.

When God confronted him regarding his brother’s whereabouts, Cain professed ignorance. “I don’t know. Am I my brother’s keeper?” So Cain was cursed and sent away by God. “When you cultivate the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you; you shall be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth.”

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because all sinned...” (Ro.5:12) After all, it was man who was made in God’s image and only God possesses immortality. The animal kingdom was never intended to be immortal. They were never invited to eat from the Tree of Life either, which sustained Adam and Eve. And if they could have lived forever without eating from the Tree, doesn’t that suggest that they were *more* immortal than Adam? Can you imagine an earth populated with eternally reproducing mosquitoes or ants? Can you imagine a heaven filled with the immortal souls of cats and dogs, birds and rabbits, snakes and scorpions? Or a separate animal heaven? This is the implication of an immortal animal kingdom had there been no fall.

<sup>6</sup> Since God is perfect, He cannot fraternize with sin. We cannot have fellowship with Him unless our sin is dealt with appropriately. He prescribed a means by which men could periodically cover their sin and maintain fellowship with Him and it required the shedding of blood of a spotless lamb.

“And Cain said to the Lord, ‘My punishment is too great to bear! Behold, Thou has driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Thy face I shall be hidden,<sup>7</sup> and I shall be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and it will come about that *whoever finds me will kill me.*”

“So the Lord “appointed a sign for him (we aren’t told what it was) lest anyone finding him should slay him. Then Cain went out from the presence of the Lord and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden. And Cain had relations with his wife, and she conceived....”

The question is often posed here: Whom did Cain marry, since Cain and Abel were Adam and Eve’s first kids and no others are mentioned yet? Some people stumble here and throw out the whole Bible, as our young delivery man did, because they can’t reconcile this with the text. But it’s not a difficult question. The easy answer is that he married his younger sister on the assumption that Adam and Eve had daughters who are not mentioned. (Bible genealogies, as most others, are patrilineal, so it’s not unreasonable that daughters would not be named.) I don’t have a problem with this, as, if we are interpreting Scripture accurately, there would have been no one else to marry but his sister or possibly niece (a daughter of Abel, though we have no record of Abel’s offspring). The gene pool would have been virtually pristine at that early point, allowing the marriage of close relatives without consequence.

However, I think a more important, and more difficult question to answer than who Cain married is this: Who was Cain afraid would kill him?

If the Bible is taken strictly literally (word for word, line upon line), which it often is, it appears that Cain is the only remaining male offspring of Adam and Eve after the death of Abel. So his question seems paradoxical on its face. It certainly calls into question the basic storyline and is a big HINT that all is not as it seems.

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<sup>7</sup> This story makes a good case for the idea that God was still walking amongst men, in perhaps the same form He used in the garden, during Cain’s life. This appears to have continued for some time, perhaps until Seth’s son Enosh grew up, when men “began to call upon the name of the Lord.” (Gen. 4:26) What this means cannot be stated with any certainty, but it clearly indicates a change from the way things were before, and perhaps refers to a more distant relationship, likely one of prayer rather than face-to-face communication.

The only other people who *could* kill him in this scenario would be his own or Abel's children (assuming both he and Abel had been married for quite some time before the murder and those children would be significantly younger than himself), *or* his own sisters. Would his own children be likely to kill him for slaying their uncle? And how would any of *Abel's* offspring, if scattered "out there," even know of Cain's guilt? There was no cable news, telegraph, or even snail-mail in those days. Besides, the text reads more like these people would be total strangers living in distant cities or lands, doesn't it? He says, "I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me," not "My relatives will kill me when they hear what I did." And if they *are* close relatives, such as younger brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews, or his own children, is it conceivable that they would: 1) have left home before he did, or 2) be so long-dispersed as to not recognize him? Assuming Cain and Abel are not very, *very* old, their children (if any) would have been relatively young still. Why would Cain and Abel have stuck around home with mom and dad, but the younger siblings went off and lost contact with them?<sup>8</sup> Doesn't seem reasonable. The loose ends threaten to unravel the whole story.

I started thinking about this several years ago because loose ends really bother me, and this theory represents my effort to tie them up into a neat little package. I hope it helps you as it does me. I've never heard this put forth before, but it's an idea that solves a lot of problems for the text. So here goes.

What if Cain, then, was Adam and Eve's first-born after the Fall, but not their *actual* first-born? All of a sudden, Eve's remark at the birth of Cain, "I have gotten a manchild *with the help of* the Lord" makes total sense. Since the curse that God pronounced on her included greatly amplified pain in childbirth ("I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth"<sup>9</sup>), it makes sense that she would now need help with the delivery. Prior to the curse, she may have given birth numerous times without pain, or with little pain, and not needed help at all. In addition, the statement in Gen. 3:20 which says, "Now the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living" is odd given that she supposedly had not yet given birth. Could this be a divine HINT that indeed she had given birth many times before the Fall?

