



What Does James 5:14 Teach?

The medicinal and/or refreshment use of oil appears to be the only applications of the anointing with oil that fits James 5:14. No metaphor, messianic, or funerary language is indicated. Further, if anointing with oil was used to carry out miracles, miraculous spiritual gifts were

only passed on through a direct gift from God or the laying on of the apostle's hands (see Acts 8:14-19). The latter is not possible today since there are no living apostles. Considering all the applications of anointing with oil we can conclude that James is telling elders, who are called to the sick, to do what they can to offer refreshment and medical assistance to the sick and also pray to God. God can and does answer prayer. If a member should request oil for refreshment or medicinal treatment, it should be done. If a member does so expecting a miracle, it should not.



Author's Note:

A few weeks ago the question posed in the title of this article came up in Bible Class. We didn't have time to fully explore the topic, so I wanted to offer this study to fully answer the question.

KMP

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We are so glad that you joined us today.
Please come again.

● Let us know if you have any questions.

ISSUE

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THE OLSEN
PARK CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

May 2
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Services

Sunday: 9:30 AM
10:20 AM
6:00 PM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Charles Kelley
Pat Ledbetter
Jeff Nunn
Kyle Pope

Deacons:

Dean Bowers
Eddie Cook
Pat Goguen
Neil Ledbetter
Rusty Scott

Evangelists:

Kyle Pope
Curtis Carwile



Should We Anoint the Sick with Oil?

By Kyle Pope

In the last chapter of the book of James, the Holy Spirit offers these words regarding prayer for the sick, **“Is anyone among you sick? 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. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven”** (James 5:14-15, NKJV). As we strive to do all those things (and only those things) which are authorized in God's word, the question sometimes arises as to whether this instruction teaches a binding practice for us today. Let's consider the evidence in Scripture to answer this question.

Oil Anointing in the New Testament

The references in the New Testament to anointing with oil fall into six categories:

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I. Messianic. In ancient Israel the king of God's people was anointed with oil by a prophet of God to signify his Divine appointment (1 Samuel 10:1; 16:14). The one whom God promised who would come to be priest, prophet, and king was called the *Messiah* (Hebrew) or *Christ* (Greek), meaning "Anointed

One." Jesus came as God's Anointed, "to preach the gospel to the poor" and "liberty to the captives" (Luke 4:18). He is referred to as having been anointed by God (Acts 4:26-27) with the Holy Spirit and power (Acts 10:38).

II. Metaphorical. In three instances anointing with oil is used as a metaphor for something else. Hebrews 1:9 quotes from Psalm 45:6-7 in reference to God's loving mercy which is likened to an anointing with "the oil of gladness." The Apostle John in two instances appears to speak of the miraculous pouring out of the Holy Spirit, as "an anointing from the Holy One" (1 John 1:20, 27). No literal oil is involved.

III. Refreshment. By far, the most frequent references to anointing with oil refer to it as a type of cleansing or refreshing. The Christian who fasts is instructed, "when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face" (Matthew 6:17). This refreshing is the initial reason (before Jesus explains the deeper significance), that Mary Magdalene anoints Jesus' head and feet with "very costly fragrant oil" (Matthew 26:7, also 26:9; Mark 14:3-4; Luke 37-38, 46; John 11:2, 12:2-5).

IV. Funerary. When Jesus is criticized for allowing Mary to anoint Him with this expensive oil, He not

only foreshadows His future death, but suggests to us that burial was another customary occasion for anointing with oil. He states, "For in pouring this fragrant oil on My body, she did it for My burial." (Matthew 26:12). After His actual burial occurred, Mary would try again, to anoint His dead body, only to discover His resurrection (Mark 16:1).

V. Medicinal. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus tells of a man who is a neighbor to a stranger he finds beaten and left for dead. The text says, "So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him." (Luke 10:34). Here, the anointing is purely medicinal. The Samaritan has no power to heal, he simply gives the medical help within his ability (cf. Revelation 3:18). Various medicinal oils and salves were used in ancient times.

VI. Miraculous. The final category may be an extension of the medicinal application. When Jesus sends out his disciples to teach the gospel they are given power

to do miracles. As they go, the text says: "And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them" (Mark 6:13). It is unclear whether or not this is describing common medicine or some miraculous use of oil (cf. John 9:6, 11, anointing with mud in a miracle).

