

**Message #179 of Scripture Beneath The Surface**  
*“The Anointing: Oil In Bible Symbolism”*

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Hello! Thanks for being with us. Today I'd like to try to explain some of the concepts of oil, as used in Bible symbolism. The church of today pretty well understands that the concept of oil is an important issue, but I'm not certain that Christians, for the most part, understand the different aspects of oil as used in scripture. Or in other words, why was oil part of the anointing ritual in the days of Israel's temple and it's priests, and why does the scripture, in James 5:14, tell us that those who are sick should be anointed with oil?

The word, anointing, is fairly common in Christian circles. Some Christian denominations still anoint the sick with oil when they are praying for their healing. Some don't. Hopefully I can shed some light on this subject for those who have wondered about the reason for oil being used for this purpose, or, for the purpose of anointing the high priest in the days of Israel in the wilderness. Also, there are doubtless many people who wonder what the connection is between oil and the Holy Spirit

And first, let me read two portions of scripture that I have just referred to. The first portion is Exodus 29:4-7, and it refers to the initial sanctification of Aaron and his sons when the first tabernacle was set up in the wilderness after the children of Israel were delivered out of Egypt. It says, "And Aaron and his sons you shall bring unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall wash them with water. And you shall take the garments, and put upon Aaron the coat, and the robe of the ephod, and the ephod, and the breastplate, and gird him with the curious girdle of the ephod: And you shall put the miter upon his head, and put the holy crown upon the miter. Then shall you take the anointing oil, and pour it upon his head, and anoint him."

Here is the first instance of oil used as an anointing. It was important in the aspect of ritual which was intended for the purpose of sanctifying a man for the office of priesthood. King David even referred to it in Psalms 133, verses one and two. He said, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to

dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;"

You can see from these two verses that the anointing with oil was a precious thing indeed. Not something to be just glossed over and forgotten, but something important.

Now the other verse I want to read is James 5:14. It says, "Is anyone sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord."

You see, it is not just an Old Testament concept, this anointing with oil, but is also a New Testament concept that has significant meaning. But to understand the meaning fully we have to go to the book of Zechariah.

Now, the part of Zechariah that is important to us in understanding the significance of oil is chapter four. But there are fourteen verses in the chapter and I don't want to read them all. That might be more confusing than helpful. You can make a note for yourself and read the entire chapter four of Zechariah when you get a chance. But for now, I want you to realize that the writer of the book of Zechariah was being visited by an angel from God, and was instructing Zechariah concerning some of the difficulties that Israel was experiencing at the time. In Zechariah 4, verses 1 through 5, the angel had shown Zechariah a vision of a lampstand and two olive trees. When the angel asked Zechariah if he knew what he was seeing, Zechariah replied that he didn't know what it was supposed to mean, and asked, "what is it?"

The angel then replied to Zechariah, and explained what Zechariah was seeing. And here is the angel's reply in verse 6. "Then he answered and spoke unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts."

Now, notice that the angel explains to Zechariah that what he is seeing is, "The Word of the Lord." It is the word of the Lord that Zechariah was seeing. It was a word of the Lord meant for Zerubbabel, the current leader of Israel, but the picture Zechariah saw was a lampstand and two olive trees. And the angel told Zechariah that this lampstand and the two olive trees were God's word.

You see, the lampstand is representative of something that gives light. In the days of the Old Testament lamps were used to light up the darkness. And if you can follow this principle, then realize that God's word is a light to us. Psalms 119:105 says, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." And Jesus referred to this same concept in John 8:12, when he said that he was the light of the world.

We know that we need the light from God if we are not going to fall off the narrow path that leads to salvation. Light is something that every human needs if they are going to find the truth of God. In Zechariah, chapter four, the light of God's word was represented as a lamp and two olive trees.

And here's an interesting thing about God's word. We can have the written or spoken word of God, and that's good. However, every true Christian knows that we need more than just the written or spoken word of God. What we really need is to have the written or spoken word, and in addition, we also need to have the written or spoken word revealed to us. However, if we consider an oil lamp, we will also have to realize that an oil lamp is quite useless to us unless we have oil for the lamp. You see, the lamp, of itself, does not shed any light. It can only shed light if we add oil to it. It is the oil in the lamp that

burns, and the burning of the oil makes a flame. The flame sheds light, and then, and only then, does the lamp become useful to us.

Imagine having a lamp without any oil. What good would it do you? Or, in today's concept, what good would it do to have a flashlight and no batteries? It's the same thing.

In Zechariah, chapter four, the rest of the verses explain that the two olive trees empty olive oil out of themselves and into the lamp, and then the lamp can burn the oil, and the darkness is dispelled.

