



Part 21 – The City of Man

Genesis 4:16-26

People often wonder where Cain's wife came from. Our hesitancy to admit the obvious is often due to our discomfort in acknowledging that Cain's wife had to be from the line of his own parents. As we read in Genesis 5:4, the first couple had other sons and daughters. We are not told at what age Cain married or any other details for that matter. The inspired writer

is not interested in answering such questions. And while we may be curious about such things, the Bible was not written to satisfy our curiosity.

What is important for us to know is that as Cain, under the curse of God, wandered east he established a settlement that he named after his son Enoch. Though they did not acknowledge the Lord, they nevertheless bore the image of God. Therefore, even from the ungodly line of Cain came necessary building blocks of culture: The growth of families, agriculture, metallurgy, tool-making, and the arts.

In the 5th century masterpiece, *The City of God*, Augustine traces the origins of the sinful city of man to this first settlement founded by Cain. The advancement of the culture did not reduce the rot of sin. From Cain's disregard to the sanctity of the life of his brother eventually came the disregard of life so brazenly displayed in Lamech's violence (vv. 23-24). The first recorded instance of polygamy – an attack upon the sanctity of marriage – belongs to Lamech as well. There is also the matter of Cain's pride in naming the city after his son. This pride will grow in the line of Cain until, on the plains of Shinar, the builders of the tower seek to make a great name for themselves (11:4).

Only God can offer hope in the face of rising sin. And this he does by granting to Adam and Eve another son whom they named Seth which means "appointing." In spite of the great sorrow they suffered from the wreckage caused by Cain's sin, they did not abandon hope in God's gracious promise (3:15). And their hope was well grounded. For from the line of Seth men once again began to seek after the Lord as Abel once had done.

1. The rise of city of man

Vv. 17-22

- What is described in chapter 4 is the rise of the line of Cain (the seed of the serpent). Cain's refusal to repent of his act of murder and his hate-filled heart has led to the proliferation of sin. We will see this vividly in the life and words of his descendant Lamech. Nevertheless, they excel in culture building. They become skilled in music, agriculture, and metallurgy and tool-making. In his mercy God not only allows them to build a culture but to this day allows his people to benefit from the fruits of the labors of even the godless. Ironically, though they refuse to acknowledge God they nevertheless rely upon His merciful ordering of the world for the very advances they make; laws fixed by God's providence within creation.
- What is described here are the basic building blocks of culture. In the city of man you will find many fine people. Lasting friendships are formed in the city of man. Great achievements are accomplished. Among the citizens of the city of man are those who perform great acts of bravery. In the city of man are women who refuse chemo treatment for the sake of their unborn baby. There are good and lasting marriages in the line of Cain. This is because they are all made in the image and likeness of God.
- The condition of the city of man reminds us that culture, high or low, sophisticated or primitive cannot redeem. Nor can any civilization cure itself of sin. The same nation which gave us Bach and Einstein also gave us the Third Reich. The same country which gave us Tchaikovsky and St. Basil's Cathedral also gave us Stalin's Ukrainian genocide and gulags. And our nation which has contributed so many good things from religious liberty to the first Amendment to medical advancements and cures for dread diseases like polio – from George Washington to Booker T. Washington – this same nation has also made pornography easily accessible to the youngest children – has addicted itself to drugs – aborted over 60 million unborn persons – indulged hatred against neighbors – and made serial killers cultural icons.

2. The rot of sin

Vv. 17-24

- The advance of civilization does not deter the rise of sin. As civilization advances so does man's ability to sin in ever more creative and destructive ways. We see in the description of Cain's descendants the typical hallmarks of human sin.

a. Pride

Vs. 17

- Cain names his new settlement after his son Enoch (not to be confused with the Enoch mentioned in chapter 5). This is a preview of the sin of those who settled in the plains of Shinar whose goal was to make a great name for themselves (chapter 11).

b. Immorality

Vs. 19

- Lamech taking two wives is the first reference to polygamy in the Scriptures. Some have made the wrong conclusion that the Bible's descriptions of polygamy implies an endorsement of the practice. But this is not so. The Bible never endorses polygamy. Polygamy, like homosexuality and adultery, is an attack on the foundations of God's design for marriage. And like all attacks on the sanctity of God's design for marriage and sexuality, polygamy issues in further sin and brokenness.

c. Violence

Vv. 23-24

- Lamech boasts in his violence. He answers insult with murder. None of mankind's advances in governance, medicine, economics, or the arts have staved off the scourge of violence. Murder and abuse characterize the most advanced civilizations on the planet.
- Societies typically crumble from internal rot. Hostile outsiders may threaten. But nothing so destroys a society than its own moral corruption. I remember growing up in the Cold War in the 1970's and 80's. The fear then was Soviet missiles. And while that may have been a legitimate concern at the time, the greater threat has proven to come from within.

3. The hope of redemption

Vv. 25-26

- The birth of Seth is a moment full of hope. It signals the carrying forth of the godly "seed of the woman." Mentioned here are two essential characteristics of the godly life: faith and worship.

a. Faith

- Vs. 25 – The faith of Adam and Eve remains unshaken. Seth is a reminder to them that the seed of the serpent will not stamp out the seed of the woman.

b. Worship

- Vs. 26 – The clause translated "call upon the name of the Lord," became a common way to describe the worship of God's people. The church must never lose its focus on calling men and women to faith in Christ and the worship of the Triune God. Of all the good things the church can commit resources to, the call to faith and worship must remain its central vocation.
- Cain named his son Enoch which is also the name given to one in the righteous line of Seth. Enoch means to "initiate" or "to forge." This seems to indicate an attempt on Cain's part at a new beginning. It is noteworthy that Enoch, of Cain's line, has a city named for him, whereas Enoch of Seth's line is taken up to glory "to that city whose foundations and whose architect and builder is God."
- Here, Cain's line is traced through his son Enoch to Lamech. In chapter 5 the line of Enoch the descendant of Seth is traced to Noah. These two lines provide a study in contrasts between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. The descendants from Cain to Enoch all the way down to Lamech is filled with rebellion against God. But Seth's line which leads through Enoch to Noah is characterized by the gracious preservation of godliness. The enmity God promised between the seed of the serpent and the seed of woman (3:15) is a gracious promise. It is a promise which preserves the hope of redemption.