

Sons of God: Angels or Men?

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What is meant by “the sons of God” in the Genesis 6 and the Book of Job? In the [Appendix \(Part 1\)](#) below is every occurrence of the phrase: five in the OT and five in the NT. Note that it always begins with the definite article, “the”.

The Singular Form: [Appendix \(Part 2\)](#)
“The Son of God” appears only once in the Old Testament (Da 3:25) where it is commonly accepted as a reference to a pre-incarnate manifestation of Jesus, i.e., a theophany. In the New Testament there are 45 occurrences, and the phrase always refers to “Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God”, with one exception.

Lu 3:38, the end of a reverse genealogy, ends by listing Adam as “of God”. The list starts in Lu 3:23: “Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty [~30] years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, the son of Heli,” The translators supply “the son” before each “of” in the list except the first: “the son of Joseph”, where they only add “the”. Thus, the final entry is “Adam, the son of God”.

The Plural Form: [Appendix \(Part 1\)](#)
“The sons of God” appears five times in the New Testament: peacemakers, sons of the resurrection (i.e., (to-be) resurrected saints), those led by the Spirit of God, His sons to be revealed, and believers. [All five refer to people here on land \[earth\].](#)

In the Old Testament, we have only five occurrences, and all five are controversial. However, based on the pattern observed so far, and allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture, we should expect those “sons of God”, apart from strong clues to the contrary, also to be men who follow God. In the opposite direction, the “sons of disobedience” in Eph 2:2 & 5:6 are followers of disobedience, as are sons of “your father the devil” in Jo 8:44, and “the sons of men” in Pr 15:11 (see the [Appendix](#)).

Genesis 6

Ge 6:2 and 6:4 are about “the sons of God” who take as wives “the daughters of men” because they were beautiful – not a Godly criterion – and “of all whom they chose”, which sounds like polygamy. “The sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them” is a euphemistic way of saying they had sex with those wives, which produced children. Nothing here is inconsistent with “the sons of God” being God-following men who married daughters of unbelievers, if “daughters of men” is meant to indicate unbelievers.

However, there is a red herring here that has led some people to conclude that “the sons of God” are angels, namely the statement that “There were giants on the earth in those days”, and that those giants are the children produced by these mixed marriages, “the mighty men who were of old, men of renown”. Yes, the text clearly states that “the mighty men” were those children, but it does not equate them with the giants (Hebrew, nephilim). The thought is that angels had sex with women and produced giants as children.

There are, at least, three problems with that idea, however: (1) Angels do not

have DNA or reproductive equipment; indeed, in Mt 22:30, Jesus said, “For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven” (like Mr 12:25). (2) Ge 6:4 reads, “There were [already] giants on the land [earth] in those days [referring to an earlier time], and also afterward [during the following], when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them.” Hence, the giants preceded the mating. (3) Giants also existed after the Flood, so did the angels misbehave again later? There were no giants on the ark other than potentially giant animals, including dinosaurs. (So, perhaps, these giants are dinosaurs?)

Therefore, lacking anything in the context to suggest that “the sons of God” here are angels, the only reasonable alternative is that they are God-following men, consistent with the New Testament usage, and that the statement about giants is ancillary, independent information. Certainly, the text states no causal link between the marriages and the giants.

Job 1-2

In Job 1:6 & 2:1 “there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD”. This statement reasonably means that God-following men gathered to worship the LORD, as in Ex 18:12b “And Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses’ father-in-law before God” and as we do today in Church meetings.

Indeed, there are 257 occurrences of the phrase “before the LORD” in the rest of Scripture. See [Appendix \(Part 3\)](#). In 253 of those, the usage is to minister, worship, present an offering, pray, make a covenant, enter the land, etc., “before the LORD”. In each case, the context indi-

cates that the activity takes place on land [earth], not in heaven. Most often it is in the Tabernacle or the Temple, but sometimes it is on a mountain or elsewhere. The only exception in the 257 occurrences is 1Ki 22:19-21, which parallels verbatim 2Ch 18:18-20. In that one case the locale is may be heaven, where God’s throne is, although the passage does not state that it is in heaven. Perhaps that lone exception is what leads many to assume heaven in Job.

