

Sin of the Sons of God – Does the Punishment fit the Crime?

Genesis 6:3

Then 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.”^a

Genesis 6:3 is an enigmatic passage that describes God’s decree of punishment for the sin of the sons of God. The sin involves copulation between the “sons of God” and the “daughters of men” and is described in verses 6:2 and 6:4:

² the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose.... ⁴ The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown.

This paper assumes that the sons of God were indeed spiritual beings created by God. All passages are from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted. Dr. Gordon Wenham excels at detailing the case for this interpretation in his commentary on Genesis. Wenham states:

The “angel” interpretation is at once the oldest view and that of most modern commentators. It is assumed in the earliest Jewish exegesis (e.g., the books of 1 Enoch 6:2ff; Jubilees 5:1), LXX, Philo *De Gigant* 2:358), Josephus (*Ant.* 1.31) and the Dead Sea Scrolls (1QapGen 2:1; CD 2:17–19). The NT (2 Pet 2:4, Jude 6, 7) and the earliest Christian writers (e.g., Justin, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen) also take this line.^b

In background, the unanimous interpretation until approximately 200 A.D. was that that the sons of God were angels, and the daughters of men were simply that—the daughters of the descendants of Adam. The concept of human/god hybrids in early history is recorded in the mythology of civilized cultures worldwide, cultures separated by vast distances with no known means of communication. By approximately 200 A.D. some rabbinical scholars opposed the classical view and sought to reinterpret the identity of the sons of God and distance themselves from the religions of the cultures around them. These rabbis proposed an interpretation claiming that the sons of God were royalty. Later Christian scholars introduced the idea that the sons of God are descendents of Seth and that the “daughters of men” are actually only female descendents of wicked Cain. Some, including Luther, adopted this view observing that angels

^a *New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update*. LaHabra, CA : The Lockman Foundation, 1995, S. Ge 6:3
LXX The Septuagint, Greek translation of the OT
Ant. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*
NT New Testament

^b Wenham, Gordon J.: *Word Biblical Commentary : Genesis 1-15*. Dallas : Word, Incorporated, 2002
(Word Biblical Commentary 1), S. 139

and women do not currently have intercourse that produces tangible offspring. Luther's objection was based more on his distaste of catholic mysticism rather than the pagan myths.

I agree with the opposition when they claim that physical copulation between humans/spirits is not possible now and that we find no Nephilim being produced today. I believe there was a time in history before the flood, however, when this actually happened; and it is documented in Genesis 6:2. In addition, we see in verse 6:4 that the offspring, the Nephilim, were present both before and after the flood. Furthermore, Numbers 13:33 claims that the Nephilim were in Canaan when Israel left Egypt.

³³ And there we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim), and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them."

These passages record that the Nephilim, and therefore physical intercourse between angels and women, continued to be an issue after the flood. In other words the flood did not resolve the problem. One significant issue with the sons of Seth and the daughters of Cain interpretation is that the descendents of Cain presumably died out at the time of the flood and were not present after the flood to create more Nephilim. The sons of God sinned before the flood, the flood occurred, and the sons of God sinned after the flood. Obviously the flood did not stop the sin of the sons of God; it was neither the punishment nor the solution to the problem.

God's decree concerning the sin of the sons of God

Genesis 6:3, "Then 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."^c

Theologians have long complained that God's decree of punishment concerning the sin of the sons of God does not fit the crime. The purpose of this paper is to prove how the punishment decreed in Genesis 6:3 actually *does* fit the "crime" and explains why the Nephilim, the proof of human/spirit copulation, existed both before and after the flood and not now. This paper will also attempt to prove that God decrees events in Genesis 6:3 that protect humanity from the corruption of the sons of God and make this sin impossible in the future.

