

7. The Progressive Civilisation of Sin (2007)

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[0 : 00] Well, do turn with me, if you would, to the book of Genesis and to Genesis chapter 4. And I should have said, just as the last hymn was announced, that during the hymn our youngest children go out for Sunday school.

Most of them know, of course, but if there are any visitors here and you missed that, I've even had it written in my notes twice the last week to remind me to do it, but there you go. Our children go out to Sunday school.

So if there's anybody else here or downstairs who want to avail themselves of that, now's the time to do so. The progressive civilization of sin.

Now, Christian people face a lot of hostility in the world today. As we were mentioning in prayer, some of us received the news from the Barnabas Fund.

And this latest edition was all about the suffering of believers in Iraq. And Release International's magazine just last week similarly spoke about the same thing from many other places. And we know that the 20th century saw more Christian martyrs than all the other 19th centuries that went before it, put together.

[1 : 16] Of course, in this country, in recent times, we don't know anything about that kind of real persecution. Although, if we go back a few centuries to the killing times of the 17th century here in Scotland, there was plenty of that.

If you go around the graveyards of some of the Ayrshire churches today, you'll see many memorials, the Covenanters, who were persecuted and martyred for their faith then. But even today, in our secularized world, we do find plenty of hostility to real, clear Christian faith.

We find it from the media. We find it from increasingly aggressive other religions today, don't we? And we find it in creeping ways from the state itself, in legislation that we're beginning to see passed.

And so bitter is this hatred against the one true God, the God of the Bible, made known in Jesus Christ, that we find a deeply ingrained hatred, even against civilizations that bear association through their history with the God of the Bible.

So, the so-called Christian West, although it's very, very far from being Christian, is hated today in the Muslim world. And Israel today, although it's very, very far from the Lord Jesus Christ, is nevertheless hated the world over by the religious and by secularists alike, just because of the association that lives on in the human heart with the God of the Bible from their past.

[2 : 49] Now, these things are not just accidental. These are deep-rooted divisions that go right back to the very dawn of human history.

And Genesis chapter 4 goes a long way to explaining for us why human history has been one of such fracture and division and strife. As we've discovered already, Moses is not just writing history, although he is doing that.

Of course, Cain and Abel and their stories are real enough. The New Testament makes that very plain for us. But it is more than that. And the New Testament as well shows us that in these two men lies the root of two cultures, two whole destinies.

Those who are like Cain, as 1 John 3 and 12 tells us, and are of the evil one. And those who are like Abel, as Hebrew 11 speaks.

People of faith, and therefore people of God. And so even for his first readers, Moses is giving a message of both realism and of hope. Realism about the conflict that has always been and always will be between the people of Cain and the people of Abel.

[4 : 00] But also hope, that the fact of conflict and violent oppressions towards God's people is not the whole story. Hope, because God is still in control.

He knows what he's doing. And all such things are according to his gracious plan and purpose. A plan and purpose that is for the ultimate blessing and glory of those who are his own. His one true people of faith. And it was a message that Moses' people desperately needed. Just as hard-pressed believers today desperately need this message.

Israel certainly then knew what it meant to face hostility and violence and anger. In Egypt, remember, they were sorely oppressed. But now they were facing the land of Canaan with all its fierce inhabitants, with its great cities.

And ever after in the land they were surrounded, weren't they, by ferocious enemies. And that's why, you see, at the end of his life, as we have said several times, Moses wrote down all these words, Genesis to Deuteronomy as we know it, and commanded it to be read again and again before the people, so that they would remember God's truth and be strong and courageous.

[5 : 15] Deuteronomy 31, verse 6, he says, Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.

And part of what Moses wrote, of course, was Genesis chapter 4. A chapter that lays out for us the last act, if you like, of this first book of beginnings that began in chapter 2, verse 4.

The generation, the beginning of the heavens and the earth. You'll see it, chapter 5, verse 1, the next book begins. The generations of Adam. And it's a chapter that tells us all about the progressive civilization of sin in the world of humanity.

I've chosen that title because of its deliberate ambiguity. Because this chapter tells us how sin permeates and becomes pervasive in the culture of humanity in such a way that it can be both something that scares us and something that seduces us.

We can be scared by its sheer corruption and bestiality. But we can also be seduced by it because sin's civilization also embraces real culture and beauty at the same time.

