

Prayers over Oil and Perfumed Oil: Biblical Resources

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Some churches use regular oil and perfumed oil (chrism) in some of their liturgies, for example, baptism, confirmation (chrismation), ordination, and anointing of the sick. Other liturgies of anointed may also be celebrated without having official status. Separate blessings or consecrations of chrism, oil of catechumens, and oil of the sick are celebrated annually the week before Easter, as well as when needed during the year.

Selected biblical passages are presented here that may be useful resources in the composition of prayers of thanksgiving and for the blessing or consecration of oil and perfumed oil, as well as for liturgies of anointing.

Invocation or Address

Blessed are you, Holy One of Blessing:

Alternative Responses:

We bless you, O God:

Your love is better than wine,
your anointing oils are fragrant,
your name is perfume poured out.

Song of Solomon 1.2-3

We bless you, O God:

How much better is your love than wine,
and the fragrance of your oils than any spice.

Song of Solomon 4.10

We bless you, O God:

Wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world,
what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.

Mark 14.9; Matthew 26.13

The Olive Tree and Olive Oil

On the third day of creation,
the earth brought forth spice-bearing plants
and oil-bearing trees like the olive,
and God saw that it was good.

Genesis 1.13
cf. Genesis 1.12

Genesis 1.12

At the end of seven and forty days
Noah sent out the dove from the ark;
and the dove came back in the evening,
and there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf.

Genesis 8.6, 10
Genesis 10-11

In the seventh year you shall let your land rest and lie fallow, Exodus 23.11
so that the poor of your people may eat.
You shall do the same with your vineyard,
and with your olive orchard.

When you reap your harvest in your field
and forget a sheaf in the field,
you shall not go back to get it;
it shall be left for the alien, the orphan, and the widow,
so that God may bless you in all your undertakings.

Deuteronomy 24.19

When you beat your olive trees,
do not strip what is left;
it shall be for the alien, the orphan and the widow.

Deuteronomy 24.20

If you will only heed God's every commandment -
loving and serving God
with all your heart and with all your soul -
then God will give the rain for your land in its season,
and you will gather in your grain, your wine, and your oil.

Deuteronomy 12.12-14

Like a loving mother,
God nursed Israel in the desert
with honey from the crags,
with oil from flinty rock.
Happy are you, O Israel!
Who is like you, a people beloved of God!

Deuteronomy 32.13

Deuteronomy 33.29

You spread a table before me
as my foes look on.
You soothe my head with oil;
my cup is more than full.
Goodness and love will tend me
every day of my life.
I will dwell in the house of the Lord
as long as I shall live.

Psalms 23.5-6

You love righteousness and hate wickedness,
Therefore God, you God, has anointed you

Psalms 45:7

with the oil of gladness
beyond your companions.

You make grass grow for cattle,
make plants grow for people,
food to eat from the earth,
and wine to warm the heart,
oil to glisten on faces
and bread for bodily strength.

Psalm 104.14-15

Oil and the Sick

From the sole of the foot even to the head,
there is no soundness in it,
but bruises and sores and bleeding wounds;
they have not been drained, or bound up,
or softened with oil.

Isaiah 1:6

They cast out many demons,
and anointed with oil many who were sick
and cured them.

Mark 6:13

He went to him and bandaged his wounds,
having poured oil and wine on them.

Luke 10:34

Are any among you sick?
They should call for the elders of the church
and have them pray over them,
anointing them with oil
in the name of the Lord.

James 5:14

Women and Oil

In her generosity,
the widow of Zaraphath shared with Elijah
the little bit of oil she had.
Through the prophet God promised
that the jar of oil would not fail
until rain fell upon the earth.

1 Kings 17.12-13

1 Kings 17.14

When her children were threatened,
the prophet's widow appealed to Elisha.
He multiplied her single jar of oil into many,
so she and her children could live in security.

2 Kings 4.1

2 Kings 4.3-6

2 Kings 4.7

The reign of God will be like this:
The five wise bridesmaids
took flasks of oil with their lamps,
kept awake,
and were ready (when the groom came)
to enter into the wedding banquet.

Matthew 25.1

Matthew 25.4

Mathew 25.13

Matthew 25.10

Anointing Oil

The Lord spoke to Moses:
Take the finest spices of liquid myrrh
five hundred shekels,
and of sweet-smelling cinnamon half as much,
that is, two hundred fifty,
and two hundred fifty of aromatic cana,
and five hundred of cassia -
measured by the sanctuary shekel -
and a hin of olive oil,
and you shall make of these a sacred anointing oil
blended as by the perfumer;
it shall be a holy anointing oil.

Exodus 30:22-25

The women of Israel,
those whose heart was stirred
and whose spirit was willing,
helped to construct the tent of meeting in the desert.
They brought spices and oil
for the light and for the anointing oil.
And the cloud covered the tent of meeting,
and God's glory filled the tabernacle.

Exodus 35.22, 25, 26, 29

Exodus 35.21

Exodus ch. 35-40

Exodus 35.28; cf. v.7

Exodus 40.34

Wisdom praises herself,
and tells of her glory in the midst of her people.
In the assembly of the Most High she opens her mouth,
and in the presence of God's hosts she tells of her glory:
I grew tall like a cedar in Lebanon,
and like a cypress on the heights of Hermon.
I grew tall like a palm tree in En-gedi,
and like rosebushes in Jericho;
like a fair olive tree in the field,
and like a plane tree beside water I grew tall.

Sirach 24.1-2

Sirach 24.13-15

Like cassia and camel's thorn I gave forth perfume,
and like choice myrrh I spread my fragrance...,
Like a terebinth I spread out my branches,
and like the odor of incense in the tent.