In considering the decree itself, there has been considerable speculation as to what it actually means. The Hebrew is enigmatic, and while the broad concepts are fairly straightforward, the nuances are varied—the variety being evident in the many translations. There are four main clauses that must be considered. The first is "Then the LORD said." This indicates that God's decree is the result of the sin of the sons of God in the preceding verse. There is not much dispute concerning this. The second phrase, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever," has been the subject of considerable debate. The reason for God's Spirit "not striving" with man is given in the following clause: "because he also is flesh." What these phrases mean is somewhat obscure, but I believe the core issue they address is the way God governs humanity to prevent or mitigate sin. The Hebrew verb is most often translated "strive" but also is translated "abide with"

^c *New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update*. LaHabra, CA : The Lockman Foundation, 1995, S. Ge 6:3

or even “contend with.” If we consider this Hebrew verb in the context of “spirit” governing man, the range of meaning fits the concept. The Spirit “abides with,” “remains with” and “is available to” mankind tangibly at that time to “strive with” and “contend with” them concerning their actions and deeds. Before the flood, spirits (God and angels) had jurisdiction to contend with mankind against sin. Spirits, not men, governed mankind and strove with them to live according to God’s laws as members of a righteous society. They did this tangibly, physically interacting with the five senses and not through some mystical experience. The spirits were so physically tangible that angels could copulate with human women who bore their offspring.

In simple terms I believe that this phrase reflects the concept that before the flood God ruled over humanity through tangible spiritual beings, and after the flood God ruled humanity through human kings. Spirits contended with flesh before the flood; flesh ruled flesh afterwards. There is ample evidence for this paradigm. In the early Genesis narrative, God is speaking to humans directly in tangible form as their ruler giving them the law. At the first sin in the garden, God speaks directly to the culpable and decrees His judgment. At the second recorded sin, God again speaks face to face with the first murderer and pronounces His judgment. There is no room for human vigilantes. Here is God’s decree in Genesis 4:11-15:

¹¹ And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. ¹² When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.” ¹³ Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment is greater than I can bear. ¹⁴ Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.” ¹⁵ Then the LORD said to him, “Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.” And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him.

The key issue to note is that after God decrees a curse upon Cain and banishes him as punishment for murder, Cain is concerned that he himself will be killed. In response, God gives Cain a sign to prevent others from killing him. This same concept of protection against human vigilantes is presumed upon by the second recorded murderer, Lamech, who was Cain’s descendant according to Genesis 4:24. So spirits, not men, judged murderers before the flood. As punishment Cain was not allowed to remain in God’s presence, and the ground would no longer be fruitful for him. We know that Cain was exiled from “God’s territory” near Eden and went east to the territories governed by other spirits, the sons of God. These sons of God, fallen angels, did not govern justly even as human kings may not rule justly. Psalm 82 indicates that they governed wickedly, encouraging evil. The corruption and violence that develops there is evidence that the sons of God did not contend with man against sin but exploited those under their rule; they took women as wives, whomever they chose.

After the flood God decrees a change in government in which this “striving” with man against sin is delegated from spirits to other men. Genesis 9:5b-6a records this massive transition in a few words.

“from every man’s brother I will require the life of man. “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed”

This delegation of authority to oppose sin is expressed in the creation of human governments. Spirits continue to be tangible and can interact physically with humans, but they have lost their jurisdiction to govern. Before the flood only the hybrid Nephilim are the “mighty men” (*gibbor* in Hebrew) and “men of renown.” After the flood we find the first mention of human kings and kingdoms in Genesis 10:10, with Nimrod the first king and Babel the first kingdom. By Genesis 14 we find many kings ruling different territories and fighting one another. This transition at Babel is also documented in Deut 32:8.

When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the ²sons of God.

In the above passage God allocates geographical territories of the earth as the inheritance of the different peoples He scattered at Babel. These territories are divided under the sons of God who continue to be tangible—but are looked to as gods, not rulers. After the flood these spirits exerted influence over the nations through human kings who served them but they themselves no longer governed. The resurgence of the Nephilim proves that this spiritual “influence” of the sons of God was still tangible and even physical. People could speak with their gods as they spoke with other men to obtain guidance and advice. Also after the flood we find God speaking with men—and even physically wrestling with one of the patriarchs. However, human kings now dispense God’s justice and are responsible to shed the blood of murderers. Thus the second clause, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever,” is fulfilled after the flood as man is commanded to strive with man because God delegated judgment to human kings instead of spirits. Psalm 82 describes a scene in which God judges his own council of gods (elohiim) and condemns spirits ruling humans for showing favor to the wicked and not defending the weak (the situation before the flood).

