

***“Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose. And the Lord said, 'My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.' There were [b]giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown” (Genesis 6:1-4).***

The previous chapter of Genesis documented an era when human beings lived for incredibly long periods. With the exception of Enoch, the individuals mentioned in Genesis chapter five enjoyed life spans that averaged over nine centuries.

If those life spans were typical of others who lived during that period, we would naturally expect to see a significant increase in the human population. Therefore, we should not be surprised to find that Genesis chapter six begins with the following statement: ***“More and more people were born, until finally they spread all over the earth...” (CEV).***

It is at this point that we encounter one of the most controversial and highly debated sections of the Bible. You see, Genesis 6:2 tells us, ***“...the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.”*** The first question generated by this passage often revolves around the identity of the “sons of God” mentioned here.

Genesis 6:4 then continues by saying, ***“The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men that were of old, the men of renown” (RSV).*** That statement raises an entire slate of additional questions.

To address those questions, we can start by exploring the background information on the “sons of God” mentioned here. Their identity will play an important role in the way we interpret and understand these verses.

We can begin our background check on these “sons of God” from Genesis 6:2 by looking into other uses of this phrase within the Scriptures.

The New King James Version of the Bible uses the term “sons of God” ten times, with an equal distribution of five occurrences in both the Old and New Testaments. Two of those ten appearances are here in Genesis chapter six. The remaining three Old Testament passages appear within the book of Job...

***“Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them” (Job 1:6).***

***“Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD” (Job 2:1).***

***“To what were (the earth’s) foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, When the morning stars sang together, And all the sons of God shouted for joy? (Job 38:6-7).***

So based on these Old Testament passages, we can conclude two things about these sons of God...

1. It appears they had some form of divine access in heaven.
2. They were present when God created the universe.

The next stage of our inquiry brings us to Genesis 6:2...

***“...The sons of God saw that the daughters of other humans were beautiful. So they married any woman they chose” (GW).***

While some men may be more irresistible than others, has there ever been a man who could marry *any* woman he desired? Probably not. So this hints at something unusual concerning these sons of God.

Next comes Genesis 6:4...

***“The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown” (ESV).***

This word “Nephilim” refers to “*the giants*” <sup>(1)</sup> or “*the fallen ones.*” <sup>(2)</sup> While this word is typically used to identify people of great physical height, it also carries an additional meaning. One commentator reports that the term “Nephilim” also describes a people group of reckless ferocity who spread devastation and carnage far and wide. <sup>(3)</sup>

The significance of these definitions is highlighted by the fact that the offspring of these unions eventually became “...***famous heroes and warriors***” (*Genesis 6:4 CEV*).

(1) H5303 napil, Brown-Driver-Briggs' Hebrew Definitions <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/h5303/kjv/wlc/0-1/>

(2) *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*. Revised editions Copyright © 1961, 1966 The Moody Bible Institute Of Chicago. Additional and New Material Copyright © 1988 The Moody Bible Institute Of Chicago. [pg 471]

(3) See *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments* by Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown [Genesis 6:4]

***“the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose” (Genesis 6:2 ESV).***

In addition to the five Old Testament appearances of the term “sons of God,” there are five additional New Testament appearances of this phrase as well...

***“Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9).***

***“But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection” (Luke 20:35-36).***

***“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (Romans 8:14).***

***“For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God” (Romans 8:19).***

***“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:26).***

Based upon these New Testament passages, we can also associate the phrase “sons of God” with those who seek to honor God. Of course, this represents a significant departure from the Old Testament use of this term. This helps explain why scholars and commentators have reached various conclusions regarding the identities of these individuals.

For example, we can link these sons of God with the descendants of Adam's son, Seth ([Genesis 4:25](#)). You see, Genesis chapter five reveals that Seth's descendant Enoch walked with God for 300 years. ([Genesis 5:22](#)). The New Testament also lists Seth among Jesus' human ancestors ([Luke 3:38](#)). This suggests that Seth and his descendants followed God in respect, love, and faithfulness, and were thus regarded as “sons of God.”

When viewed from this perspective, the phrase “sons of God” refers to those righteous descendants of

Seth who married “daughters of men” who did not share their faith. Since these “*daughters of men were beautiful*,” this approach to Genesis 6:2 implies that these marital relationships were primarily rooted in physical attraction.

Unfortunately, whenever we make a decision to pursue such relationships solely on the basis of physical attractiveness, bad things usually follow as a result. In this instance, the negative consequence that arose from these relationships became evident through the birth of the Nephilim, a group that embodied the meaning of the term “fallen ones.”