[6 : 30] And Moses wanted to guard his people and us against both. Don't be scared by the conflict, by the opposition that you will face in an ungodly world.

He will never leave you or forsake you, he says. But don't be seduced either by the civilization of a godless world. You must never leave and forsake the Lord for the bright attainments and lights of human idolatry and self-glory and self-deification.

And that's what this chapter is all about. And I think we'll find that it has as much to say to us today as it did to those who first heard it, way back in the time of Moses.

So let's look at the chapter then in a little bit of detail. Now we looked at this chapter not very long ago, didn't we, in our series on the questions God asks men and women. And we focused particularly on the question that God asks in verse 6.

Why are you angry? But today I want to look at the whole chapter and get a sense of the bigger picture. And if you were listening in the reading with the children, I think you'll see that it divides clearly, doesn't it, into three sections.

[7 : 37] Each beginning with those words, Adam knew his wife. Then verse 17, Cain knew his wife. And then verse 25, Adam knew his wife again. So let's look at these three acts in the drama then, under three headings.

First of all, a conflict is begun. Secondly, a city is built. And thirdly, a church is born. First then, look at verses 1 to 16.

A conflict begins. And these verses are all about the enmity of the godless human heart. They tell us that man's heart, when it's full of resentment against God, will also inevitably be full of hatred for God's people, just because they are God's people.

They will hate you, remember, said Jesus, because of me. You see, this is not just a story of murder, not even just a story of fratricide, killing his brother.

It's a story of religiously motivated hatred and murder, isn't it? What we're beginning to see here is the curse of Genesis 3, 15, being played out in the reality of human history.

[8 : 50] Remember, I will put enmity between your offspring, the serpent's, and her offspring. That's Eve's line, people of true faith. And it's the progressive entail of sin that we're beginning to see here in this chapter.

It begins by corrupting and destroying the relationship of the first couple, then the first family, and then human societies as a whole. Until when we get down to chapter 6, verse 5, we read these awful words, The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

But here is where it began. Now, notice first what the root of this conflict really is. There are two seeds, two offspring, but not just by accident of birth, rather because they represent two sovereignties at work in the world, and two sovereignties, two rules in the human heart. The verses 1 and 2 tell us of the natural birth of Cain. A man, Eve, says she has gotten with God's help. Difficult to know if Eve's expression there is a mark of faith, or as some scholars suggest, well, she's actually essentially saying, I've really done this myself, with a little bit of help from God. I'm not sure. But what is certain is that Moses pinpoints for us very clearly the root of the conflict is not just normal family tensions. It's spiritual.

[10:27] Verses 3 to 5 make clear, don't they, that God had regard for Abel, but not for Cain. And the root problem was a heart problem. Cain was religious.

He brought sacrifices. But he felt that God should be delighted with Cain's ideas about what worshipping God really meant, regardless of what God's ideas were. Whereas Abel was quite different.

Abel had a humble and an obedient heart. And that's reflected for us in his sacrifice. Verse 4 tells us he gave of the best, not just any old thing, the firstborn.

And he gave the fat portions, the very choice portions. And every Israelite hearing this under Moses knew perfectly well that that was what God commanded, the firstborn, the best, the firstfruits.

You see, Cain did religion his way. And he was very angry when God dared to say, well, I'm sorry, Cain, but I'm the Lord, not you.

[11:28] And I decide things, not you. But Abel, by contrast, did religion God's way. He listened to God and he approached God the way God commanded.

The only way there is for man to come to a holy God through God's appointed sacrifice and no other. And that is the fundamental divide that separates the world into two seeds.

Because they represent two sovereignties, two rulers in our lives. It's either God or it's ourselves. It's either God's way or our way. And it has been ever since.

Francis Schaeffer puts it this way. From this time on in the flow of history, there are two humanities. The one humanity says there is no God, or it makes gods of its own imagination, or it tries to come to the true God in its own way.

The other humanity comes to the true God in God's way. And there is no neutral ground. So that's the root of the spiritual conflict.

[12:35] The world is divided forever into these two humanities. Two seeds destined by two sovereignties. The one true God and his way and his rule versus everything else that is not that.

Well, notice secondly, the result of this conflict. There are two sins, aren't there? Cain sins against God, not just in his first attitude, which God rebukes, but also in an entrenched and a willing defiance to refuse God's mercy.

