

- † **[Slide 1: Shaq]** You might want to have a Bible open to Genesis 6.
- † In the second half of Genesis 4, we learned the family of Cain was utterly corrupt; in Genesis 5, we learned Seth’s descendants had at least some righteous people walking with God. Following this, the narrator introduces us to the Noah’s Ark / flood narrative with the following eight verse bridge.
- **[Slide 2: 6.1-4]** Genesis 6.1-8 NASB: Now it came about, when *men* began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, ²that the sons of God saw that the daughters of *men* were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose. ³Then the LORD said, “My Spirit shall not strive with *man* forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.” ⁴The 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. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.
 - **[Slide 3: 6.5-8]** ⁵Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of *man* was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ⁶The LORD was sorry that He had made *man* on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. ⁷The LORD said, “I will blot out *man* whom I have created from the face of the land, from *man* to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them.” ⁸But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.
 - **[Slide 4: terms]** Because of its placement, we know this section is important: it somehow helps explain God’s wrath at all mankind such that he would destroy almost all people in the flood.
 - But there are multiple terms to understand here, including “sons of God,” “daughters of men,” “Nephilim,” and “the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.”
- † **[Slide 5: Grammar]** Let’s start with a little Hebrew lesson, so I can show you why it is valuable to understand the original languages as much as you can. In Hebrew narrative, each action of the plot usually starts with a special kind of verb, called “[1]-consecutive-imperfect,” followed by the subject of the verb, and then the rest of the sentence. Thus without English style or interpretive connections, our passage says... **[Slide 6: plot sequence]**
- v.1: 1-came to be, it, mankind began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them.
 - v.2: 1-saw, the sons of God, that the daughters of men were beautiful.
 - v.2: 1-took, they, wives for themselves, whomever they chose.
 - v.3: 1-said, Yahweh, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.”
 - Have you ever noticed when you read in a word-for-word translation, like NASB or NKJV, in the Old Testament, a lot of sentences begin with “And”? That’s one way to translate the [1] connected to the verbs at the start of the sentences.
 - In our passage, most English translations try to make more thoughtful connections. Instead of ignoring the [1] or using “and,” they insert words like “now,” “then,” “so,” or “thus.” That helps you see the connections the translators think the Hebrew author was making.

- But the [?] is more than a translatable word, it also is a signaling device: it says, this sentence is part of the plot of our narrative scene.
 - **[Slide 7: Grammar]** Interestingly, v.4 does not begin with a [?]-consecutive-imperfect verb! It begins with the noun “The Nephilim,” followed by a perfect tense verb. In Hebrew narrative, such a change signals that this is background information, not part of the plot. So we know the Nephilim are a separate question, not part of our explanation of God’s anger, and thus not necessarily related to the question about the sons of God and daughters of man.
- † So we have a plot sequence here which results in v.3 with God deciding to destroy humanity in the flood. That suggests we should try to understand what is going on in vv.1-2. I will give you several theories and you can decide for yourself what to believe.
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- † **[Slide 8: demons]** Theory 1: The Sons of God are fallen angels/demons and the daughters of man are human.
- This was the theory of many Jewish apocalyptic writers during the centuries before Christ came. In the early church, Clement of Alexandria proposed this [*Christ the Educator* 3.2.14], as did Ambrose after him [*On Noah* 4.8].
- † Since it says “sons of God” and “daughters of men,” does the text imply a distinction in that the sons are not of men? If you do a search through the Bible for the term “sons of God,” you will find that it does appear to refer to angels in Job and Psalms.
- **[Slide 9: Job 2.1]** For example: **Job 2.1 NET: Again the day came when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also arrived among them to present himself before the LORD.**
 - **Psalms 29.1 ESV: Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.** The heavenly beings in Hebrew are literally “sons of God,” but the translators thought that would be confusing, so they made it clear angels were in view.
 - On the other hand, the term seems to refer to loyal angels, not the fallen angels we call demons.
 - **[Slide 10: Romans 8.14]** Also, in the New Testament, who is called sons of God? Jesus and Paul referred to believers as such. For example, **Romans 8.14 NET: For all who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God.**
- † There are some New Testament passages that are confusing in their own right, but seem to be connected to Genesis 6.
- **[Slide 11: 2 Peter 2]** Turn to 2 Peter 2. Peter is saying that God will bring judgment against false teachers who are leading others into depraved lifestyles. Then he says in **2 Peter 2.1-9 NET: But false prophets arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. These false teachers will infiltrate your midst with destructive heresies, even to the point of denying the Master who bought them. As a result, they will bring swift destruction on themselves. ²And many will follow their debauched lifestyles. Because of these false teachers, the way of truth will be slandered. ³And in their greed they will exploit you with deceptive words. Their condemnation pronounced long ago is not sitting idly by; their destruction is not asleep. ⁴For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but threw them into hell and locked them up in chains in utter darkness, to be kept until the judgment, ⁵and if he did not spare the**

