

Schedule of Meeting Times:

WKAC 1080 AM Sunday 7:30 AM
 Study Sunday 10:00 AM
 Worship Sunday Morn 11:00 AM
 Worship Sunday Eve 5:00 PM
Singing every 2nd Sunday evening
 Study Wednesday 7:00 PM

Preacher / bulletin editor:

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“Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away.”

—1 Corinthians 13:8

**Servants during Dec 2023 and Jan 2024:**

Songleader: Larry (24), Dwight (31), Stanley (1/7), Larry (1/14), Dwight (1/21), Stanley (1/28)

Reading: Stanley; Mike M (Jan)

Announcements: Larry; Stanley (Jan)

Table: Marty, Stanley, Mike M, Larry; Larry, Mike M, Marty, Stanley (Jan)

Wednesday Lesson: Kris (27), Larry (1/3), Stanley (1/10), Kris (1/17), Larry (1/24), Stanley (1/31)

Lawn Mowing (week starting): a “no show” until spring...

Area Meetings:

Hays Mill church of Christ

21705 Hays Mill Road
 Elkmont, AL 35620

The Bible . Examiner

“Examine everything carefully...” —1 Thessalonians 5:21 NASB

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Anointing with Oil

by Wayne Jackson

In the book of James, the inspired writer exhorts: “Is any 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 shall save him that is sick, and the Lord shall raise him up,” Jas 5:14,15.

The sick are still among us. And virtually no one questions the fact that the church should have elders today, where qualified men can be found. Should elders, then, in connection with their prayers, be anointing the sick with oil?

Though this procedure has not been practiced by churches of Christ in modern times (as a general rule), some are suggesting that it ought to be a part of our ritual. How should this matter be viewed?

First, it ought to be noted that

this reference to “anointing with oil,” v14, is extremely abbreviated. Nothing is specifically stated in the context as to the design of the practice.

Second, there are no contextual indications that this anointing with oil had any sort of spiritual basis that would make it universally applicable or perpetually obligatory. If this was to be a requirement for the universal church for all time, it would seem to be a reasonable expectation that some foundation for the practice might have been supplied.

Commentators are sharply divided as to the meaning of the passage. Certainly any view of this text which comes into conflict with other clear biblical information must be rejected.

Several of the ideas that

attempt to explain this ambiguous text are as follows:

Some suggest that oil was employed as a daily item of toiletry in ancient times (much like cosmetics are used today). In periods of sickness, or fasting, this casual use of oil was suspended (cf Ruth 3:3; 2 Sam 12:20; 14:2; Dan 10:2,3; Micah 6:15; Mt 6:16,17). It is argued, therefore, that James may have been exhorting the brethren to accompany their prayers with the “anointing of oil,” i.e., the resumption of their normal activities. The oil would serve as a token of confidence in the power of their petition.

While this concept may be possible, it does not readily commend itself to the ordinary expositor. Too, it would not explain why elders would be called to administer the oil.

A number of writers contend that the oil of James 5:14 was merely a medicinal item which, together with the prayer, would be providentially efficacious in the healing process.

It is true that oil has a medical value for some ailments, and that it was employed to this end in ancient times (cf Isa 1:6; Lk 10:34). However, oil, as a physical remedy, would be useless in many sicknesses. Moreover, it would

appear rather unusual that “elders” would be sought for the administration of physical healing techniques, when there were good doctors available for that purpose (see Col 4:14). One would hardly be inclined to call for elders today for the diagnosis and treatment of physical difficulties.

Some scholars think that the “anointing” referred to by James was simply a refreshing, encouraging act of friendship, much like when Mary anointed Jesus’ feet, Jn 12:3; cf Lk 7:46. It is argued that the Greek word *aleipho* (“anoint”) has to do with mundane rituals rather than a religious ceremony (yet see Mk 6:13). In this sense James’ admonition would be a call for the elders’ prayers, accompanied by the cultural amenity of that day which reflected love and friendship.

If such is the case, that primitive cultural would have no relevance today; certainly it would not be a practice bound in the modern world.

Most likely the use of oil, as reflected in this passage, was a symbolic act. In Bible times the practice of anointing with oil was frequently representative of God’s approval (see 1 Sam 10:1; Psa 89:20). Many biblical scholars are fairly confident, therefore, that

the application of oil in James 5:14 was a symbolic act invoked in conjunction with supernatural healing. There are a couple of factors that lend themselves to this view:

There is contextual information elsewhere in the New Testament that associates miraculous healing with the anointing of oil. In Mark 6:13 the record states: “And they [the Lord’s supernaturally endowed disciples] cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.” This may be the key verse that sheds light on James 5:14.

Not all Christians in the first century possessed the gift of healing (cf 1 Cor 12:28-30). It would be most natural, though, that the elders of local churches would be those who were granted the gift in their respective congregations. Ephesians 4:8-11 clearly indicates that some

“pastors” (i.e., elders) were given spiritual gifts. If this view is correct, and in this writer’s judgment it is the most feasible, then the act of anointing with oil would not be appropriate today for the simple reason that miraculous gifts are not available to the church in this age, 1 Cor 13:8ff.

Why, then, are a few today anxious to implement the anointing of oil into modern church practice? It could be that some are very sincere, wanting to do the Lord’s will, yet misunderstanding the nature of this passage. On the other hand, it may be the case that a few folks in the church today are simply looking for a new experience of some sort. Having grown tired of what they perceive as “traditional” service to God, they seek the novel. May we strive to approach the Scriptures in a respectful yet sensible manner! 📖

🌀 Remember in Prayer 🌀

Shirley has still been feeling under the weather. **Thomas Wales**, a familiar name to some, passed away this past week. **Jack Lovell**, **Bobby (Ben) Nave**, and **Jeremy Pack** are inmates that were baptized into Christ last Monday (12/18); they are in

circumstances often hostile to a young Christian—please pray for them.

And remember those with chronic issues as well—such as **Mike B**; **Pam**; **Carolyn**; **Betty**; **John**, **Sylvia**, and **Paige Pollard**; and **Joyce**. 📖