

JOB 38:7 ARE THE SONS OF GOD, ANGELS?

This study is taken from my larger study on who the sons of God are in Genesis and Job which can be found here:

www.growupinchrist.com/images/docs/Topical/Sons_of_God_by_Drew_Worthen.pdf

Job 38:4-7 ⁴ "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell *Me*, if you have understanding, ⁵ Who set its measurements? Since you know. Or who stretched the line on it? ⁶ "On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone, ⁷ *When the morning stars sang together And all the sons of God shouted for joy?*

If we are going to exegete verse 7 it must be done within the context of the entire passage which has the creation of the universe as its foundational premise. Only with this in view can we begin to arrive at a proper biblical conclusion regarding the sons of God in verse 7.

The first thing to note is that the passage that is connected to Job 38:7 is inextricably linked to chapters 38-41 where the Lord admonishes Job with the reality that God is bigger than anything that Job may be experiencing in the earth, which is designed to put his life into perspective, and to demonstrate that God does everything with a purpose, to His glory.

Even a casual look at these four chapters will show how God is using language that explains His creation using architectural characteristics that humans would utilize in construction, along with other anthropomorphisms, (the attribution of human characteristics or behavior to a god, animal, or object).

Job 38:4-5 ⁴ "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell *Me*, if you have understanding, ⁵ Who set its measurements? Since you know. Or who stretched the line on it?

Shall we assume that the Holy Spirit, who hovered over the waters when the earth was formless and void, got out His measuring tape as the Son of God held one end and the two of them measured twice and cut once?

Job 38:8 ⁸ "Or *who* enclosed the sea with doors When, bursting forth, it went out from the womb;

The sea obviously is not enclosed with doors any more than the waters burst forth from the womb of a woman.

Job 38:9-10 ⁹ When I made a cloud its garment And thick darkness its swaddling band, ¹⁰ And I placed boundaries on it And set a bolt and doors,

The sea does not have a bolt and doors to keep it in its place.

Job 38:22 ²² "Have you entered the storehouses of the snow, Or have you seen the storehouses of the hail,

Snow and hail is not deposited in storehouses.

Job 38:29 ²⁹ "From whose womb has come the ice? And the frost of heaven, who has given it birth?

Ice and frost are not delivered as in childbirth.

Job 38:31 ³¹ "Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades, Or loose the cords of Orion?

Could Pleiades or Orion be held in place in the universe by chains and cords?

Job 38:35 ³⁵ "Can you send forth lightnings that they may go And say to you, 'Here we are'?

Does lightning speak?

Job 39:19 ¹⁹ "Do you give the horse *his* might? Do you clothe his neck with a mane?

Job 39:25 ²⁵ "As often as the trumpet *sounds* he says, 'Aha!' And he scents the battle from afar, And the thunder of the captains and the war cry.

Does the horse speak to himself and conclude now is the time for battle?

Job 40:15,18 ¹⁵ "Behold now, Behemoth, which I made as well as you; He eats grass like an ox. ¹⁸ "His bones are tubes of bronze; His limbs are like bars of iron.

Is the behemoth a giant robot with bronze and iron as integral parts of his being?

Job 41:1,27 ^{NAU} "Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook?
Or press down his tongue with a cord?
²⁷ "He regards iron as straw, Bronze as rotten wood.

Does Leviathan eat iron and bronze?

The point to this whole section of Scripture is that God is using different forms of speech to make a point to Job. Much of this language is rhetorical and cynical in nature and is not meant to be taken literally, though the language definitely speaks to literal realities concerning God and His creation.

He is the almighty God who is not only the creator of the universe but is the Savior of all of His people, including Job, who is called upon by God to trust that He is faithful toward His people, despite our lack of understanding of His ways and will, which at times may be implemented for our good and His glory.

It is this Creator/God who promised to Adam and Eve that He would send a Savior, born of a woman, who would restore Paradise and advance a Kingdom where righteousness dwells forever.

Colossians 1:15-20 ¹⁵ *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.* ¹⁶ *For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things have been created through Him and for Him.* ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. ¹⁸ He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹ For it was the *Father's* good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, ²⁰ and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, *I say*, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

This is the One, Jesus Christ, who miraculously orchestrated the symphony we know as the entire physical creation that declares the glory of God.

And part of what we read in the book of Job, especially in this section from chapters 38-41, is a word picture of this creation leaping into existence at the command of God as the Lord uses this

colorful and descriptive language that is meant to *personalize* His creation in a way that shows God's special touch.