ancient world, but did protect Noah, a herald of righteousness, along with seven others, when God brought a flood on an ungodly world, ⁶and if he turned to ashes the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah when he condemned them to destruction, having appointed them to serve as an example to future generations of the ungodly, ⁷and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man in anguish over the debauched lifestyle of lawless men, ⁸(for while he lived among them day after day, that righteous man was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard) ⁹– if so, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from their trials, and to reserve the unrighteous for punishment at the day of judgment...

- If sexual sin and fallen angels and the flood of Noah are all connected in Peter's mind, could that support the idea that fallen angels were involved in Genesis 6?
- Turn to **Jude 1.6-7 NET**: **You also know that the angels who did not keep within their proper domain but abandoned their own place of residence, he has kept in eternal chains in utter darkness, locked up for the judgment of the great Day. So also Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighboring towns, since they indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire in a way similar to these angels, are now displayed as an example by suffering the punishment of eternal fire.**
- How would angels pursue unnatural sexual desire like what happened in Sodom and Gomorrah? In the cities, the issue was homosexuality; with angels could it have been sex with people?

† **[Slide 12: marry]** Can you think of any argument against this theory? Some mention that Jesus implied angels do not marry [Matthew 22.30; Mark 12.25].

- The phrase [אִשָּׁה] [לָקַח] always seems to mean take a wife, but literally could mean take a woman.
- Also, what Jesus said was in reference to angels in Heaven, marrying each other. We know angels and demons [fallen angels] can appear as people, even eat and drink, so could angels have sex with people? If so, could they procreate, could women have children, as it says in Genesis 6.4, having been impregnated by an angel/demon? Seems far-fetched.
- **[Slide 13: judge]** Another argument against this is that this whole section is about the flood punishment of people with no mention of punishing angels. Our context is people going astray from God, people showing enough evil to anger God. God's punishment in Genesis 6 strongly indicates the culprits are mortals.

† **[Slide 14: theory 2]** Theory 2: The sons of God were descendants in Seth's righteous line, while the daughters of men were of Cain's line or at least not worshippers of God.

- This was the theory of the fourth century theologian Ephrem the Syrian [*Commentary on Genesis* 6.3.1]. It has been the most prominent theory in the church since that time; both Luther and Calvin thought the sons of Seth marrying daughters of Cain defiled the seed line with corruption.

† This makes good sense of the context, right? We know there were a few righteous people in Seth's family and everyone else was astray, so if the sons in the righteous family married pagan wives, who led them astray and raised their children up as pagans, then it would result in very few righteous people, as was the case when God spoke to Noah.

† Anyone have an argument against this? One has to do with consistent terminology.

- **[Slide 15: mankind]** Look again at Genesis 6.1-8. In vv.1, 2, 4 [אָדָם], meaning man or mankind, multiplies and has daughters who are taken. In vv.3, 5, 6, 7 God judges [אָדָם] and will blot them out because they are wicked. In those latter verses, [אָדָם] refers to all people; can [אָדָם] then refer only to a subgroup in the other verses? It seems like [אָדָם] has to refer to all people or all men, not just Seth's or Cain's men. On the other hand, the Old Testament does sometimes shift meaning of a word from a generic group to specific subset.
- Another consideration is that nowhere else in scripture is the term "sons of God" used in reference to Sethites only; but we did see that Paul and Jesus used the term to refer only to righteous people; but then here the sons of God are acting unrighteously, which ticks God off.
- Any thoughts? Which theory do you like better so far?

† **[Slide 16: theory 3]** Theory 3: the sons of God are a dynasty of tyrants [perhaps even of line of Cain/Lamech], while the daughters of men are daughters of Seth's descendants.

- The theory is that tyrants were forming harems and perverting both righteousness and justice.
- It is true that Genesis 4-5 stresses daughters being born to Seth's descendants, not Cain's. On the other hand, we surmise there were daughters in both families, and in the families of Seth and Cain's other siblings too.
- And why would evil men be called sons of God?
- Political leaders are sometimes themselves called "gods" in the Old Testament [Exodus 21.6; 22.8-9], but there is no textual evidence that groups of kings were called "sons of God."
- Anyone like this theory?

† **[Slide 17: theory 4]** Theory 4: the sons of God were some sort of political leaders possessed by demons.

- This is the theory of many modern scholars, including two I respect, Bruce Waltke and Alan Ross.
- † Ross notes that scripture [Daniel 10.13, 20; Ezekiel 28.11-19] implies that demons have been the real power behind evil rulers and we see in the gospels that demons can possess non-believers.
- He thinks God would use this passage to provide argument against ancient myths in the polytheistic cultures surrounding Israel. Those cultures thought great men were lesser gods, but this passage would say that great men were men, but possessed by demons, and their famous and powerful offspring were not god-kings but flesh who would die like everyone else.
- † People like this view, because it keeps angels/demons involved, which seems to relate the passage to Jude and 2 Peter, but it still does not imply that angels/demons could have children with human partners, and it helps explain God's anger being mostly against people in our passage.
- On the other hand, it does not really explain any of our textual questions: why the terms "sons of God" and "daughters of man" were used, why what was happening then made God so much more angry at people than before or since, why what was happening then made God imprison some demons but not others, and so on.
 - Of the four theories, which is your favorite?

† **[Slide 18: Matthew 24]** Whatever the truth, we need to keep the Big Picture in view.

- Turn to **Matthew 24.37-39 NET**: [Jesus says nobody knows when he will return] **For just like the days of Noah were, so the coming of the Son of Man will be. For in those days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark. And they knew nothing until the flood came and took them all away. It will be the same at the coming of the Son of Man.**
- Jesus' reference to marrying and giving in marriage could refer to the sons and daughters in Genesis 6. According to Jesus, they were living merry, sinful lives, away from God – as Genesis 6.5 says, “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” – but then God’s judgment struck.
- That’s the point we need to take from this; whatever theory we hold about the sons of God and daughters of man, we need to remember that life without God will bring judgment.

† Two remaining questions: who were the Nephilim and who were the mighty men of old [they might be the same people].

† **[Slide 19: Genesis 6.4]** **Genesis 6.4 NASB: 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. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.**

- The mighty men could be the Nephilim or the children of the sons of God with the daughters of men.
- Some say the mighty men were the Nephilim who were the children of the sons of God with the daughters of men; most of these people, such as Ambrose [*On Noah* 4.8], believe the sons of God were demons, and they think that explains why the offspring were so mighty.
- The argument against that is the Hebrew grammar we discussed earlier: this is a background statement, an aside, not part of the plot, so it is doubtful that the Nephilim are associated with the sons of God and the daughters of men or their children.
- So were the mighty men the Nephilim or the children? I lean toward the Nephilim; so who were the Nephilim?

† **[Slide 20: Nephilim]** [נְפִלִים] is a plural noun, but we are not totally sure what it means.

- The associated verb [נָפַל] can mean “to fall,” “to collapse,” “to die in battle,” “to be inferior,” “to fall upon or raid,” even “to be born.”
- If they were the mighty men, perhaps they were those who fell upon or raided others in war.
- The Greek translation of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint, which was written in the inter-testamental period before Jesus was born, translates [נְפִלִים] as γίγαντες, meaning mighty ones or giants. So obviously the Greek speaking Jews of that period identified the mighty men with the Nephilim.
- Augustine [*City of God* 15.23] and Basil the Great [*Homily 20, Of Humility*] were two early church scholars who thought these must be what we would call giants. Before the flood, there might have been some massive people, who gained renown for their physical stature and capabilities, especially if they were raiders.

- If stories about these mighty men were told by Noah and his family, over time they might have become the basis for pagan mythical semi-divine heroes. So God might have included this aside to point out they were just mighty men, and other mighty men would come later.
- The text says that, right? There were Nephilim again later, after the flood. Does that affect our view of what they could be? If they were something specific to that period, they all would have died in the flood...
- Think of Goliath: 1 Samuel 17 his height was somewhere between six-foot-nine and nine-foot-nine [there is some question as to the text], and his armor weighed between 125 and 220 pounds. His spear weighed 15 pounds. A baseball bat is about two pounds; a two handed sword from the sixteenth century weighed five to eight pounds. Goliath was big and strong.
- Basketball star Shaquille O'Neal is 7-1 and 324 pounds, and super athletic. NFL players are not usually that tall, but often as weighty, and show incredible dexterity and strength.
- So I think the Nephilim were huge men, who were mighty warriors.