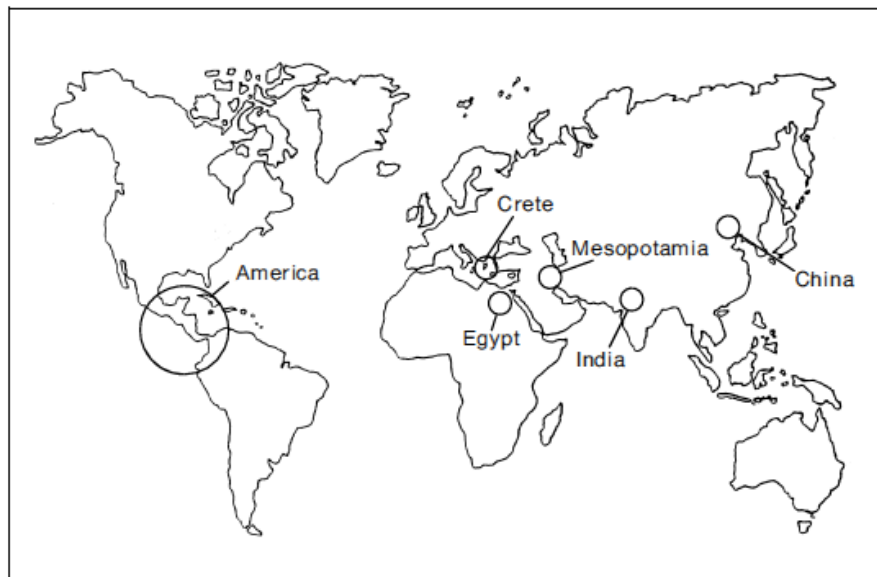


**Six centres of 'civilisation'**

The next phase of the story brings us to the rise of what we call 'civilisation'. 'Civilisation' was first established in six centres of the world (see Map 3).

**Mesopotamia**

i. The world's oldest known civilisation developed in '**Mesopotamia**'. The descendants of Cain and Seth, and the descendants of Noah, lived in this area. To them it was 'the earth'. Genesis 4 finds its setting in the 'New stone age' culture which arose in Mesopotamia. Civilisation in that area is recognizable to historians from about 5000 BC and Genesis 4:17–24 lets us know its beginnings were even earlier. The 'Sumerian' culture, which was well established by 3500 BC, is the first civilisation that historians are able to study in some detail with the aid of written records.



Map 3: The first six civilisations

There were other civilisations that started soon after.

**Egypt**

ii. In **Egypt** there were people hunting, fishing and gathering crops in 5000 BC, and Egypt became a kingdom under its first king in about 3200 BC.

**India**

iii. Neolithic culture reached **India** in about 4000 BC and the first Indian civilisation began in about 2500 BC.

**Crete**

iv. Towns were being built in **Crete** in about 2500 BC and civilisation there was well established by 2000 BC.

**China**

v. In **China** there is evidence of agriculture from about 5000 BC and the first Chinese civilisation dates from about 1700 BC.

**Central America**

vi. Further away there was a civilisation that began in **the American continent** (from about 1500 BC onwards). After about 1500 BC there were no new civilisations that emerged independently of the rest of the world.

**Genesis 1-11  
– the new  
stone age in  
Mesopotamia**

Genesis chapters 1–11 concentrates on only one of these civilisations. Everything in these chapters is set in the world between the Tigris and the Euphrates, that is, in Mesopotamia. If we try to relate Genesis to what is known by historians we must say that Genesis 4:1 7ff tells the story of the rise of ‘new stone age’ culture in the first civilisation in the history of the world.

**4:17 – c1300 BC**

In trying to understand the history of the world and how it fits with Genesis, the difficulty is to discover how Genesis 3 links with Genesis 4. It is fairly sure that Genesis 4 describes the rise of ‘new stone age’ culture. The events of Genesis 4:17 onwards must be dated at about 13,000 BC. By the time we have got to Genesis 5:30 we have reached about 5600 BC. ‘Civilisation’ brought many blessings, yet it is also the story of the human race continuing to fall into deeper disobedience and hatred. Even though Cain has been wicked and murderous he continues to live, and from him and his children come the early civilisations of the Mesopotamian valley.