***“The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—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” (Genesis 6:4).***

Although it is possible to associate these “sons of God” with the righteous lineage of Seth, there is an alternative explanation that involves a specific group of angelic beings.

As we’ve already noted, the term “sons of God” may also refer to a group of supernatural entities who were present during the creation of the universe. These celestial beings also possessed the ability to appear before God in heaven ([Job 38:6-7](#) and [1:6](#)). Angels would seem to be the only creatures who satisfy both conditions.

Because of this, it’s possible to link these “sons of God” from Genesis chapter six with a group of angelic beings who were involved in physical unions with mortal women. Those women subsequently bore children who grew into reckless, ferocious adults of great physical stature.

However, this view appears to contradict the Biblical assertion that angels are spiritual entities ([Hebrews 1:14](#)) who do not enter marital relationships ([Matthew 22:30](#)). That would eliminate the possibility of this “physical relationship” theory, except for one seemingly offhand statement in the Biblical book of Jude...

***“And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day—just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire” (Jude 1:6-7 ESV emphasis added).***

This passage makes a correlation between a specific group of angels and the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. They are linked by the fact that the people of Sodom and Gomorrah “...*likewise indulged in sexual immorality*.” In other words, the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah imitated the behavior of these angelic beings by similarly engaging in sexually immoral behavior.

Thus, we can say that these angelic beings possessed the capacity to commit sexual immorality, as evidenced by the comparable behavior of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. But how could such a thing be possible? We’ll look at one potential answer to that question next.

How could an angelic entity partake in an immoral physical relationship? One explanation could involve an all-consuming degree of human control that manipulated every facet of that person’s physical and mental being. That might account for the cause and effect relationship we see in Genesis 6:4: “*The Nephilim were on the earth in those days... when the sons of God went to the daughters of humans and had children by them*” (NIV). It might also explain why those relationships produced seemingly unnatural children who grew to become the adults of huge physical size known as “the

Nephillim.”

While such possibilities may summon a variety of horror show images, there’s little doubt that many believe the idea of an ethereal being “possessing” someone in this manner is something that no thinking person would ever entertain in our 21st century world.

However, this does not account for the modern-day examples of such activity in those who claim to “channel” the spirits of the dead. It also fails to consider those religion beliefs that encourage communication with the spirit world.

In addition, the New Testament book of Mark tells us that Jesus “**cast out many demons**” from various people ([Mark 1:34](#)). So, while this interpretation may be incorrect, we should still acknowledge it as a valid possibility in light of these realities. (1)

***“Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5).***

So this portion of Scripture paints a vivid picture of a world populated by those who were consumed by evil thoughts and desires. To illustrate the dark nature of those conditions, consider how it might feel to live in the world that Genesis 6:5 describes. For instance, what would it be like to live in a world that was entirely populated with deceivers, cheaters, and con artists?

How would it feel to live in a world where everyone engaged in character assassination? Imagine life in a world where no one thought twice about murdering another human being. That was life in the age of Genesis 6:5.

(1) One reason to explain the decline of such activity (if accurate) may be related to the sentence God imposed in Jude 1:6: ***“He held angels for judgment on the great day. They were held in darkness, bound by eternal chains. These are the angels who didn’t keep their position of authority but abandoned their assigned place” (GW).***

***“And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart” (Genesis 6:6).***

It is often difficult for limited human beings to grasp important truths regarding the person and nature of God. But one way to enrich our understanding of God’s nature involves the use of a literary tool known as an *anthropomorphism*.

This term refers to a figure of speech in which a human ability (such as vision or hearing) or human emotion (such as anger or jealousy) is attributed to God. For example, the Old Testament book of Exodus makes the following statement...

***“Then, as God finished speaking with Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of stone on which the Ten Commandments were written with the finger of God” (Exodus 31:18 TLB).***

We later read this in the book of 2 Chronicles...

***“For the eyes of the Lord search back and forth across the whole earth, looking for people whose hearts are perfect toward him, so that he can show his great power in helping them” (2 Chronicles 6:9 TLB).***

Each of these Scriptures demonstrate that concept in action. While God does not have fingers or eyes as we understand them, these passages employ human attributes to describe God’s ability to communicate and see in a way that is familiar to us.

