

Israel Under Attack – Part 1

Daniel 10, Genesis 10, Genesis 6, Ephesians 6, Psalms 82, Ezekiel 28, Revelation 19, Isaiah 60, Deuteronomy 32, Jeremiah 7

Slide 1

Today and continuing onto next Sunday, we're going to discuss another aspect of the on-going conflict between Satan and God, specifically: Satan's war against Israel.

Anti-semitism, which is generally define as an attitude of hostility towards the Jews, is rampant in the world today. According to the Anti-Defamation League, in 2015 over one billion people in the world harbor anti-semitic attitudes.

This total includes 19% of the Americas, 74% of the Middle East and North Africa, 58% of Europe, 22% of Asia, and 14% of Australians.

This irrational hatred is understandable in the Arab world since 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 do a majority of the nations today, even those who have little or no contact with Israel, display such bitter and irrational hostility towards the Jews?

Slide 2

When we study Scripture, two factors emerge for this seemingly irrational behavior.

First, Ezekiel and Hosea make it abundantly clear that Israel's past and current sufferings are connected with God's judgment.

The curses for disobedience, declared on Mt Ebal in Deuteronomy 11, have been inflicted on a people that has, at times, stubbornly persisted in rebellion and unbelief.

The second factor is that a spiritual war has been raging against Israel since the dispersion of the nations after the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11.

This event, according to the Septuagint, would have taken place approximately 450 years after the flood when Nimrod's godless one-world empire was forcibly disbanded by the confusion of the languages at Babel.

Who comprised this world empire? To understand this we need to go back to Genesis 10. Genesis 10 tells the story of the development of seventy ethnic groups from the three sons of Noah: Shem, Ham and Japheth.

So, after Babel God spread these groups over all the world, but when they settled in their new locations, they kept the memories, stories, and mythology of Nimrod's empire.

The Bible suggests that God permitted the spiritual government of these seventy nation groups to be divided between powerful, fallen angels.

Why God permitted this to happen, we don't know! Maybe Satan claimed that he and his minions could do a better job than God at handling human affairs.

Or, perhaps God simply allowed mankind to have its own way, respecting human free will, even if it was a will prone to Satanic deception!

Regardless, what can we learn from the Scriptures regarding this?

Slide 3

When we study the Bible, we learn it references a group of powerful angel princes that appear to have a particular relationship with human beings who have rule over the nations.

To understand the Biblical references dealing with this subject, we need to recognize that in the Scriptures, angels (fallen and unfallen), are called sons of God (Bene Elohim).

Not, like the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Quite the opposite! In Scripture, the term "son of God" 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 to angels. For example, when the material universe was created, Job 38:7 tells us, *"While the morning stars sang together, and all the angels shouted for joy."*

The King James Version gives a literal rendering of the Hebrew, *"When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy."*

We also meet these "sons of God" in Job 1:6, where the NIV translates the verse: *"One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them."*

The NIV says "angels" but the literal translation says, *"Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them."*

Before the flood, 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.”*

Some commenters believe the “sons of God” referenced in Genesis 6, is a reference to men of the godly line of Seth while the daughters of men refer to the ungodly women of the line of Cain.

And then, there are several New Testament passages that allude to the fate of this particular group of rebellious angels.

2 Peter 2:4, *“...God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them in chains of darkness to be held for judgment.”*

But how do we know that these fallen angelic or demonic beings rule over the nations?

Slide 4

There are several places in the Bible where we find evidence of their presence. For example, we encounter these powerful and malignant rulers in the book of Daniel.

Daniel saw a vision in Daniel 10 that scared him so bad he fainted. Seeing his distress, God sent an angel to give the prophet its interpretation.

But the angel explained that he'd been unable to get to him for several weeks because, as he said in Daniel 10:13, *“...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.”*

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, *“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 *kosmo-kra-tor* which literally means "world ruler."

So, after attempting, through Nimrod, to rule over a one-world empire, Satan now rules each nation-group separately through powerful, fallen angel-princes.

Satan, as the instigator of evil and the most powerful of these fallen angels, is their commander-in-chief who rules this fallen world through these malignant beings.

Consequently, in John 12:31 and 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 just bow down to him.

