

JEW AND GENTILE PART I

David Baker, prepared for the Presbytery word, 15 August 2021
Transcription of recording, slightly edited

Introduction

In this session, which is session sixteen on 'The Seventy Weeks prophecy', we will further consider the significance of the 'delay' between the first and the second half of the seventieth week.

Specifically, our key point in this session is that the Lord is using the period of delay to gather both Jew and Gentile into the body of Christ before the second half of the seventieth week begins. We will continue in this theme in our next session.

By way of orientation, we will just make two preliminary points concerning the period of delay as we begin.

The first point is that we know that all of the outcomes that are nominated in the Seventy Weeks prophecy have been fulfilled by the one offering of Christ.

Christ has finished the transgression; He has made an end of sin; He has made reconciliation for iniquity; He has brought in everlasting righteousness; He has sealed up vision and prophecy; and He has anointed the Most Holy. Dan 9:24.

The period of delay is for our sake

Now, that raises a question. If all of those outcomes have been fulfilled after sixty-nine and a half weeks, why is there a period of delay before the seventieth week begins? The answer to that question is straightforward.

The crucifixion of Christ, as we know, was completely *for our sake*. The Seventy Weeks prophecy states that 'Christ was cut off, but not for Himself'. Dan 9:26.

His crucifixion was for our sake, and equally, the period of delay is also for our sake.

The period of delay is as important as any of the other major elements, or waypoints, in the Seventy Weeks prophecy.

As we have considered in an earlier session, God reactivated the present elements of the universe at the ninth hour.

Christ took the whole of the old creation out into the sea of God's forgetfulness, and then God reactivated the elements of the present universe at the ninth hour to give us the opportunity to mourn, and repent, by looking upon Jesus Christ whom we have pierced.

So, the mercy of God has granted us time to escape His judgement upon the old creation, by joining us to the fellowship of Christ's offering as those who belong to the new creation.

Referring to the mercy of God, the apostle Peter proclaimed, 'The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.' 2Pe 3:9.

The delay is a period of grace

Furthermore, the period of delay, which is a period of mercy, is also a dispensation. This is a period of grace that gives us the opportunity to join the fellowship of Christ's offering, so that everything that He fulfilled *for* us, by His offering, is fulfilled *in* us as we walk with Him in the fellowship of that offering.

During the period of great darkness from the sixth hour to the ninth hour, God authored every day for us, in Christ, as Christ fulfilled the works of our sonship.

There is now a period of grace – this is true for every day, and His mercy is new every morning – giving us the opportunity to receive His word and join the fellowship of what Christ has already accomplished for us.

So the apostle Paul rejoiced. 'For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the [righteous] requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.' Rom 8:3.

On the day of Christ's resurrection, He breathed upon the disciples and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.' Joh 20:22.

They were born of the Spirit and, by the Spirit, they were joined to the fellowship of His body, and to the fellowship of His offering and sufferings.

Understanding that we have been granted participation in the finished work of Christ, by the Spirit, is the highpoint, the central feature, of the Seventy Weeks prophecy, as we have said many times.

That is the first preliminary point concerning the period of delay.

The Lord confirms the covenant of sonship

The second preliminary point concerning the period of delay is that it belongs to the seventieth week when Jesus Christ is confirming the covenant of sonship with 'the many'. Dan 9:27.

Again, it is not helpful to think of the period of delay as 'a gap'. It is not as though Christ confirmed the covenant for three and a half years, and then that confirmation stopped, and there was a gap; and He will pick it up again during the final three and a half years.

It is far more helpful to think of the period of delay as a 'stretching' of the seventieth week. Then, everything that occurs during the period of delay also belongs to that seventieth week.

By way of an anecdotal illustration, we can use the account of Joshua asking the Lord to pause the sun in the sky, to stretch the day for them. Jos 10:12.

The Lord evidently paused the rotation of the earth, or however He did that, so that Joshua and the people of Israel had an extra twelve hours to complete the work that God had given them to do during that day.

All of those events still belong to *that day*.

So, in the same way, the Holy Spirit has stretched the seventieth week, and everything that happens during the period of delay also belongs to the seventieth week.

