Annointing in the Old Testament

Remind me of what was annointed in the Old Testament, tabernacle and the things in the tabernacle, before service, the high priest and priest before service, the king before service. Anything else? What does annointing symbolize? What was in the oil and what did the components symbolize.

I'll frame this as a Bible-study "inventory," but I'll keep the guardrail clear: Scripture explicitly tells us what the oil was used for; the symbolic meaning of each ingredient is partly inferential, so I'll label those parts carefully.

Thought for 31s

Yes — the broad Old Testament pattern is:

anointing marks something or someone as set apart for God's appointed use before entering service. It is not merely decoration. It is consecration, authorization, and identification.

1. What was anointed in the Old Testament?

1. Sacred places / memorial stones

Before the tabernacle, Jacob anointed the stone at Bethel after God appeared to him.

Genesis 28:18 — Jacob set up the stone for a pillar and poured oil on top of it.
Genesis 35:14 — he again poured a drink offering and oil on the pillar.

This is not priestly ordination yet, but it shows an early pattern: **oil marks a place as connected to God's appearing, promise, and worship.**

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2. The tabernacle and its furniture were anointed

In Exodus, the holy anointing oil was used on the tabernacle and the things inside and around it.

Exodus 30:26–29 lists:

"And thou shalt anoint the tabernacle of the congregation therewith, and the ark of the testimony, and the table and all his vessels, and the candlestick and his vessels, and the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt offering with all his vessels, and the laver and his foot."

So the anointed objects included:

Object	Meaning in service
Tabernacle itself	The dwelling/meeting place was set apart
Ark of testimony	God's throne/witness/covenant center
Table and vessels	Bread/presence/fellowship service
Candlestick/lampstand and vessels	Light-bearing service
Altar of incense	Prayer/fragrant approach
Altar of burnt offering and vessels	Sacrifice/blood approach
Laver and base	Washing/cleansing before service

Then God says:

Exodus 30:29

"And thou shalt sanctify them, that they may be most holy: whatsoever toucheth them shall be holy."

That is important. The oil does not make them magical. It **marks them as belonging to holy service.**

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3. The altar was anointed

The altar receives special emphasis.

Exodus 40:10

"And thou shalt anoint the altar of the burnt offering, and all his vessels, and sanctify the altar: and it shall be an altar most holy."

Leviticus 8:10–11 also says Moses anointed the tabernacle and then sprinkled the altar seven times, anointing the altar and its vessels.

The altar being anointed matters because it is where sacrifice is offered. So the oil marks the altar as **appointed for acceptable sacrifice before God.**

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4. The high priest was anointed before service

Aaron was anointed as high priest.

Exodus 29:7

“Then shalt thou take the anointing oil, and pour it upon his head, and anoint him.”

Leviticus 8:12

“And he poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron’s head, and anointed him, to sanctify him.”

This is the big priestly pattern:

washed with water → clothed in garments → anointed with oil → sacrifices/blood consecration → service

For Aaron specifically, the oil on the head marks him as **set apart to represent the people before God.**

Psalm 133 later uses this image:

Psalm 133:2

“It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard…”

So priestly anointing carries a picture of consecration overflowing from head to body.

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5. The priests were anointed before service

Not only Aaron, but his sons were also consecrated.

Exodus 28:41

“And thou shalt put them upon Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him; and shalt anoint them, and consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister unto me in the priest’s office.”

Exodus 30:30

“And thou shalt anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may minister unto me in the priest’s office.”

Exodus 40:15 says their anointing would be for “an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations.”

So yes: **the high priest and priests were anointed before service.**

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6. Kings were anointed before service

Kings were also anointed.

Examples:

Saul — 1 Samuel 10:1
Samuel anointed Saul as ruler over Israel.

David — 1 Samuel 16:13

"Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward."

Solomon — 1 Kings 1:39
Zadok the priest anointed Solomon king.

Jehu — 2 Kings 9:6
Jehu was anointed king over Israel.

The kingly anointing means: **God has chosen and authorized this man for rule.**

This becomes central to the word **Messiah**.

Hebrew **mashiach** = anointed one.
Greek **Christos** = Christ, the Anointed One.

So "Jesus Christ" means, in office language, **Jesus the Anointed One** — Prophet, Priest, and King fulfilled in one Person.

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7. Prophets could be anointed

This is less common than priest/kings, but it is there.