Luke 4:6b, *“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.”* Notice that Jesus didn't contest this claim. Why?

Because by this time, mankind had worshipped Satan, through these angel princes, ever since Adam and Eve gave their allegiance to the devil in the garden of Eden!

From that point onward, these fallen beings have been worshipped as gods by their respective nations.

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, behind these idols were real demonic spirit beings!

Paul made this clear in 1 Corinthians 10:20, *“The sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God.”*

1 Corinthians 8:5-6, *“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...”*

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

An interesting sidelight here is that the ancient Canaanites originally worshipped one god whom they called El, the name for God that's familiar to us.

In fact, all the nations started out with a monotheistic belief.

Slide 5

But the nations deserted God as Satan cleverly placed the polytheistic worship of these fallen, demonic beings into their belief systems. How did he do it? Through mythology.

Here's how it worked. A nation began with monotheistic beliefs. But as the family of men scattered over the earth, they began to weave stories around the one, true God.

They attached a wife to him and described how the two of them subsequently had children. These second or third generation gods were usually related to one another forming what became known as a pantheon. A word which literally means *“all gods.”*

These gods were actually fallen angels and they became the ones who, in the mythology of the nations, interacted with mankind.

As they did, the real God whom we worship, was pushed more and more into the background, becoming increasingly irrelevant or ineffective.

For example, in Greek mythology, they conceived of the universe effectively beginning with Ouranos (the sky) who 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.

It was these third-generation gods who interacted with human beings. We're familiar with their names: Zeus, Apollo, Mercury, Hades, Athene, Aphrodite, etc.

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

The Canaanites were no exception. In their mythology they assigned to the great God, El, a spouse called Asherah, whose worship is often mentioned in the Old Testament.

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. In the meantime, El withdrew himself from direct involvement with the world.

Slide 6

When we read Genesis 10, we find an interesting correlation in that there are exactly seventy nation-groups that developed after the flood from Noah's three sons.

It could be that the reference to the seventy sons of El and Asherah were a reference to seventy fallen angels placed in charge of these seventy nation-groups? Seventy world-rulers of darkness?

Deuteronomy 32:8, *"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 NIV says *"sons of Israel"* but the Septuagint reads *"sons of God,"* that's angelic beings. Were they seventy in number?

This becomes even more interesting when we read in Luke 10 that Christ sent out seventy disciples on a gospel mission.

These disciples had been sent out 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 a warning shot across the bow for Satan and his empire? Maybe it was Jesus' way of saying, *"I'm coming to get you!"*

Anyway, what we do know for sure is that angelic princes, or world rulers, are in charge of human affairs and they've made mess of it! Wars, cruel injustice, sin run rampant, and on and on.

In fact, God actually confronted them on their appalling mismanagement! Jesus said on one occasion in John 10:34, *"Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are "gods"?"*

This may not make sense when first read, but what Christ was referring to was an assembly in Heaven when God rebuked these fallen angels found in Psalm 82.

Psalm 82:1, *“God presides in the great assembly; he renders judgment among the “gods:”* then God begins with an accusation in verse 2 - 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 in verses 3-4, *“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 verse 5 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.' Verse 6, *“I said, ‘You are “gods”; you are all sons of the Most High.”*

As I've already said, these fallen angels were gods to the people who worshipped them. They're descendants of the Most High because they were direct creations of God.

And, as sons of the Most High, the greater was their responsibility to rule over the nations justly and wisely! Which they failed to do.

Therefore, God passes judgement on them and pronounces their doom in verse 7, *“But you will die like mere mortals; you will fall like every other ruler.”*

These fallen princes will eventually be destroyed, along with their commander-in-chief, Satan. The cry then goes up in verse 8, *“Rise up, O God and judge the earth, for all the nations are your inheritance.”*

So, these fallen angels, these so-called gods, were given the chance to prove themselves. God allowed them to have their way and to do their best or their worst 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! 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 would bring salvation and blessing to all the nations.

Slide 7

Let’s go back to Deuteronomy 32:8-9, when God gave the nations their inheritance. He divided all mankind and set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the *“sons of God.”*

It’s the next verse on which we need to focus! It’s one that’s often quoted, usually glossed over, and rarely understood! Yet it’s a statement of incredible significance.