The Bible uses the concept of a lampstand to represent God's word. In Zechariah four, the vision Zechariah saw contained one lampstand. It was one lampstand and two olive trees that Zechariah saw, and these three things represented God's word. Now, here's a very interesting thing. In the book of Revelation, the writer John also saw a vision of God's word. In Revelation 11:4 the vision is repeated, just as in Zechariah. However, this time there are two lampstands and two olive trees. It is still the word of the Lord, but with the addition of a second lamp.

Zechariah saw only one lamp, but John, in Revelation, saw two lamps. What is implied here is that the vision of Zechariah represented the Old Testament of God's word, and the vision of John with two lamps represents both the Old Testament word of God and the New Testament word of God. At the time of Zechariah there was only the word of God for the Old Testament, the Old Covenant, but in the time of John there was both the Old Testament, the Old Covenant, and the New Testament, the New Covenant.

In essence, the lamp is the word of God. The olive trees are the additional witness, the additional testimony, of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Because God is a three part God, made up of mind, Spirit, and body, there must be more than just a single testimony for the word of God. God gives his word to the world. But in addition, his word is also confirmed by the additional second and third witnesses.

This is also part of Zechariah's vision. In Zechariah 4:14, the angel explains that the two olive trees are God's additional witnesses that testify of the truth of God. They are the two anointed ones that stand by the Lord, who is Lord of the whole earth.

And here's a very important part of understanding why there are two additional testimonies which confirm the truth of God. You see, in scripture God has given instruction that no situation can be judged in finality unless there are at least two or three witnesses to confirm the judgment. In Deuteronomy 19:15, God gives explicit instruction that there must be two or three witnesses to condemn a man for any sin that he commits. It says, "One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sins: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established."

Now, this concept is stated in scripture several times. And very, very interestingly, Jesus himself refers to this same concept. He refers to it in Matthew 18:16, and in John 5:31-37, Jesus tells the Jews who were confronting him that if he only testified of himself, without additional witnesses, then his testimony was not true. And then he explained to them that the Father also gave witness of him, and the Holy Spirit gave witness also.

And here in John 5:34, he explains that he does not receive the additional testimony of men in order that his word can be confirmed as true, but only the Father and the Holy Spirit are considered to be qualified

witnesses. And the reason for this is that it is only God who can speak the absolute truth, therefore it is only the three parts of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that can establish the truth of God completely.

You see, God is three parts in one. It is the same thing for you and me. We are also three parts, because we are made in the image of God. We have a mind that is our controlling part of us. We have a spirit that takes our thoughts, beliefs, and convictions, and correspondingly moves our body to act and speak. In this sense, we also give three witnesses to who and what we are. We have thoughts, beliefs, and convictions, but they cannot be known by other people unless they are revealed in some way. It's like being a lamp without oil. We can have thoughts in ourselves, but unless those thoughts are transmitted to other people, the other people will not see us for what we really are and for what we really think.

It is the mind of God that is his word, but it is only the revealed mind of God that can be known by humans. And as it says in 1 Corinthians 2:10-11, it is the spirit in man that knows the deep things buried in the mind of man. And in the same way that our spirit can know the deep things inside of us, it is the Holy Spirit that knows the deep things of God, and takes those things and reveals them unto humans.

In each and every situation, in each and every person, there must be two or three witnesses in order to establish truth. One witness is only a possibility. But if there are one or two additional witnesses that testify in unity, then truth can be confirmed.

Now, if we consider these things, we can return to the subject of oil. It is the oil that causes the lampstand to shed light. The lampstand is God's light, but that light cannot be confirmed as true unless there is the additional witnesses of the oil to confirm it as true. God's word is understood by humans because it is not only spoken or written, but Jesus Christ gave testimony by his life on earth that God's word is true. And the Holy Spirit gave testimony that God's word is true by the workings, by the miracles, by the healing that Jesus did.

Jesus said plainly that the works he did were by the Holy Spirit. In all situations, God's word is established by the Father, which is the mind of God, by his spirit, which is the Holy Spirit, and by Jesus Christ, the outward human manifestation of God in the earth. We believe God's word not just because it was spoken, but because it was demonstrated through the life of Jesus, and it was shown to have power. God's word is powerful, and the healing and miracles, accomplished by the Holy Spirit, clearly demonstrated it.

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The lampstand and the two olive trees, in Zechariah 4, and the two lampstands and the two olive trees in Revelation 11, show us God's word. And when we understand that it is the addition of the oil that makes the lampstand shed light, then we can see that oil is an important function for Christians.

