

## **Spiritual warfare** **Israel under attack**

**In our previous messages, we discussed the origins of Satan, the fallen Lucifer, and the war he's been waging on God and on the human race ever since he was summarily ejected from Heaven as a result of his hubris and vaulting ambition.**

**We saw that this fall from Heaven was, in essence, a rebellion against *truth* - with the result that the once-glorious cherub became the degraded and ignominious father of lies!**

**We considered the fact that, as a consequence, his main weapon against humanity has been *deception* and *lies*.**

**We saw how - after the great flood – Nimrod, son of Cush and grandson of Ham, established a one-world godless empire - the dynasty of Uruk - in defiance of God's edict that man spread over the earth.**

**This empire was dedicated to the worship of Satan in the form of Enki, the Lord of the Abyss, who dwelt in Eridu, the oldest city on record.**

**The Lord God, as we know, brought this godless enterprise to an abrupt halt by confusing the languages at Babel - which many believe was this original city of Eridu.**

**As [Genesis 11:9](#) says:  
the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth.**

**In this message we're going to discuss another aspect of the on-going conflict between Satan and God; specifically: Satan's war against Israel.**

**Antisemitism, which we can define generally as an attitude of hostility towards the Jews, is rampant in the world today. According to the Anti-Defamation League - in 2015 at least - a total of about 1.09 billion people - that's one billion and 90 million people in the world, harbour antisemitic attitudes.**

**This total includes 14% of Australians and ranges to 74% of people in the Middle East and North Africa. Western Europe is at 24% with 22% in Asia and so on.**

**But why such irrational hatred? It's understandable (to and extent) in the Arab world: the Arabs believe that the land of Israel is rightfully theirs; they believe that they have a legitimate claim to the promises made to Abraham, to the land of Israel, and to the holy city of Jerusalem in particular!**

**But why the present-day virulent and often apparently irrational hostility displayed towards Israel on the part of what appears to be the majority of the nations? Even those who have little (or even no) contact with Israel?**

When we consider the relentless persecution of Israel, two factors emerge as clear reasons for its occurrence.

Firstly, even a cursory reading of **Ezekiel** and **Hosea** makes it abundantly clear that Israel's sufferings are connected with God's judgment on this nation. The curses for disobedience, pronounced on Mt Ebal in **Deuteronomy 11**, have been summarily inflicted on a people that has, at times, stubbornly persisted in rebellion and unbelief; on a wife that has been divorced from her husband (as **Ezekiel 3** explains) .

But this *doesn't* explain the attitude of the *nations* towards this little country - and it's that aspect that we're going to discuss in this message.

So let's lift the lid a little and get a glimpse from Scripture into *this* aspect of the spiritual war that has actually been raging for well over 3000 years or so!

It all really began with the dispersion of the nations after the incident of the Tower of Babel. This, according to the Septuagint, would have taken place in approximately 2100 B.C. – possibly about 450 years after the flood - although it must be said that much of mainstream opinion has placed the flood itself at roughly 2300 B.C.

Nimrod's godless one-world empire (which we discussed in our third message on spiritual warfare) had been forcibly disbanded by the confusion of the languages at

**Babel and so Satan was now forced to adopt a different strategy.**

**Genesis chapter 10** tells the story of the development of seventy language or ethnic groups from the three sons of Noah: Shem, Ham and Japheth.

**These groups spread over the world - taking with them the memories, stories and unfortunately, the mythology of Nimrod's empire.**

**So it wasn't a one-world empire this time. Instead, the Bible seems to suggest that God then permitted the spiritual government of these seventy nation groups to be divided up between powerful, fallen angels – or spiritual world-rulers (as we'll see in a moment).**

**Now exactly *why* God permitted this to happen, we don't really know for sure!**

**Perhaps Satan claimed that he and his minions could do a better job than God at handling human affairs.**

**Perhaps God was simply allowing mankind to have its way - respecting human free will - even if it was a will prone to Satanic deception!**

**Perhaps - as he did with the various so-called *dispensations*, God was permitting evil to play its hand out so that its character and inevitable out-working could be clearly seen for what they really were.**

Hopefully we'll have a more thorough answer to this particular mystery in a short while.

So what do we learn from the Scriptures in regard to this issue?

Well - the Bible has several references to a group of *powerful angel princes* that appear to have a particular relationship with human beings - that appear, in fact, to have the role of *rulers* over the nations.

To understand the Biblical references dealing with this subject, we need to understand that angels (fallen and unfallen) are called, in Scripture, *Sons of God* (*Bene Elohim* or *Bene -ha-Elohim* in the Hebrew).

Not, of course, in the sense of the eternal Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. In fact. - quite the opposite! In Scripture, the term "*son of God*" - when applied to a *created* being, is used to define a creature that has been *directly* created by God.

This explains why Adam – the only man created *directly* by God - as opposed to the rest of our race - is called a "*son of God*" in **Luke 3:38**.

And in the Old Testament, the term applies particularly to *angels*. For example, when the material universe was created, it says in **Job 38:7** *...the morning stars sang together, and all the angels shouted for joy.*

But in the Authorized Version, it gives the literal rendering of the Hebrew, which is this:

**...the morning stars sang together, and all the *sons of God* (the *bene ha-Elohim*) shouted for joy.**

We also meet these so-called "sons of God" in **Job 1:6**, where the NIV translates the verse in this way:

**One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them.**

Now the NIV says "*angels*" but the KJV and the ESV say:

**Now there was a day when the *sons of God* (*Bene ha-'elohim*) came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.**

Here, as we saw in the passage from **Job**, the translators of the NIV obviously understood the term to mean *angels* and substituted the word accordingly.

**Genesis 6** records how, before the flood is a particular group of these fallen angels mated with human females:

**Genesis 6:2 ... the sons of God saw that the daughters of humans were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose.**

There are several New Testament passages that allude to the fate of this particular group of rebellious angels.

Unlike the angels at present inhabiting the heavenly realms, these have been punished for that particular crime with confinement in Hades.

