*Northwest Bible Church – Dec 05, 2004 – Worship Service – Alan Conner*

**Romans 11:16-17**

*One Olive Tree*

INTRO
 The pretribulational rapture view is based on there being two peoples of God: Israel and the church. This passage supports the belief that there is only one people of God.

I. A HOLY ROOT AND BRANCHES (v. 16).

    A. The transitional nature of v. 16. The idea is twofold:

            1) Transitional looking back to vv. 1-15 - that the on-going work of salvation among the Jews is consistent with this principle of holiness in the root and branches (to some degree) in Israel.
            2) Transitional looking forward to vv. 17-24 – introducing the metaphor of the root and the branches that dominates these verses.

    B. What do the figures refer to?

        What does the "first piece" or "first fruits" and then the "root" refer to? Probably the same thing: the patriarchs (cf. 11:28; 9:5).

        What about the "lump" and the "branches"? Some say the physical nation of Israel generally speaking. Israel was called by God to be a "holy nation" (Ex. 19:6). But a better answer which is more consistent with what follows is that it refers to the spiritual branches or descendants connected to Abraham by faith, not the physical. This is because believing Gentiles are grafted in, and some of the Jews are broken off so just the physical nation cannot be in view.

II. GENTILES ARE GRAFTED IN (vv. 17-18).

    A. Breaking off and grafting in (v. 17).

        1) "Some" (= majority) of the Jewish branches were broken off.

        2) Gentiles are by nature "a wild olive." = outside the covenant standing of Israel. Wild = uncultivated, uncared for, not in the covenant garden.

 The "wild olive tree" was notoriously unfruitful and Paul’s use of this for the Gentiles is designed to humble them and puncture their pride and put them in their place.

        3) Gentiles partake of the rich root of the olive tree.

 The olive tree is a symbol for Israel found in the OT (Jer. 11:16;Hos. 14:5-6) and other Jewish writings, also it was the most cultivated fruit tree in the Mediterranean area. Used here for the elect people of God, spanning both ages of salvation history (old and new covenants) and both major ethnic groups (Jew and Gentile).

The "rich root" = patriarchs, esp. Abraham (v. 28). Includes principle of God’s election and saving grace in Isaac and Jacob. See in Romans 9:6-13.

    B. Gentiles are grafted into the one olive tree = one people of God. This teaches that when Gentiles come to faith in Christ they are grafted into the preexisting people of God, they become a part of the same spiritual Israel as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

    Believing Gentiles are now:

        1) We become Abraham’s seed.

Rom. 4:11, Rom. 4:16, Gal. 3:7

        2) We inherit the blessings of Abraham. We are grafted into the Abrahamic Covenant in its spiritual and New Covenant administration.
Gal. 3:14, Gal. 3:29

        3) We become true Jews having a circumcision of the heart.
Rom. 2:28-29, Phil. 3:3

        4) We have been drawn near to Israel’s blessings.
Eph. 2:11-16

        5) We are fellow heirs with believing Jews in their blessings.
Eph. 3:4-6, Rom. 15:27

        6) We are now called "the Israel of God", or spiritual Israel.
Gal. 6:16

All of these verses support the idea of there being ONE PEOPLE OF GOD, NOT TWO.

CONCLUSION