**5:30 – c 5600 BC**

**Cain’s  
descendants**

**1. Marriage and  
childbirth**

1. **Marriage and childbirth continues.** <sup>1</sup> Cain has a wife and one of his children is named Enoch. God allows the human race to continue despite its sinfulness.

<sup>1</sup> 4:17

**2. Cities**

2. **We have the rise of cities.** <sup>1</sup> The earliest city known to historians is Jericho. But Cain built a city even earlier, and named it after his son, Enoch. It is interesting that cities arise in the line of the wicked Cain. Cities arise when people want to congregate together, often for self-centred reasons. People are dissatisfied and fearful. They want to be near other people so that they can feel safe. Yet when they build cities and congregate together the city turns out to be not so wonderful after all! Despite the fact that people can crowd together, cities can be dangerous and lonely places. They can be places of violence and poverty. The city seems to offer security but then it turns out to be a place of threats and hazards. Cain’s building a city was an attempt to overthrow the curse of Genesis 4:14. He had been condemned to a life of vagrancy and loneliness, and he was attempting to overthrow God’s judgement on him. Yet he did not succeed. Cities do not provide the protection and safety that they are intended to provide.

<sup>1</sup> 4:17

**3. Polygamy – a  
lapse from  
God’s original  
plan**

3. **We have the first mention of polygamy in the Bible.** In the line of Cain, after Enoch comes Irad, then Mehujael, then Methushael, and then Lamech <sup>1</sup>, and Lamech becomes the first polygamist to be mentioned in the Bible.

<sup>1</sup> 4:18

Again, it is interesting that polygamy arises in the line of Cain. It was a lapse from God’s original plan. Again it is an attempt by the human race to defy God’s way of doing things. Polygamy is not the same as promiscuity. It is a form of marriage. Yet it is a step down from God’s ideal. It leads either to jealousies or to a lack of close family life. It began in the line of Cain.

**Common blessings given to all**

• **Have limitations**

• **Can never bring salvation**

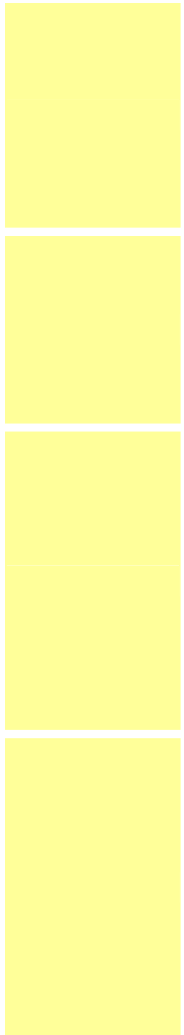
• **God's Blessings come only from calling on the name of Yahweh**



The human race tries to find peace and satisfaction in the natural blessings of life. Childbirth, city-life, marriage and sexuality – these are blessings that God has given to the human race. They are part of His general goodness to all men. God is good to everyone and causes His sun to shine on the just and the unjust.

Yet these 'common blessings' of the human race have two limitations to them. They get misused by sinners. The descendants of Adam were furnished with these earthly and ordinary blessing, yet as we shall see, they used them only in the interests of sin.

It follows that a further limitation to the 'common blessings' is that they can never bring salvation. Men and women try to find peace and satisfaction and security in marriage, in building communities, in pressing for more and more sexual pleasures. But there is no salvation in these things and they let us down if we look to them to provide more than they are able to provide. The people of Cain continue to deteriorate despite God's goodness to them.

The thing that is missing is mentioned in Genesis 4:26. '*People began to call upon the name of Yahweh*'. It is calling upon God that brings salvation. Otherwise we have the blessings but not the Giver of them. And when you have the blessings but not the Giver of them, the blessings turn out to be not so marvellous after all. Families! Cities! Wives! But there will be no blessing in such things unless there is a calling on the name of Yahweh as well.



	<p><b>Dr Michael Eaton</b> is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)</i> books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>		
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