For example, we read in [2 Peter 2:4](#), that:

**.....God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them in chains of darkness to be held for judgment;**

I understand that other people interpret this [Genesis 6](#) passage differently. Some, for example, believe that in that chapter, the *sons of God* is a reference to men of the godly line of Seth while the *daughters of men* refers to the ungodly women of the line of Cain.

I've explained in a separate message just why I believe that the term *sons of God* in [Genesis 6](#), is in fact a clear reference to a group of fallen angels.

But to return to our theme: how do we know that fallen angelic (or we could now say: *demonic*) beings rule over the nations?

Well, there are several places in the Bible where we find credible evidence of their presence.

For example, we encounter these powerful and malignant rulers in the book of [Daniel](#).

Daniel, you'll remember, saw a vision that scared him and an unnamed angel had been sent to give the

prophet its interpretation. But, as the angel explained, he'd been unable to get through to Daniel for weeks because, as he said:

..the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia. (Daniel 10:13)

A little later he adds, in Daniel 10:20,

Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I go, the prince of Greece will come;

In our Christian walk, we too, encounter these malignant beings.

Ephesians 6:12 says this:

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

The expression: *the powers of this dark world* is a translation of the Greek word κοσμοκράτωρ (*kosmokrator*) which literally means: "world - ruler".

So after attempts - through Nimrod - to rule over a one-world empire, Satan appears to be now ruling each nation-group separately through these powerful, fallen angel-princes.

Satan, of course, as the instigator of evil, and the most powerful of these fallen angels, is, of course, their commander-in-chief. Accordingly, this fallen world is under *his* control (for the moment!) as he rules through these malignant beings.

Consequently, in [John 12:31](#) & [John 16:11](#), he's described as **the prince of this world**. In [Ephesians 2:2](#), he's called **the ruler of the kingdom of the air**, And in [1 John 5:19](#), we're told that **the whole world is under the control of the evil one**.

That's why, in [Luke 4:5-6](#), Satan could offer Jesus all the kingdoms of the world if Christ would bow down to him - and he actually said *this*: **'I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to.'**

And you'll notice that Christ didn't contest this claim at that point because sinful mankind *has* worshipped Satan - through these angel *princes* - ever since Adam and Eve gave their allegiance to the Devil in the garden of Eden!

And from that point onwards, these fallen beings have been worshipped as *gods* by their respective nations. The lesser demons have also been worshipped – masquerading as lesser gods. [Romans 1:23](#) says that the pagan world:

exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

And we know that behind these idols were real beings - demonic spirit beings!

In **1 Corinthians 10:20**, Paul made the point that: The sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God.

And in **1 Corinthians 8:5-6**, Paul refers to these demons - who were worshipped as Gods. He says:

For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”), . yet for us there is but one God, the Father, etc

So - after the scattering of nations at Babel, all nation-groups were apparently handed over to the control of fallen angels under Satan's overall command.

An interesting side-light here! The ancient Canaanites originally worshipped one God whom they called El - the name for God that's so familiar to *us*. And that's not surprising since all the nations started out with a monotheistic conception - acknowledging that there was only *one* God. We, of course, use the plural of El - *Elohim* - indicating the plurality of beings in the Godhead.

**But the nations deserted the true God as Satan insinuated into their belief systems, the polytheistic worship of these fallen, demonic beings.**

**And how did he do it?**

**He did it firstly through the various mythologies which then developed into world religions. Here's how it generally worked:**

**A nation began with monotheistic beliefs. This was inevitable at the beginning – particularly following the flood. But as the family of men scattered over the earth, they began to weave stories around the one, true God.**

**They attributed a wife or spouse to him and described how the two of them subsequently had children. These second (or sometimes, third) generation of so-called *gods* were usually related to one another - some of them forming what became known as a *pantheon* – a word which literally means: *all gods*.**

**These gods were, of course, fallen angel beings. And they became the ones who, in the mythology of the nations, interacted with mankind.**

**As they did so, the original god ( the *real* God whom we worship), was pushed more and more into the background – became increasingly irrelevant or *otiose* (as scholars would describe him today).**

Take, for example, the Hellenistic nations. If you recall from Greek mythology, they conceived of the universe effectively beginning with *Ouranos* (conceived of as the sky) and he subsequently mated with *Gaia* (the earth).

They had children (the Titans) and these Titans, *Cronos* in particular, produced another generation which included several of the gods of Mt Olympus. And it was these *third-generation* gods (if you will), who interacted with human beings. We're all familiar with their names: Zeus, Apollo, Mercury, Hades, Athene, Aphrodite etc.

And who were these so-called 'gods'? Demonic rulers! Angel-princes and demons!

The Canaanites were no exception in this regard. In their mythology they ascribed to the great God, El, a spouse called Asherah - whose worship is mentioned often in the Old Testament - usually in reference to the *Asherah poles*.

According to Canaanite mythology, El and Asherah had seventy children. These seventy second-generation gods were placed in charge of human affairs. They bickered constantly among themselves and their intense rivalry worked itself out through the nations they commanded. Maybe that's one explanation for history's incessant wars.

And in the meantime, El withdrew himself from direct involvement with the world – certainly a typical (and colourful) explanation of how rampant polytheism came to replace the worship of the one true God!

Now if we read **Genesis chapter 10**, we find an interesting corollation in that there are exactly *seventy* nation – groups: Shemites, Hamites and Japhethites that developed after the flood from Noah's three sons.

Could the reference to the seventy sons of El and Asherah then be a reference to seventy fallen angels placed in charge of these seventy nation-groups? Seventy world-rulers of darkness? And if so, is it conceivable that Satan could have revealed this to the Canaanites?

A verse in **Deuteronomy chapter 32** may well be a reference to this. It says in verse **8** of that chapter:

**When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel.**

The Masoretic text here says "**sons of Israel**" but the Septuagint reads "sons of God" - that is -angelic beings. Were they seventy in number?