Psalm 82

- 1 God has taken his place in the divine council;
in the midst of the gods he holds judgment:
- 2 “How long will you judge unjustly
and show partiality to the wicked? *Selah*
- 3 Give justice to the weak and the fatherless;
maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.
- 4 Rescue the weak and the needy;
deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”
- 5 They have neither knowledge nor understanding,
they walk about in darkness;
all the foundations of the earth are shaken.
- 6 I said, “You are gods,
sons of the Most High, all of you;
- 7 nevertheless, like men you shall die,
and fall like any prince.”
- 8 Arise, O God, judge the earth;
for you shall inherit all the nations!

² Compare Dead Sea Scroll, Septuagint; Masoretic Text *Israel*

Historically, the rise of kings coincides with the decline of Nephilim as the “mighty ones” (*gibbor* in Hebrew). Nimrod, the first king, is a “gibbor” and called a mighty hunter before the Lord. What he hunted is the subject of speculation but I propose that he hunted post-flood Nephilim, interlopers who physically and violently sought to re-impose their will on humanity. Coincidentally, the next mention of kings after Nimrod is with regard to four kings from his territory beginning a military campaign against Nephilim in Canaan. This is the first war and organized battle mentioned in scripture. These four kings from Nimrod’s territory are going to battle against the five kings of Canaan, including Sodom and Gomorrah. They begin their campaign by defeating Canaan’s Nephilim.

⁵ In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him came and defeated the ^aRephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim, the ^cZuzim in Ham, the ^dEmim in Shaveh-kiriathaim, ⁶ and the ^eHorites in their hill country of Seir as far as El-paran on the border of the wilderness. (Genesis 14:5-6)

According to Deut 2:10-22 (see Endnote 1), the Rephaim, Zuzim, Emim and the Horites were Nephilim. The narrative links these as allies to the five kings in the valley of Sodom and Gomorrah. The human kings of Canaan tolerated these wicked beings and apparently gave their daughters to the sons of God willingly (because the sons of God no longer had jurisdiction to take whomever they chose). Embracing the sin of the sons of God made Canaan a wicked place—worse than the surrounding nations who fought against them. It is ironic that when the angels came to visit Lot, the men of Sodom tried to rape them by violence. Afterwards Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, as Jude says, for going after “strange flesh.” I believe that there is more than a minor connection in the history of Sodom, beginning with the battle of the four kings, linking Canaan with the reemergence of the sin of the sons of God. God’s first and obvious answer to this was to use kings from Shinar to destroy the Nephilim. Secondly, God made Sodom an example that this sin would not be allowed to continue by coming down Himself to investigate the situation and decree judgment. During this period the sin of the sons of God continued to create more Nephilim but God spoke to Abraham of a time four generations later when iniquity changed.

¹³ Then the LORD said to Abram, “your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs for four hundred years...¹⁶ they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.” (Genesis 15:13, 16)

Finally, four generations later when the era of “tangible spirits” had ended and no new Nephilim were being created, God sent men into Canaan and commanded them to exterminate all that they found there and obliterate the wicked Nephilim and their allies from the earth. This was God’s answer to the sin of the sons of God and its legacy.

^a ch. 15:20; Deut. 2:11; 3:11

^c [Deut. 2:20]

^d Deut. 2:10, 11

^e Deut. 2:12, 22

The New Testament sheds light on the concept articulated in the third clause, “because he also is flesh.” In fact, Romans 8:3-8 is a commentary on the weakness described in Gen 6:3 as to why the rule of God’s Spirit did not produce righteousness.

³For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

To illustrate with a simple example consider the Spirit contending with Cain in his battle against sin in Genesis 4:3-8:

³ In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, ⁴ and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, ⁵ but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. ⁶ The LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? ⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.” ⁸ Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.