And what often happens at such meetings? Satan shows up to accuse the brethren: “Satan also came among them (to present himself before the LORD).” Indeed, Job could have been one of “the sons of God” in the first meeting (1:6). He would certainly be correctly described as a son of God. Perhaps, seeing him there, God pointed him out to Satan; he could also have been at the second meeting (2:1) seeking God in regard to his losses before he was hit by bodily afflictions.

Certainly, Job’s presence at the two meetings is pure conjecture, and not essential to the interpretation, but the idea underscores the plausibility of this understanding of the language. Interpreting “the sons of God” as righteous men is consistent with the language and the story, and there are no indicators in the text that require angels instead.

Note also Job 1:7 & 2:2: And the LORD said to Satan, “From where do you come?” So Satan answered the LORD and said, “From going to and fro on the land [earth], and from walking back and forth on it.” Satan had been on the land, and it is never stated that he left it and went to heaven. If we cooperate with the narrator, we reasonably assume that he is still on land when the LORD speaks to him.

“So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD” (1:12b, 2:7a). *There are 15 occurrences of the phrase “the presence of the LORD” in the Bible. See Appendix (Part 4).* In each of the 13 non-Job occurrences, the context indicates clearly that His presence is on land [earth], not in heaven – with the single possible exception of 2 Th 1:19, which does not indicate the location. Hence, it is unreasonable to assume that only in Job 1 and 2 is His presence in heaven.

The Bible mentions God’s presence when He is blessing God-followers or about to judge the sons of disobedience, among other times. For example, see Ex 33:14, “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest”. God shows up when and where He wants, but He often honors God-followers by showing up when they gather, as today when we gather in His name.

Nothing in Job 1 & 2 demands or even suggests that “the sons of God” were angels, as some believe. Where else in the Bible do we hear of angels gathering someplace to present themselves to the LORD? Aren’t they always described as being around God, ready to do his bidding (e.g., 1 Kings 22:19)? Where else do we hear of angels “present(ing) themselves before the LORD”? *Instead, they are right there with God except when they are running errands for God.*

These are not proofs that “the sons of God” are not angels – they certainly could be –, but God-following men seem a much better fit and the texts in no way even suggest angels.

Job 38

We are left, then, with one remaining usage of the term in the context of all other usages most reasonably being understood as God-following men. In Job 38:7, who or what are “the morning stars” that sing and “all the sons of God” that shout? Is the poet using parallelism to equate the two, or are they independent but both praising God for the same event? And what event is in view?

The context of God laying the foundations of the land (38:4) certainly makes one think first of Day 3, when God made the surface of planet Earth, the land and seas. But there were no God-following men available to shout with joy on Day 3, so who else could “the sons of God” be except angels at that time? That would make this one verse be unique in referring definitively to angels as “the sons of God”.

Another possibility is that 38:4 is referring to the re-laying of the foundations of the land during the latter part of the Flood, if such happened, which is pure conjecture. At that time, there are some God-followers who could shout: Noah and his sons (and their wives) on the ark, as well as the many patriarchs (in heaven?) who preceded them. After all, “He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living.” (Mr 12:27)

Does more context resolve the dilemma? Consider 38:8-11. Again, this sounds like it could be describing Day 3. However, if so, God’s command to the seas “This far you may come, but no farther, And here your proud waves must stop!” would have to be understood only as His original intent, sovereignly overridden at the Flood. That, of course, is possible, but on the other hand, that command sounds much

like the promise He made after the Flood that no such Flood would ever happen again. Still, there is no report of the waves not stopping obediently at the shores until the exceptional event of the Flood.

What about 38:9 “When I made the clouds its garment, And thick darkness its swaddling band”? Was there such a cloud over the sea during the Flood? Or does this tell there was such on Day 3? Either or both seems possible, so this seems not to provide a resolution.

I, for one, remain unsure of the proper understanding of Job 38:7, though I lean toward it exceptionally referring to angels. But that uncertainty does not foil my understanding that all the other occurrences of “the sons of God” probably mean God-following men.

Appendix: Research Results

Part 1: “The Sons of God”

Old Testament [five occurrences]

Ge 6:2 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.

Ge 6:4 There were 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.

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

Job 2:1 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 38:7 When the morning stars sang together, And all the sons of God shouted for joy?

New Testament [five occurrences]

Mt 5:9 Blessed *are* the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.

Lu 20:36 “nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.

