

# SONS OF GOD

---

## CULTURAL INSIGHT

The biblical phrase “sons of God” can have a number of meanings in the scriptures. One distinctive meaning found in the Old Testament is “a class of divine beings who are part of the divine council.” This is most clearly seen in the book of Job, where “the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord” (Job 1:6). These sons of God were also present at the Creation according to Job 38:7.

This understanding of “sons of God” can make Genesis 6:1–4 more difficult as, in the context of the verses, it suggests that heavenly beings were having children with humans in a manner similar to individuals in stories from other cultures in the ancient Mediterranean, like the Greeks. This is the plainest sense of what Genesis 6 says. It is likely that an ancient reader of Genesis would have understood it this way.

This is not the only way of understanding this passage, however: in the Joseph Smith Translation, Moses 8:13 reads, “And Noah and his sons hearkened unto the Lord, and gave heed, and they were called the sons of God.” This passage understands the sons of God as those who keep God’s commandments. This interpretation is shared with the ancient Christian theologian Augustine (AD 354–430), who noted, “There is therefore no doubt that, according to the Hebrew and Christian canonical Scriptures, there were many giants before the deluge, and that these were citizens of the earthly society of men, and *that the sons of God, who were according to the flesh the sons of Seth*, sunk into this community when they forsook righteousness.”<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 2, *St. Augustin’s City of God and Christian Doctrine* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1887), 305, *City of God* 15:23; emphasis added.

### ***Related verses***

Genesis 6:1–4

Moses 8:14

Job 1:6

Job 2:1

Job 38:7

### **Credits**

***Author:*** Avram R. Shannon

***General Editor:*** Taylor Halverson

***Associate Editor:*** Morgan Tanner

***Senior Editor:*** Sarah Whitney Johnson

***Assistant Editor:*** Sam Lofgran

***Assistant Editor:*** Verlanne Johnson

***ScripturePlus Design:*** Jasmin Gimenez Rapple