Now, the key point, or the major implication of viewing the period of delay in this way, is that the Lord is *still confirming the covenant of sonship in our day*.

When the gospel is preached to all nations, the second half of the seventieth week begins

On the day of His resurrection, Christ established a messenger administration to reveal Him, and to exemplify His crucifixion as His witnesses to the ends of the earth.

The disciples then received 'power from on high' when they were anointed with the sevenfold Spirit of God through the Holy Spirit, on the Day of Pentecost, to be the Lord's witnesses to the ends of the earth.

It is not until this work is completed that the period of delay will come to an end, and the final half of the seventieth week will commence.

Jesus said that the gospel of the kingdom will be preached *as a testimony in all nations*, and 'then the end will come'. Mat 24:14.

Even though the Seventy Weeks prophecy was first addressed to Daniel and his Jewish brethren, the prophecy clearly states that Christ will confirm the covenant with 'many', in the seventieth week.

'Many' includes both Jew and Gentile; all of the spiritual descendants of Abraham.

The word of the oath to Abraham on Mount Moriah was that 'in your Seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed'. Gen 22:18. We know that the Seed of Abraham is Jesus Christ.

The apostle John, in the book of Revelation, recorded that he saw 'a great multitude from every nation, tribe, people and tongue'. Rev 5:9. This includes all the Gentiles, and also the Jewish people.

Jew and Gentile reconciled in one body

The apostle Paul proclaimed that Jesus Christ has reconciled both Jew and Gentile to the Father, in His physical body, through His offering on the cross.

This is a key passage: 'But now [referring to the New Covenant] in Christ Jesus [in His body] you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.' Eph 2:13.

He was speaking to the Gentiles here. He was writing to the Ephesians where he established that first lampstand church in the region of Asia.

‘For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one [that’s Jew and Gentile], and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh [just emphasising it is *in* His physical body] the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances.’ Eph 2:14-15.

He has abolished the Old Covenant.

Remember, Christ fulfilled the Law, but He abolished the Old Covenant and inaugurated the New Covenant. So, He has abolished the enmity.

‘So as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace [this is a new creation], and that He might reconcile them both [Jew and Gentile] to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.’ Eph 2:15-16.

There are not two prophetic destinies. The prophetic destiny for the Gentiles is not different from the prophetic destiny for the Jewish people. There is *one prophetic destiny in the body of Christ*.

‘And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off [speaking to the Gentiles again] and to those who were near [the Jews]. For through Him we both [Jew and Gentile] have access by one Spirit to the Father.

‘Now, therefore [this is his main implication in his writing to the Ephesians], you [that is, the Gentiles] are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.’ Eph 2:17-19.

The household of God is the Father’s house; it is the true temple, the body of Christ.

The majority of the Jewish nation rejected Christ as the Messiah

In his letter to the Romans, Paul declared, ‘I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for *everyone who believes*.’ So, Jew and Gentile; and Christ has made one new man in His physical body through His offering on the cross.

‘I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek [or for the Gentiles].’ Rom 1:16.

Paul recognised that there was a priority to proclaim this gospel, firstly, to the Jewish people.

Following the resurrection of Christ, the gospel was first proclaimed to the Jewish people by the twelve apostles. The apostles proclaimed the word to all the people in Jerusalem, including the priests and the religious leaders.

When Peter and John were arrested, after healing the lame man as they entered the temple, they even preached this gospel to Caiaphas himself.

Many of the Jewish people, including some of the priests, responded to the gospel. We know that Caiaphas did not respond, but many of the priests did. The Scriptures do record that many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

Many of the Jewish people, including some of the priests, responded to the gospel, and were joined to the fellowship of the early church.

However, the vast majority of the Jewish nation rejected Jesus Christ as their Messiah. They continued to make animal sacrifices in the tradition of the Old Covenant, until the temple and the city was destroyed by Prince Titus in AD70.

The gospel was preached firstly to the Jews

Now, even though Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, he recognised that the gospel needed to be proclaimed firstly to the Jews.

And so, when he entered a new city on his missionary journeys, he would often go to the synagogue first to proclaim the gospel to the Jewish people – all of those who had converted to Judaism.

To pick up one account, we see this particularly in the town, or the region, of Pisidia and Antioch.