This becomes even more interesting when we read in **Luke chapter 10** that Christ sent out *seventy* disciples on

a gospel mission. Some translations say 72 disciples but the A.V. says 70. These disciples had been sent out - in the words of Jesus - as lambs among wolves but they came back rejoicing and saying, in [verse 17](#):

**‘Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.’**

Was this warning shot across the bow for Satan and his empire? **The** Lord's way of saying: ‘I'm coming to get you!’

Anyway - what we know for sure is that angelic princes - or world rulers - are in charge of human affairs and that they've made a *pig's breakfast* of it!

Wars; cruel injustice; sin run rampant and so on.

God actually confronted them on their appalling mismanagement! Remember what Christ said on one occasion in [John 10:34-35](#)? These were his words:

**“Is it not written in your Law, ‘I have said you are “gods” ’ ?**

A lot of Christians have been puzzled by this reference and have tended to avoid the passage. But what Christ appears to be referring to, was an occasion in the great assembly in Heaven when God rebuked these fallen angels.

Let's read what happened - it's found in [Psalm 82](#). And it starts off like this:

**v1 God presides in the great assembly; he renders judgment among the “gods”:**

The so-called *gods* here are, of course, the fallen angels - maybe 70 of them - who were (and are) in charge of the pagan nations - and the state of the world is a testament to their mis-management and so God begins with an accusation:

In **v2** - he asks the question:

**‘How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked?’**

He then goes on to tell them what they should do:

**v3 Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.**

But in their wickedness they are incapable of doing the right thing! So in **v5** God concludes that:

**‘The ‘gods’ know nothing, they understand nothing. They walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.’**

Then, in the next verse, we have these angels - direct creations of God - being once again referred to as 'sons of God'.

**v 6 “I said, ‘You are “gods’ ; you are all sons of the Most High.’**

As we’ve already said, these fallen angels were *gods* to the people who worshipped them and were also described as *sons of the Most High* because they were direct creations of God. And of course, as sons of the Most High, the greater was their responsibility to rule over the nations justly and wisely!

But they failed to do so – and now God passes judgement on them and pronounces their doom:

**v7 But you will die like mere mortals; you will fall like every other ruler.”**

These fallen princes would eventually be destroyed - along with their commander-in-chief, Satan.

The cry then goes up in **v.8:**

**.....Rise up, O God and judge the earth, for all the nations are your inheritance.**

A very significant statement - and we'll return to it a little later.

So these fallen angels - these so-called *gods*, were given the chance to prove themselves. And God allowed them to have their way and to do their best (or their worst) - virtually unchallenged - for over a thousand years!

Then, around 2000 B.C., *he stepped in!*

He did so by showing them how it *should* be done!

He would expose their evil mis-management that we've just read about in **Psalm 82!**

He would have his own nation! And in sharp contrast to Satan's minions, he would rule over *that* nation in justice and righteousness!

And through that one nation – his nation – he would bring salvation and blessing to *all* the nations.

So let's go back again to **Deuteronomy 32:8-9.**

**When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the sons of God.**

We've already discussed this verse. But it's the next verse we now need to focus on! It's one that's often quoted, usually glossed over – and rarely understood! Yet it's a statement of incredible significance for our purposes!

**v9 For the *Lord's* portion is is people, Jacob *his* allotted inheritance.**

**....the *Lord's* portion is his people**

How often have we talked about the Lord's *portion* without recognizing the meaning of the word?

One's '*portion*' means *a part of a whole*. It suggests that the remainder *belongs to* (or has been *allocated to*) some-one else.

In this case - to the fallen angels! The false gods who had inherited all the nations which developed after the flood.

But now God would have *his share*. *His portion* of the nations would be Israel. The verse goes on to confirm this thought: **Jacob *his* allotted inheritance.**

The fallen angels had received their nations by lot. As we read in **verses 8 & 9**, the nations were carved up, if you like, among the *sons of God*. But now *Jacob*, or *Israel*, would be *God's* allotted inheritance – his '*slice of the pie*', if you like!

The reference to Israel as God's *inheritance* is made over and over again in the Hebrew Scriptures.

In **Exodus 34:9**, Moses asks that God take Israel as *his inheritance*; in **2 Sam.20**, Joab was accused of trying to swallow up *the Lord's inheritance*; we read in **1 Kings 8** that Israel were the Lord's people and *the Lord's inheritance* whom he brought out of the iron-smelting furnace of Egypt; and **Psalm 33:12** says this:

**Blessed is the nation whose God is Yahweh – the people he chose *for his inheritance*.**

So we can sense the outrage in the cry of **Psalm 79:1**,  
**O God, the nations have invaded your inheritance; they have defiled your holy temple; they have reduced Jerusalem to rubble.**

But we must remember that there was no favouritism involved on God's part: no selection in that sense. God didn't choose an already-existing Israel from among all the other nations.

The fact is that all the nations were spoken for. They all had their own so - called "gods" and they were already corrupted and sunk in sin. So God *had* to make a new beginning. As he's done with each of us, personally, He had to start from scratch, so to speak, and did so by creating and developing his own nation through *one man* – Abraham (and his wife, Sarah).

So in **Deuteronomy 32:6** we read this:  
**Is he not your Father, your Creator, who made you and formed you?**

The Lord took his chosen couple out of Ur - the then capital of Sumer - and a centre of evil - dedicated to the worship of Nanna, the Moon god.

And so concerned was he to make a fresh start with his own nation, that he ordered Abram to *leave his family behind*.

Not only this, but Sarah was sterile: she couldn't conceive naturally. So what did the angel of the Lord say to Abraham in **Gen.18:10**? **I will surely return to you about this time next year and Sarah, your wife, will have a son.**

Rebekah, too, was childless until Isaac prayed for her in **Gen.25:21**; and in her turn, Rachel was sterile until God enabled her to conceive – according to **Gen.30:22**.

So the three matriarchs of Israel all needed supernatural assistance to conceive. Surely this was no co-incidence: it sounds very much like God was putting his stamp well and truly on this nation – claiming it as his own.

