

The Allegory of the Olive Tree

Key Scripture Jacob 5

Explanation The longest allegory in scripture is Zenos's allegory of the olive tree. In Jacob 5:3, Zenos explains that the tame olive tree represents the house of Israel. From this interpretation, conclusions may be drawn concerning other symbols in the allegory. For example, the young branches taken from the olive tree most likely represent inhabitants of the Americas, the Jews, the lost ten tribes, and a remnant of the house of Israel; and the wild olive tree symbolizes the Gentiles and the nations of the earth. The numbers on the top half of this chart (1–6) represent the six main stages that Zenos addresses in his allegory: (1) the decaying of the top, (2) the grafting in of the wild tree, (3) the planting of young branches in other parts of the vineyard, (4) the returning of the branches to the main tree, (5) the bitter fruit burned by fire, and (6) the good fruit being gathered and stored. On the bottom half of the chart, these same stages are shown graphically, arranged clockwise around the central figure of the tame tree.

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Jacob 5

Stage 1 Main top of tame olive tree begins to perish (v. 6) and is burned by fire (v. 9)

Stage 2 Wild olive tree branches are grafted in (v. 10) and bear good fruit (v. 17)

Stage 3 Young branches are grafted in other parts of the vineyard (vv. 8, 13)

Stage 4 Young branches are grafted back into the tame olive tree (v. 52)

Stage 5 Branches that bring forth bitter fruit are cleared (v. 65)

Stage 6 Fruit is good and vineyard is no more corrupt (v. 75)