Paul went into the synagogue on the Sabbath, and he sat there as they read the Law and the Prophets. Then, at the end of the reading, the rulers of the synagogue sent an invitation to him and the other brethren, saying, ‘Do you have any word of exhortation for the people?’ Act 13:15.

Paul promptly stood up and preached one of the famous sermons that is recorded in the book of Acts. Following that sermon, they were invited to come again the following week.

Scripture recorded that the Gentiles, particularly, begged Paul to come and preach the next week. Act 13:42.

Also, some of the Jews followed him after that sermon, and Paul and Barnabas encouraged the Jews to continue in the grace of God. Act 13:43.

This indicated that Paul, as he was speaking as a messenger of Christ, recognised that prevenient grace was being poured out upon the people, and so they were able to respond, and turn, and look upon Jesus Christ whom they pierced.

Paul encouraged them to 'not harden their heart', but to 'continue to receive this grace', so that they could respond.

Filled with a spirit of jealousy

On the following week, Paul went back to that synagogue. 'On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy.' Act 13:44-45.

The bulk of the Jews had obviously begun to reject the word of Paul. They had hardened their heart. The seed, or the word, that Paul had proclaimed was now being devoured, and they were filled with something else which was a familiar spirit for them.

They were being filled with 'envy', or a spirit of 'jealousy'. Remember, it was a spirit of jealousy or envy that caused the Jews to deliver Christ up to be crucified.

They were filled with envy here. 'And contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul.' Most of the Jewish people rejected his word. They were not willing to relinquish their religious heritage for the sake of joining the offering of Christ.

'Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles".

'For so the Lord has commanded us: "I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth".' Act 13:45-47.

Paul was sent to the Gentiles by Christ

Now we will turn to Romans Chapter 11, and read eight or nine verses in this chapter.

This is a particularly significant chapter in the writings of Paul, and in his letter to the Romans,

concerning the nature of Jew and Gentile in one body. We will only introduce this theme today.

'For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry.' Rom 11:13. Paul understood that he had been set apart, from his mother's womb, to preach and reveal Christ among the nations and to the Gentile people.

Jesus Himself, on the road to Damascus, had made it very clear to Paul that he would be sent to the Gentiles to turn them from darkness to light, and from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God. Act 26:17-18.

So Paul was very clear on the primary focus of his ministry, and the mandate that he had received from the Lord.

Paul had a heart for his own people

However, he also hoped that, as he fulfilled that mandate, some of his countrymen would also receive the word, and be saved. So, he magnified his ministry to the Gentiles.

'If by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them.' Rom 11:14.

He was not referring to human jealousy here. He provoked them to godly jealousy, as a zeal for the Lord's house, and a zeal to be part of the Lord's people and citizens of God's household, along with the Gentiles.

Earlier in his letter, Paul testified about the great sorrow and continual grief that was in his heart because of his countrymen who had rejected the gospel. Rom 9:1-3.

'For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?' Rom 11:15.

Paul was referring to the offering of Christ here. And the Jewish nation was cast away, or cut off, by the offering of Christ. They were 'cursed' with Christ, who was cut off.

But, as Paul explained to the Ephesians, the offering of Christ was also the provision for their reconciliation to the Father, along with the Gentiles, as those who were being brought back from the dead and from the death of sin, with Christ, as part of the new creation.

The offering of Christ was the point where they were 'cut off' and 'cast away', but it was also the provision for their *reconciliation* with the Gentiles, and with the Father.

As Paul said, 'Their acceptance to God the Father is nothing less than life from the dead.' It was by resurrection!

If the Head is holy, the body is holy

'For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches.' Rom 11:16.

Paul was describing Jesus Christ here as 'the Firstfruits from the dead'. He is the Firstfruits of all who sleep, by resurrection. He is the Firstfruits of the new creation.

He is the Head of His many-membered body and, if He is holy, then all those who belong to Christ, as members of His body, are also holy.

They are being sanctified by their participation in the fellowship of His offering. As Paul said to the Hebrews, 'Christ has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.' Heb 10:14.

'If Christ is holy, as the Firstfruits, and is the Head of the body, then the whole body of Christ is also holy, or being sanctified.'