See, in verses 6 and 7, God holds out a better way to Cain, doesn't he? It's a promise. You too can be accepted, Cain, if you do it my way. That's what he's saying. But it's also a warning, isn't it?

If you don't, if you deliberately choose the power of sin as your master, well, sin is crouching at your door. It desires to devour you. A promise and a warning.

And that is the eternal gospel, isn't it? Revelation 14.6 calls it that. The eternal gospel that says, Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment is come.

[13:47] But no, Cain sins on, persistently, and deliberately saying no to God. And that's a very, very dangerous thing to do, you know.

To willfully refuse the grace and the mercy of God like that. But people do it. People do it today. And Cain did it then.

And that's what led to his second sin against his brother Abel. Bruce Waltke says, Because he fails at the altar, he fails in the field.

Because he fails in his theology, he will fail in his ethics. And the Bible tells us that plainly, that corrupt behavior always flows from corrupt thinking. Read Romans chapter 1.

It's refusal to honor God that darkens people's minds and that leads to debased behavior. Because it's the reverse, isn't it, of true worship, of what we're made for. We're made to love the Lord our God with our heart and our soul and our mind and our strength.

[14:49] And therefore our neighbor as ourself. But Cain, in Cain's world, they will not love the Lord, but hate him.

And therefore they hate also their neighbors. Cain de-God's God, and therefore he dehumanizes himself at the same time. The one always follows the other.

And if you look at verse 14, he recognizes that, doesn't he? He tells us he's lost everything that human beings need. He's lost his identity. He's driven from the ground and from God.

He's driven from the one he's made for and for the thing he's made for. He's lost his society. He becomes a fugitive, a wanderer. He's lost his security.

Everyone who finds me will want to kill me, he says. All because he refuses God's blessing. And he brings upon himself the curse that God placed upon his enemy, the devil.

[15 : 52] Verse 14, Now you are cursed. See, he has chosen himself the path of the evil one to be of him, to be his seed. You see, if you refuse persistently the offer of God's mercy, even when he repeats it and comes back to you as he did to Cain, then eventually God will give you what you really want.

If what you say is, I want to be of the serpent. I want to be of the evil one. I want to be under the curse. And that's the root here and the result of the conflict for Cain and for God's people always because of Cain's continuing line.

Now do you notice that? Conflict goes on for God's people because of God's mercy even to Cain. God doesn't destroy Cain, does he?

Now in verse 15 it's quite the opposite. He protects Cain. Even Cain, of the evil one, a fanatical God-hater, even Cain is a recipient of God's preserving grace, at least in this earthly life.

Isn't that staggering? God doesn't wipe out Cain. Or as we'll see, his progeny either, at least not yet. It's interesting, isn't it?

[17 : 20] Because today we talk a lot about the problem of judgment. And we shy away from the thought of a God who can judge. God's judgment is a real problem to us in our modern secularized world.

And yet in the Bible it's the very opposite that's the problem, isn't it? The real problem is why God doesn't judge. Why do the evil prosper? That's the great cry of the psalmist, isn't it?

When will you judge the wicked, O Lord? Why are there so many enemies surrounding your people? Why not wipe them out right now? Where's the justice? I guess there'll be Christians praying that very thing today, won't there?

In parts of the world where they are facing real persecution. But we also pray these things, don't we, in our own way? God, please take away these injustices that I face, these struggles, these conflicts that I have.

But you see, this God has a bigger agenda, doesn't he? Well, Jesus tells us that, doesn't he, of his heavenly Father. He's the one who makes the sun rise on the evil as well as the good.

[18 : 31] And the apostle Peter tells us why, doesn't he, in his second letter. Do you remember? The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise, but patient, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

You see, even God's judgments are merciful judgments in history. He preserves even Cain and his lines so that in the fullness of time there will be, through the salvation that God has promised by his holy seed, there will be many, even of the rebellious of the earth, who will reach such repentance and will again be called sons of the living God.

And I guess there are many of us in fact, all of us here today just because of that. Isn't that true?

But you see, for that to be so, there must be down the ages conflict for God's people.

There must be suffering for the seed of the woman, the holy seed, the people of God. And there will always be until God's final judgment does at last come.

And he separates one from another, the sheep and the goats, the wheat and the tares, those who are of Cain, and those who are of Abel. And do you see the encouragement that there must have been for God's people Israel under Moses?