Anointing of God's People and God's Servant

Israel grew up and became tall
and arrived at full womanhood;
her breasts were formed
and her hair had grown long. Ezekiel 16.7

God said: I pledge myself to you
and enter into a covenant with you
and you will become my spouse. Ezekiel 16.8

Then God anointed her with oil
and she had choice flour and honey and oil for food. Ezekiel 16.9
Ezekiel 16.13

The spirit of God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
to provide for those who mourn in Zion -
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. Isaiah 61.1, 3

Anointing of Objects and Places

With it you shall anoint the tent of meeting
and the ark of the covenant,
and the table and all its utensils,
and the lampstand and its utensils,
and the altar of incense,
and the altar of burnt offering
with all its utensils,
and the basin with its stand,
you shall consecrate them,
so that they may be most holy;
whatever touches them will become holy. Exodus 30:27-29

Cf Exodus 40:9-11

Then Moses took the anointing oil
and anointed the tabernacle and all that was in it,
and consecrated them.
He sprinkled some of it on the altar seven times,
and anointed the altar and all its utensils,
and the basin and its base,
to consecrate them.

Leviticus 8:10-11

Anointing of Priests

You shall anoint Aaron and his sons,
and consecrate them,
in order that they may serve me as priests.

Exodus 30:30

Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons
to the entrance of the tent of meeting,
and shall wash them with water,
and put on Aaron the sacred vestments,
and you shall anoint him and consecrate him,
so that he may serve me as priest.
You shall bring his sons also
and put tunics on them,
and anoint them,
as you anointed their father,
that they may serve me as priests:
and their anointing shall admit them
to a perpetual priesthood
throughout all generations to come.

Exodus 40:12-15

Then Moses took some of the anointing oil
and some of the blood
that was on the altar
and sprinkled them on Aaron and his vestments,
and also on his sons and their vestments.
Thus he consecrated Aaron and his vestments,
and also his sons and their vestments.

Leviticus 8:30

How very good and pleasant it is
when kindred live together in unity!
It is like the precious oil on the head,
running down upon the beard,
on the beard of Aaron,
running down over the collar of his robes.

Psalms 133:1-2

Moses ordained [Aaron],
and anointed him with holy oil;
it was an everlasting covenant for him,
and for his descendants as long as the heavens endure,
to minister to the Lord and serve as priest
and bless his people in his name.

Sirach 45:15

Anointing of Kings

Samuel took a vial of oil
and poured it on [Saul's] head,
and kissed him; he said
The Lord has anointed you ruler
over his people Israel.

1 Samuel 10:1

Then Samuel took the horn of oil,
and anointed him in the presence of his brothers,
and the spirit of the Lord
came mightily upon David
from that day forwards.

1 Samuel 16:13

So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron,
and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron,
before the Lord,
and they anointed David king over Israel
cr 1 Chronicles 3:3

2 Samuel 5:3

I have found my servant David,
with my holy oil I have anointed him

Psalms 89:20

There the priest Zadok
took the horn of oil from the tent and anointed Solomon.

1 Kings 1:39

Anointing of Women

Ruth the Moabite washed and anointed herself.
She married Boaz,
and bore Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of David.
Ruth and David
were forebears of Joseph the husband of Mary,
of whom Jesus was born.

Ruth 3.3

Ruth 4.10, 13

Ruth 4.17, 21-22

Matthew 1.5-6

Matthew 1.15

Judith anointed herself with precious ointment. Judith 10.3; cf 16.7
She liberated her people from the Assyrians, Judith ch. 11-15
and went before all the people in dance, Judith 15.13
leading all the women, while all the men of Israel followed.

Esther was treated with oil of myrrh, Esther 2.12
with perfumes and cosmetics.
She became Queen of Persia, Esther 2.17
liberated her people, Esther ch. 4-9
and established the feast of Purim for ever. Esther 9.32

Susanna's maids brought her olive oil and ointments for her bath. Daniel 13.17
She was falsely accused by the two elders Daniel 13.21
who were burning with desire for her. Daniel 13.20
Daniel convicted them of bearing false witness, Daniel 13.61
and Susanna's innocence was proclaimed by the people. Daniel 13.60

Women Anoint Jesus

While Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, Matthew 26.6
a woman came to him with an alabaster jar Matthew 26.7
of very costly ointment
and she poured it on his head as he sat at the table.
Jesus said: By pouring this ointment on my body Matthew 26.12
she has prepared me for burial.

While Jesus was sitting at table in Bethany Mark 14.3
in the house of Simon the leper,
a woman came with an alabaster jar
of very costly ointment of nard,
and she broke open the jar
and poured the ointment on his head.
Jesus said: She has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. Mark 14.8

A woman of the city brought an alabaster jar of ointment, Luke 7.37
bathed Jesus' feet with her tears, dried them with her hair, Luke 7.38
and anointed them with the ointment.
Jesus explained: She has shown great love Luke 7.47
and said to her: Your faith has saved you; Go in peace. Luke 7.50

Mary of Bethany took costly perfume, John 12.3
anointed Jesus' feet, wiped them with her hair,
and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.
Jesus said: Leave her alone. John 12.7
She brought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial.

Women Go To The Tomb to Anoint Jesus' Body

Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome brought spices, so that they might go and anoint Jesus.

Mark 16.1

The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee saw the tomb and how his body was laid, and prepared spices and ointments. On the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared.

Luke 23.55

Luke 23.56

Luke 24.1