

THE LAYING ON OF HANDS

I. WHAT IS THE DOCTRINE OF THE LAYING ON OF HANDS?

A good definition of a doctrine is "the sum of all scripture passages on a given subject". While we will not attempt to cite all the scripture references on the subject of hands or "the laying on of hands", it is essential that we outline some of the more important scriptures relating to this important study. You are encouraged to do a concordance study in this area.

Hands in the scripture are often connected with natural and spiritual power.

"Then Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people, and blessed them, and he stepped down from making the sin offering, and the burnt offering, and peace offerings." (**Leviticus 9:22**)

"...But a man from the hill country of Ephraim, Sheba...has lifted up his hand against King David." (**II Samuel 20:21**)

"Now I know that the Lord saves His anointed; He will answer him from His holy heaven with the saving strength of His right hand." (**Psalms 20:6**)

"Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will upon you with My righteous right hand." (**Isaiah 41:10**)

A. THE LAYING ON OF HANDS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

1. Jacob conferred a blessing in Joseph's sons by the laying on of hands. It is interesting to note that a greater blessing was conferred through the right hand of Jacob. This was not just a form. Something powerful took place here.

"But Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, crossing his hands, although Manasseh was the first-born. And he blessed Joseph, and said 'The God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God which has been my shepherd all my life to this day, the Angel who redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and may my name live on in them, and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth'." (**Genesis 48:14-16**)

2. Under the Levitical system, the priests were often instructed to lay hands upon the animal that was to be offered to the Lord. In some cases they were to confess their sins as they laid hands on the animal. In so doing, there was a typical transmission of guilt from the man to the sacrifice.

"Then Aaron shall lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel, and all their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and he shall them on the head of the goat and send it away by the hand of a man who stands in readiness. And the goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a solitary land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness."

(Leviticus 16:21-22) See also Exodus 29:10; Lev. 1:4,8,13; Lev. 4:15,24,33; Lev. 8:14

3. Witnesses against a criminal often laid their hands on the head of the accused before stoning him. In this way they made a confirmation of their witness or testimony against him.

"Bring the one who has cursed the camp, and let all who heard him lay their hands on his head; then let the congregation stone him." **(Leviticus 24:14) Also see Deuteronomy 17:7**

4. God had chosen the Levites to serve before Him as priests. These were actually chosen as a substitute for all the firstborn of Israel. When the Levites were consecrated or ordained, the children of Israel laid their hands on them making the transference of this authority valid.

"So you shall present the Levites before the tent of meeting. You shall also assemble the whole congregation of the sons of Israel, and present the Levites before the Lord; and the sons of Israel shall lay their hands on the Levites. Aaron then shall present the Levites before the lord as a wave offering from the sons of Israel, that they qualify to perform the service of the Lord." **(Numbers 8:9-11)**

5. When God desired a man to take Moses' place, He signaled out Joshua. Joshua was the Lord's choice, not the choice of Moses. Yet it was Moses who laid hands upon Joshua. In doing so, he ordained Joshua for this calling, imparted to him the necessary gift (wisdom) for the task, acknowledged his Divine appointment, and transferred spiritual power to him **(Numbers 27:15-23)**.

"Now Joshua the son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands on him;

and the sons of Israel listened to him and did as the Lord had commanded Moses." (**Deuteronomy 34:9**)

B. THE LAYING ON OF HANDS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. The laying on of hands is often used in the New Testament in connection with HEALING.

Jesus used the laying on of hands extensively in His healing ministry.

"And while the sun was setting, all who had any sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and laying His hands on every one of them, He was healing them." (**Luke 4:40**) See also **Matthew 8:3,15; Matthew 9:29; Matt. 20:24; Mark 1:41; Mark 5:23; Mark 6:5; Mark 7:32; Mark 8:23; Mark 16:18; Luke 5:13; Luke 13:13; Luke 22:51**

The disciples also extended this ministry of healing by the laying on of hands.

"And at the hands of the apostles many signs and were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico." (**Acts 5:12**)

Paul also laid his hands on the sick, and they were healed!

