



Gospel Doctrine Sunday School

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Slippery Rock Branch

Volume 4, Issue 7

Today's Word: grafting

March 30, 2008

Lesson 13: "The Allegory of the Olive Trees"

Are You:

- Reading Your Scriptures Every Day?
- Praying for the Church Leaders and Missionaries?

Today's Scriptures

Jacob 5-7

Next Week:

General Conference

April 13:

Lesson 14:

"For a Wise Purpose"

E nos, Jarom,

Omni, & Words of Mormon

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President

Thomas S. Monson:

"Home teaching is part of today's plan to rescue. . . Let us reach out to rescue those who so need our help and lift them to the higher road and the better way" ("Stand in Your Appointed Place," *Ensign*, May 2003, 54.)

Questions to Ponder

- How can new converts add life and strength to the church?
- What are the responsibilities of those who "have been nourished by the good word of God"?

Olive Tree Horticulture 101

"Some botanists [Wallace and Hess] have compared details in the allegory of the olive trees with recent knowledge about ancient horticulture. The specifics in the allegory fit consistently with what is known. Of the twenty species of olive, only one (with two varieties) is edible. The olive was cultivated as far back as 3500 b.c. The edible olive can be wild or domesticated, depending on environment and cultivation. Wild trees produce a smaller, more bitter fruit than do tame trees. (Many of the wild varieties, if cultivated and cared for, can produce large, palatable fruit, but never as good as the domesticated species.) A wild branch grafted to a tame tree can produce good fruit if the branch is from the edible species. Cuttings or graftings were used until about 420 b.c., when a shift to seeds and roots took place.

"Unless properly pruned, the top of an olive tree can outgrow its roots. On the other hand, a denuded tree will suffer root death. This explains the servants' efforts in the allegory to match growth with root development and to graft wild branches onto the old tree after its own branches were transferred elsewhere. The instance of wild branches grafted onto a tame tree (or tame branches onto a wild tree) producing first good fruit and then bad may be the result of "delayed incompatibility." A particular combination of rootstock and top branches may do well for a time but then deteriorate due to a change in environment or disease. Removing the old grafts and putting in correct grafts, as in the allegory, can correct the incompatibility. It is also not uncommon for one tree to produce two kinds of fruit at the same time. Old growth and cut-off branches were typically burned to keep them from harboring parasites and insects.

"The use of the term *vineyard* in Jacob rather than *orchard* is a bit unconventional but has biblical and horticultural precedent. It is interesting that no modern terms, like *budding*, *rootstock*, *mulching*, or *incompatibility*, are used in the allegory; the vocabulary is consistent with ancient terminology.

"One common belief is that olive trees do best on rocky, infertile hillsides. Actually, because olive trees are hardier and more resistant to extremes in temperature than other trees, they are often grown where other trees cannot grow. But olive trees, as the allegory suggests, grow best when well-cultivated, watered, pruned, and fertilized" (from "Research and Perspectives: Recent Studies on the Book of Mormon," *Ensign*, Jul 1989, 62).