And so, like all direct creations, Israel, the nation, is described as a "*son of God*."

**Exodus 4:22,**

**'This is what the Lord says: 'Israel is my firstborn son,'**

That's what made Pharaoh's refusal to release the Israelites from Egypt such an offence and affront to Yahweh.

Listen to what the Lord says in **Exodus 4:22-23** as He gives instructions to Moses:

**Then say to Pharaoh, 'This is what the Lord says: Israel is my firstborn son, [23] and I told you, "Let my son go,**

so he may worship me.” But you refused to let him go; so I will kill *your* firstborn son.’ ”

And this, of course, accounts for the dreadful night of the last plague!

So having secured its eventual deliverance from Egypt, God then took this fledgling nation and nurtured and cared for it.

**Deuteronomy 32:10-11**, He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye, like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them aloft. The Lord alone led him; no foreign god was with him.

The other nations may have been claimed by Satan -but not Israel! - Israel was *God's* portion - *God's* inheritance – *his* share of the nations in respect of headship and rule.

So - before bringing the Children of Israel out of Egypt, God introduced himself to Moses in the burning bush. The account of this is found in **Exodus chapter 3**.

There, God identified himself as *Yahweh* and declared that he, *Yahweh*, the God of Israel, was the very same God who had developed and cared for this nation from the very beginning.

In **v6**, he tells Moses that he is, in fact, ‘**the Elohim of your fathers – the Elohim of Abraham, the Elohim of Isaac and the Elohim of Jacob.**’

And having identified who He actually is: the great eternal God, the ‘*real thing*’, the Lord now tells Moses that, although he is the great God, in his capacity as the national God of his own nation, Israel, he is to be known as *Yahweh*.

In **Ex.3:6**, he says to Moses: ‘**I am Yahweh,**’ and in **v15** He adds: ‘**This is my name forever, the name you shall call me from generation to generation.**’

The Babylonians had their Marduk, the Sumerians their Tammuz, the Tyrians had Melquart, the Sidonians, Eshmun, the Phoenicians and Canaanites their Baal and so on.

The personal name of *Israel’s* God was to be *Yahweh*! This is a point poorly understood by many Christians – and this vagueness in regard to the names of God is not helped by the translators of the Hebrew text, who, for some reason, translate the name *Yahweh* as ‘LORD’.

This creates a problem - in that most readers miss the real significance of many of God’s declarations to his people.

Take, for example, **Deut. 7:9**, where the Lord declares:

**‘Know therefore that *the Lord* your God is God;’**

What is God actually saying here? To most believers, the statement means not much more, really, than: ‘*God is God*’ – which seems to be an unnecessary repetition.

But what is the Hebrew literally saying? It’s this:  
**Know therefore that Yahweh, *your* god, is *God*!**

Paraphrased, it would go like this:

**‘I want you to know that Yahweh, your national god, isn’t one of the many national gods you see in these other nations around you. he is, in fact, the Elohim – the genuine, one and only great God!’**

And having made this point, Yahweh goes on in **v9** to further emphasize the difference between himself, the only true God, and the devilish imposters controlling the surrounding nations.

**v9 ‘He is the faithful God (Elohim), keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments.’**

The other objects of worship were frauds – imposters and fakes! Yahweh was the real deal!

For the other nations, there was no personal, on-going and developing relationship with their gods. Israel was unique – because only Yahweh, the true God, the

**Creator of mankind, could enter a genuine covenant relationship with a nation - because he alone, could know (and control) the future! He alone could establish an eternal covenant because he alone was eternal! The false gods were *not* eternal Beings, neither had they any influence over the future.**

**As well as this, Yahweh *alone* could establish a covenant of love because other so-called gods not only did not love their subjects but – as followers of the fallen Lucifer – they must have actively hated the people over whom they ruled!**

**And they would have deeply resented Israel! Because Israel's very existence must have served as a constant rebuke to their immorality and often-unrestrained evil – seen particularly in their worship of Moloch, Chemosh, Baal and so on!**

**But there was still more reason why Satan would want to either corrupt or destroy Israel.**

**Once Yahweh had produced his own nation - and identified himself as the God of that nation, his good name, his glory, was bound up in that nation! Yahweh had literally put his own reputation 'on the line' with Israel!**

**If Israel failed, their God, Yahweh, had failed! If Israel was defeated, then Yahweh was defeated. If Israel was honoured, their God was honoured – and so forth!**

**This was a commonly-held assumption throughout the ancient world!**

**In fact, so closely was a nation's *god* identified with his nation that if one nation was defeated by another, the *god* of the victorious nation was commonly regarded as stronger and more worthy than the God of the defeated nation.**

**Listen to the scorn in the voice of Sennacherib, the Assyrian king, when he communicated with Hezekiah:**

**2 Chron. 32:17**

**He wrote letters ridiculing Yahweh, the God of Israel, and saying this against Him: Just as the gods of the peoples of the other lands did not rescue their people from my hand, so the god of Hezekiah will not rescue *his* people from my hand.**

**Remember that at the time Yahweh brought out his own nation, the world was rampantly polytheistic. Each nation-group acknowledged the existence of the gods of other nations but believed that their gods were stronger.**

**In this context, Yahweh was regarded by the pagan world as just another god. A powerful one, to be sure - one who had parted the Red Sea - but still just another god!**

An incident recorded in the book of **Samuel**, gives us a clear insight into the polytheistic outlook of the world at that time.

There we read the story of the hijacked Ark of the Covenant. If you remember, Yahweh showed himself superior to Dagon when Dagon's statue collapsed before the Ark of the Covenant.

And look at the Philistines' reaction!

**1 Sam.5:7** When the people of Ashdod saw what was happening, they said, "The ark of the god of Israel must not stay here with us, because his hand is heavy on us and on Dagon our god."

A little later, we read in **1 Samuel 6:2** the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners and said, "What shall we do with the ark of the Lord? Tell us how we should send it back to its place."

And they did so- having added to it various tributes and offerings.