If the Root is holy, the branches are holy

Then He shifted his illustration, or his analogy, to that of an 'olive tree'. 'If the root is holy, so are the branches.'

'And if some of the branches were broken off [referring to the natural branches – the Jewish people], and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of *the olive tree*.' Rom 11:17.

The kingdom of God is an 'olive tree'

The writers of the Scriptures used a number of different trees to describe the people of God.

We read of a 'choice vine' that has been planted; also of an 'almond tree', which is the lampstand – it is the rod of God. They also used the analogy of the 'fig tree'.

All of these analogies, or illustrations, are very important because they highlight a specific element that belongs to the people of God.

The writers also used the illustration of an 'olive tree', and an olive tree describes the kingdom of God, which is the kingdom of sonship.

We know that the whole nation of Israel functioned as a unified kingdom under the rulership of King David.

Through Jeremiah the prophet, the Lord spoke to the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, particularly, saying, 'The Lord called your name, "a green olive tree, beautiful in fruit and form"; with the noise of a great tumult He has kindled fire on it, and its branches are worthless.' Jer 11:16.

He was speaking about the judgement that would come upon them at the hand of the Babylonians, who would lead them into captivity.

Christ is the root of the olive tree

The key point is that Jesus Christ is the 'rich Root of the olive tree', as the Son of David who has risen from the dead, ascended on high, and taken His seat in the throne of the heavenly Father.

In the book of Revelation, the apostle John heard, and recorded, the testimony of Jesus as the 'rich Root of the olive tree': 'I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches [He was speaking to John]. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.' Rev 22:16.

Jesus Christ proclaims Himself to be the rich Root of the olive tree.

Now, for our Sonseekers, when you are thinking of a root, you generally think of a root for a tree as being something that is in the ground.

When we refer to the 'rich Root of the olive tree', it' is a very unique and peculiar kind of root, because the root of the tree is not in the ground. The Root of the tree is actually *in heaven*, seated on a throne.

So, the rich Root of the olive tree is Jesus Christ, seated in the Father's throne.

As our great High Priest who is seated in the Father's throne, Jesus Christ is branching out to build the true temple in the heavenly places.

This is how the olive tree is growing, if you like. By reaching out His hand that holds His messenger administration, He is branching out into every place.

It is through the word of the gospel that is proclaimed by the messengers of Christ in His right hand that sons of men are being born as sons of God, and then equipped by their fellowship in Christ's offering to serve as priests in the Father's house.

The Father's house is the true temple in the heavenly places. This is how Christ is branching out to build the true temple.

The natural branches were broken off
'And if some of the branches were broken off [the natural branches], and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree.' Rom 11:17.

Paul made two points here.

He spoke about the natural branches of the olive that have been broken off from the kingdom of God, because of their unbelief. And there were a number of stages to that.

This includes the Jews in Jerusalem who sewed up the veil in the temple, and continued to make animal sacrifice, which we know was an abomination to the Lord. They were part of 'the natural branches' that were broken off.

It also includes the Jews who had already travelled to other places, or lived in other places, and gathered in the various synagogues.

When Paul or the other messengers of Christ came and preached the word to them, they rejected it, and they judged themselves to be, as Paul said, 'unworthy of eternal life'. Act 13:46.

They were also part of the natural branches that were broken off from the olive tree.

The natural branches also include the Jewish believers in the Jerusalem church who were unwilling to let go of their religious practices and the practices that belonged to the Law covenant, because of their loyalty to their Jewish heritage and to the obligations of their extended Jewish family.

Their duplicity, or their double-mindedness, on this issue, revealed the idolatry that was in their heart.

This 'abomination which causes desolation' led to the trampling of the apostle Paul, around AD60,

and ultimately to the destruction of the temple and the city in AD70.

They were also part of the natural branches being broken off from the olive tree.

The Gentiles are grafted in

Paul also highlighted a point that many Gentiles are being 'grafted in' to the olive tree as branches from a wild olive tree.

They are from the various kingdoms of the world that have no heritage in the kingdom of Israel, or the kingdom of God.

They are being grafted, contrary to nature, into the rich Root of the olive tree to become partakers of Christ, as citizens of the kingdom of God in the heavenly places.