[19 : 56] That the conflict that they faced was real, but it was precisely because of their precious calling to be a people through whom God's blessing would come to all nations, even those who were at that time still their enemies.

families. The privilege of being the people of the holy seed of God is to be a people born into conflict. Conflict and battles and hatred and persecution.

These things aren't a sign of God's curse upon his people but of his blessing. Not of his absence but of his presence. He will never leave you nor forsake you though there will be battles aplenty.

Isn't that what the New Testament tells us as believers today is exactly the same for us? Jesus' teaching is full of it, isn't it? In the world you shall have tribulation, conflict. But blessed are you he says when men revile and persecute you on my account.

Rejoice and be glad for great is your reward in heaven. You're part of God's wonderful plan of salvation. Because it's a sign that you are people of real faith. You are able people.

[21 : 08] And it's always been so. All through history. Remember in Galatians 4 Paul picks up the same conflict. Different identities involve it. Isaac and Ishmael but again he says the same thing.

It's always been the way. The one of the natural seed persecuting those who are of the spirit. Remember Peter in his first letter says, Brothers, don't be surprised at the fiery trial you're facing as though it was something strange.

Rather rejoice in as much as you share Christ's sufferings that you may be glad when his glory is revealed. Isn't that a staggering thing to say? Not just to rejoice in sufferings but the reason that we rejoice he says we share in Christ's sufferings.

You see, all the holy seed share in the sufferings of the great seed, the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul says the same thing in Philippians chapter 1.

It has been granted to you, he says, that you for the sake of Christ not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake engaged in the same conflict that you saw that I had and still have.

[22 : 22] You see, we share in Christ's sufferings. We bear the pain of conflict for his sake so that the mercy of Christ may yet reach a lost world of Cain.

If God had destroyed Cain, if God had cut off Cain's seed, there would have been no conflict, would there, for the godly line of Seth. There would have been no enemies for Israel.

But there would have been no salvation for a lost world. But God chose for his chosen seed to bear the pain of conflict so that through Abraham's seed salvation might come not only to Israel but to all nations.

Now doesn't that give a rather different perspective to the struggles that we often face today as believers? Especially to the opposition that we sometimes face in our own personal ministries and mission and lives of witness.

We say to ourselves, oh, for an end to this conflict. But you see, the Bible tells us, yes, there will certainly be an end to that conflict because Abel's blood still cries out from the ground and every injustice will be judged by God.

[23 : 41] God is not slow, says Peter. He's not unjust. But he is merciful. And he is willing to suffer evil even himself so that the great harvest that he is determined to have, he shall have.

at the end of time. You see, when the day of conflict ends for God's people, so also the day of mercy will end for God's enemies.

But until then, because we face conflict, there is a day of salvation. And even enemies may be brought to the grace that is in Christ.

Christ. So we shouldn't fear, we shouldn't despair at the reality of the kind of conflict we face and will always face in our Christian lives. We share Christ's sufferings.

It's for the sake of his mercy that that mercy may reach even those who are still enemies, who still refuse to buy the need of Christ, that they may yet find repentance.

[24 : 48] And that there will be, as the Bible tells us, multitudes of every language and tribe and people and nation praising the sovereign rule of our Lord Jesus Christ. Even the enmity of the godless human heart serves the glorious purpose of our God.

That's what the psalmist means when he says, even the wrath of man shall praise him. And that perspective ought to help us, I think, with the second section here, beginning at verse 17 to verse 24.

It tells us, a city is built. Because these are verses all about the enigma of godless human history. They describe, don't they, the ambiguity of the human culture and civilization which has developed for the most part from those who are not seeking God's glory but are pursuing man's glory.

In fact, they're in opposition to God. And yet, they're not totally abandoned. by God and his mercy and his many gifts and mercies. Do you see how the ongoing blessing of God is still at work in the world of men despite the rebellion of Cain?

Verse 17 says, Cain knew his wife and she conceived Enoch. In verse 18, he had children and then grandchildren and great-grandchildren and so on. You see, the blessing of God of creation from chapter 1, verse 28, be fruitful and multiply.

[26 : 18] It's not revoked even though it is tinged with pain from the curse. By the way, if you're worried about where Cain found his wife, you don't need to worry.