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<sup>8</sup> We know he was living near Eden at the time he killed Abel because, afterward, he "went out from the presence of the Lord," implying he was still living near the Garden and moved to the land of Nod east of Eden.

<sup>9</sup> Gen. 3:16

Thus the curse on her would have actually *been* a curse, since she would have lost something wonderful—painless childbearing. If she had never experienced birth *before* the Fall, she would have nothing to compare the present pain to, so it would not really even seem like a “curse.” The implication then would be that Cain was not their first child, but the first since they left the Garden and the first delivered in pain under the curse.

If this is so, where is the record of their earlier offspring? And why would such vital information be left out of a book that is purported to be historically reliable?

It makes sense to me that, prior to the Fall, there was no need to keep such records. After all, if anyone wanted to know who begat whom, they could simply go and ask. Before death entered the world, every relevant person would still be alive. Genealogies would have been somewhat pointless. And why keep a record of days and years when no one was ever going to die? *Time* itself was perhaps not much of an issue before the Fall. There would be time to accomplish all you wanted.

And, before the reality of death entered the world, it is conceivable that mankind simply did not seriously entertain that it ever would, nor contemplate the consequences. It would have only been *after* the Fall that men would have recognized the need to record generations because only then did men begin to die, and only then would longer-lived families have reason to document their genetic strength.

At that point, it would be too late to go back and document all the earlier children of Adam and Eve and *their* children and grandchildren and so on, because they would be spread hither and yon throughout the near world, at least. And even if someone had the resources to wander the earth and try to put it all together, it would be an impossible task since new offspring were continually being added to the genealogy. Which I think adequately explains why there are no records, at least in the Bible. It does not explain why they aren't at least mentioned in Genesis, but again, this is a barebones account and the writer or editor may not have considered it relevant to the bigger picture. Or maybe to them it was self-evident. They apparently did not consider it important information since it was reality to them and “obvious.” As in, “duh.”

Anyway, it is conceivable to me that Adam and Eve may have had many children before Cain and Abel. Perhaps for forty or even four hundred years before the Fall,<sup>10</sup> which would mean that there would be large numbers of people around, scattered over the world near and far, and most would no longer know each other. How many of *your* second cousins, let alone third and fourth, do you actually know well enough to pick them out of a crowd? Especially if you came from a large family like I did. Probably not many.

This hypothesis, suggesting a long period before the Fall, is consistent with typology. Jesus, the Second Adam, spent 40 days in the wilderness before Satan came to him to test him. Perhaps Adam spent forty years, or even 400 years, in the Garden getting to know God before God allowed Satan to test *him*.

If this theory is true, and let's entertain the idea for awhile, then the offspring of Adam and Eve who preceded Cain and Abel on the scene may have been born well *before* the Fall, and may even have moved out of the Garden well before the Fall and produced their own offspring, perhaps multiple generations. I've thought of three possible scenarios:

- 1) The children may have obeyed their parents' instructions (which they surely would have passed on) not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. As they reached adulthood, Adam and Eve may have encouraged them to go out and explore the world God had made. After all, if it wasn't cursed yet and death had not entered the world, it would have been entirely safe for them. Why not spread their wings and take flight? Eventually things would get crowded around the ol' homestead anyway, and maybe they just wanted to have some space. Kids are like that. Don't want the folks around all the time saying, "Here, let me show you the right way to do it."
- 2) Or perhaps the restriction from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was *not* given to the children of Adam at all, and so they ate with impunity and without sinning. And yet, still,

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<sup>10</sup> It is my suspicion that, since 40 is the number of testing in the Bible, that God would have given Adam and Eve a multiple of forty years before He allowed the temptation in the garden. Forty years, 400 years?

their eyes were opened and they became familiar with evil. Perhaps even attracted to it. And perhaps this lust drove them to break fellowship with their parents and move on, to wide open pastures where they could be their own masters.

- 3) Or, the kids may have been told not to eat from the Tree by their parents, but disobeyed, perhaps after having their own encounter with the devil. Their violation would not result in the official Fall however, because they were not the ones given the command by God, and they were not the federal head of humanity. Only the fall of Adam would bring judgment on creation, because Adam was the father of the human race, ruler of creation and our best shot at success. If the first and best man failed, then failure could legitimately be projected upon all men. If they *did* eat from the Tree against God's instructions and gained the knowledge of evil, they may have begun to chafe under the limitations of life in the Garden and left voluntarily. Or been asked to leave. These men would continue to live indefinitely, producing offspring and filling the earth until the day that Adam himself violated the law, at which point death became man's chief fear and constant companion.