In this regard, Paul said to the Gentiles, 'You are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens of the household of God.' Eph 2:19.

Paul rejoiced that so many Gentiles had become citizens of the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven, as sons of God.

We can be just as loyal to our traditions as the Jews were

However, he also warned the Gentile believers by saying, 'Do not boast against the branches [particularly against the natural branches that have been broken off]. Rom 11:18.

'Do not boast against the branches.' It is easy, as we are considering these things, to look back. We identify that when the veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom, the Jews immediately sewed the veil back up and continued to make their animal sacrifice, because they were loyal to their religious traditions, and they were not willing to let any of that go.

It is easy to look back and to consider this from a superior, or arrogant, position, not recognising that, when the word of Christ is preached to us, and we harden our heart or we recoil in unbelief when Christ comes to meet us eye to eye and heart to heart, we demonstrate that we have just as much loyalty to the veil that covers our eyes and our religious predispositions, histories and loyalties as did the Jews.

In many cases, we have as much loyalty to that veil that covers our eyes as the Jews had to the veil in their temple at that time.

Our vital connection to the supply of the oil of present truth

Paul said, 'Don't boast against the [natural] branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.' Rom 11:18.

In saying this, Paul was very clear that the viability of every Gentile congregation is their connection to the rich Root of the olive tree, who is seated in heaven. And that connection is through the messenger administration in the right hand of Christ, which is supplying fresh oil as the word of present truth.

It is this supply of fresh oil, as the word of present truth, that is the essential supply and support for every lampstand church.

We need to be waiting and ready for His coming

This is one of the main lessons of the parable of the five wise and the five foolish virgins who were waiting for Christ - that we all must have a continual supply of oil.

There are many people who are *waiting* for Christ, but the issue is that we need to be *ready* for His coming. And we will only be ready for His coming if we continue to receive the word of faith as it is preached to us, and continue to embrace our fellowship in Christ's offering and His sufferings.

Grafted into Christ by faith

'But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in". Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear.' Rom 11:18-20.

Now, this is a pivotal passage in the Scriptures.

The Jewish branches were broken off because of their unbelief, and the Gentile branches have been grafted in to the rich Root of the olive tree - that is, into Christ - *by faith*.

Paul was referring the faith of Christ that we receive when the word of faith is preached to us by His messengers in His right hand. When that word of faith is preached to us, and we receive it, it becomes the word that is in our heart, and in our mouth, as the confession of our faith.

That faith compels us, motivates us, to lay hold of our unique participation in the fellowship of

Christ's offering and His sufferings, and in that fellowship, we are receiving the grace of Christ's resurrection life.

We stand by receiving His resurrection life, not on our own faith

Paul had earlier stated that 'we received an introduction by faith, into grace'. Rom 5:2.

Grace is the resurrection life of God, and it is only as we are receiving that resurrection life that we are able to 'stand'.

So, we do not stand on the basis of our own faith; or on the basis of our own gospel; or on the basis of our own understanding of who we perceive the Lord to be; or the basis of our own interpretation of His promises.

His faith joins us to the fellowship of His offering

The only way in which we stand is by receiving His resurrection life in the fellowship of His offering.

Paul reminded the Gentiles that the faith of Christ, which joins us to the fellowship of His offering, is the only way in which we can stand as sons of God.

He exhorted us not to be haughty, because our salvation is not a legal position that we have attained on the basis of forgiveness alone. Our salvation from sin, and hence our salvation from the wrath of God upon our sin and uncleanness, is completely dependent upon our ongoing participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering.

Paul stated earlier in his letter to the Romans, 'Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.' Rom 5:9. This means, through our participation in the fellowship of His offering.

It is important to appreciate, as believers, that when Christ confronts us, and when He meets us eye to eye, and His eyes are like a flame of fire, His eyes reveal His jealous love for our sanctification as sons of God. That jealous love is also His wrath upon our sin and uncleanness.

If we recoil from His gaze in unbelief, we are recoiling, or drawing back, to perdition, for He confronts us because He wants to address an issue in our life.

We need to respond by fleeing to Him for refuge to lay hold of the unique participation in His offering that is necessary to see that matter resolved. That is how we are saved from His wrath as we receive His resurrection life, and cease from sin.