"And it came about that the father of Publius was lying in bed afflicted with recurrent fever and dysentery; and Paul went in to see him and after he had prayed, he laid his hands on him and healed him. (**Acts 28:8**) See also **Acts 19:11**

The Church today is to continue in the impartation of Divine healing through the hands. It is believers who make up the Body of Christ, and we are to be His hands extended. "They (believers) will lay hands on the sick, and they (the sick) will recover." (**Mark 16:18**)

2. The laying on of hands can be seen in connection with the conferring of the Holy Spirit. There are five cases of men or companies receiving the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts. Three of these definitely mention the laying on of hands in connection with the reception of this gift.

"Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands he offered them money..." (**Acts 8:18**) See also **Acts 9:17 and Acts 19:6.**

3. The laying on of hands was used in connection with the impartation

of spiritual gifts. This is much like the Old Testament case of Joshua receiving an impartation of wisdom from the hands of Moses.

"And for this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of hands. Guard through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you."
(II Timothy 1:6,14) See also I Timothy 4:14

4. The laying on of hands is often accompanied by prophecy.

"Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed upon you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery."
(I Timothy 4:14) See I Timothy 1:18

6. The laying on of hands was used in connection with the impartation of a blessing.

"And He took them in His arms, and began blessing them, laying his hands upon them." **(Mark 10:16)**

7. The laying on of hands was used in the sending out of ministries. Perhaps there was a corporate identification of the Body with those who were being sent out. In this way they were not going alone, but a Body was identified with them and would be, in effect, going with them.

"And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them they sent them away." **(Acts 13:2-3)**

8. The laying on of hands was used in connection with the confirmation or ordination of ministries.

"And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid Their hands on them."
(Acts 6:6)

C. CAUTIONS REGARDING THE LAYING ON OF HANDS.

There are several cautions that are found in regard to the ministry of the laying on of hands. It should not be taken lightly or done suddenly. The act of laying on of hands is more than a mere outward symbol. There is in fact an impartation to and an identification with the candidate. Therefore, we must be very cautious in our use of this ministry.

"Do not lay hands upon any one too hastily and thus share responsibility for the sins of others; for others, their sins follow after." (I Timothy 5:22)

Amplified Bible reads:

"Do not be in a hurry in the laying on of hands - giving the sanction of the church too hastily (in reinstating expelled offenders or in ordination in questionable cases) - nor share or participate in another man's sins; keep yourself pure."

In every case except in regard to healing, it was always the leadership who laid hands on the people. Perhaps because of the serious nature of many of these things, the novice is excluded from operating in such ministry.

II. WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LAYING ON OF HANDS FOR THE CHURCH TODAY?

We can expect that all of the uses of the laying on of hands found in the New Testament will find a place in the church today. Even if we do not understand the full significance of it, it is important for us to maintain the scriptural pattern.

This doctrine involves a supernatural impartation from generation to generation that is provided for us in no other aspect of church life. Think of it as Jesus laying His hands on those who followed Him who in turn laid their hands on those coming after them until today His followers lay their hands on us. The Church of this day should be using the laying on of hands:

- * in praying for the sick
- * in the conferring of the Holy Ghost
- * in the impartation of spiritual gifts
- * in connection with prophecy to give confirmation and guidance
- * in the bestowing of a spiritual blessing
- * in the confirmation and ordination of ministries
- * in the sending out of ministries from the Body

III. WHO IS DOING THE WORK?

II Timothy 1:6 indicates that the impartation is the "gift of God" and thus is from God. NO MAN can, at his will, give or impart a gift. Donald Gee, an early Assembly of God pioneer, in his book Concerning Spiritual Gifts said:

"This does not in any wise contradict the sovereignty of God in bestowing spiritual gifts; it is only consistent with the beautiful revelation of the whole of the Bible that the Almighty condescends to work through, and by the cooperation of human channels. Never make the mistake that by the

laying on of hands men have it in their own power and will to bestow any spiritual gift. This beautiful and appropriate ordinance is powerful only as those who exercise it are in the will of God and full of the Holy Ghost. It should be remembered, however, that this is a perfectly Scriptural ordinance and we do quite well to submit to it from recognized godly brethren when seeking spiritual gifts or blessings. We may safely depend on the Lord's honoring His own appointed methods. We have seen that in bestowing spiritual gifts, God is sovereign. That sovereignty may express itself by the direct bestowal of the gifts without any human intervention, or by their bestowal through the laying on of hands."