Genesis 6:6 provides us with another good example when it tells us that God was “**...grieved in His heart (HCSB)**” regarding this turn of events, for it uses a familiar human emotion (grief) to help us

grasp the depth of God's sorrow over the evil that consumed His beloved creation. So, this portion of Scripture portrays a world where malevolent thoughts and desires reigned supreme in the hearts and minds of every inhabitant.

This verse also tells us something important about the nature of God. For example, a person who is rejected by a loved one is likely to suffer genuine emotional pain. In fact, the rejected person may regret that he or she ever met the person who inflicted such pain.

In a similar way, Genesis 6:6 uses this human emotion to remind us that God is not an unfeeling, unemotional Being who is unaffected by our choices. Although God knew that His creation would eventually reach this stage, that knowledge did not diminish the pain and grief He experienced as a result.

***“So the Lord said, ‘I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them’” (Genesis 6:7).***

There are some things in life that are simply beyond repair. In such instances, the most effective remedy is to begin anew. Essentially, Genesis 6:7 tells us that the world of that era had become so corrupt that God opted to initiate a reset. However, God also made the decision to start over with one man...

***“But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord” (Genesis 6:8).***

Nowadays, many people view the account of Noah as nothing more than a fictional tale, a myth, or a children's fable. In fact, there's a good chance that all the average person really knows about Noah is that he supposedly built a giant ark and saved all the animals from a major flood. That's why any book written about Noah today is likely to be a coloring book.

However, Noah's account encompasses far more than just the famous ark he constructed. For example, God mentioned Noah twice (along with Daniel and Job) through the pen of the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel. The unmistakable inference from that passage is that Noah was one of the most Godly men who ever lived (see [Ezekiel 14:13-20](#)). In the New Testament, the Gospel of Luke identifies Noah as one of Jesus' ancestors (see [Luke 3:36](#)) and the book of Hebrews lists him among the heroes of the faith (see [Hebrews 11:7](#)).

So what made Noah so special? The following verse provides us with an answer...

***“This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God. And Noah begot three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth” (Genesis 6:9-10).***

The word “righteous” identifies a person who is in “right standing” with God. Noah was just such a person. Noah exemplified a life dedicated to honoring God in every respect even in the midst of a world that had rejected its Creator.

And much like his great-grandfather [Enoch](#) before him, Noah also walked with God. This indicates that Noah was someone who moved forward in his relationship with God and followed His direction.

***“The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth” (Genesis 6:11-12).***

It's difficult to ignore the repetitive use of the word "corrupt" to depict the state of the world in these verses.

The word translated “corrupt” means “*to spoil, ruin (or) destroy.*” in the original language of this passage. <sup>(1)</sup> The word used for “violence” refers to physical and ethical wrongdoing. <sup>(2)</sup> So these verses describe the inhabitants of the earth during this period as a group of dishonest, immoral, unethical people who were unrestrained in their pursuit of violence, fraud, and brutality.

And that was the point when God stepped in...

***“So God said to Noah, ‘I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth’” (Genesis 6:13 NIV).***

This passage, and its account of God’s decision to eradicate humanity may sound barbarous to contemporary audiences. After all, we use terms like “ethnic cleansing” and “genocide” to describe the eradication of entire populations today. Isn’t God doing something similar here in Genesis six?

Before we make that assumption, we should first remember that *every* human being faces a death sentence at this very moment. You see, God’s [warning](#) to the first human being was clear: a death penalty awaited him if he chose to act in disobedience. A similar death sentence awaits each of us as well, ***“...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).*** The timing and execution of that death penalty is subject to God’s sovereign discretion.

We should also remember that choices bring consequences. The person who chooses to live with no acknowledgment or recognition of God and elects to pursue a lifestyle that is filled with corruption, dishonesty, and violence, has little cause to complain that God was too severe in executing his or her death sentence. As the Old Testament book of Proverbs tells us, ***“Such is the fate of all who live by violence and murder. They will die a violent death” (Proverbs 1:19 TLB).***

But, there was still a glimmer of hope for the human race.