It's obvious that it was a sister or a relative of his. The genealogies that we have here don't mention everybody. Chapter 5 is quite clear about that. Nor has there been any prohibition on that yet. So, don't let that be a great worry to you. But God's blessing goes on. They are fruitful. They multiply. And similarly, the cultural advancements and the civilization that's described here is another evidence of God's ongoing purpose for man to subdue the earth, to have dominion over the earth.

He builds cities. Culture and civilization begins to flourish. Even though it's chiefly godless. It's seeking in human activity and human creativity what can only really be found in God himself. And what man has forfeited, in fact, by rejecting God. Cain, you see in verse 17, builds a city. It's not the city of God, it's a city of man. He names it after his own creation, after his son.

[27 : 30] Just like the Egyptians did with their cities called Ramesses and Pishon and so on. And Moses clearly realizes his people will get the point about that. It's the line of Cain that builds cities and names it after their own glory.

But he's doing it, you see, to seek the solution to the curse that he's brought upon himself. Why do you build a city? Why do you build a civilization and a culture? Well, it's to give you, isn't it, the things that Cain had lost.

Identity and society and security. The very things that he says God has robbed him of in verse 14. And that's what humanity has been doing ever since, isn't it?

Still does today, building cities to the glory of man. cities, nations, civilizations, cultures, philosophies. They're all there to give us meaning, to give us significance, society, security. And that is what explains the enigma, the ambiguity of our human history. Francis Schaeffer, again, used the term that man is a ruin, but he is a glorious ruin.

[28 : 38] And that's exactly what we see in these verses, isn't it? They tell us of this glorious ruin of human civilization, the city of man. See, on the one hand, we do have, don't we, in these verses, a great glorious advance of human culture and civilization.

It speaks about the birth of architecture, verse 17, city building, of agriculture, verse 19, Jabal, a man of livestock, of the arts, verse 21, Jubal with his flutes and his lyres, and of artisans, in verse 22, Tubal Cain, the father of all technology, instruments, bronze and iron and so on.

You see, the whole gamut of human civilization in all its glory, it all comes from Cain, from godless humanity. Isn't that striking? Because man is still made in God's image.

He is a ruin, but there is glory still in that ruin. And therefore, he has blessed the earth even despite himself, even in rebellion against God.

That's what we call God's common grace. God's grace is at work in the world, for all the world, blessing, the sun shining on the just as well as the unjust. Not everything that's good in the world has come from Christians, has it?

[29 : 58] Of course not. Many of the things that we rejoice in, that we need in our daily lives. They've been created, they've been invented, they've been pioneered by total pagans. But we rejoice in them.

And of course, not all things that have been created by Christians are necessarily good. See, Moses is plain here, he's telling us that we're not to despise things just because they're not Christian, if you like.

They come from the line of Cain. Whether it's music, or the arts, or sciences, or whatever, they're good gifts from God. It's God's grace to all men. That's important because some Christians don't grasp that.

We make a kind of sacred and secular divide, something that's quite unreal. We talk about Christian music, and secular music, or Christian art, and secular art, and all sorts of other things.

You find some Christians who insist that they must have a Christian doctor, or a Christian psychiatrist, or whatever. I've got no objection to Christian doctors, or as a matter of fact, Christian psychiatrists, especially female ones.

[31 : 10] But let me tell you, when I'm ill, whether it's a broken leg or a broken mind, I want a good doctor, and a good psychiatrist. Whether they're Christian, really, is quite immaterial, quite second place. I certainly don't want a Christian one who's useless.

And that goes for architecture, goes for everything in life, doesn't it? Music, the arts, civilization, technology, science. And you see, the whole point of these verses is that the people of God are to see that God uses even those who despise him to bring blessing to the world, and therefore blessing to God's people.

Through the blessing that is at work, through the glory even of ruined humanity, even despite themselves. So we're not to despise the culture of Cain's descendants.

But then again, we are not either to deify the culture of Cain's descendants. Moses may be having a tilt here against the pagan notions that all of these things came from the gods, music and wine and the livestock and so on.

But no, Moses is saying quite the opposite. The humanities are exactly that. They're just human. And ultimately, they come from God alone and from his grace. So we're not to deify culture and civilization.

[32 : 25] We're not to spiritualize it. It's just a human thing. We're not to be mesmerized by man's glory and forget the true object of worship who is God alone.

Now that was a real warning for Israel. It was necessary. If you read in Deuteronomy chapter 12, for example, you'll see that Moses warns against them being ensnared by the lures of Canaanite culture.