The symbolism being used in this section is purposeful and so to assume that this non-literal language, all throughout these chapters, now becomes literal at Job 38:7, to describe angels as participating in the witnessing of this creation, becomes, at the very least, questionable.

Having said that I would personally like to believe that the phrase, sons of God in Job 38:7, is actually describing angels in this verse and that they had the unique perspective of God's creative handiwork, but that is different from saying that an exegesis of this passage, in light of the context, precludes that they must be angels, especially when we place the other references to "sons of God" in Job in the light of other possible interpretations based on sound hermeneutics.

So, if these are not angels witnessing God's handiwork prior to man being created on day 6, what other possibility is there for identifying these sons of God in **Job 38:7** "When the morning stars sang together *And all the sons of God shouted for joy?*"

Again, when we place this verse back into the context of the creation being reported by God to Job, with the symbolic language that is utilized to paint a picture for Job, we can begin to see a little different image.

The first question I have is, who are the morning stars?

I know that many believe that the sons of God are angels in this verse, but is God describing angels as morning stars as well?

In typical Hebraic form this is certainly a possibility as we have already seen with some of the verses throughout this section.

Job 38:5 ⁵ Who set its measurements? Since you know. Or who stretched the line on it?

These are two separate questions in the very same verse that are identical in nature; that of measuring.

Job 38:6 ⁶ "On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone,

Here again, two separate questions in the same verse communicating the same thing as it relates to a building project being set on a firm foundation.

And we see this same pattern all throughout this section. And so, I think we are on safe exegetical ground to surmise that the morning stars and the sons of God are the same group described in two ways in the same verse.

Of course, this still doesn't directly answer the question, who are the players in this verse?

By the way, for those who do not equate the morning stars with the sons of God, it is suggested that the morning stars are allusions to Jesus Christ or even Lucifer, though the phrase in Job, sons of God, would suggest a plurality of sons, not just one, be that Jesus or Lucifer.

Revelation 22:16 ¹⁶ "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. *I am* the root and the descendant of David, *the bright morning star*."

Isaiah 14:12 ¹² "How you have fallen from heaven, *O star of the morning*, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, You who have weakened the nations!"

It is obvious that if the morning stars in Job 38:7 were either Jesus Christ or Lucifer they were certainly witnesses to the creation. But this seems to me to be forced upon the text as well as the context found in chapters 38-41.

But as we consider the context and the symbolic language employed in this section it is not unreasonable to arrive at another conclusion not limited to sentient beings, be they angels or God Himself.

In fact, as we have already touched on, this kind of anthropomorphic language describes the very inanimate creation we have before us in Job.

Job 38:29 ²⁹ "From whose womb has come the ice? And the frost of heaven, who has given it birth?"

Is ice and frost birthed from the womb of a woman as intimated in this verse?

Unless we ignore the use of special language that God is employing we would have to say, yes, ice and frost are birthed from the womb of a woman, since God suggests that it is. And who are we to question God and His word?

Is it possible that the inanimate creation itself can speak human words?

Job 38:35 ³⁵ "Can you send forth lightnings that they may go And say to you, 'Here we are'?"

Again, unless we ignore symbolic language that God employs, the literalistic implication is that lightning speaks the same dulcet tones of any person on earth, albeit in lightning language, whatever that is.

Of course, the book of Job is not the only place where this kind of anthropomorphic language is attached to the physical universe.

Psalm 98:8 ⁸ Let the rivers clap their hands, Let the mountains sing together for joy

Isaiah 55:12 ¹² "For you will go out with joy And be led forth with peace; The mountains and the hills will break forth into shouts of joy before you, And all the trees of the field will clap *their* hands.

What is God suggesting in these two passages?

Well, if we look at Psalm 98 we see that it is a psalm of praise and adoration to God for His faithfulness and salvation to His people as they are encouraged to sing and shout to the Lord.

Psalm 98:1-4 ^{NAU} A Psalm. O sing to the LORD a new song, For He has done wonderful things, His right hand and His holy arm have gained the victory for Him. ² The LORD has made known His salvation; He has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations. ³ He has remembered His lovingkindness and His faithfulness to the house of Israel; All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. ⁴ Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth; Break forth and sing for joy and sing praises.

In these passages that lead up to verse 8, where the rivers and mountains join the host of Israel in praise, it is obvious that people are being addressed, but creation is also encouraged to join in this

praise for precisely the same reason since God is creator of all things, including both man and earth.

We see the same thing in Isaiah where God is calling a people to Himself as they are encouraged to turn from their wickedness and embrace the grace that God is extending to them.