(1) “sahat” Thayer’s Greek Lexicon and Brown Driver & Briggs Hebrew Lexicon. See <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/h7843/kjv/wlc/0-1/>

(2) “chamac” NETBible Copyright © 1996-2007 by Biblical Studies Press (BSP), L.L.C. <http://net.bible.org/strong.php?id=02554>

***“Build a large boat from cypress wood and waterproof it with tar, inside and out. Then construct decks and stalls throughout its interior. Make the boat 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. Leave an 18-inch opening below the roof all the way around the boat. Put the door on the side, and build three decks inside the boat—lower, middle, and upper” (Genesis 6:14-16 NLT).***

So God gave Noah specific instructions for building a huge, sea-worthy vessel. We should also notice that God specifically said to Noah, ***“...make yourself an ark...”*** It was almost as if God said to Noah, ***“Don’t subcontract any of this work- I want you to take care of this personally.”***

So here was Noah’s “to-do” list: First, ***“... make yourself an ark of cypress wood.”*** A more literal translation of this instruction would be, ***“... make yourself an ark of gopher wood.”*** We’re not quite sure what “gopher wood” was, but it was probably some sort of hardwood.

Noah was further instructed to coat the ark with pitch inside and out. “Pitch” was a tar-like substance that would serve to make the ark watertight. God then gave Noah some specific interior and exterior dimensions: ***“Make it 450 feet [137m] long, 75 feet [23m] wide, and 45 feet [14m] high. Construct a skylight all the way around the ship, eighteen inches [457mm] below the roof...” (Genesis 6:14-16 TLB).***

To offer some perspective on the scale of Noah’s Ark, here are a few comparisons:

- Noah’s Ark was roughly half the length of the [RMS Titanic](#). <sup>(1)</sup>



- It had a displacement of about 20,000 tons and a gross tonnage of about 14,000 tons <sup>(2)</sup>
- If you stood the ark up on it's bow, it would be as tall as a thirty story building
- The ark would be too big to fit on an American football field. If placed on a standard American football field, Noah's Ark would extend past each end zone by about fifteen yards (about 18m).
- Noah's Ark had a total available floor space of 100,000 sq. ft. which would be more floor space than 20 standard-sized basketball courts <sup>(3)</sup>
- The total volumetric capacity of the Ark was approximately 1,400,000 cubic feet. <sup>(4)</sup> This is equivalent to the capacity of 522 standard livestock cars currently in use on a modern-day railroad. <sup>(2)</sup> This interior capacity meant that the Ark had the ability to transport about 125,000 sheep-sized animals <sup>(5)</sup>

So Noah's Ark was an immense vessel, that was nothing like the cartoonish boat that is often depicted in a children's storybook

(1) See *Comparing Noah's Ark* [http://www.worldwideflood.com/ark/compare\\_ships/compare\\_ships.htm](http://www.worldwideflood.com/ark/compare_ships/compare_ships.htm)

(2) Charles C. Ryrie *The Ryrie Study Bible* pg. 16

(3) See *Could Noah's Ark really hold all the animals that were supposed to be preserved from Flood?*  
<http://www.christiananswers.net/q-edn/edn-c013.html>

(4) See *How big was Noah's Ark, really?* <http://www.answersingenesis.org/creation/v22/i1/catastrophe.asp>

(5) See *How could Noah fit two of each of the millions of animal species into the ark?*  
[http://www.creationstudies.org/Education/animals\\_ark](http://www.creationstudies.org/Education/animals_ark)

At this stage in the Genesis narrative, God has not yet told Noah why He wanted him to build an ark. But now God was about to explain His reasoning...

***“I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish. But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife and your sons’ wives with you. You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive. You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away as food for you and for them.” Noah did everything just as God commanded him”***  
***(Genesis 6:17-22 NIV).***

So Noah carried out the instructions God gave him. In fact, Noah spent decades <sup>(1)</sup> building this ark at a time when everyone else went about their business. <sup>(2)</sup>

So Noah's commitment to God was evident in his actions. Instead of complaining or disregarding God's instructions, Noah simply acted upon God's directive. Noah likely faced ridicule as he labored over this colossal barge, but he remained steadfast in his commitment to honor God's Word and carry out his commands.

This may explain why another portion of the Bible makes the following statement about Noah.

***“By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith” (Hebrews 11:7).***

Noah's response demonstrates how tangible actions serve to reveal genuine faith. Noah's trust in God led him to follow God's instructions when no one else was interested. Because of this, Noah was prepared when God's Word came to pass just as He promised.

(1) Genesis 5:32 tells us that “*After Noah was 500 years old, he became the father of Shem, Ham and Japheth.*” Genesis 7:6 then tells us that Noah was six hundred years old when the floodwaters came on the earth. Since God told Noah to take his sons and their wives into the ark with him, we can calculate from these verses that Noah must have spent decades building the ark

(2) See Jesus’ statement in [Luke 17:26-27](#)