

The Grafted Olive Tree

The olive tree is an evergreen tree that usually is about 16 feet high. The young tree has a smooth, silver-gray bark. As it gets older, the trunk gets stout and knobby. It has numerous branches that form a dense, shady tree. The tree has a very large root system that can get enough water even in dry conditions. The trees are usually planted about 36 feet apart in areas where it is not irrigated. Olive leaves are narrow and sharply pointed. There are ten to forty flowers carried on each short branch.

In Bible times, it was very common to graft olive trees. A branch from a good olive tree was taken and grafted onto a wild olive tree. The wild olive tree, called *agrielaios*, did not produce very good fruit. But the good cultivated olive tree, called *kallielaios*, did produce very good fruit. Wild olive trees would grow up and take up space with their root systems. To keep from having to cut down a tree and plant a new seedling, a branch from the good tree would be grafted onto the wild tree. This good branch would then produce fruit while getting nourishment from the wild tree root system. Several branches would be grafted onto a wild tree.

In Romans 11:17 we read, "And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree."

God was using the grafting process to make a very important point. Instead of grafting a good branch onto a bad tree, God took a bad branch and grafted it onto a good tree. This was opposite of the way the first century people grafted olive trees. God had a good tree with a good root system. The Israelite nation was the tree with the root system of the Patriarchal Law, Mosaic Law and the New Law. The Gentiles were represented by the wild olive tree. God took the wild olive tree, the Gentiles, and grafted them into the good tree and its root system.

The reference to the branches being broken off means that Jews who did not accept Christ were unacceptable to God. They were cut from the tree. This shows that just because someone has a sincere heart and believes in God does not mean that person will be acceptable to God. A person must believe in and obey Jesus Christ to be acceptable to God.

By Mark McWhorter