We know that Cain offered a defective sacrifice and remained fleshly. Cain’s deeds were evil and, when God refuses to accept his evil deeds, instead of doing well and repenting Cain becomes angry. God “strove with” Cain and commanded him to win the battle over the sin that was tempting him. Being fleshly, Cain was hostile to God’s command and instead succumbed and became the first murderer. Abel’s murder did not result because God’s spiritual rule over Cain was somehow defective. It was not because the Spirit did not strive enough with Cain. Abel’s murder occurred because Cain’s flesh refused to submit to the rule of God and indeed, according to Romans, he could not. In other words, Cain’s flesh made God’s striving ineffective and it was Cain who was at fault. In contrast Abel was righteous and “of the spirit” on the basis of offering an acceptable sacrifice as seen in Hebrews 11:4.

⁴ By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts.

This is exactly the point Paul is making in Romans 8. Instead of the Spirit, the answer God gives to establish an orderly society on Earth among fleshly men is detailed in Romans 13, human rulers and authorities. What prevents murder among fleshly men is the threat of punishment from other men—law enforcement and the judicial system.

Wicked flesh ruled only by spirits produced violent anarchy. The flesh must be ruled by the flesh if some kind of order was to be maintained. According to Genesis 6:11-13 uncontrolled human violence—not the sin of the sons of God—was the sin that the flood punished.

¹¹ Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. ¹² And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. ¹³ And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth. ¹⁴ Make yourself an ark of gopher wood.

After the flood, God prevented uncontrolled violence and evil from reoccurring by subjugating men to man instead of to spirits. Men striving against other men imposed God's judgment. Paul affirms this concept in Romans 13:1-5 when he writes to Christians about human government.

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴ for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. ⁵ Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.

So God fulfilled "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh" by removing the rule of spirits over humanity. In other words, while the spiritual beings still existed, they only exerted their influence indirectly through human kings. Fleshly man judged fleshly men. This transition from direct to indirect rule is part of the punishment on the sons of God. Seen from this perspective, the punishment decreed in Gen 6:3 is beginning to fit the crime, but this will be dealt more completely in the fourth clause.

The last clause is, "Nevertheless his days shall be 120 years." For scholars, this is the part of the decree where there seems to be the greatest disconnect between the sin of the sons of God and the punishment God imposes on men. Scholars explain this clause two ways. The weakest explanation is that the 120 years is referring to timing of the flood and this is what will limit the days of mankind. Obviously, mankind continued to exist after the flood and only the days of those who died in the flood were limited. We also have seen the sin of the sons of God continued after the flood—more Nephilim were produced. In any case, why punish mankind for what the sons of God did? Ultimately, this explanation is weak and the clause must mean something different.

The classic interpretation of the fourth clause is as a decree limiting the lifespan of humans to a maximum of 120 years. When God uttered this decree, men's lives were measured in centuries, not decades, with many lives reaching 800 or 900 years. At this time limiting a man's life to a mere 120 years would be a radical change. The fact that lifespans begin to decrease immediately

following this decree is compelling evidence that the classic interpretation of this clause is valid. Noah lived 950 years; his son Shem lived only 600 years, and his grandson only 438 years. While this interpretation seems strongest, severely limiting the length of human life raises the question about the punishment fitting the crime: the angels sin and the humans are condemned to a shorter life. It doesn't seem to make sense, especially if humans were actually the victims of wicked angelic rulers. I believe there is a logical answer.

The solution to this problem

There is a common element in the second and fourth clause, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever,” and, “Nevertheless his days shall be 120 years.” Both clauses look to the future and are not completed immediately as seen in the terms “forever” and “shall be.” Both clauses are linked together as a single response to the sin of the sons of God. I believe that the decree begins a process affecting human/spirit intercourse that is manifested in and linked to the declining lifespans of humanity. In other words, we can measure the progress of “My Spirit will not strive with man forever,” by how long people were living at a given point in history. When their lives declined to the prescribed 120 years, spirits (God's Spirit and the sons of God) would no longer “strive with” or “abide with” or judge humans as they did up until that point.

