



The Church of God International

HOME BIBLE

Study Course

4

Understanding the Laying-On- of-Hands

Doctrinal Statement:

The laying-on-of-hands is a ceremony performed by the ministry on special occasions such as for the receiving of God's Holy Spirit after baptism, for ordination, and for other special purposes. It symbolizes one's submission to God and to the church, which is God's instrument on earth. Such a ceremony is the occasion of God conferring a spiritual gift, blessing, or service to the person.

The doctrine of the laying-on-of-hands is of critical importance to the Church of God. It shows that God works and deals with mankind through fallible, imperfect human beings that He sets apart for His purpose. For some, this is a humbling experience, realizing they will have to cooperate with other human beings who are not perfect, but who for the purpose of God are used to guide them as "helpers of their joy" to salvation.

From the first five books of Moses to the book of Revelation, we will find the laying-on-of-hands ceremony being used by servants of God to ordain or commission others for a variety of God's purposes.

Usually the ceremony centered around God's servant praying aloud as he placed his hands on the recipient of his petitions. It was a formal request to God for a specific blessing, gift, or authority—as in ordination. Usually these ceremonies are short, but they are always filled with great meaning.

The Precious Name of Jesus

One of the greatest miracles which occurs in the name of Christ is the miracle of having one's sins forgiven by and through faith in that name. This miracle was made possible by the propitiatory death of Jesus. Why should our sins be forgiven by the death of a man? The reason is that Christ was not just a mere man. He was both man and God. God the Father "created all things by Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 3:9). Therefore, His life is of more value than all human life. His substitutionary, or vicarious, death on the stake is sufficient to pay the penalty for all the sins of all human beings—past, present, and future.

"To Him [Jesus Christ] all the prophets witness that, *through His name*, whosoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43).

"And he [Peter] commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord..." (verse 48). The apostles realized the power that believers have when using the precious "name of Jesus Christ of

Nazareth” (Acts 3:6,16; 4:7,10,12,18,30; 5:28,40; 19:13). They went out everywhere teaching, preaching, and baptizing in that name. Results were miraculous.

Final Instructions

In the book of James, the apostle showed that the children of this world, fighting and warring the way they do, meet with disaster, failing to receive help because they neglect to ask for God’s help. And when they do ask God, it is to fulfill their own personal wants and desires. If we ask selfishly, we ask amiss. We can only expect a negative answer to such a prayer.

Jesus set the right example when He said, “I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me” (John 5:30). The apostle Paul tells us we can “understand what the will of the Lord is” (Ephesians 5:17). We are to study the Word of God as Paul commanded Timothy (2 Timothy 2:15).

With the study of God’s Word and the guidance of His Holy Spirit, we can know the will of God even if there is no specific promise mentioned in the Bible. It is a matter of learning how to apply the principles

of God’s revealed will to the situations that arise in our lives.

It is understandable that we cannot ask for something, or ask God’s blessing on something, that is contrary to His Word. With regular Bible study and setting our heart on the things above, we will come to know God’s will for our lives.

The point to remember, for the purpose of this lesson, is that we must seek to learn and know God’s will, as well as believe the truth of His Bible. “And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him” (1 John 5:1,15).

In the previous lessons, we have covered repentance, faith, and baptism. This fourth lesson will show us how through the ceremony of the laying-on-of-hands we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit of God, which is His character, His love, and His power, is the added strength we need to obey His spiritual law.

By now you should have found a quiet place to study and a private place to pray. If you have already prayed for God’s

help with this lesson, and have your study tools before you, you are ready to begin Lesson 4, “Understanding the Laying-On-of-Hands.”

Understanding the Laying-On-of-Hands

Certain basics are essential for all believers. The most basic doctrines of Christianity are listed in the first two verses of the sixth chapter of Hebrews, beginning with repentance, faith, baptism, and this current lesson, the laying-on-of-hands.

Old Testament Examples

When the Lord God was bringing the children of Israel out of Egypt, He instructed Aaron and his successors to lay their hands on certain of the sacrificial animals. This was symbolic of transferring sin to the animal to be sacrificed (Leviticus 8:14–23; Numbers 8:10–14).

Another example is the event taking place on the Day of Atonement. “Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall

send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man” (Leviticus 16:21).

Obviously Aaron didn’t have magic hands; his were the same as any other Israelite’s. This physical ceremony commanded by God was to show the unconverted Israelites that their sins needed to be atoned for and ultimately placed on the head of the father of sin, Satan. Of course, this all had symbolic meaning since only Christ’s blood really atones for sin (Romans 5:11). The laying-on-of-hands in this example symbolized the placing of the sins of the Israelites upon the head of the animal.

Of course, today we are not involved in animal sacrifices. These examples are used only to show how God used the laying-on-of-hands anciently.

Review

1. *The laying-on-of-hands is a basic doctrine.*
2. *When Aaron laid hands on an animal, it symbolized the transference of sin from the Israelites to the animal.*
3. *Only the blood of Christ really atones for sin.*

Scriptures to Read, Remember, and Recite:
Hebrews 6:1,2; Leviticus

8:14–23; Numbers 8:10–14; Leviticus 16:21; Romans 5:11

To Confer Blessings

In the Book of Genesis, we see the ceremony of Israel’s (Jacob’s) blessing on his two grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh. “Then Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on Ephraim’s head, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh’s head, guiding his hands knowingly, for Manasseh was the first-born” (Genesis 48:14). Joseph, the boys’ father, objected to Jacob’s putting his right hand on the second born, but Jacob refused to change the position of his hands: “I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations” (verse 19).