Now all of this seems confusing: especially their use of the word 'Lord'!

But this wasn't a faith reaction. They weren't acknowledging God's lordship over *them*.

**Substitute the name *Yahweh* for the word "Lord" and it all becomes clear. Their reaction was normal. They were wondering what to do with Yahweh's Ark. They still worshipped Dagon; they hadn't shifted allegiance but now they recognized that Yahweh was the stronger god. They even make reference to how he had parted the Red Sea.**

**This put them into a panic, and eager to placate the rival god, Yahweh.**

**So now we can see why the presence and strength of Israel was a dire threat to Satan and his kingdom of darkness. The nations, after all, were in bondage to Satan: his lieutenants ruled over them – and now Yahweh was once again stepping in to challenge his authority; as happened in the Garden of Eden when man was given his mandate to rule over the earth.**

**A national beach-head had been established by Yahweh - right in the heart of the Devil's empire!!**

**And so Satan's intentions were clear: he must either corrupt or destroy Israel! Clearly, if the Israelites would turn aside to other gods, they would be thus implying that the gods they turned to, were greater, stronger and more worthy of worship than Yahweh himself.**

**Accordingly, Satan's tactics were the same he had used in the garden of Eden. The same lie that we discussed in**

our first message - that God was not alone worthy of worship! And this lie was again assiduously promulgated by the evil one.

And so the temptation to idolatry was ever-present with Israel and Yahweh jealously took every precaution to keep his people separate and pure – in other words: sanctified!

He prepared a land for them and instructed his people to cleanse it of any trace of heathen worship. In [Exodus 23:23-24](#), he says this:

My angel will go ahead of you and bring you into the land of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites and Jebusites, and I will wipe them out. Do not bow down before their gods or worship them or follow their practices. You must demolish them and break their sacred stones to pieces.

No wonder that the first two commandments were: [Exodus 20:3](#), You shall have no other gods before me and [vv.4-5](#): You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above, or on the earth beneath, or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them, for I, Yahweh, your God, am a jealous God!

As we said, the other nations were polytheistic: they recognized and acknowledged each other's *gods* and

their gods were more or less happy to share the credit overall.

But there was to be no such polytheism in Israel: the nation was to be exclusively faithful to Yahweh – acknowledging that he was the one and only true God.

As He said in [Isaiah 42:8](#),  
**I am Yahweh, that is my name; I will not yield my glory to another - nor my praise to idols.**

The Israelites weren't even to marry outside their own race. And right at the beginning, in [Genesis 17](#), circumcision was introduced to Abraham in order to set his progeny apart from the pagan nations that would surround them.

In fact, the bond between this nation and their God was so strong that Israel was portrayed as Yahweh's wife in passages such as [Jeremiah chapter three](#).

Sometimes we find it incredible that, given the miracles they had witnessed: the Passover, the parting of the Red Sea, the water from the rock, the provision of manna – and so on, that the Israelites should have – time and time again – slipped back so readily and succumbed to the lure of idol worship and false gods. As, for example, in the case of Israel and the Moabites – recorded in [Numbers 25](#).

But we *must* understand the world of which they were part: the polytheistic world we've just been describing.

We understand that there is only one God; the patriarchs believed in only one God! But the situation would have been less clear in the minds of the Israelites *after four hundred years in Egypt* - even in the face of the overwhelming evidence of Yahweh's power!

Remember that the nation had *not long ago* come out of that pagan country and for hundreds of years they had, no doubt, been in close contact with the many gods of Egypt. They would have encountered Osiris, Isis, Seth, Nephthys, Apis, the bull god, the cat goddess, Bast, and the myriad lesser gods of that pagan nation!

Though initially blessed in the Egyptian territory of Goshen, it was not long before the Israelites fell under the influence of these pagan gods – and joined the Egyptians in their idolatry.

We read of the new Pharaoh who brought the nation under the yoke of slavery. Ostensibly the reason was that their increasing size was beginning to pose a threat to the Egyptians but in actual fact, it was God's judgment upon them because of this idolatry.

Listen to the words of [Ezek. 20:8](#), where God says this: **'But they rebelled against me and would not listen to me; they did not get rid of the vile images they had set their eyes on, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt. So**

**I said I would pour out my wrath on them and spend my anger against them *in Egypt.***'

**And even when delivered from bondage by a mighty hand, bad habits died hard and there was a persistent tendency to slip back into their former way of thinking: to regard Yahweh as just another god – as did the other nations.**

**After all, not long after the ten plagues – followed by the Passover and the miraculous parting of the Red Sea, the emancipated Israelites were dancing in a frenzy around the statue of Apis, the bull-god of Egypt, and the embodiment of the great Egyptian god, Ra.**

**And this proclivity to idol worship persisted. Foreign gods surrounded them and the worship of these Beings often infiltrated the land.**

**Take Solomon's seven hundred wives, for example, for whom Solomon erected pagan temples in Israel. The following indictment is damning in its simplicity! Of Solomon, the chronicler said, [1 Kings 11:5](#),**

**He followed Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians and Moloch, the detestable god of the Ammonites.**

**And we're all familiar with the story of Jezebel, - culminating in that spectacular and decisive confrontation on Mt Carmel between the 450 prophets of Baal and Yahweh's prophet, Elijah.**

Other prominent deities had also become popular in parts of Israel. Among these was the Babylonian goddess, Ishtar, who was previously known to the Sumerians as Inanna, the so-called '*Queen of Heaven*'.

In **Jeremiah 7:18**, God asks this of the prophet:

**Do you not see what they are doing in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, the fathers light the fire, and the women knead the dough and make cakes to offer to the Queen of Heaven. They pour out drink offerings to other gods to arouse my anger.**

These rites to Ishtar are, of course, the genesis of our celebration of Easter.

And Ishtar had a consort called Tammuz – originally known to the Sumerians as Dumuzi. Tammuz was a vegetation god – probably a manifestation of Baal. As vegetation god, Tammuz was visualized as dying each year as the crops died in winter and as rising again when new growth appeared in spring.

