

Symbolic Elements in Zenos's Allegory

Key Scripture Jacob 5

Explanation Zenos's allegory of the tame and wild olive trees, though complicated, is one of great doctrinal and historical importance, in part because it represents the past and future history of the house of Israel. Understanding the elements in this allegory, which are grouped together and listed on this chart, can lead to added insights concerning God's dealings with his covenant people. As this data shows, the allegory is a dynamic interchange between several trees (or parts of trees) and the master of the vineyard, his servant, and several laborers. This chart does not interpret these symbols as they appear in Jacob 5, but it shows that many elements are built into this extended allegory and thus facilitates in-depth reflection on this text.

Symbolic Elements in Zenos's Allegory

1. The Trees

a tame olive tree
young and tender branches
mother tree
main top
natural branches
root of the main tree
moisture of the root
transplanted branches
a wild olive tree
grafted branches
many other trees
good, tame, natural fruit
bad, wild, bitter fruit
equal fruit

Trees' Doings

growing
waxing old
decaying and perishing
cumbering the ground
overrunning the roots
bringing forth much fruit
becoming corrupt
withering away
growing faster than roots
taking strength
good overcoming evil
thriving exceedingly

2. The Actors

master of the vineyard
servant
a few other servants

Actors' Doings

nourishing
digging about
dunging
pruning/plucking off branches
burning, casting into fire
grafting
planting branches
cutting down trees
grieving
laboring long, caring
sparing
balancing the root and top
preserving
laying up fruit
obeying
rejoicing

3. The Places

a vineyard
nethermost part
poorest spot
poorer than the poorest spot
good spot