Deuteronomy 32:9, *“For the Lord’s portion is His 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 *portion*?

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!

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 received their nations by lot. In verses 8 and 9, the nations were carved up 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 Samuel 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.

Psalm 33:12, *“Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people he chose for his inheritance.”*

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

There was no favoritism involved on God’s part. He 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 were already corrupted and sunk in sin. So, God made a new beginning.

He started from scratch, so to speak, and did so by creating and developing His own nation through one man, Abraham and his wife, Sarah.

God took His chosen couple out of Ur, the capital of Sumer, a center of evil dedicated to the worship of Nanna, the Moon god.

So concerned was God 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.

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

The three matriarchs of Israel all needed supernatural assistance to conceive. This was no coincidence. God was putting His stamp of approval on this nation, claiming it as His own.

Like all direct creations, Israel 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 God.

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, 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 accounts for that dreadful night of the last plague! After securing Israel's deliverance from Egypt, God 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.”*

Slide 8

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.

This is why, before bringing the Children of Israel out of Egypt, God introduced himself to Moses in the burning bush found in Exodus 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 verse 6, 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 after identifying Himself as the great eternal God, the ‘real thing,’ God 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 Exodus 3:6, He says to Moses: *“I am Yahweh,”* and in verse 15 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.

This vagueness in regard to the names of God is not helped by the translators of the Hebrew text either, who, for some reason, translate the name Yahweh as 'LORD.'

This creates a problem since most readers miss the real significance of many of God's declarations to his people. Take, for example, Deuteronomy 7:9, where the Lord declares: *"Know therefore that the Lord your God is God."*

What's God actually saying here? To most believers, the statement means not much more, than: 'God is God' which seems to be a repetition.

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 verse 9 to further emphasize the difference between Himself, the only true God, and the devilish imposters controlling the surrounding nations.

Verse 9, *"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! There was no personal, on-going and developing relationship with the gods of the other nations.

Israel was unique because only Yahweh, the true God, the Creator of mankind, could enter into a genuine covenant relationship with a nation. 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.

Only Yahweh could establish a covenant of love because other so-called gods not only didn't love their subjects but, as followers of Lucifer, they actively hated the people over whom they ruled!

Slide 9

These other, so-called gods would have deeply resented Israel because Israel's existence served as a constant rebuke to their immorality and often-unrestrained evil.

Another reasons why Satan would want to either corrupt or destroy Israel is that 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 honored, their God was honored – 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 Sen-nach-er-ib, the Assyrian king, when he communicated with Hezekiah in 2 Chronicles 32:17b.

He ridiculed Yahweh, the God of Israel, saying, *“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.”*

Slide 10

Conclusion

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, 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 when the Ark of the Covenant was captured.

If you remember, Yahweh showed himself superior to Dagon when Dagon’s statue collapsed before the Ark of the Covenant.

Listen to the Philistines’ reaction in 1 Samuel 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 that 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, even adding various tributes and offerings.

All of this may seem 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 made reference to how He had parted the Red Sea.

They were eager to placate this rival god, Yahweh. So now we can see why the presence and strength of Israel is a dire threat to Satan and his kingdom of darkness.

The nations were in bondage to Satan: his lieutenants ruled over them and now Yahweh stepped in to challenge his authority just like in the Garden of Eden when man was given his mandate to rule over the earth.

A national beachhead 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 Israel or destroy it!

If the Israelites would turn aside to other gods, they would be indicating that the gods they turned to, were greater, stronger and more worthy of worship than Yahweh Himself.

Accordingly, Satan's tactics and the lie were the same he had used in the garden of Eden. The same lie we discussed in my first message - that God was not worthy of worship!

And so, the temptation to idolatry was ever-present with Israel and Yahweh jealously took every precaution to keep his people separate and pure despite being constantly hindered and frustrated by the people he had chosen.

God wanted them to be a light to the nations, showing them how to live, pointing them to God, living as God's holy people as a kingdom of priests.

This is never fully realized, but God knew this would be the case and sent a Messiah who would inaugurate His kingdom rule, and the subjects of which would be a blessing to all nations.

Are you a blessing? Are you light in the darkness? The encouragement is that despite our weaknesses God can and will work through us.