

**I. Introduction:**

- A. When David was fleeing from Saul, he didn't have all the spiritual helps that are available to us.
1. As Bro. Fulton has told us, he didn't have strong Christian brethren or a church with which to fellowship.
  2. And we have no way of knowing how much of God's word he actually was able to hold in his hands.
  3. The **Pentateuch**, the writings of Moses, were available at the time, but did he actually have a copy?
  4. Did he draw strength from the **Book of Judges** or from **Joshua**? We may never know.
- B. And similarly, how much of the Word of God did Nehemiah have?
1. Could he read the comforting words of **Isaiah** for example, or the **Psalms**? Did he have a copy of **Ezekiel**?
  2. They had been written, and they were in existence, but were they available to him?
  3. Let's make that one of our targets as we progress thru this book; let's look for additional Bible references.
  4. Nehemiah knew probably did own a copy of the **Pentateuch** – he has already referred to **Moses**.
  5. And in our text he prays about God's promises of judgment upon Israel & her restoration when she repents.
  6. As I said this morning his thoughts about this judgment could have come from **Leviticus** & **Deuteronomy**.
  7. But did he also have any of the more expressive or concise eschatological scriptures?
  8. Was he for example, thinking about **Ezekiel 36** which was given by God about 125 years earlier.
    - a. Ezekiel said, *"Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying...*
    - b. *Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went...*
    - c. *I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.*
    - d. *And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God."*
- C. Let's assume that this **prophecy WAS known** to Nehemiah, just as were the prophecies of Moses.
1. Do you think he applied it to Judah in 450AD? Did he think this a prophecy about himself or Artaxerxes?
  2. The truth is **Ezekiel 36** shoots like a rocket over the heads of Ezra, Zerubbabel and Nehemiah.
  3. This prayer of his **IS** going to be **answered**, but it will not be through his efforts, nor will it be completed in his lifetime. It will not be answered in the way Nehemiah may have had it envisioned.
  4. Furthermore, it was not a prophecy about **Zionism** or the **reestablishment** of **secular Israel** in 1948.
  5. **Ezekiel** was talking about the King of kings & about the day He will return in glory – a few years from today
- D. But since Nehemiah has brought up the subject, let's think about the restoration of Israel and particularly the time-table and method of that restoration.

**II. First we need to review Nehemiah's statement and Israel's need for restoration.**

- A. It is the teaching of the Bible, in both Testaments, that Israel is a blinded people.
1. Not only is Israel spiritually blinded as a nation, but it is true also as individuals.
  2. Israel is made up of sinners just like everyone else, and they are dead in trespasses and sins.
  3. Therefore Israel is completely blind to the things of God, and this is why they are scattered.
- B. Nehemiah may have been shocked at the condition of Israel and Jerusalem, but he shouldn't have been.
1. As Jehovah's elect nation, and with special blessings throughout her history, theoretically, Israel should have faithfully served God from day one. But the reality is – from day two she failed miserably.
  2. And when her Messiah came, Israel was so blinded that most individuals couldn't recognize Him.
  3. As a nation they didn't even know their own God.
  4. This was the cause, and also the result of God's judging them with blindness.
  5. It parallels the sins of the people in Nehemiah's day, but on a much lower and more ugly level.