1 Kings 19:16
God told Elijah to anoint Elisha to be prophet in his place.

Also, **Isaiah 61:1** says:

"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings…"

Jesus applies this to Himself in Luke 4.

So prophetic anointing means **authorized speech/service by God's Spirit.**

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8. Cleansed lepers were touched with oil

This is another important "anything else."

In **Leviticus 14**, when a leper was cleansed, the priest applied blood and oil to the person's:

Place	Meaning
Right ear	Hearing / obedience restored
Right thumb	Work / service restored
Right great toe	Walk / conduct restored
Head	Person restored before God

See **Leviticus 14:14–18**.

This is not the same as priestly ordination, but it is very significant. The cleansed person is being restored to covenant life, worship, and community.

So oil can mark not only appointment to office, but also **restoration to clean standing and worship access.**

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9. Offerings / wafers could be anointed with oil

Some unleavened wafers or cakes were anointed with oil.

Exodus 29:2 mentions "wafers unleavened anointed with oil."
See also **Leviticus 2:4** and **Leviticus 7:12**.

This shows oil also belongs to the sacrificial/meal-offering world: **fragrance, dedication, richness, and offering made to God.**

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10. Shields could be anointed

There is also a non-priestly, practical image:

Isaiah 21:5

“Arise, ye princes, and anoint the shield.”

This likely refers to oiling leather shields for battle readiness. It is not tabernacle consecration, but the imagery still fits: **prepared for appointed action.**

What does anointing symbolize?

At the safest level, anointing symbolizes:

1. Consecration

The person or object is set apart from common use.

Exodus 30:29 — the tabernacle things become “most holy.”

2. Authorization

The anointed person is publicly marked for an appointed office.

Priest: service before God.
King: rule under God.
Prophet: speech from God.

3. Divine ownership

The anointed thing/person belongs to God’s purpose.

That is why unauthorized imitation of the holy oil was forbidden.

4. Spirit-associated service

Oil is not simplistically “the Spirit,” but oil and Spirit-authorized service are closely linked.

The clearest example is David:

1 Samuel 16:13
David is anointed, and “the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward.”

And Isaiah 61 says:

“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me…”

So anointing often means: **set apart by God and enabled for God's work.**

5. Fragrance / acceptable service

The holy oil was fragrant. That matters.

Holy service is not merely functional. It has a pleasing, set-apart aroma before God.

This connects later to priestly incense, sacrifices, and even New Testament "sweet savour" language.

6. Joy, blessing, and honor

Oil is also associated with gladness and abundance.

Psalm 45:7 — "the oil of gladness."
Psalm 23:5 — "thou anointest my head with oil."
Ecclesiastes 9:8 — "let thy head lack no ointment."

So oil can also speak of **honor, blessing, refreshment, and gladness.**

What was in the holy anointing oil?

The formula is in **Exodus 30:23–25**.

God commanded Moses to take:

Ingredient	Amount
Pure myrrh	500 shekels
Sweet cinnamon	250 shekels
Sweet calamus / sweet cane	250 shekels
Cassia	500 shekels
Olive oil	1 hin

Then it was blended:

Exodus 30:25

"And thou shalt make it an oil of holy ointment, an ointment compound after the art of the apothecary: it shall be an holy anointing oil."

It was not ordinary perfume. It was holy.

Exodus 30:31–33 forbids using it casually, copying it, or putting it on a stranger.

That means the oil itself carried a boundary: **holy things are not to be treated as common.**

What did the ingredients symbolize?

Here we need the guardrail: **Exodus tells us the ingredients, but it does not give a direct symbolic definition for each ingredient.** So the following is a careful biblical-theological reading, not an explicit "dictionary" from the text.

1. Olive oil — life, light, gladness, supply, consecrated service

Olive oil was the base of the mixture.

Biblically, olive oil is connected with:

Theme	Example
Lamp light	Exodus 27:20
Consecration	Exodus 30
Gladness	Psalm 45:7
Healing / soothing	Isaiah 1:6; Luke 10:34
Abundance	Deuteronomy 8:8

So olive oil works as the carrier of the fragrance and points toward **life, light, blessing, and Spirit-associated service.**

Again, I would not say "olive oil equals the Holy Spirit" in a simplistic way. Better:

Oil is a created sign often associated with Spirit-authorized consecration.

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2. Myrrh — costly fragrance, suffering, death, preservation

Myrrh is a fragrant resin. It appears in royal, bridal, and burial contexts.