Each year, at the dying of the crops, a pagan ritual was enacted in which women would mourn the supposed death of Tammuz. This belief – and its accompanying ritual - had evidently found its way into Israel. **Ezekiel 8:14** records how the prophet was brought to the entrance of the north gate of the House of the Lord and

there he saw, as it says, women sitting there, *mourning* the god Tammuz.

The book of **Hosea** gives a frightening account of just how much spiritual and moral conditions had deteriorated in Israel at that point. It had even gone as far as child-sacrifice, according to **Ezekiel 20:31**.

So, as far back as the book of **Deuteronomy**, Yahweh had denounced his people for their idolatry.

### **Deut.32:16-17**

**They made him jealous with their foreign gods and angered him with their detestable idols. They sacrificed to false gods, which are not God - gods they had not known, gods that recently appeared, gods your ancestors did not fear.**

This was yielding victory to Satan who was operating through the false god, Baal. It was disgracing the name of Yahweh, who, as we said before, had laid his reputation on the line with Israel by identifying himself as the God of that nation.

So, Israel had to make up their minds! Was Yahweh the true God – worthy of worship and obedience – or was it Baal? They couldn't have it both ways!

The stark choice was presented to them by Elijah and we can almost hear the frustration in the prophet's voice:

## 1 Kings 18:21

**Elijah went before the people and said, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If Yahweh is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.”**

**Eventually, as we know, Yahweh had to distance himself from his own people – the nation that was bringing dishonor on his name and betraying his love for them over and over again!**

**He was forced to divorce both kingdoms (as we read in the [third chapter of Jeremiah](#)) and Israel has consequently been side-lined as Yahweh works out his purposes through the church.**

**But it’s a huge mistake to conclude that Yahweh has given up on Israel! I believe that such a view is playing straight into the Devil’s hands!**

**Israel is Yahweh’s *inheritance* – the people of his love! To abandon them permanently *as a nation* - even in favor of a glorious spiritual body such as the church - would be to concede defeat to Satan – certainly in the eyes of the nations and their gods!**

**It would be a deserting of the field of conflict – the very existence of which has been permitted to demonstrate and ultimately display to the nations, Yahweh’s superiority, his glory and his worthiness to rule!**

It would be at least a tacit – if not overt – admission that Yahweh was fickle and was reneging on his promises when in **Rom.11:29**, the Scripture clearly indicates (and it's speaking in direct reference to Israel) that: **God's gifts and His call are irrevocable!**

**Remember – Satan has been trying to discredit the God of Israel for millennia and among the nations, he does so by discrediting Israel – the nation that bears his name!**

**And does he *appear* to have been successful? To the point that even many Christians are suggesting that Yahweh has permanently abandoned Israel – in favor of the church?**

**Absolutely!~ Because of Israel's persistent idolatry, Yahweh was forced to temporarily allow his people, as a whole, to be swallowed up by the nations in judgment.**

**Beginning with the Assyrian invasion of 721BC! Assyria deported the vast majority of the Israelites and brought in other captive races – so forming the mixed race of what were known in New Testament times as the *Samaritans*.**

**The Babylonians continued the process with little sister, Judah, beginning in 606 BC and completing the deportations in around 586 BC.**

Now of course the Persian king, Cyrus, did allow the exiles to return to their land from 536 BC and the city was restored under Nehemiah later in the fifth century BC. But since that time, with the exception of the largely Jewish population in the land at the time of Christ, Israel has largely been scattered among the nations.

This became especially true of the Jews in the first Century in the great dispersion (or diaspora) that came to a head in 73 AD - after the destruction of Jerusalem and the siege of Masada.

And what does this appear to say about Israel's God? It reflects directly on his name! Listen to the prophet's anguished plea in [Joel 2:17](#),

**Do not make *your inheritance* an object of scorn, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God? '**

But let's remember that Satan appeared to also have won in the garden of Eden. And the sinful state of the world today seems to testify to his victory – as righteousness now is in a state of humiliation (just look at the treatment of the Lord's people in the world today!).

It looks as if Satan is winning the spiritual battle with mankind – right? Evil appears to have won out!

Yet we know that this is merely the outward appearance. We know that God is working his purposes throughout history – working out everything **in conformity with the purpose of His will** as **Eph.1:11** clearly affirms.

We know that, despite appearances, Satan is a defeated foe. And that, as Paul said to the saints in **Rom.16:20**, **The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.**

We know that God is allowing evil today to do its worst: allowing wicked men - in the words of **Rom.2:5** – **to store up wrath for themselves against the day of God's wrath when his righteous judgment will be revealed.**

Notice that the more man stores up wrath, the more righteous God's judgment appears. Remember how, in **Genesis 15**, Yahweh told Abraham that he wouldn't bring the Israelites out of Egypt until the fourth generation because, as he said in **v16**, **the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.**

So God holds off! As a God of Righteousness, he will have everything seen in its true light. That is the basis for perfect justice!

Read the passages concerning the necessity for absolute transparency in both forgiveness and judgment. Evil must be seen for exactly what it is – and acknowledged by the wrong-doer. This applies to our law-courts today; it applies to our processes of granting parole

today. Spiritually - it applies to the believer's daily forgiveness and cleansing – as seen in **1 John 1:9**.

**If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.**

It applies to the Bema judgment of believers' works – recorded in **1 Cor.3:13** where each man's work will be seen clearly for what it is!

It's a principle that also applies on Israel's Great Day of Atonement described in **Zechariah 12:10** onwards, when that nation looks upon the One they pierced and realizes their terrible sin in crucifying their Messiah.

And we see the principle also working in the Great White Throne judgment of **Revelation 20** – particularly **v.12** – a passage which describes how the books were opened and each man is judged according to the things that are written in those books.

So Yahweh gives Satan and his henchmen every opportunity to prove themselves. And, in fact, enough rope to hang themselves!

So Israel is in humiliation today! And it does appear as if the other nations are winning!

