

prepared to enter the millennial Kingdom as the hearer of the much greater blessing to the nations.

### **The Olive Tree Image.**

Paul's olive tree in Rom 11 is Israel, but wild olive branches, Gentiles, have been grafted in. Paul has an end-historical eschatological perspective like that of Rev 12. Paul presents the olive tree illustration in the context outlined by Rom 11:12, with its fourfold development of (1) Israel's stumbling, (2) riches for Gentiles, (3) Israel's salvation, and (4) greater blessing for Gentiles. Romans 11:15 should be read as a full and climactic parallel to verse 12. The αὐτῶν (*auton*) of 15a is a subjective genitive; the action is Israel's, just as the stumbling of verse 12a is hers. The casting away is not God's casting away Israel, but Israel's rejection of her Messiah, just as the stumbling had previously been related to the rejection of the Messiah in 9:32, 33, as well as in 11:12. Israel's rejection, as well as Gentile criminality, was the occasion of the cross and the reconciliation of the world in the atonement.

If, now, the momentous event of the cross is in view in 15a, the end-historical event of the resurrection of the righteous must be in view in 15b. Paul has already shown in Rom 8:23 how closely the resurrection of the righteous is related to the cross, since he there employs the word ἀπολύτρωσις (*apolytroisis*), his great atonement word, to describe the final effect of the atonement in the redemption of the body. Paul appears to have crafted in Rom 11:15 an exquisitely balanced statement. Israel's rejection of her Messiah (a) is related to the cross (b) as, in a parallel but reverse manner, her reception of Him when she says, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord," (b') presupposes the resurrection of the righteous (a') in the reverse and chiasmic order.

In such a context Paul now argues for the continuity of the believing elect remnant (the firstfruits, the root) sanctifying the rest of the unbelieving branches. The continuity of the remnant is the proof that God has not cast away His people; in due time their number will be augmented by the salvation of "all Israel," when a momentous event, involving Gentiles, has taken place. In such a setting Paul's use of the olive tree image serves a fourfold purpose. (1) It preserves the emphasis on the continuity of ethnic Israel in relation to the believing remnant; (2) it accounts for the rejection of the Messiah by a large number of Israelites (some branches are broken off); (3) it emphasizes the opening of the Abrahamic covenant to Gentiles as Gentiles (wild olive branches grafted in); and (4) it fits the end-historical setting which Paul has in view in vv25-32.

It is just at this point that the precise articulation of the Pauline image with John's thought appears. Paul argues that the existence of an elect remnant in ethnic Israel is the pledge and guarantee of the salvation of "all Israel" in due time: ". . . hardening in part has happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles enters in," Paul says (Rom 11:25). John Murray has well argued that the fulness of the Gentiles cannot mean the whole number of elect Gentiles, since Paul has clearly said that there is to be