

A Reformation of the Anointing

What is the anointing and who is it for?

The anointing was outworked in the Old Testament differently from the New Testament. In the Old Testament, people were chosen by God and anointed with oil, which represented the Holy Spirit (Exod. 29;30:22-33). God's heart was that Israel would be a kingdom of priests and that every firstborn would act as a priest who would intercede for their family (Num. 3:12; 8:16-17). Israel's sin in worshipping the golden calf changed that. Rather, God chose one tribe (the Levites) who had shown their zeal for holiness (Exod. 32:26).

The symbolical act of anointing is mentioned another 26 times in the Old Testament. As Israel moved forward, they desired a king and these men were, like the priests, set apart by an act of anointing with oil. David's anointing is the most memorable (1 Sam. 16); Scripture recording that as he was anointed by Samuel, "the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power" (1 Sam. 16:13).

From this, we can see that God would call people to serve Him (as prophets, priests or kings) and they would be consecrated by applying the anointing oil. At the time of the natural act, a supernatural act would occur where the Spirit of God would rest on them for the purpose of outworking God's mission.

Fast forward to the New Testament. Jesus arrived and we see fulfilled in Him the three roles of prophet, priest and king (Heb. 1:1-3). He was the Messiah, which also means "Anointed One" (Isa. 61:1; Luke 4:18). It is never recorded that Jesus was anointed with oil in any formal setting. Instead, it was recorded that the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus as He was baptized (Mark 1:10) and rather than the focus being on his

role, His identity as a child of God was highlighted in the gospel accounts.

The occasion where Jesus was anointed with oil is recorded in Mark 14:3. This was unusual anointing as it was carried out by a woman – Mary. Most commentators agree that Mary’s act was an anointing for death and burial; a preparation and empowerment for the greatest act of humility ever known.

These two moments offer a reformation of our understanding of the anointing for the modern church. Jesus repurposed the anointing from one of role and position to one of identity and dying to self. Following on from Jesus’ actions, we see Peter at Pentecost proclaiming that the Holy Spirit had been poured out on all flesh (Acts 2:14-21). No longer are we waiting for the Holy Spirit to anoint one person; rather we are, through Jesus’ magnificent gift, all the anointed.

Yet, I sometimes wonder if we have understood this.

Have we understood the repurposing of the anointing?

Read the full article at

To hear more, join me for Episode 15 of Abiding Matters as Melanie J Saward and I discuss the topic of the anointing on the latest podcast episode. {[eo](#)}

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