But it's also a really important thing for us too, isn't it? Because our world does idolize these things. Education, culture, progress, the arts, science.

There's a beguiling beauty, isn't there, in man's glory. But we must not be deceived by these things. We must see the other side, the ruinous side also of man.

Not just his glory. So we mustn't despise man's civilization, but we mustn't deceive ourselves either about the other side. And that is what verses 23 and 24 speak about, isn't it?

[33 : 29] Alongside the high culture goes high corruption. See, verse 19 tells us Lamech had two wives despising God's creation order for one man and one woman to be one flesh forever.

And so, we shouldn't be surprised that along with his sexual deviation goes social depravation. It's very often the way, isn't it? And he's not just a murderer like Cain, his ancestor.

He boasts and sings about his murder. Verse 23, listen you wives. I wonder if he's telling him to take notice, not to mess with him. Listen you wives.

You touch Lamech, you get blown away. That's what he's saying. A man wounded him. Well, you don't wound Lamech because you retaliate with murder.

The word there for young man actually means boy, young boy. A boy wounded Lamech and Lamech blasted him away. If Cain's avenged seven times by God, well look at me, I will outdo God seventy times.

[34 : 33] You touch Lamech, you really meet vengeance. It can almost do as a modern rap song, couldn't it? It's just the kind of thing that's being sung in our cities today, isn't it?

By disaffected youth. Glorifying murder and violence. Touch me, you get blown away. The song of Lamech. Bruce Walkie says, Cain's identity is marred by violence, but Lamech's is marked by violence.

And that's the progression. And that too is a feature of human advance and culture and civilization, isn't it?

Alas, we know it only too well because glorious as he is without God, man is a ruin and man creates ruin. And that's the enigma of godless human history, isn't it?

The advance of progress and culture and civilization, but with it the advance and the progress of corruption cruelty. Beauty, yes, but with it bestiality and brutality.

[35 : 44] Enterprise, yes, but with it evil, high culture, and yet at the same time heinous cruelty. These things so often go together, don't they?

That's a story of history. The rise of humanity is matched by the rise of inhumanity. Think of ancient Babylon, full of those wonderful works of art, the wonders of the world, but also full of the weeping of the brutalized people.

Same in ancient Egypt. Think of Rome and Greece. Think of Nazi Germany with its wonderful concert halls on the one hand and its awful concentration camps on the other. and it's true in the celebrated cultures of today as well.

I was just reading this article by Melanie Phillips this week entitled, From the cradle to the grave, life has never been so cheap as it is today. She's speaking of the new Mental Capacity Act which has

torn up protection for the most vulnerable.

It's enshrined the destruction of our most fundamental prohibition against killing and grotesquely presents it instead as a therapeutic measure. At both ends of the life cycle it seems that our society is rapidly evolving into a culture of death.

[36 : 55] What was once considered worthy of the utmost respect, human life and the right not to be killed has now become an inconvenience to be snuffed out like a candle flame. We are forgetting what it is to be human.

Life has become very cheap. The cost to our culture, however, she says is incalculable. But these two things go together.

High culture and high cruelty and corruption. And it's baffling, isn't it, to the liberal mindset. To those who think that at our core mankind are basically good.

If only we're set free then our liberated genius will lead us to utopia. But no, you see, the Bible tells us the truth. It faces squarely the enigma of human history and it explains it.

There is glory because God has not absolutely departed from man. But man has absolutely departed from God and that is why also there is a horror of ruin.

[37 : 59] It's a pretty sobering picture, isn't it? But who could say that Genesis chapter 4 doesn't speak to our culture today? But it's not quite the end of the chapter, is it?

Because as well as explaining our world, the Bible also points us to the answer to it as well. Look at these last two verses as we close. Because they tell us, don't they, that in the midst of the enmity of conflict, in the midst of the enigma of human civilization and culture, in the midst of all of that, a church is born.

And these verses speak unequivocally of the endurance of godly human hope. Over and against the entail of sin and the curse of man, there is an inextinguishable certainty in the promise of God of a future for those who will reject the hubris and the arrogance of man and turn humbly instead to God.

It's just tagged on at the end, isn't it? Two little verses. And yet in fact, we're right back to Adam and Eve and to their new offspring that comes alongside Cain, Seth, whose name means granted or appointed by God.