I am claiming that in Genesis 6:3 God is setting in motion a “gulf of separation” between mankind and spirits that was linked to declining lifespans and that could be measured against that timeline. Physical human/spirit copulation and the birth of Nephilim would be ending. Spirits, both God and the sons of God, would become “unphysical” to humans and human/spirit interaction would become less tangible. Once this gulf was complete, there could be no more Nephilim because the sons of God were no longer able to copulate with the daughters of men—the gulf rendered them incapable of sexual human/spirit intercourse. Looked at in this light the punishment *does* fit the crime. Because the sons of God exploited mankind instead of contending with them against sin as we have seen in Genesis and Psalm 82, God removed their ability to tangibly interact with humanity and corrupt them directly. God did this by changing humanity, and this change was also reflected in a shortened life. I am not claiming that spirits were totally prevented from exerting their influence on humanity. I am claiming that their influence became less tangible. After human lives had degraded to 120 years, instead influencing humans through their five physical senses, the sons of God interacted with humans through the mystical spiritual experiences, spiritism, and divination listed in Deut 18.

According to this paradigm, after God's decree in Genesis 6:3 a clock was set in motion to restrict direct human/spirit interaction that was only fully imposed when human life spans decreased to 120 years. The time from the Flood to Moses was a unique time of human/spirit interaction, an era that came to an end just as certainly as the creation of Nephilim came to an end. It was during this time that God came and physically spoke to Abraham. God and two angels sat and ate with Abraham before giving Abraham the promise, a promise of audible words that were heard with real human ears. God also met with Isaac and physically wrestled with Jacob. In a separate account, it was during this time God came and spoke to Job and his friends. We are certain it was during this time because Job lived 140 more years after God had restored his fortunes. The patriarchs were not mystics but men who actually spoke, touched and ate with spirits and lived longer than 120 years. Following the “lifespan genealogies” we see a direct line of fathers/sons in which each and every father lived longer than 120 years. This type of

genealogy ends with the most important person of the Old Testament, Moses. After Moses this “lifespan genealogy” is no longer used.

Age	Man	Ref.
930	Adam	Gen 5
912	Seth	Gen 5
905	Enosh	Gen 5
910	Kenan	Gen 5
895	Mahalale	Gen 5
962	Jared	Gen 5
365	Enoch	Gen 5 (did not die)
969	Methuselah	Gen 5
777	Lamech	Gen 5
950	Noah	Gen 9, 11
600	Shem	Gen 11
438	Apachshad	Gen 11
420	Shelah	Gen 11
464	Eber	Gen 11
239	Peleg	Gen 11
239	Rue	Gen 11
230	Serug	Gen 11
148	Nahor	Gen 11
205	Terah	Gen 11
175	Abraham	Gen 25:7
180	Isaac	Gen 35:28
147	Jacob	Gen 47:28
137	Levi	Ex 6
133	Kohath	Ex 6
137	Amram	Ex 6
120	Moses	Deut 34:7

Jacob mentions the decline of life expectancy in his speech to Pharaoh in Gen 47:9.

⁹ And Jacob said to Pharaoh, “The days of the years of my sojourning are 130 years. Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their sojourning.”

Jacobs’ son Joseph dies in Egypt at age 110, and his death is recorded in the last verse of Genesis. Interestingly, Joseph is not recorded as speaking with God but only having dreams and interpreting the dreams of others. The lifespans of Jacob’s other sons are not recorded in Genesis. It is only later in Exodus that we find that one son, Levi, lived to be 137 years old and had children and grandchildren that also lived to be older than 130.

So Genesis and Exodus show us through the genealogies that God’s decree in Genesis 6:3 was completed with Moses, who lived 120 years. With Moses, God Himself came down to Sinai and delivered His Law directly from the burning mountain to humans with “different genetics” as

evidenced that they no longer lived to the ages that the patriarchs had attained. The rule of God was revealed and written down for His people, once for all. This Law was to prevent and mitigate sin. The Spirit spoke to men who would live less than the 120 years and were now on the other side of this gulf—spirits to them were no longer physical. The people of this new era heard God’s voice and pleaded for a mediator between them and the Spirit so they would not die as recorded in Deut 5:24-28. God acknowledged their plea and affirmed they were right; His voice was simply too great for the humans of this new era to bear.