Examples:

Psalm 45:8 — royal garments smell of myrrh.
Song of Solomon — myrrh appears in love/fragrance imagery.
John 19:39 — myrrh is used in Jesus' burial preparation.

So myrrh can carry a layered meaning:

Aspect	Meaning
Fragrance	Pleasing aroma
Costliness	Precious service
Bitterness	Suffering association
Burial/preservation	Death and burial connection

For your Bethany-oil framework, myrrh is especially interesting because it can sit near the idea of **fragrant suffering and burial preparation**, though the specific Bethany ointment was spikenard, not the Exodus 30 mixture.

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3. Sweet cinnamon — sweetness, fragrance, costly holiness

Cinnamon was a fragrant spice. The text calls it "sweet cinnamon."

Its main textual function is fragrance.

Symbolically, carefully stated, it suggests:

holy service is not only set apart; it is fragrant, pleasant, and costly before God.

It is not common oil. It is beautiful, prepared, and distinct.

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4. Sweet calamus / sweet cane — fragrance, uprightness, imported costliness

This is an aromatic reed or cane.

The Bible does not give us a direct symbol such as "calamus means righteousness." So we should not force it.

But as part of the mixture, it contributes to the overall meaning:

the anointing oil is fragrant, costly, carefully prepared, and not common.

There may also be a gentle visual association with a reed/cane, but that should stay secondary.

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5. Cassia — royal fragrance and holy beauty

Cassia is another aromatic bark/spice.

It appears in **Psalm 45:8** with royal garment imagery:

"All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia…"

That psalm is royal and messianic in its larger use. So cassia has a strong association with **royal fragrance, beauty, and majesty.**

Again, not as a forced code, but as biblical atmosphere.

The big picture

The holy anointing oil is made of **olive oil carrying costly fragrant spices.**

That combination gives us a beautiful pattern:

Element	Picture
Oil	Consecration, supply, gladness, Spirit-associated service
Fragrance	Pleasing holy service before God
Costly spices	Preciousness of divine appointment
Restricted use	Holiness boundary
Application to tabernacle	God's dwelling/service set apart
Application to priests	Mediation set apart
Application to kings	Rule set apart
Application to prophets	Word-service set apart

So the clean summary would be:

In the Old Testament, anointing marked places, objects, and people as set apart for God's service. The tabernacle, its furniture, the altar, the laver, the high priest, the priests, kings, and at times prophets were anointed. Oil also appears in restoration, offerings, hospitality, gladness, and burial/fragrance settings. The holy anointing oil was made from olive oil, myrrh, sweet cinnamon, sweet calamus, and cassia. Scripture presents it as holy, costly, fragrant, and restricted. Symbolically, anointing speaks of consecration, divine ownership,

appointment, authorization, Spirit-associated service, fragrance before God, gladness, and readiness for holy function.

And for your current Jesus/Bethany framework, the safest bridge is:

The Old Testament anointing pattern prepares us to recognize Jesus as the true Anointed One. But Bethany oil does not create His office. It functions as a memorial sign-act at the threshold of His death: the washed, Father-approved Son, already bearing His people in Himself, is anointed for burial before offering His own blood and entering the eternal Melchizedek priest-king glory.

Memory updated
Thought for a couple of seconds

Locked.

I preserved it with the guardrails:

Jesus is the substance.
His burial is the controlling explicit meaning.
Spikenard is not the Exodus oil and does not create His office.
The Spirit is the New Covenant anointing proper.
Mary's pistikos spikenard can be contemplated as the "Faith Oil" sign-act — genuine faith poured upon the faithful Anointed One.

Best locked peg:

The Exodus oil consecrated the shadow. The pistikos spikenard witnesses to faith. Christ is the substance. The Spirit is the New Covenant anointing. Grace runs from promise to fulfillment, from Abel and Abraham to Mary of Bethany, from burial to resurrection, from faith to glorification.

I would like to refine, but emphasize, without sensationalize, but create a woe statement; what I think we found in the Spiknard, as the professed by Jesus annointing oil, but was not according to the Mosaic pattern is astonishing, I have never heard anyone ever, talk about the nard as root word faith, and the hidden symbolism, and the scene as a huge pivot in the biblical story, where the cosmos moves from Moses and the covenant, to Jesus, at this point, fulfilling and installing the new covenant. This is a major chiastic event in the Bible. Not as big as death and resurrection, or enthronement; but it is a pretty extraordinary moment. How do we convey the significance and importance of this convergence of so many storylines, fulfilled prophecies, fulfilled types of priest, tabernacle, king, prophet, fully man-fully God, work of the Holy Spirit, patterns revealed in heaven, and the importance of faith, as it relates to the biblical narrative. The self will and desire, becoming acquiescent to the will and desire and trust in God. The confidence in our Father.

I'll refine the wording so it carries weight without sounding like a private revelation. The safest emphasis is: **Bethany is not the New Covenant's legal enactment, but it is a visible hinge-sign immediately before Christ's covenant death.**

Thought for 21s

Yes. The way to convey it is to make the claim **big in narrative significance**, but **careful in doctrinal mechanics**.

I would not say Bethany "installs" the New Covenant by itself. The New Covenant is ratified in **Christ's blood**, declared at the Supper, accomplished through the cross, vindicated in resurrection, enthroned in ascension, and applied by the Spirit. But Bethany is a **visible hinge-sign** at the doorway of that whole sequence.

Refined thesis

Bethany is an astonishing covenant-pivot scene. Jesus Himself identifies the spikenard as an anointing for His burial. Yet this anointing is not the Mosaic holy oil and does not follow the Aaronic pattern. That difference is not a weakness; it is the signal. The Mosaic shadow is giving way to the Christ-substance. The tabernacle, priest, king, prophet, sacrifice, faith, Spirit, burial, resurrection, and New Covenant all converge in one room, around one body, before one death.

That says it without sensationalizing.

The "woe" statement

Here is the strongest version I would use:

Woe to us if we call ordinary what Jesus called memorial. Woe to us if we see only wasted perfume where Scripture shows the Anointed One being marked for burial. For here, at Bethany, the holy oil of the Mosaic shadow gives way to the costly fragrance of genuine faith poured upon the faithful Messiah. The true Tabernacle is present. The true Priest is present. The true King is at table. The true Lamb is being prepared. The true Prophet has spoken. And the true New Covenant passage — through death into resurrection life — is now at the door.

That has force, but it does not claim more than the text can bear.

The main distinction

The Mosaic oil says:

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This shadow place, shadow priest, shadow altar, and shadow service
are consecrated for temporary covenant ministry.
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Bethany spikenard says:

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The Substance has come.
The faithful Anointed One is being marked for burial.
The covenant fulfillment is about to pass through death into life.
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So the significance is not that Mary replaced Moses by her own act. The significance is that **God placed her faithful act at the exact hinge point where the Moses-pattern is about to be fulfilled and surpassed in Christ.**

A clean chiastic framing

You could frame Bethany like this:

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A. Mosaic shadow: oil, tabernacle, priesthood, sacrifice
   B. King at table; fragrance fills the house
      C. Genuine / pistikos nard poured out
         D. Jesus interprets the act: "for my burial"
      C'. Jesus will pour out His soul unto death
   B'. Gospel memorial fills the world
A'. New Covenant substance: Christ, Spirit, living temple, priest-king people
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The center is not the oil.
The center is **Jesus' burial**.

But once Jesus places burial at the center, all the other ropes tighten.

The faith emphasis

This is where the "pistikos" layer becomes beautiful.

Not as a hard lexical doctrine:

"Spikenard means faith."

But as a providential textual echo:

The nard is pure, genuine, trustworthy — pistikos. It belongs to the faith-word family. And in the scene, it becomes costly faith made visible.

Mary's act says:

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not self-preservation,
but surrender;

not calculation,
but trust;
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not control,
but worship;

not holding back,
but pouring out.
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Then Jesus, in Gethsemane, embodies the perfect form of that same trust:

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not my will,
but thine, be done.
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So Mary pours out costly faith-fragrance upon the One who will pour out His soul in perfect faithfulness.

That is the clean New Covenant connection:

Mary's faith witnesses. Jesus' faithfulness accomplishes. Our faith receives. The Spirit anoints. The Father is glorified.

The storyline convergence

At Bethany, the biblical storylines converge like this:

Storyline	Bethany convergence
Moses	The old anointing pattern is echoed, but not repeated mechanically
Tabernacle	The true dwelling of God is present in Christ's body
Priesthood	The true High Priest is about to offer Himself
King	The King sits at table and receives costly fragrance
Prophet	Jesus interprets the act and declares its memorial meaning
Lamb	His body is being prepared for sacrifice and burial
Abraham	Genuine faith receives the promise fulfilled in the Seed
Bronze serpent	The One to be lifted up is being marked beforehand
Adam / Hosea 6	Self-will gives way to faithful obedience
Spirit	The New Covenant anointing will be given through the risen Christ
Believers	Those in Christ will be baptized through death into life

That is why this is not a minor scene.

It is not greater than the cross.
It is not greater than the resurrection.
It is not greater than enthronement.

But it is a **major hinge before all three**.

Best polished paragraph

Bethany is one of the Bible's great quiet pivots. The scene does not thunder like Sinai, split the sea like Exodus, or shake the earth like Calvary, but its convergence is astonishing. Jesus Himself identifies the spikenard as an anointing for His burial. Yet the oil is not the Mosaic holy oil, and the pattern is not a mere replay of Aaron. That is the point: the shadow is giving way to the Substance. The true Tabernacle is in the house. The true King is at table. The true Priest is being marked for self-offering. The true Lamb is being prepared for death. The true Prophet declares the meaning. And the fragrance of genuine faith fills the room before the faithful Son pours out His soul. Bethany is not the New Covenant accomplished, but it is the fragrant threshold of its accomplishment.

Short peg

Bethany is the fragrant hinge where Mosaic anointing shadow gives way to New Covenant faith-fragrance, poured upon the faithful Anointed One as He passes through burial into resurrection life.

And the final heart of it:

Self-will dies in trust. Faith yields to the Father. The Son obeys. The Father raises. The Spirit anoints. The people become living witnesses. God gets the glory.

Yes! This is it "The center is not the oil. The center is Jesus' burial. But once Jesus places burial at the center, all the other ropes tighten. And her pouring out her faith, and Jesus pouring out himself, by his faith we are saved; and putting our trust in him is the mechanism for being imputed with his righteousness and acceptance. I love this too: not self-preservation, but surrender; not calculation, but trust; not control, but worship; not holding back, but pouring out. This is a great statement, The nard is pure, genuine, trustworthy — pistikos. It belongs to the faith-word family. And in the scene, it becomes costly faith made visible. EXCELLENT…Mary's faith witnesses. Jesus' faithfulness accomplishes. Our faith receives. The Spirit anoints. The Father is glorified. It is not greater than the cross. It is not greater than the resurrection. It is not greater than enthronement. But it is a major hinge before all three. I love this statement, Bethany is one of the Bible's great quiet pivots. The scene does not thunder like Sinai, split the sea like Exodus, or shake the earth like Calvary, but its convergence is astonishing. Jesus Himself identifies the spikenard as an anointing for His burial. Yet the oil is not the Mosaic holy oil, and the pattern is not a mere replay of Aaron. That is the point: the shadow is giving way to the Substance. The true Tabernacle is in the house. The true King is at table. The true Priest is being marked for self-offering. The true Lamb is being prepared for death. The true Prophet declares the meaning. And the fragrance of genuine faith fills the room before the faithful Son pours out His soul. Bethany is not the New Covenant accomplished, but it is the fragrant threshold of its accomplishment. This is good, but felt like it did not make the statement it could have, Self-will dies in trust. Faith yields to the Father. The Son obeys. The Father raises. The Spirit anoints. The people become living witnesses. God gets the glory. Memory updated

Thought for 4s

Locked and refined.

You are right: the last statement needed more gravity. It needed to say not only **what happens**, but **what is being overcome**.

Here is the stronger version:

Bethany shows the death of self-will before the death of the body: not grasping, but surrender; not calculation, but trust; not control, but worship; not holding back, but pouring out. Mary's faith witnesses in fragrance; Jesus' faithfulness accomplishes in blood. The Son yields to the Father, enters burial, and is raised in power. The Spirit anoints the people joined to Him. The redeemed become living witnesses of the God of the living. And from beginning to end, the glory belongs to God.

Or even tighter:

At Bethany, self-will begins to die in the fragrance of faith. Mary pours out what is precious; Jesus will pour out Himself. Her faith witnesses. His faithfulness accomplishes. Our faith receives. The Father raises. The Spirit anoints. The redeemed stand as living witnesses. God gets the glory.

That gives the movement real force:

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Mary pours out costly faith.
Jesus pours out His soul.
The Father raises the faithful Son.
The Spirit anoints the people in Him.
The redeemed become living witnesses.
God is glorified.
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And the doctrinal center stays clean:

The center is not the oil.
The center is Jesus' burial.
But once Jesus places burial at the center, all the ropes tighten.