Ro 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

Ro 8:19 For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.

Ga 3:26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Part 2: “The Son of God” (The Son of Man, The Christ)

Old Testament [one occurrence]

Da 3:25 “Look!” he answered, I see four men loose, ..., and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.”

New Testament [45 occurrences]

Mt 4:3 ... “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.”

Mt 4:6 ... “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. ...”

Mt 8:29 ... “What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? ...”

Mt 14:33 ... “Truly You are the Son of God.”

Mt 26:63 ... Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!”

Mt 27:40 ... “... If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.”

Mt 27:43 “He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”

Mt 27:54 ... they feared greatly, saying, “Truly this was the Son of God!”

Mr 1:1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Mr 3:11 And the unclean spirits, ..., saying, “You are the Son of God.”

Mr 15:39 So when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried out like this and breathed His last, he said, “Truly this Man was the Son of God!”

Lu 1:35 And the angel answered and said to her, “... that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.”

Exception, not re Jesus:

Lu 3:38 *the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.*

Lu 4:3 And the devil said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.”

Lu 4:9 ... “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here.

Lu 4:41 And demons also came out of many, crying out and saying, “You are the Christ, the Son of God!” ...

Lu 22:70 Then they all said, “Are You then the Son of God?” So He said to them, “You *rightly* say that I am.”

Joh 1:34 “And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.”

Joh 1:49 Nathanael answered and said to Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”

Joh 3:18 He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Joh 5:25 ... will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live.

Joh 9:35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, “Do you believe in the Son of God?”

Joh 10:36 do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?

Joh 11:4 When Jesus heard *that*, He said, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”

Joh 11:27 She said to Him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

Joh 19:7 ... He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God.

Joh 20:31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, ...

Ac 8:37 ... “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”

Ac 9:20 Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.

Ro 1:4 *and declared to be* the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

2Co 1:19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached ...

Ga 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; ... I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Eph 4:13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

Heb 4:14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, ...

Heb 6:6 ... they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, ...

Heb 7:3 ... made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually.

Heb 10:29 ... who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, ...

1Jo 3:8 ... For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

1Jo 4:15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

1Jo 5:5 Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

1Jo 5:10 He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son.

1Jo 5:12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

1Jo 5:13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may *continue* to believe in the name of the Son of God.

1Jo 5:20 And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is

true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

Re 2:18 And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, "These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass:

Part 3: "Before the LORD"

[There are two occurrences in Job; 255 more in the OT; and two in the NT.]

Two OT Exceptions: Before in Time

Ge 13:10 ... (before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) ...

Zep 2:2 Before the decree is issued, Or the day passes like chaff, Before the LORD's fierce anger comes upon you, ...

A Few Typical OT Occurrences

(of 251 that are men on land [earth])

Nu 6:16 "Then the priest shall bring them before the LORD and offer his sin offering and his burnt offering;

Nu 16:16 And Moses said to Korah, "Tomorrow, you and all your company be present before the LORD ...

1Sa 10:19 ... Now therefore, present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and by your clans."

1Ki 19:11 Then He said, "Go out, and stand on the mountain before the LORD."

And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake;

Pr 15:11 Hell [*Sheol, grave, pit*] and Destruction [*Abaddon, place of ruin*] are before the LORD; So how much more the hearts of the sons of men. [There are three negatives here: hell, destruction, and "the hearts of the sons of men". This is in contrast to the hearts of "the sons of God". The grave and the place of ruin are here on land [earth] in the Hebrew mindset.]

Eze 46:9 "But when the people of the land come before the LORD on the appointed feast days, ...

Possible Exception?

Zec 6:5 And the angel answered and said to me, "These are four spirits of heaven, who go out from their station before the Lord of all the land [earth]."

[Note that the four spirits are "of heaven" or belong to heaven, hence "heaven's four spirits". That tells us their origin or citizenship, and perhaps their nature, but not their current location. They "go out from their station", but we are not told where that station is except "before the Lord of all the land". So where would that Lord be found? He certainly could be in heaven, but normally an earthly lord would be in the location over which he presides: "all the land". This would be consistent with all the other occurrences of the phrase, and is not an unreasonable or disprovable conjecture.]

Exception: Before God's Throne

1Ki 22:19 and 21 [same as:]
2Ch 18:18 Then Micaiah said, "There-fore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing on His right hand and His left. ... 20 "Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, and said, 'I will persuade him.'