²⁴ And you said, ‘Behold, the LORD our God has shown us his glory and greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire. This day we have seen God speak with man, and man still live. ²⁵ Now therefore why should we die? For this great fire will consume us. If we hear the voice of the LORD our God any more, we shall die. ²⁶ For who is there of all flesh, that has heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of fire as we have, and has still lived? ²⁷ Go near and hear all that the LORD our God will say and speak to us all that the LORD our God will speak to you, and we will hear and do it.’ ²⁸ “And the LORD heard your words, when you spoke to me. And the LORD said to me, ‘I have heard the words of this people, which they have spoken to you. They are right in all that they have spoken.

At that time, because of this gulf, no more physical human/spirit intercourse is possible. Before the flood, wicked Cain spoke with God and saw the face of God (Gen 4:14). Also, before the flood, Adam, Enoch, and Noah walked “with” God (Gen 3:8, 5:24, 6:9); after the flood Abraham and Isaac only walked “before” God (Gen 17:1, 24:40). As human lifespans shortened, I believe that the capacity to interact directly with spirits diminished so that by the end of this era, even righteous Moses was unable to look at the face of God and live (Exodus 33:20). Finally, the children of Israel living less than the 120 years knew they would die if they even continued to hear the voice of God, and God said they were right. Their capacity to interact with God was less than that of Moses. This shift is also evidenced in the fact that by this time no new Nephilim were being created either—it was the end of an era. The remaining Nephilim to be destroyed in Canaan were simply the descendants produced by sexual relations between angels and women at an earlier time. Thus by the time of the Exodus as recorded in Numbers 13:22 we find references only to the descendents of the Nephilim, not the creation of the Nephilim themselves.

²² They went up into the Negeb and came to Hebron. Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi, the descendants of Anak, were there....And besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there... ³³ And there we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim), and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them.”

Like the four kings in Genesis 14, Joshua led Israel into Canaan to on a campaign to destroy the Nephilim. Like Jacob’s son Joseph, Moses’ successor is part of the next era. After conquering Canaan, Joshua’s death at 110 is recorded in the last verses of book of Joshua, where he leaves Israel to be governed by the Law of Moses with God as their king.

God's spiritual rule is revealed and recorded

At Sinai God gave Moses, the man who lived 120 years, the revelation of the Law—statutes and guidelines of His spiritual rule. Paul affirms this in Romans 7:14 when he says that the Law is spiritual. Moses received the legal code from God for His kingdom on earth. All those in Israel, and those from other nations who joined Israel became citizens in the kingdom of God, had God ruling them as their king and were expected to obey the Law. This “spiritual kingship” lasted from the time of the Exodus when God birthed Israel (Deut 32:9-18) as His own nation until the Samuel. God’s spiritual rule over His kingdom and His “influence” over men was defined in the written Law. His spokesmen were those men He raised up in accordance with the revelation of Moses, prophets like Samuel. God forbids Israel’s citizens from seeking spirits through mysticism and divination like the nations under the sons of God. In fact, Deut 18:9-22 describes the stark contrast between the spiritual rule of the kingdom of God on earth and the other nations.

⁹ “When you come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations. ¹⁰ There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer ¹¹ or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead, ¹² for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD. And because of these abominations the LORD your God is driving them out before you. ¹³ You shall be blameless before the LORD your God, ¹⁴ for these nations, which you are about to dispossess, listen to fortune-tellers and to diviners. But as for you, the LORD your God has not allowed you to do this. ¹⁵ “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen— ¹⁶ just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.’ ¹⁷ And the LORD said to me, ‘They are right in what they have spoken. ¹⁸ I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.

