

# ANOINTING

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## CULTURAL INSIGHT

Anointing is the process of smearing or rubbing oil on a body. Objects as well as people could be anointed. In the Old Testament anointing is associated with the calling and sanctification of kings and priests. The anointing oil used in these contexts appears to have been perfumed (Exodus 25:6).

During the consecration of the tabernacle and the appointment of Aaron as priest, Aaron was washed and then anointed with olive oil (Exodus 40:12–13). Leviticus describes the priest who officiates in the sacrificial system as “the priest that is anointed” (see, for example, Leviticus 4:3). Occasionally in the Old Testament, we find examples of prophets being anointed as part of their calling, as when Jehovah instructed Elijah to anoint Elisha as his successor (1 Kings 19:15–16).

Anointing is associated in the Old Testament with kings far more than with prophets or even priests. When Jehovah had Samuel chose Saul as king over Israel, Samuel anointed Saul and asked rhetorically, “Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?” (1 Samuel 10:1). Similarly, when David was chosen to succeed Saul as king, Samuel anointed him with oil (1 Samuel 16:12–13). Solomon was anointed by Zadok, who was priest over the tabernacle (1 Kings 1:39). Anointing was the distinctive ceremony for crowning the Israelite king, a process that set them apart from the rest of Israel and, like for priests, turned them into holy individuals. This is clear even in Book of Mormon examples, which describe the process of appointing kings using language of anointing, such as “anoint” (Jacob 1:9) and “consecrate” (Mosiah 6:3).

Because of this association, one of the distinctive titles of the ancient Israelite (and then Judahite) king was “the Lord’s anointed.” We see this description as early as with Hannah’s song in 1 Samuel 2:10. David specifically refused to kill Saul when he had him in his power because as the Lord’s anointed, Saul still

had Jehovah’s protection (1 Samuel 24:6–10). This kingly title appears a number of times in the Psalms (see, among others, Psalms 2:2; 20:6). Perhaps surprisingly to the ancient audience, the non-Israelite, Persian king Cyrus is identified as the Lord’s anointed in Isaiah 45:1.

The Hebrew “to anoint” is *mašah*, and so the anointed one is the Messiah. The title Christ derives from a Greek word that means the same thing. Jesus’s claim to be the Messiah and the Christ (the same claim in different languages) is fundamentally a claim to kingship. The previous kings were anointed as a symbol pointing to the great king and anointed one who would sit on David’s throne forever (2 Samuel 7:16).

***Related verses***

|                   |                   |                     |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Genesis 31:13     | 1 Samuel 10:1     | 2 Kings 11:11       |
| Genesis 25:6      | 1 Samuel 12:3     | 2 Kings 23:30       |
| Exodus 25:6       | 1 Samuel 15:1–17  | 1 Chronicles 29:22  |
| Exodus 28:40–41   | 1 Samuel 16:6, 13 | 2 Chronicles 6:42   |
| Exodus 29:6–21    | 1 Samuel 24:6–11  | Psalms 2:2          |
| Exodus 30:25–26   | 1 Samuel 26:7–16  | Psalms 18:50        |
| Exodus 31:11      | 2 Samuel 1:14     | Psalms 20:6         |
| Exodus 35:8       | 2 Samuel 2:7      | Psalms 28:8         |
| Exodus 37:29      | 2 Samuel 3:39     | Psalms 45:7         |
| Exodus 40         | 2 Samuel 5:3      | Psalms 84:9         |
| Leviticus 4:3–5   | 2 Samuel 12:7     | Psalms 89:20–21, 51 |
| Leviticus 6:22    | 2 Samuel 19:10    | Psalms 132:10       |
| Leviticus 7:35    | 2 Samuel 22:51    | Isaiah 45:1         |
| Leviticus 8:10–12 | 2 Samuel 23:1     | Isaiah 61:1–3       |
| Numbers 35:25     | 1 Kings 1:34–40   | Lamentations 4:20   |
| Judges 9:8        | 1 Kings 5:1       | Habakkuk 3:13       |
| 1 Samuel 2:35     | 1 Kings 19:15–16  | Zechariah 4:14      |
| 1 Samuel 9:16     | 2 Kings 9:3–12    |                     |

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