Isaiah 55:6-7 ⁶ Seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near. ⁷ Let the wicked forsake his way And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the LORD, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.

It is in light of this truth that not only Israel, but the entire creation joins in to honor the God of all creation just a few verses later in the same section of Isaiah 55.

Isaiah 55:12 ¹² "For you [the people of God] will go out with joy And be led forth with peace; The mountains and the hills will break forth into shouts of joy before you, And all the trees of the field will clap *their* hands.

God identifies creation itself as capable of giving praise and adoration to the Lord who created it.

However, God is not suggesting, like those of the pantheistic persuasion, that the physical stuff that makes up the earth, the moon, the sun and the stars is sentient. But what He is declaring is that both man and the universe share in the glory of God because they are both made to honor the Lord, and the Creator can employ any aspect of His creation to proclaim that truth.

Therefore, both can be viewed side by side as responders, in a sense, to the goodness of God as He declares what is true of His nature and His power.

Psalms 19:1 ^{NAU} For the choir director. A Psalm of David. The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.

In this sense, the heavens do in fact speak as the Lord speaks through it and this is why men are without the excuse that they have not heard from God.

Romans 1:20 ²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly

seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

And this is why God always connects His entire creation, together with men, as He will redeem both on the last day as He raises His people to resurrection life.

Romans 8:19-22 ¹⁹ For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.

Again, notice how Paul equates creation and man as both capable of yearning and waiting to be set free from slavery to glory.

Paul, like David and Isaiah, never thought for a moment that the creation itself was sentient and had actual thoughts of being redeemed, but he uses language that attributes qualities to the creation that only man can personalize as he shows how both creation and man are inextricably tied together and made for each other as both declare the glory of God, in Christ.

So, I raise the question. Is it possible that in Scripture human characteristics can be attributed to the creation itself, and if so, is it possible that the morning stars singing, and the sons of God shouting, in Job 38:7, don't have to be describing sentient beings, like angels?

Is it possible that the creation itself is being addressed as glorying in the handiwork of God as the Lord is using language to bring a life of its own to what He is doing in the span of six days in the beginning?

I would submit that this is precisely what the text is saying, in light of the larger context, and this is why we can connect inanimate morning stars singing, in the first part of the verse, to the sons of God who shout for joy, in the last part of the verse, as the parallelism becomes complete, where both are identical and declaring the glory of God.

Just as lightning can speak, (Job 38:35), so too can individual stars or planets or even universes, that are birthed, if you will, by the

word of God. And in that sense they can be described as sons of God who praise their Creator.

Here's my point. Job 38:7 is not found in an exegetical vacuum. The surrounding context must be brought to bear when looking at passages where less clear language must be defined by more clear passages.

As we consider the book of Job we must not place back into a passage, like Job 38:7, our preconceived idea as to what we think it should say. Rather, let's take the evidence we have and make observations that the context allows us to use.

Is it possible that the morning stars and the sons of God are angels who are declaring the glory of God? As I said earlier, I like the idea of angels being special witnesses to the handiwork of God, despite the fact that the word angels is not used in that passage.

The Scriptures don't tell us anywhere as to when the angels were created, though it is certainly inferred that it must have been somewhere within that six day period as on the seventh day the Lord ceased His special creative work, of which angels were necessarily a part.

And so, it is certainly possible that angels were created before man and before the end of God's creative process as they rejoiced over the universe being spoken into existence by our Creator.

But, it is also possible that since man is at the center of God's redemptive work and that all of the word of God centers around the God-man coming to redeem a people for Himself chosen before the foundations of the world, and since God's chosen angels are ministering spirits to those who will receive salvation, (in that sense they play a secondary role to man's redemption), it is not beyond the realm of possibility that angels were created on day six *after* the creation of God's crowning glory made in His image, man.

So, in light of these things, is it also not possible, in this section relating to God's ability to miraculously create ex nihilo, that the creation itself can declare the glory of God during creation week as the Lord uses anthropomorphic language to personalize His loving touch on every corner of His universe, which is the immediate context of this passage in Job?

The jury may still be out on Job 38:7, but if we are coming to the table to use the phrase, “sons of God” as a pretext for defining this phrase in all of the OT as being equated with angels, then it is going after a bridge too far in my estimation.

FOR THE EXPANDED STUDY ON WHO THE SONS OF GOD ARE IN BOTH GENESIS 6 AND JOB, (from which this present study was taken), VISIT:

www.growupinchrist.com/images/docs/Topical/Sons_of_God_by_Drew_Worthen.pdf