Yet Yahweh *will* be seen as righteous when he judges the nations. But notice when it is that he returns to

execute that judgement. It's when the chaos, violence, godlessness and evil has reached its frenzied climax in the Battle of Armageddon!

One thing is certain from Scripture: Satan's apparent victories over Israel are no more real and lasting than his momentary appearance of victory at Golgotha. Christ's resurrection brought an abrupt end to any such fanciful imaginings.

And in the same way, Christ's triumphant return to this earth will shatter the nations' illusions of victory over Israel.

**Psalm 59:8** says this:

**But you laugh at them, Yahweh; you scoff at all those nations.**

Listen carefully to the words of **Psalm 94:19** which say this: **The Lord (Yahweh) will not reject his people; He will *never* forsake *His inheritance*.**

Aren't the Scriptures clear enough on this matter?

I don't believe in replacement theology and I don't think Satan does either. Else why continue this series of unremitting and scurrilous attacks on that nation?

Certainly saved Jews and Gentiles are both members of Christ's body in the church today, and we know in **Galatians 6:16** that the church is referred to as **the**

*Israel of God*, just as Paul claimed in **Rom.11:1** that his place in the church was proof that God had not forsaken Israel.

It is also true that we, the church, have become, according to **1 Peter 2:9**, a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession – something that was conditionally promised, in **Exodus 19:5-6**, to the fledgling nation of Israel – conditional upon them obeying the terms of the Covenant that God was about to establish with them.

But what is this showing?

Not that Israel has been substituted by the church, but simply that Israel, under law, could not, in the energy of the flesh, attain to that level of obedience that would entitle them to these blessings.

But neither, of course, could we! It's only through the work of Christ that *we* have obtained our standing before God.

So, you may say. isn't that proving that Israel has been forever passed over because the flesh can *never* please God or inherit the promises?

Well – laying aside all God's promises for the moment - that would be plausible. And however forced the interpretation, the analogy could conceivably hold – if it were not for one crucial thing: Israel, as a nation, has its

great Day of Atonement – when it recognizes its Messiah and turns to him in repentance.

Because the Great Day of Atonement isn't just a yearly feast! If we follow the feasts of **Leviticus 23**, Yom Kippur follows closely after the Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Ha shanah) which signifies the Rapture.

As with the Church, Israel's restoration, her cleansing, is, after all, based on the atoning work of Christ. The so-called 70-week prophecy of **Daniel 9**, which encompasses Israel's separation from Yahweh, beginning in 445 BC and heading up at the end of the Great Tribulation, is, in the words of **Dan.9:24**,

**..decreed for your holy people and your city; to finish transgression; to put and end to sin; to atone for wickedness; to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place.**

So this will take place upon Christ's return to the earth, And so we can clearly see the difference between God's dealing with the Church and his dealing with his nation, Israel.

In the meantime, we can certainly see the hand of God in disciplining his faithless people. But God's discipline, as it is with us, is never intended to harm: it is always with a view to correction, restoration and ultimate blessing.

**And Israel's scattering among the nations has actually helped preserve her from further destructive idolatry. Yahweh vowed that he would ensure that she would never again turn to false gods; and that her sufferings during the 'time of the Gentiles' would ultimately serve to restore her to himself – her former husband.**

**He says this in [Hosea 2:6-7](#)**

**Therefore I will block her path with thornbushes; I will wall her in so that she cannot find her way. She will chase after her lovers but not catch them; she will look for them but not find them. Then she will say, 'I will go back to my husband as at first, for then I was better off than now.'**

**So, over the last two thousand years or so, we've had the bizarre – or at least entirely unique situation – in which Israel, though scattered and sown among the nations over the centuries, and in spite of having no active relationship with her God, Yahweh (for she is still in rejection of Christ), nevertheless has never assimilated into those nations. Nor has she ever subscribed to any other religions.**

**How much more evidence do we need that Yahweh has further plans for her; that he is actually protecting her from herself and preserving her for their eventual reconciliation and reunion.**

**[Hosea 3: 4-5](#) sums up this period of time in this way:**

**For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or household gods.**

**But now listen carefully to the next verse:**

**v5** **Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the Lord and to his blessings in the last day.**

**Not the church here – Israel!**

**On the day when I act, says the Lord Almighty in Malachi 3:17 they will be my treasured possession.**

**Israel may be separated from her Lord right now - may have experienced the punitive withdrawal of his love and mercy - as Hosea tells us - may have experienced a temporary hardening in part because of her disobedience, as Romans 11 points out, may have, through the centuries, been scattered and sown among the nations until recently (that is the meaning of the name: *Jezreel*)- but Yahweh has promised her ultimate restoration and blessing**

**But in the meantime, the attacks on Israel continue - because Yahweh's reputation is still on the line! His ability and right to rule are still in question – have yet to be ultimately, universally and triumphantly resolved.**

**So the powers of darkness are still in assault mode! They've been unable to seduce Israel into idol worship since the Babylonian exile, so their only recourse today is to destroy her or even not recognize her as a nation at all!**

**After all, prophecy must be fulfilled exactly, and if there's no nation of Israel, then there'll be no throne for Christ to occupy – from which he may rule the nations.**

**So just as the cleansing and occupation of the land under Joshua's leadership would have been a chilling foretaste of the inroads that the enemy would make into Satan's already-established empire back then, so Israel's re-establishment in the land at present, serves as an ominous portent for Satan and his empire – one that presages his imminent undoing.**

**The false gods are now clearly panicking! No wonder there's a frenzied increase in their attacks on Israel; attempts to neutralize the threat before it's too late for the prevailing powers of darkness.**

**Yahweh has identified himself as Israel's God, and therefore his victory must entail the victory of *his* nation over *their* nations! Which, in turn, involves their destruction and that of their satanic leader.**

**That is the essence of the spiritual war! Accordingly, their efforts to discredit or destroy Israel have**

**redoubled and we can clearly see their resentment and spite bubbling to the surface.**

**For instance, notice how the nation of Israel seems to be blamed for all the world's woes. In the Second World War, Hitler blamed the Jews for all Germany's (and indeed the world's) social and economic problems.**