...
[Now, here may be our lone exception. At least in Micaiah's vision, the LORD is on His throne, the angels are standing on both sides, and a spirit comes before Him. We normally assume this is in heaven, not on land, although the story does not say where it takes place. This may be the driving force that makes many think the sons of God in Job are

angels in heaven. However, this is the rare exception, if indeed it is, and there are no clues that the sons of God in Job are in heaven.]

New Testament [two occurrences]

2Ti 2:14 Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words ...

2Pe 2:11 whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord. [We might assume that these angels would be making their accusations in heaven, if they did. But this is hypothetical, for the verse says they do not make accusations. Nor does the verse say where the Lord would be if such were made before him. In light of the overwhelmingly predominant use in the OT, the best assumption is that it would be on land [earth], not in heaven.]

Part 4: "The Presence of the LORD"

[There are two occurrences in Job; 12 more in the OT; and two in the NT. In each case except the last, the context makes it clear that His presence is on the land [earth].]

Old Testament [14 occurrences]

Ge 3:8 And ... Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

Ge 4:16 Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden.

Ge 27:7 'Bring me game and make savory food for me, that I may eat it and bless you in the presence of the LORD before my death.'

Jud 18:6 And the priest said to them, "Go in peace. The presence of the LORD be with you on your way."

Job 1:12 ... So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

Job 2:7 So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, ...

Ps 97:5 The mountains melt like wax at the presence of the LORD, At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.

Ps 114:7 Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, At the presence of the God of Jacob,

Jer 4:26 I beheld, and indeed the fruitful land was a wilderness, And all its cities were broken down At the presence of the LORD, By His fierce anger.

Jon 1:3 But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. ... to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

Jon 1:10 ... For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.

Zep 1:7 Be silent in the presence of the Lord GOD; ... [Spoken to "Judah...the inhabitants of Jerusalem: v.4]

Hag 1:12 Then Zerubbabel ... and the people feared the presence of the LORD.

New Testament [two occurrences]

Ac 3:19 Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, [now, not just later in heaven]

Possible Exception?

2Th 1:9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, [This verse does not say where His presence will be. Those who think we spend eternity in heaven would say heaven. Those who think we spend eternity "in the new earth" (on the new land) would say there. Scripture is vague on this issue. Apparently, this is not an important thing for us to know.]

[Not yet analyzed:]

Part 5: "Foundations of the land [earth]"

[Note that all but the last are preceded by "the" definite article.]

Job 38:4 Where were you when I laid the foundations of the land [earth]? Tell Me, if you have understanding.

Ps 82:5 They do not know, nor do they understand; They walk about in darkness; All the foundations of the land [earth] are unstable. [Or does this mean all the foundations of the people????]

Ps 104:5 You who laid the foundations of the land [earth], So that it should not be moved forever,

Pr 8:29 When He assigned to the sea its limit, So that the waters would not transgress His command, When He marked out the foundations of the land [earth],

Isa 24:18 And it shall be That he who flees from the noise of the fear Shall fall into the pit, And he who comes up from the midst of the pit Shall be caught in the snare; For the windows from on high are open, And the foundations of the land [earth] are shaken.

Isa 40:21 Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the land [earth]? [But no man was around to understand until 3 days after the land was founded???]

Isa 51:13 And you forget the LORD your Maker, Who stretched out the heavens [day 2] And laid the foundations of the land [earth] / day 2 or 3; You have feared continually every day Because of the fury of the oppressor, When he has prepared to destroy. And where is the fury of the oppressor?

Isa 51:16 And I have put My words in your mouth; I have covered you with the shadow of My hand, That I may plant the heavens [what does that mean?], Lay the

foundations of the land [earth] / the land of Israel in this case?. And say to Zion, 'You are My people.'

Jer 31:37 Thus says the LORD: "If heaven above can be measured, And the foundations of the land [earth] searched out beneath [i.e., beneath men's feet, so under ground], I will also cast off all the seed of Israel For all that they have done", says the LORD.

Mic 6:2 Hear, O you mountains, the LORD's complaint, And you strong foundations of the land [earth]; For the LORD has a complaint against His people, And He will contend with Israel. [This could be symbolic reference to leaders of Israel as mountains and foundations of His people.]