

For 14 years, potential singing stars have auditioned on the X-Factor. But, unfortunately, not all of them can sing. Have a look: [Video: X factor – Temple Fire](#)

I find watching people like that so painful. It seems cruel to laugh at them. But it also makes me really wonder not only, why can't they see how bad they are, but also why don't their family and friends tell them.

Maybe they don't want to hurt their feelings or dash their dreams. But is it really a kindness to hide the truth from people – and leave them to face a devastating judgement later on? Would it not be better to help them face the uncomfortable truth now before things get too serious?

That's why

- Teachers correct their student's wrong answers.
- Or why driving instructors point out all our mistakes when we're learning to drive.
- Or why the doctor tell us about our high blood pressure or cholesterol.

It's not comfortable to be told these things, but they do it because they know that if we don't face up to an accurate judgement of ourselves now, then we won't be prepared for the ultimate judgement to come.

And so this morning's passage is uncomfortable reading. It shows some unpleasant truths about humanity. But God wants us to accept this judgement, so that we can be prepared for the ultimate judgement to come.

Genesis 5:28-6:8: "When Lamech had lived 182 years, he had a son. <sup>29</sup> He named him Noah and said, "He will comfort us in the labour and painful toil of our hands caused by the ground the Lord has cursed." <sup>30</sup> After Noah was born, Lamech lived 595 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>31</sup> Altogether, Lamech lived 777 years, and then he died.

<sup>32</sup> After Noah was 500 years old, he became the father of Shem, Ham and Japheth.

<sup>6</sup> When men began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, <sup>2</sup> the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose. <sup>3</sup> Then the Lord said, "My Spirit will not contend with man for ever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years."

<sup>4</sup> The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterwards—when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown.

<sup>5</sup> The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. <sup>6</sup> The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. <sup>7</sup> So the Lord said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth—men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air—for I am grieved that I have made them." <sup>8</sup> But Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord."

## 1. Lamech Hoped for a Better World

A couple of weeks ago we thought about a guy called Lamech. He was a descendant of Cain and boasted to his two wives that in revenge he had killed a young man.

But the Lamech in this passage, was a descendant of Seth. And he was a different kind of person. When his son was born, he named him Noah, which sounds like the Hebrew word for comfort or rest because he said, "He will comfort us in the labour and painful toil of our hands caused by the ground the Lord has cursed." Genesis 5:29

This was Lamech's optimistic dream for his son. Life was hard. Producing food in this fallen world was exhausting. Lamech desperately hoped that Noah would bring comfort and rest.

I think many people are still hoping for that today. They long to be relaxed and content, safe and comfortable, healthy and happy. But the world is not like that.

## 2. God Saw A Wicked World

When God looked at the world, he didn't see a world that was heading for comfort and rest.

### a) It was Very Good

Before, at the end of the creation week, "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good." Genesis 1:31 He was pleased with what he saw because it reflected his wisdom and power, his beauty and majesty, his character and love.

### b) Now It Was Very Corrupt

But now, as God looked at the world, he saw something very different. [“The Lord saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become.”](#) Genesis 6:5 He saw a world filled with violence, brutality, selfishness and greed. A world where men and women had rejected his leadership and instead were doing what they wanted.

We’ve seen that with Adam and Eve, with Cain and with Lamech. And here is another insight into this in Genesis 6:2: [“The sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose.”](#)

This verse has been notoriously difficult to understand and has been endlessly debated, so we’re not going to get bogged down by it. But briefly there are three main suggestions about what it means.

The traditional view is that these sons of God were fallen angels who married women and the resulting offspring were the Nephilim, who were giants. But there are many problems with this view:

- According to Jesus in Matthew 22:30, angels can’t marry.
- They are also not physical beings like us (Luke 24:39)
- The Nephilim are not an angel/human hybrid, but described as human men.
- And the focus of this passage is the wickedness of humanity, not of angels.

So a second view is that the sons of God were descendants of Seth who married ungodly women from the line of Cain and their children were called Nephilim, which means fallen ones, because they fell away from walking with God. One of the main problems with this view is the Nephilim are mentioned as being on the earth after the flood (Numbers 13:33), when everyone was a descendant of Seth!

But a third view with possibly fewer problems is that the sons of God were simply godly men, who were drawn away from following God by attractive ungodly women, and their children were called Nephilim because they fell away from God’s favour.

But whatever we think about all of this, the conclusion we are supposed to come to, is that mankind had become incredibly corrupt.

### c) The Heart Of The Problem

And the problem was not a lack of laws, discipline, education or civilisation. The problem went much deeper. It was [“That every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.”](#) Genesis 6:5 Every desire in their heart, every thought in their mind, every desire that they expressed, every attitude that they cultivated, was polluted by sin.

God had created human beings to [“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”](#) Matthew 22:37 and to [“Love your neighbour as yourself.”](#) Matthew 22:39 But instead, they turned their back on God, rebelled against his rule, rejected his commands, redesigned their lives according to what they wanted and used and abused others for their own selfish desires.

This is God’s diagnosis of what is wrong with this world. The heart of the problem is the problem of our heart. [“The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?”](#) Jeremiah 17:9

And if we’re willing to see this world through God’s eyes today, then Paul says we will see that [“People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, <sup>3</sup> without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, <sup>4</sup> treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.”](#) 2 Timothy 3:2–4

### 3. God’s Distress Was Deep

This is what God saw, but look at how it impacted him: [“The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.”](#) Genesis 6:6

Sometimes people accuse God of being distant from and indifferent to the struggles and suffering of his world – as if he is sitting on a cloud somewhere unconcerned that his world is such a mess.