Sanctification ensures we do not violate the holy ground of His fellowship

When Paul said, 'Do not be haughty, but fear', he was talking about the fear of the Lord, which we receive as we continue to turn to the Lord in response to His word that is proclaimed to us, so that we meet Him eye to eye.

The *fruit* of meeting Christ eye to eye is the fear of the Lord. This fear motivates our ongoing obedience to Him, and our commitment to our sanctification as sons of God, so that we do not violate the holy ground of His fellowship.

This is what the 'fear of the Lord' looks like. It motivates our obedience to Him and our unyielding commitment to sanctification and to fellowship.

Paul made the same point when he wrote to the Hebrews. 'Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest.' Heb 4:1.

The promise *does* remain while ever the Lord is speaking to us, and prevenient grace is poured out upon us as the messengers of Christ proclaim the word to us.

While ever the word is proclaimed to us, and the Holy Spirit is bearing witness - 'Today, if you hear His voice'- a promise remains of entering His rest.

When the Lord ceases to speak, a promise comes to an end

But seasons do come to an end, and when the Lord ceases to speak on a matter, that promise comes to an end.

'So while a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear [the fear of the Lord] lest any one of you may seem to have come short of it.'

'For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you, either.' Rom 11:21.

There are many examples in the Scriptures that bear witness to the Lord's judgement on the natural branches; that is, the nation of Israel.

Probably one of the most prominent and sobering examples which we have been considering of late is the way in which the Lord miraculously delivered the whole nation of Israel out of Egypt, under the leadership of Moses.

When they came to the edge of the promised land, and they refused to enter because of their unbelief and their disobedience, He swore in His wrath that they would not enter His rest.

Then a whole generation, apart from Joshua and Caleb, fell in the wilderness under the judgement of God, to be cast into the lake of fire.

Jude referred to this very sobering example: 'I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.' Jud 1:5.

Paul wrote the book of Romans well before the destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem in AD70, but that is another very prominent and sobering example of the Lord's judgement upon the natural branches. Josephus estimated that upwards of 1.1 million Jews died in the seize of Jerusalem.

So the city of Jerusalem, as we now know it, is built on the burial ground of a huge number of Jewish people who had rejected Christ and the New Covenant, in favour of their loyalty and obligations to the Old Covenant.

So, this bears witness to the judgement of God, and the warning to all Gentile believers is clear.

If the Lord has judged the natural branches in this manner, then He will not spare us if we reject the gospel of sonship, and refuse to embrace our unique participation in the fellowship of His offering and His sufferings. If we draw back from the Lord, we are drawing back to perdition.

The offering of Christ reveals the goodness and severity of God; His mercy and judgement

It is important for us to understand the goodness and the severity of God that is revealed by the offering of Christ.

As the two thieves who were crucified alongside Christ so clearly demonstrate for us, there are two sides of the cross. There is mercy, and there is judgement.

Knowing this to be so, the apostle Paul has encouraged us, and every believer, 'Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity [judgement and being cast into the lake of fire]; but toward you, goodness [which is repentance leading to salvation], if you continue in His goodness.' Rom 11:22.

The Lord is extending mercy to us so that we can be included in the fellowship of His offering.

He who endures to the end will be saved

Paul built all of these points on the proposition that he laid out through the whole book of Romans.

Earlier, he said, 'Do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart [unrepentant heart] you are treasuring up for yourselves wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgement of God.' Rom 2:4.

We recognise, then, the importance of continuing to receive, believe and obey the word as it is proclaimed to us, as well as the importance of *continuing to embrace our participation* in His offering and sufferings for the entire duration of our lives.

Remember, Jesus said that 'it is he who endures to the end will be saved.' Mar 13:13.

God is able to re-gather the Jews

Paul came back to his consideration of the Jews when he stated, 'They also [the Jews], if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

'For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree [into the kingdom of God], how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

'For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come [or comes] in.' Rom 11:23-25.

The judgement of blindness has been invoked upon the Jewish nation because of their unbelief. However, Paul proclaimed that God is able to re-

graft the Jews as the natural branches into the olive tree.

In our next session, we will consider how and when this re-gathering of the Jews into the kingdom of God takes place.