- C. As Nehemiah suggests, this shouldn't have been a surprise to anyone. They had the Word of God.
1. Moses may have been the first, but many of God's prophets spoke about blindness, judgment & captivity.
  2. *Isaiah 6:9-10* – “Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.”
  3. This Old Testament scripture is quoted in the New Testament many times – in each of the **gospels** and then in **Acts** and **Romans**.
  4. In each of those instances **Isaiah** was used to describe **the reason** for Israel's **attitude toward Christ**.
  5. For example the Apostle John said that “they **COULD not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart.**”
  6. In **II Corinthians** Paul wrote: “*But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart.*”
- D. It needs to be clearly understood that **Moses, Isaiah, Paul** and the rest of God's prophets were also told that this blindness and its resulting captivity were **temporary**.
1. **II Corinthians** goes on: “*Even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away.*”
  2. Paul goes on in **II Corinthians** because **Isaiah 6** goes on –
    - a. “*Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.*”
    - b. “*Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate,*”
    - c. “*And the LORD have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land.*”
    - d. “*But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.*”
- E. Out of the many references to Israel's blindness and restoration, the best study may be in **Romans 11**.
1. As Nehemiah had been informed by Hanani, Israel has been set aside from the position of honor under the Lord.
  2. And Paul tells us that into the spotlight have come the Gentile nations.
  3. Since the days of Christ, those Gentiles have been given the gospel, and from among them the Lord has been saving many.
  4. **Verse 24** – “*For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree:*
    - a. *how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?*
    - b. *For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.*”
- F. What is or are “**the times of the Gentiles?**”
1. First the word “**Gentiles**” refers to the “**nations**” which were not Israel.
  2. I am of the opinion that you could say “**the times of the Gentiles**” **began** with the fall of Jerusalem.
    - a. Israel and Judah had become so idolatrous that they were pushed into exile & captivity by Babylonians.
    - b. In one sense Nehemiah was living in the times of the Gentiles.
    - c. And even though a remnant of Judah returned to Jerusalem under Ezra and Nehemiah, the nation was still living in unbelief and under a certain kind of captivity.
  3. But there are many men smarter than I, who believe that the “**times of the Gentiles**” began with the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD after the death of Christ.
  4. Whichever is the case, the Lord Jesus teaches us in **Luke 24** that this period will continue until such time as the Gentiles and unbelievers are expelled from Jerusalem.
  5. And we can discern in that scripture when it will come to an end, but I want to save that for a few minutes.

- G. What I'd like to do now is share with you what I think is the general timetable of events leading up to the removal of this blindness and its resulting captivity.

### III. Like Nehemiah, Paul positively declares that one day Israel's blindness and captivity shall end

- A. **Romans 11:25** – *“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.*
1. *And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:*
  2. *For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.”*
  3. *“For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance”* on the part of the Lord.
- B. In the fulness of time the Son of God became incarnate – ie. the Lord Jesus Christ was born.
1. But as God had ordained, because His death and sacrifice was absolutely necessary for man's salvation, Israel rejected her King and demanded His execution.
  2. At time the Lord threw open the doors of the gospel to the whole world – the Gentiles.
  3. During His earthly ministry the Lord established a new institution to act as His ambassador – His churches.
    - a. You could say that the Admiral transferred his flag from the sinking ship *“Israel”* to His church.
  4. Shortly after that, Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans and Israel became a people without a country for nearly 2,000 years – just as it was in our original text.
  5. Even though I have great admiration for Israel, and based upon many scriptures, I feel that Christians owe to them a great deal, yet I am convinced that the 1948 establishment of the nation of Israel has very little to do with the fulfilment of prophecy for that nation.
  6. Just as the return of Judah under Ezra was not the fulfilment of Nehemiah's prophecy, neither was the Balfour Agreement of 1917 or the reestablishment of Israel in 1948.
  7. What is far more important for the nation is the covenant which is soon to come with the Antichrist and the events which follow.
- C. Without a doubt in my mind, the next major aspect of prophesy is to be the translation of the saints and, in the process, the removal of the Lord's churches from the earth.
1. I believe that Paul was expecting it, and even though he did not see it, we should be expecting it.
  2. Paul said in **1 Thessalonians 4** – *“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.*
    - a. *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.*
    - b. *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:*
    - c. *Then we which are alive & remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”*
  3. In **Revelation 2 and 3** we hear the Lord Jesus conversing from Heaven with several of His earthly churches, but after that chapter we never read of those or any other of His churches again.
  4. In fact, in **chapter 4**, we see heaven opened and the throne of God surrounded by His saints.
    - a. *“And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.”*
  5. **Revelation 4:7** – *“ And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.*
    - a. *And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.*
    - b. *And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;*