It seems, doesn't it, just like a bit of a footnote to the story, but that's the style, isn't it, of the God of the Bible? Behind all the vain glory of man, he is at work, quietly in the background, but he is at work.

[39 : 25] And here's the answer to all the pride of man, to all the ruin of the world, a little child, but one on whom the whole future of humanity is staked.

It's the beginning of a new line, isn't it? A counter-culture, a holy seed in the midst, the evidence that God's promise has not failed, that his seed will not be destroyed.

No, a church is born, a community of faith, will abide through all of that until everything is accomplished in God's gracious plan. And look what marks out these people of hope.

First, it's there in Eve's words, isn't it? They trust in the holy seed. And she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, God has appointed, well, a seed of salvation.

That's what she's saying, isn't it? God's promise lives on. It's a wonderful echo in those words, isn't there, all down the ages. It's a word of faith in the promise. Behold, says Isaiah, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and you shall call his name Emmanuel.

[40 : 41] And at last, the angel to Mary, the young peasant girl in Nazareth. Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus.

For he, says the angel to Joseph, at last, will save his people from their sins. But here it is, right back at the beginning. To the hymn that we sang, O Christ, the same, through all our stories' pages. The same gospel, the same hope, right at the start. In the midst of the conflict, through all the progressive civilization of sin and culture opposed to God, there is hope for those who will trust in the Holy Seed.

Verse 26 says, Seth also bore a son and he called his name Enosh. A name that means weakness. That's so significant, isn't it?

Because people who will trust in the Holy Seed are a people who look not to their own strength and might to build their city of salvation, not to their glory and their civilization and their culture, but rather they're people who are content with a humble spirit.

[41 : 51] They know their weakness. They confess it publicly. He named his son the weak one. That's us. But they also know, don't they, that God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble.

That he saves a humble people but the haughty eyes he brings down. And so, putting their trust in the Holy Seed, being content with a humble spirit, they call out, don't they, to a heavenly savior. At that time, people began to call on the name of the Lord. And that's the only answer, isn't it, to this world's longings? Don't look to this world's civilization for your help. That's the world of Cain, the world of Lamech. That can't help you. It'll only hurt you. It'll only destroy you. But your help, says Moses, is in the name of the Lord. And as you call on him from a humble heart, and as you look for the coming of the Holy Seed, the promised one, the Savior of heaven, you have hope. And the people of faith long ago needed that word, didn't they?

[43 : 02] The land of Canaan offered them many, many alternative ways, many attractive ways, powerful culture, religions, all things so attractive. But Moses consistently said, you will not serve the Lord your God that way, but you must seek only the place that the Lord your God chooses to make his name dwell.

And we need it just the same, don't we? When the conflict of the life of faith wearies us, when the sheer scale of the city of man, the culture, the civilization that we live in that is opposed to God, when it just overwhelms us and we feel so tiny and so marginalized, we need to remember that church is born and the church will be forever.

And when all the glory of this world and its civilization and its culture, when it lies in dust and ashes, the church of Jesus Christ will stand still and will stand forever.

Because neither the city of man or, as Jesus says, the very gates of hell itself shall ever prevail against it. So, friends, don't despair.

However great the conflict that you are facing, but trust and keep on trusting in the Holy Seed. Call out and keep on calling out to a heavenly Savior from humble hearts.

[44 : 37] That's the only hope that there is amidst the progressive civilization of sin. But it is a certain hope. It's a hope that will never, ever disappoint us.

And it's the same hope through all our stories pages from then and now. Let me close by reading Paul's words in Philippians 3.

Brothers, join in imitating me and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. For many of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears walk as enemies of the cross of Christ.

Their end is destruction. Their God is their belly and their glory in their shame with minds set on earthly things. That's Cain's world. Lamech's world.

But our citizenship, he says, our city is in heaven. And from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

[45 : 47] Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and my crying, stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.

Amen. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we call out your name as your people have done from the very beginning.

We rejoice in the promise and in the certain hope that is ours through the great, holy seat, our Lord Jesus Christ. Will you keep us looking for him and longing for him until the conflict is ended.

But in these days, while that conflict persists, may we also share the patience and the love of heaven, which is not slow but merciful, and desires that none should perish but that all should come to repentance.

and may that day of opportunity thrill us amid the conflict as we also extend to this world the hope that is in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

[47 : 09] May we ask it in his name. Amen.