Now, if you're going to have faith in the word of God, it is because you can see with spiritual eyes. It's more than just hearing or reading the word of God, but because the oil has been added to the lamp of God's word, you can recognize the ultimate truth of that word.

When you are sick, and you need healing, you can call for those of the church who are mature in the faith and they can pray for you. You see, the mature believers have such a great knowledge and understanding of God's word that their faith is significantly increased. They can pray for you when you cannot seem to get results from praying just for yourself, and with the increase in faith applied to your individual situation, you can gain the victory you are seeking over your problem.

But then, you might say, “why do I need to be anointed with oil? Why can’t I just have someone pray for me?” Well, actually, there is no reason you can’t just pray without being anointed with oil. But then, think about it. We Christians enter in to salvation through the ritual of baptism. We are baptized in water, signifying our intention to being born again as a new creature in Christ. We also partake in the ritual of communion, which is an act of remembering the sacrifice that Jesus gave for us, and also demonstrating the symbolism of becoming part of the body of Christ.

These commandments to be baptized and to partake of communion are Biblical. In the same sense we recognize the physical connection of being anointed with oil as being a physical connection with the power of God’s Holy Spirit. We are still locked inside of these earthly bodies even though we are born again spirit beings through Jesus Christ. It is the acknowledgment of the power of God’s word that we are demonstrating.

We know that we have become part of the body of Christ when we give our heart to him. And when this happens, we are born again in spirit, and become born again spirit beings. Yet, because we are still locked in these physical bodies, our baptism with water is the ritual act that connects our physical bodies with our spiritual rebirth. In the same sense when we partake of the articles of communion, we are demonstrating a physical connection with our human flesh and our spiritual man. It is the progression of moving from a flesh and blood person, and into the spiritual person, that we are demonstrating. And here again, when we need healing, the healing needed is in our flesh and blood bodies, not in our born again spiritual bodies. By our reception of the anointing oil, we are demonstrating outwardly our faith in the healing power, not only as it applies to our spirit man, but also as it applies to our flesh and blood body. And when we do this, God sees our faith and responds accordingly.

In essence, what we are saying when we receive the anointing oil, is, “Lord God, we believe your word is not just empty words, but words of promise backed up by your power. And we believe that your light has shined forth in our hearts and revealed your truth to us. Therefore, we are not only praying the prayer of faith according to your spoken word, but we are demonstrating that your word works powerfully in our physical bodies as well. Our faith is increased because we have the additional knowledge and understanding of your word which has been given to us in greater measure from the additional testimony of Jesus and by the additional testimony of your Holy Spirit, these two olive trees which have allowed the lamp of your word to shine forth. Now, Lord God, see our faith, not only in our heart, but manifested openly in our physical body, and know Lord God that we believe your word and that you are a God of power, and not just empty words. We have seen the shining of your light, so therefore, Lord, please see the oil on us, demonstrating that we believe in the power of your word and not just words by themselves.”

You see people, we are born again spirit beings, if we are in Christ Jesus, but we still are working each and every day from within these mortal bodies. And because the flesh is still strongly against us, we include the addition of Biblical rituals which demonstrate our faith from a physical perspective as well as a spiritual perspective. Our faith in the word of God is manifested outwardly to those of the world in order that we also might declare the power of God. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 4:20, the kingdom of God is not only in word, but in power.

And here’s one last thing to think about. We, as Christians have little trouble demonstrating our faith as God requested through water baptism. We have little trouble physically demonstrating our faith by partaking in the physical act of communion. We also have little trouble demonstrating our faith outwardly by kneeling in prayer, even though we certainly know that we can also pray standing up or

sitting down. Yet, why do we have so great an inhibition to being anointed with oil for our healing? The oil demonstrates that we are separated onto God. It would seem to me that being anointed with oil should be a completely simple concept.

As we include the physical ritual of baptism, communion, or the anointing of oil, we are testifying, not only of God's spoken word, but of the power of his word. And certainly, we all want the power of God most surely. Without the power of God we would have no hope for a glorious eternal future with Christ. It is the power that we want, because our victory comes with power. It is power that is the kingdom of God, not just in the spoken word of God.

So, will the oil magically make us well? No, it won't! There is no special power in the oil itself, any more than the water of baptism is powerful of itself. The oil just represents outwardly what is taking place inwardly. The actual power, the actual transformation, comes from God. The oil is only the demonstration of our faith, just as we demonstrate our faith through physical baptism and the physical act of communion. We claim our right to come before God by demonstrating outwardly the knowledge we have of his powerful word. And God hears us because not only do we hope in the promise of his word for our victory, but also we show God that we know his word is powerful and therefore we expect our prayers to be heard, . . . . . and answered.