Thus, Cain would have very rationally feared going out into the world after Abel's murder, to wander amongst those who had long ago left the "face of God," because they might indeed kill him now that death had been unleashed on the world. He had seen death firsthand, had been an agent of it, and could only imagine that those who were so far from God would be even more likely to entertain that urge than he was, now that the curse had fallen on them, too.

Whatever the precise scenario, I can imagine that, at the very least, Adam and Eve had sons and daughters who grew up, married one another, had their own children and grandchildren, and moved away to start their own "gardens" and farms, so as not to crowd one another, and that eventually, because there were no telephones, telegraphs, or pony express, they did not maintain communication. Over time, as sons begat sons, they would no longer know by sight, or even by name, who belonged to whom. Given population increases, after a few decades there would be at least multiplied thousands of people. There was no birth control apparently, and people lived a long time, so they may have conceived more

frequently and later than we do today. And if men began to take multiple wives or share wives (depending on the preponderance of either sex), that would only cause faster multiplication. So the problem is not numbers. It's *who were those people out there* that Cain was afraid of?

Some would object to this theory based on the fact that, in Genesis 5, we are told that Adam had lived 130 years when he became the father of Seth, his third (named) son, given to replace Abel. So, they would say, he couldn't have been older than that. And that is a reasonable position to take. However, one could pose a few hypothetical questions here: How do you calculate an age for a man who was directly created by God? Is that 130 *apparent* years, depending on whatever "age" he was at his creation? For example, if he was created as a 20 year old, can those 20 years be counted as years he actually "lived"? Or is this really telling us it had been 130 years *since* his creation? Or is it, perchance, 130 years since the Fall, when he actually *began* to age? It would certainly make sense to begin counting his years at that point. Prior to the Fall, he was not aging (if he was eating from the Tree of Life), so why even count those years? They would be somewhat irrelevant as a means of gauging one's biological age, even though he "lived" them. Just a thought.

Nevertheless, 130 is pretty old for a specimen like Adam, with perfect genes and fertility, to be having only his third son unless they matured much later. I suspect that, in actuality, he had had many more children (and not just girls) before this age, but was well into his first century or older before things began to unravel and the Fall occurred.

This genealogy in Genesis 5 may be misleading in other ways as well. Or maybe I've just misunderstood it all along. But many of the fathers mentioned in this list are quite old when the named son is born, and somehow I've always taken it for granted that the son mentioned was their first. But now I realize it does not list the first-born of each generation,<sup>11</sup> but rather is following a particular line of descent, one that is prophetically significant— for example, the one that leads to Noah and ultimately Christ. And in fact, this is the case. If you read the genealogy of Christ in Luke 3, starting at verse 38 and working backward to

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<sup>11</sup> If it did, we would have to conclude that sexual maturity occurred quite a bit later than it does today as many of these offspring do not appear until well into the first, or even second, century of the father's life.

verse 36, you will see the same names (with some variations in spelling). And the list continues in Genesis 11 with the genealogy of Shem (Noah's son). So this is a record of a particular lineage that did not always run through the first-born of each generation. The statement that "so-and-so had other sons and daughters" means "in addition to" (not necessarily *after*) the one named.

Anyway, it's interesting to think about, isn't it? What we have in the Genesis account is not a contradiction, but a lack of information. Since we are not dealing with essential doctrine here, it seems reasonable to posit a solution, if only to help those for whom the lack of information is an impediment to belief. No one has to commit to the theory. It's just one explanation that deserves consideration.

I do believe that Adam, as the father of the human race, had to sin before God could curse the earth, because it was Adam who was given the edict and the pronouncement of what would befall him if he did otherwise. So God could legitimately hold back the curse until Adam himself sinned, regardless of whether or not anyone else sinned before him. Thus the wages of sin would still be death, and death would still have entered the world because of sin; just specifically as a result of *Adam's* sin as federal head of the human race. Scripture is very clear on this point.<sup>12</sup>

Perhaps you consider this a farfetched or crazy explanation. Maybe so. But we cannot find another more plausible one. After all, if there are people "out there" who might have killed Cain, they had to come from somewhere. Either God made more people than Adam and Eve to begin with, or Adam and Eve had many additional unnamed children either before the Fall or during a long interlude between the Fall and the death of Abel. This raises additional questions, such as, "Why are we not told about these additional sons and are left to believe that Cain is son #1, Abel is son #2 and Seth is son #3?" Perhaps they did not play a significant role in the story the author is trying to convey and that may be. In any case, we have to come up with some way of explaining who these people living abroad are. This is one possibility. We encourage you to put forth your own explanation and welcome you to share it with us at [www.grace-n-truth.com](http://www.grace-n-truth.com).

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<sup>12</sup> Romans 5:12, 19: "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—...For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous."