

### Introduction

- Who are the “sons of god” and “Nephilim” in Genesis 6?
- This is a confounding, debated, and often ignored passage.
- There are three main options, and we have to pick one.
- Their sin is part of the reason for the flood.

### View 1: Kings

- The “sons of God” are kings or noble rulers who abuse their power.
- This view has become more popular in the 20th century.
- Pagan kings often claimed to be sons of divinities.
- These are rulers who take women against their will.
- This view does not explain why their offspring are unique.
- Kingship does not seem to be established until much later in the Bible.
- Kings in the Bible are never referred to as “sons of god.”
- This is the most natural explanation, but fits the text itself the least.

### View 2: Sons of Seth

- The “sons of God” are the godly line of Seth whose sin is intermarrying with sinners.
- Genesis 4-5 follow Cain and Seth’s lines, so this story is a continuation.
- Intermarriage is a common theme throughout the Old Testament.
- Mankind is punished for the sin.
- The elect are commonly referred to as sons.
- This was the view of most of the Reformers.
- Daughters of man is never used to refer to a group of people.
- There has not been a command to avoid intermarriage yet.
- This is the most palatable interpretation, but does not explain the “weirdness.”

### View 3: Divine Beings

- The “sons of God” are divine beings/angels who rebel against God and take human women as wives.
- This phrase always refers to divine beings/angels throughout the rest of the Bible.
- This is the best explanation for the necessity of the flood.
- This is the oldest and earliest view of Jews and the early church.
- The earliest extra-biblical text interprets this as fallen angels.
- This is the best explanation of Jude 6-7, where angels were like those in Sodom and Gomorrah and are already trapped in chains in hell.
- It seems like a strange way to introduce angels in the Bible.
- Jesus proclaims that angels do not marry.
- This seems pagan, strange, and contrary to all we know of the natural world.

## Nephilim

- This could be translated as “fallen ones.”
- These could be natural giants.
- These could be semi-divine offspring of humans and angels.
- These could just be heroes of ancient ages.
- These could be demons.
- Numbers 13:33 describes them in the promised land.
- Possibly the Nephilim survived the flood, or this second group is named in memory of the first.
- We don’t have enough information about them.

## Evaluating

- The kingship identity seems to stretch the meaning of the text the most.
- The Seth identity is a valid interpretation, but it doesn’t solve all the problems.
- The fallen angels identity untangles the text, but tangles our minds.
- I rejected the fallen angels view until I recognized it explained the Bible best.
- I recognize its strangeness, but our faith is a strange one.

## Does it matter?

- We have to have some explanation for this passage, and these are the only three valid ones.
- Our interpretation helps explain why humanity was destroyed in the flood.
- We should be wary of interpretations that explain away the supernatural and miraculous.