But this verse says that when God looked at his world he was deeply distressed. The words used here express the most intense human emotion – a mixture of rage and bitter anguish. In the Bible it is used to describe:

- How Dinah’s brothers felt when she was raped.
- How Jonathan felt when he heard about Saul’s plans to kill his best friend David.
- How David felt when he heard about his son, Absalom’s, death.

- How a wife feels when her husband deserts her.

This is how God feels when he sees this corrupt world. He is filled with rage at the wickedness in his world, the crimes committed, the selfishness expressed. And he is filled with bitter anguish at the waste of human potential, the pain that is being endured, the loss being suffered, the tragedy of his image bearers destroying themselves and each other.

#### a) Because His Love is Deep

And God feels this so deeply, because he loves us so deeply. “The Lord is righteous in all his ways and loving towards all he has made.” Psalm 145:17

When parents see their kids make really bad choices that destroy their lives – their hearts break, because they love their kids and desperately want them to live the best possible life. But the Bible says that “God is love.” 1 John 4:8, so how much more then will our heavenly Father’s heart break when he sees the mess of humanity?

This is what Jesus expressed. For example, when he approached Jerusalem, “He wept over it and said, ‘If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes.’” Luke 19:41–42 Jesus wept because he knew the consequences of their sinful rejection of him, and it deeply distressed him because he loved them. And this love was so deep that it led him to the cross.

#### b) Do We Care

What about us? Is this how we feel when we see our world? Are we deeply distressed by the wickedness and suffering? Or do we close our eyes and harden our hearts to all of this? Do we turn away, change the channel, bury our head in the sand?

If we are God’s people then we are called to “Be imitators of God... and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” Ephesians 5:1–2 We are called to care because God does.

### 4. God’s Judgement Was Coming

God saw and was deeply distressed over the wickedness in this world, and so he determined to respond: “I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth—men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air—for I am grieved that I have made them.” Genesis 6:7

This was a horrifying event. God was going to send a worldwide flood that was going to wipe out all of humanity and land-dwelling animals. This was God’s righteous judgement of people’s sin and rebellion against him.

#### a) It Still Is

But this was also a warning of an even more serious judgement to come. Jesus said, “As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.” Matthew 24:37 Jesus was referring to his second coming when he will return:

- Not as a humble and weak baby born, but in power and glory.
- Not as a suffering Saviour dying for others, but as the Sovereign Lord, to whom all will need to bow.
- Not to heal and preach the good news of grace, but to bring the fullness of salvation for God’s people and the fullness of God’s judgement on all who’ve not accepted the gospel.

No-one, apart from God knows when that judgement day will come - but this is the ultimate judgement that we need to be ready for because the consequences of being unprepared are terrifying: “If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.” Revelation 20:15

### 5. God’s Judgement Was Delayed

But this passage isn’t only a warning of judgement, it is also a reminder of God’s grace.

God was grieved over the sin of mankind, but he didn’t act in immediate judgement.

The Lord said, “My Spirit will not contend with man for ever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years.” Genesis 6:3

There is some debate about the meaning of this verse. Some people think it means from then on nobody would live to more than 120 years of age. As we saw last week, this could explain the dramatic reduction in lifespans after the flood and why this seems to be the maximum lifespan today.

However it isn’t totally accurate as after the flood, people lived for more than 120 years in every generation from Noah right down to Jacob. And even Aaron lived to 123 years old.

So probably it is better to understand this 120 years as referring to the amount of time that would lapse, until the flood would come. It was a countdown to the coming judgement.

But why would God wait for another 120 years? After all, according to the genealogies in chapter 5, there already had been over 1500 years of sin, wickedness and evil. Why would God wait any longer?

#### a) To Build the Ark

Well, one reason is that God waited to give time for Noah to build an ark. Peter wrote, [“God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built.”](#) 1 Peter 3:20

We'll think about Noah in more detail next week, but this passage tells us that in this world where men and women rejected God and rebelled against God's commands, [“Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord.”](#) Genesis 6:8

Noah resisted the pressure of his peers. He refused to follow the crowd. Instead he put his faith in God. As a result he was saved by grace. And God waited to give Noah time to complete the work of building an ark to save him and his family.

#### b) To Warn Others

But Peter suggests another reason for this delay. He wrote that [“He did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness.”](#) 2 Peter 2:5

Noah was not only a boat builder. He was also preacher of righteousness. The Bible doesn't tell us the content, the method or the audience for Noah's message, but it seems like God gave Noah time to warn the world of his coming righteous judgment.

But we can be sure that this is why God is delaying his judgement today. This is why Christ has not yet come again to judge this world. Peter wrote that in his day people were ridiculing the promise of Jesus' return in judgement. They were saying: [“Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.”](#) 2 Peter 3:3

But Peter pointed them back to the flood and reminded them that God judged the world before and he would do it again some time. But for now he is delaying because

[“He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”](#) 2 Peter 3:9

#### c) To Be Prepared

So the flood declares both the wickedness of man and the certainty of God's judgement. It warns us to be ready for it – by accepting his provision of salvation. Jesus said, [“Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”](#) John 5:24

And if we have accepted God's plan of salvation, then this delay gives us time to warn everyone we can. Paul wrote to Timothy: [“In view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: <sup>2</sup> Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.”](#) 2 Timothy 4:1–2

#### Conclusion

Nobody likes to have their faults and failings highlighted. Nobody likes to be told that they are not good enough. But it is essential that we understand that God sees the sin in this world, that he is deeply distressed by it, and that one day he will judge it righteously.

So let's use the time that God has given us to be prepared by accepting his way of salvation and sharing the gospel with as many as possible!

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