- c. *And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.*
- d. *And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;*
- e. *Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.*
- f. *And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.*
- g. *And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever."*

- D. At this point, the **Book of Revelation** begins to describe **the seven years** of the tribulation.
1. I say "seven years" with authority given to me from Daniel other scriptures.
    - a. Those seven years will be crammed full of prophetic fulfillment unlike any other seven year period.
  2. And one of the early key events will be the rise of the Antichrist and the covenant he makes with Israel.
    - a. He will secure for her a peace with the Arabs, and Israel will quickly rebuild her temple, just as they did under Zerubbabel.
    - b. But then 3½ years into that period, the Antichrist will break his covenant, and Israel will begin to feel the world's persecution unlike it ever has before.
    - c. As bad as things appeared to Nehemiah, they will be much worse a few years from now.
  3. Whether she realizes it or not, the wrath poured out on Israel during the Tribulation will not be merely the hatred of man, but the wrath of God as well.
    - a. Nehemiah is speaking in part about this judgment.
    - b. Those last 3½ years are called "*the time of Jacob's trouble*" by the prophet **Jeremiah**.
  4. Not only will the Antichrist, the Arabs and the rest of the world do their utmost to destroy Israel, but the whole world, including Israel, will experience acts of divine judgment.
  5. Millions of Jews will die along with billions of Gentiles.
  6. It will be as if the sky was falling while the earth was swallowing them up.
  7. The Lord will be pummeling Israel with body-blows which drive her to her knees and fill her eyes with tears.
- E. Now let me take you back to two scriptures to which I referred earlier.
1. First, **Isaiah 6:9-13** – "*And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, And the LORD have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land. But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof."*
  2. The blindness of Israel was prophesied to last until the times of the Gentiles was fulfilled.
  3. Those Gentiles will come to their most powerful height in the reign of the Antichrist, but after a seven year reign he, and they, shall fall like wall built with untempered mortar.
- F. The other scripture to which we referred earlier was **Luke 21**.
1. To these chapters we could add several others that say essentially the same thing.
  2. In **Luke 21:20** the Lord Jesus said – "*And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.*"
    - a. *Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto.*
    - b. *For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.*
    - c. *But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great*

*distress in the land, and wrath upon this people.*

- d. *And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*
- e. *And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.*
- f. *And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."*

G. At the end those seven years, the Lord will return to earth in power and great glory.

1. He will bring with Him his vast armies, but they will be little more than observers.
2. **Revelation 19:11-16** – *"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."*

H. It will be at that time, while the virtually the whole world will be attacking Jerusalem, that the Lord will return.

1. **Matthew 24** – *"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."*
2. **Zechariah** says, *"And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn."*

I. In essence, after the Tribulation has done its work of bring Israel to its collective knees, and after perhaps as many as 90% of her people will have been destroyed, the Lord will come in glorious power.

1. And the remnant of the nation will instantly recognize their sinful unbelief and idolatry.
2. The calluses will be stripped from their eyes and their hearts, and they will humbly repent before their Messiah.
3. The wicked Gentiles will be crushed and the way will be opened up for the millennial Kingdom of Christ.
4. In that day Israel will be saved – in a moment.
5. Or to put into Nehemiah's words, *"Yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them into the place that I have chosen to set my name there."*
6. And again as she had been earlier, Israel will be the focus of the Lord's blessing for the next thousand years.

J. Nehemiah was looking towards two mountain peaks from a position in the desert at an elevation of 100 feet.

1. He could see the first peak before him standing huge at 10,000.
2. But behind that was the 20,000 foot monolith of the Millennial Kingdom of Christ.
3. Today we are in the valley between those peaks waiting for nothing else than *"that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."*