

## Anointing With Oil

by Roger Walkwitz

On page 30 of *messiah magazine* issue 83 (First Fruits of Zion), there is a good article entitled *Anointing With Oil* by Tom Lancaster. He brings out the true meaning of James 5:14. Regarding the sick, rather than the usual “pray over him, anointing him with oil,” Tom offers “pray over him and give him some herbal or conventional remedies.” Why the difference? Here is some information.

Last year in Baguio City, the Philippines, I taught on this because of certain people going around “ritually anointing people with oil” for various reasons. I find nothing in the Apostolic Scriptures (NT) to justify anyone ritually anointing anyone for any reason. In *Young’s Analytical Concordance* notice that 5 Greek words are translated “anoint,” but only 2 of these are root words, #4 *aleipho* (from lipos-grease) and #8 *chrrio*, the root for “Christ-The Anointed One.”

Years ago I was alerted to the difference between these two words in *Wuest’s Expanded Translation of the Greek New Testament* from Moody Press in Chicago. James 5:14, “Is anyone among you ill? Let him call at once the elders of the [local] assembly, and let them pray over him, having massaged him [with olive oil] in the Name of the Lord.” *Aleipho* is the Greek word in James 5:14 and both Lancaster and Wuest agree that “anoint” is not the proper meaning. Wuest explains his use of “massage” as follows:

“Olive oil was one of the few remedial agents used by the Greek physicians....The good Samaritan poured wine and oil over the wounds of the man who had fallen into the midst of thieves, wine for its alcoholic content which would disinfect them, and olive oil because of its healing properties. The use of oil in our James passage was for medicinal purposes. The general application for today is that in the case of illness, it is prayer and the doctor and the use of medicine.”

The same information is found in the authoritative *Synonyms Of The New Testament* by Trench, where he says that “*aleipho* is the mundane and profane, *chrrio* the sacred and religious word.”

For a sick person, a good body massage helps the body heal itself. Athletes get body massages regularly. *Aleipho* is used 8 times, and each time it is the practical, not ritual, use of oil or perfume to massage, rub, or apply to the head or body. If a friend is really concerned for your health, ask him to give you a good body massage along with his prayers! My barber in Baguio City sold me a bottle of hair tonic that he said would grow hair. I “anointed” my head with “oil,” massaged my head daily, and the result was: still bald! But it did feel good!

In contrast, *chrrio* is used only 5 times, 4 times for God anointing Yeshua, and 1 time for God anointing Paul and his companions. No ceremony was done and no oil was used. No human did the anointing. It was God giving His Holy Spirit to Yeshua (as man) and to Paul & Co. to empower them to do the work He had given them. This is the sovereign choice of God. For a human to put himself in the place of God to anoint with oil someone else for empowerment for service, oil representing the Holy Spirit, is presumption of the worst kind and borders on blasphemy.

Clergy who claim to be “God’s anointed” and are therefore “above criticism and to be obeyed” are in the same category. From where do they get this arrogance?

Looking again at *Young’s* we find there is a lot of anointing going on in the Tanakh. Kings were anointed with oil, priests were anointed, and I found only one reference to a prophet being anointed, and that was Elisha by Elijah, by a direct command from God. Most of the references were about Kings Saul and David as the LORD’s anointed, or The LORD’s Anointed referring to Yeshua HaMashiach or Yeshua The Messiah, “messiah” meaning an “anointed one.”

Could it be that certain clergy consider themselves as “God’s anointed” in the role of the king of Israel, or the priest, or a prophet like Elisha, or like Moses or Aaron, or even as the vicar of Christ on earth? Maybe ordination gives some the feeling that they are now “God’s anointed” rather than only receiving the approval of a certain religious body based on academic accomplishment. Congregants can be faulted also for staying silent when abuses are made because they “cannot speak against God’s anointed.” Putting certain people on a pedestal is very dangerous and not fair to the person. However, some put themselves on a pedestal, which is asking for trouble.

In Tanakh times, Israel was given anointed Kings, Priests, and some Prophets. Israel was to obey these as they functioned under God in His Theocracy. After Yeshua’s Resurrection, Yeshua Himself took all these functions. Yeshua is the King of the Universe, The High Priest in heaven, and The Prophet like unto Moses. There is no room for any human now to fit in to any of these offices.

Since questions will arise, my understanding of Eph 4:11 of the four engifted persons is that apostles and prophets ceased with the completion of the Bible, the bringers of Good News (evangelists) are the pioneer missionaries, and the shepherd-teachers are the local elders. Multiple elders existed in each Jewish synagogue and in each Messianic congregation or assembly. Nowhere in the NT is it said that any of these were anointed with oil.

Since we have no kings, priests, or prophets in the Body of Messiah now, what do we have for leadership? First of all, God has given the husband the leadership of his family. Women’s Lib has no place in the Body of Messiah. Who leads the Passover Seder each year? The patriarch of each extended family leads, or someone special.

For each local congregation, God has specified elders and deacons with their respective responsibilities. Each local congregation recognizes these from among themselves and appoints them to their office. Are they to be “anointed with oil”? No. By virtue of their appointment to office, are they then “anointed by God” with the Spirit in order to do their job? No. They most likely were engifted earlier as they served God, and this “anointing” was recognized by the congregation as the basis for appointing them to the office of elder or deacon.

King Saul was anointed by God with the ability to serve as king of Israel. When Saul disobeyed God, this anointing was removed so that he was unable to function as king. King David was also anointed by God to be king over Israel. When David sinned badly and confronted his sin, he prayed, “Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.” David knew that he would be helpless as king without this anointing from God. By the way, this had nothing to do with David’s salvation. David asked God to restore to him the JOY of his salvation, not to be saved over again.

The flesh cannot serve God, whether past, present, or in the future. God’s anointing is essential in order to serve Him. But remember, it is God’s anointing on His initiative, not man’s anointing on man’s initiative! Forget the anointing oil, unless you want to use some good liniment to give your friend a good body massage.