**Just this year (2015) the Palestinian foreign minister presented documents to the international criminal court, claiming that Israel should be investigated for war crimes – and reports indicate that the United Nations is currently contemplating this action.**

**Are these attitudes and accusations justified? Absolutely not! Ridiculous? Certainly! Insane? Possibly!**

**Understandable? Well, actually – yes - when we take into account the history of spiritual warfare, and the nature of the enemy.**

**Remember that fateful meeting between God and the fallen angel-rulers in the great assembly? It was then that they were roundly condemned for their mismanagement of the nations and Yahweh's judgement was pronounced upon them for that reason.**

**So this seems to be retaliation on their part! It's pay-back! 'You accuse *us* of making a mess of things, so we'll see to it that *you* get the blame! We'll make sure**

that *your* nation (*Yahweh's* nation) is held responsible for society's ills.'

**We need to understand this: the demise of Israel – in any form – would bring shame and dishonour upon the name of Yahweh, their God.**

**In this context, and given the history of this warfare, he would be discredited – and shown to be weaker in his ability to govern, to protect and to preserve than the false gods of the rival nations in this world.**

**But it's simply not working for Satan! His problem is the same he's faced since Eden. It's that all his efforts have backfired. Particularly in Christ's crucifixion; he entered Judas to betray Christ – only to find that in doing so, he had brought about the very thing he was trying to prevent: a victory over sin and death, accomplished on the cross – and triumphantly announced by Christ's resurrection.**

**As Peter said at Pentecost, in [Acts 2:23](#)**

**This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge.**

**It's little wonder that upon the Son of God rising from the dead, Satan and his cronies were sickened. In reference to the wisdom of God in this regard, Paul says in [1 Cor.2:8](#),**

**None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.**

**And it's the same with Israel. For example, the holocaust only served to bring about the very thing Satan was trying to prevent: it led to the re-establishment of Israel as a nation after two thousand years; as well as the instilling of a national determination that nothing – and nobody – was going to do the same thing to them ever again.**

**So the demonic world-rulers (and their master) can see God slowly but surely working, through Israel, his inexorable will for the nations.**

**And that can mean only one end for them!**

**Upon his return, Israel's Messiah will be vindicated! His right to rule over the nations will be universally and unquestionably established.**

**As we pointed out, the foretold destruction of the false gods in [Psalm 82:7](#), was followed by the cry:**

**Rise up, O God; judge the earth - for all the nations are your inheritance!**

**And Yahweh has answered – and will further respond to this cry.**

**The first phase of this judgment was executed at Calvary where, according to [Colossians 2:15](#)**

**having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.**

The next stage is a matter of clear prophecy. The Lamb of God will begin the process of reclaiming his inheritance by opening the 7-sealed book (the title-deeds to this earth) in **Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week** (or heptab) - the final group of 7 years.

And **Rev.11:18** says this:

**The nations were angry and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and your people who revere your name, both great and small, and for destroying those who destroy the earth.**

And so the war against Israel will end! It will end with the destruction and defeat of the evil '*sons of God*' – together with the subjugation of their nations to Yahweh's nation – bringing to a triumphant conclusion the spirit-mediated war of the nations that has raged over the millennia.

**Revelation 12:5** says that Yahweh comes to:  
**rule all the nations with an iron scepter.**

**Revelation 19:15** Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.

**On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written:  
king of kings and lord of lords.**

**On the day that Yahweh returns, all the nations, indeed, the entire universe, including all the false gods and Satan himself, will be forced to acknowledge his supremacy.**

### **Philippians 2:10-11**

**that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**<sup>[P]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>

**And so we thrill to the triumphant words of [Revelation 11:15](#)**

**The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.**

**Notice that it's not just in his capacity as our Lord that he returns but as Israel's long-rejected Messiah; the separation will be over; the long exile concluded!**

**And on the Great Day of Atonement, after much weeping and mourning, according to [Zechariah chapter 12](#), there will be national restoration and joy.**

**And in all of this, Yahweh will be glorified; he will be vindicated and established in his rightful place – not**

**just as the inheritor of Israel but as the great God, Lord of Lords who gathers unto himself all the nations as his rightful inheritance.**

### **Ezekiel 28:25-26**

**This is what the Lord, Jahweh says: When I gather the people of Israel from the nations where they have been scattered, I will be proved holy through them in the sight of the nations. Then they will live in their own land which I gave to my servant Jacob. They will live there in safety and will build houses and plant vineyards. They will live in safety when I inflict punishment on all their neighbors who maligned them. Then they will know that I am Yahweh, their God.**

**On that day, Yahweh's triumph will be Israel's triumph and Israel will be his jewel among the nations.**

### **Isaiah 60:3-5**

**Nations will come to your light and kings to the brightness of your dawn. Lift up your eyes and look about you; all assemble and come to you; your sons come from afar and your daughters are carried on the hip; then you will look and be radiant. Your heart will throb and swell with joy; the wealth of the seas will be brought to you; to you the riches of the nations will come.**

**In closing, I'd like to make one crucial point.**

**Satan has all sorts of reasons to hate and destroy Israel,**

and paramount among these has got to be the fact that Israel were never to be the sole beneficiaries of God's grace! They were to be the conduit through which his blessing flowed to mankind.

Through Israel, all the other nations were to be blessed!

As God said to Abraham in [Gen.12:3](#)

**I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you, I will curse. And all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.**

A blessing first realized when Israel produced the Seed that crushed the serpent's head on Calvary. A blessing fully realized when Israel, Yahweh's nation, is finally established at the head of the nations.

He will rule the nations from David's throne and his people, Israel, will be his jewel among the nations.

As we read a moment ago in [Ezekiel 28:25](#) and I repeat: **This is what the Lord, Jahweh says: When I gather the people of Israel from the nations where they have been scattered, I will be proved holy through them in the sight of the nations.**

May God bless his precious Word to each one of us.

Stephen Smith

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