Interestingly, after the creation of the nation of Israel we find the same concepts seen in Genesis 6 in a microcosm where “a spirit as a king” does not lead to righteousness, and the government of Israel is also delegated to men. In a replay of Genesis 6 we find that though Joshua left Israel under the kingship of God, the book of Judges is a record that Israel continually sinned and did not submit to God’s government. In fact the book of Judges closes with the negative assessment in 21:25:

²⁵ In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

The reality was that God was Israel’s king, but the people refused to submit to His rule. God tangibly spoke to fleshly Cain and commanded him not to sin, and yet Cain murdered Abel. God spoke to fleshly Israel through Law and commands them not to sin, and yet the pages of Judges

are filled with the wickedness of Israel. A human king of Israel was not a surprise because Moses predicted the transition of rule from spirit to man in Deut 17:14-15.

¹⁴ “When you come to the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, ‘I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me,’ ¹⁵ you may indeed set a king over you whom the LORD your God will choose. One from among your brothers you shall set as king over you.

So God’s solution to Israel’s wickedness described in Judges mirrors Genesis where “spiritual rule” is delegated to a human king in 1 Samuel 8:5b-8a.

“Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations.” ⁶ But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, “Give us a king to judge us.” And Samuel prayed to the LORD. ⁷ And the LORD said to Samuel, “Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. ⁸ According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods,”

Israel’s refusal to submit to God’s spiritual rule as written in the Law resulted in God delegating His rule of Israel to a human king after His own heart in 1 Sam 13:14. So the rule of God’s kingdom on earth also evolved from a spiritual rule to the rule of men as Moses had predicted. Looking forward we see that God’s rule over His kingdom on earth ultimately evolves into a theocracy in which God becomes man and rules as a man over humanity. Men who submit to God’s spiritual rule, like Abel, are righteous and obey His commands. Those who are fleshly and refuse to obey His rule are judged with a rod of iron.

Conclusion

We see that in Genesis 6:3 God judges the sons of God in a way where the punishment clearly fits the crime. A gulf of separation is imposed between spirit and human such that physical copulation is no longer possible and Nephilim are no longer produced—spirits become “unphysical” to humans. The ability of evil angels to corrupt humanity has been limited, and they can no longer exploit and corrupt humanity to the extent possible before the flood. While mankind remains sinful, they do not reach the levels of evil attained before the flood. After Moses the descendants of the sons of God, the Nephilim, are then exterminated by men. Ultimately, the decree in Genesis 6:3 is fulfilled by God becoming a man, Jesus, and bridging the gulf of physical intangibility He imposed between spirits and humans. He became the God/man king to rule and judge all humanity. This man spoke the very words of God with human vocal cords. Humans could once again see, hear and touch God. Jesus promised mankind eternal life and escape from the wrath of God coming upon all who disobeyed His commands and did not submit to his rule and master the sin that tempted them as Cain had failed to do. This man died offering His own life as the payment of death that God had imposed upon those who disobeyed Him. As He predicted, Jesus was raised from the dead and is coming to rule the kingdom of God as a man over mankind. When this is completed, all the wicked sons of God will be eternally

punished and will no longer afflict or influence man. In addition, all mankind that have come to believe in God's sacrifice, like Abel, will experience eternal life.

¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, ¹⁹ in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, ²⁰ because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. ²¹ Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him. (1Peter 3:18-22)

End Notes:

1. Deut 2:10-22: ¹⁰ The Emim formerly lived there, a people great and many, and tall as the Anakim. ¹¹ Like the Anakim they are also counted as Rephaim, but the Moabites call them Emim. ¹² The Horites also lived in Seir formerly, but the people of Esau dispossessed them and destroyed them from before them and settled in their place... ²⁰ It is also counted as a land of Rephaim. Rephaim formerly lived there—but the Ammonites call them Zamzummim—²¹ a people great and many, and tall as the Anakim; but the LORD destroyed them before the Ammonites, and they dispossessed them and settled in their place, ²² as he did for the people of Esau, who live in Seir, when he destroyed the Horites before them and they dispossessed them and settled in their place even to this day.