Logic would tell us that the hands of Jacob did not make Ephraim and Manasseh become the great peoples they eventually became. The fact is, the power of the Lord God performed that. God used the physical symbols of Jacob’s right and left hands to be a visible sign of the blessings

He was to grant those two boys and their descendants.

Review

1. *Blessings were passed on from fathers to sons by the laying-on-of-hands ceremony.*
2. *The power of God brings forth the blessings.*
3. *The physical symbol of Jacob’s hands was the visible sign of the blessings given.*

Scriptures to Read, Remember, and Recite:
Genesis 48:14,19.

An Example of Christ

Note the example of Jesus Himself when He picked little children up in His arms. “Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray...And He laid His hands on them and departed from there” (Matthew 19:13,15). By performing this simple act, He set an example for His church today to see to it that the little children receive God’s blessing. He used the laying-on-of-hands as a symbol of authority to ask for a blessing on the children.

Review

1. *Jesus was not too busy for*

little children.

2. *Of such is the Kingdom of God.*
3. *This simple act of blessing children sets an example for the church to follow.*
4. *The laying-on-of-hands is a symbol of authority used to ask for special blessings.*

**Scriptures to Read,
Remember, and Recite:**
Matthew 19:13,15

New Testament Examples

There are a number of New Testament examples of people being ordained to an office by the laying-on-of-hands. One of the first is in the book of Acts where seven men were set before the apostles, who prayed and laid hands on them, ordaining them to the office of deacon (Acts 6:5,6).

Another example is found in Acts where Barnabas and Saul were prayed over and had hands laid on them for a special work they were to do (Acts 13:1–3).

Review

1. *Many are ordained to certain offices in the church by the laying-on-of-hands.*
2. *Barnabas and Paul (Saul) were ordained for a certain work by the elders and*

apostles.

**Scriptures to Read,
Remember, and Recite:**
Acts 6:5,6; 13:1–3

The Giving of Authority

It is God who made the decision that His church utilize the laying-on-of-hands as a physical symbol of the authority that God placed in His church and with His true ministers.

Young Timothy didn't decide on his own one day to proclaim himself a minister of God. He would have had to recognize the authority in God's church and in the apostle Paul. He was placed in the ministry by the laying on of Paul's hands (2 Timothy 1:6). Paul had the authority to place Timothy in the ministry because he had received that authority from God by the laying-on-of-hands of the elders and apostles before him. Therefore, the authority goes back to the twelve apostles, who were called, chosen, and ordained by Jesus Christ Himself.

Review

1. *You cannot be a minister of Christ by just saying you are one.*
2. *It was God who established*

the authority of the laying-on-of-hands in the church.

3. *Paul was able to lay hands on Timothy and ordain him to the ministry because he also had received the laying-on-of-hands.*
4. *All authority comes to the Church of God from Jesus Christ and the apostles.*

**Scriptures to Read,
Remember, and Recite:**
2 Timothy 1:6

Examples of Healing

Christ set the example in healing. "When the sun was setting, all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them" (Luke 4:40).

The apostle Paul also laid his hands on Publius' father to heal him. "And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery. Paul went in to him and prayed, and he laid his hands on him and healed him" (Acts 28:8).

To the sick God gives this command: "Is anyone 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” (James 5:14). Oil is a symbol of God’s Holy Spirit. No minister’s hands are special or holy. No olive oil has any mystical powers. It is God Himself who heals through His Holy Spirit. However, when He tells the sick to call for the elders of the church, He establishes the authority for His miraculous healing to be done through His ministry in the church.

When we do go to the elders of the church and ask to be anointed for healing, we should not sit back and do nothing, waiting for God to heal. God expects us do our part to aid the healing process. Also, God knows what is best for us. So in the meantime we should get the best medical help we can afford. Doing this actually shows faith in God our Healer because we are trusting in Him for our welfare and at the same time doing our part.

Review

1. *Christ set the example by laying His hands on the sick and healing them.*
2. *Paul, following the example of Jesus, laid his hands on Publius’ father and healed him.*
3. *God gave the command that*

we should go to the elders of the church when we’re sick.

4. *The elders of the church will pray for us, anoint us, and lay hands upon us for healing.*

**Scriptures to Read,
Remember, and Recite:**
Luke 4:40; Acts 28:8; James 5:14

Receiving the Holy Spirit

The apostle Paul, even though Jesus Christ Himself struck him down, received the Holy Spirit only when Ananias laid hands on him. “And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and *laying his hands on him* he said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and *be filled with the Holy Spirit*’” (Acts 9:17). Immediately Paul received the Holy Spirit and then was baptized. Normally, baptism comes first, and then the receiving of the Holy Spirit by the laying-on-of-hands. In Paul’s case it was reversed; but this is the exception, not the rule.

Several years after Paul’s conversion, he visited Ephesus and found people

who had been baptized into John the Baptist’s baptism. They had never heard about the Holy Spirit. Paul taught them more thoroughly the truth about repentance and baptism, and when they heard these things they were again baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Paul laid hands on them and they then received the Holy Spirit (Act 19:1–6.)

Peter and John were sent to Samaria because word came to the apostles at Jerusalem that they had received God’s truth and had been baptized. However, they had not received the Holy Spirit. So when Peter and John laid their hands on them, they immediately received the Spirit!

Watching all this happen was Simon the sorcerer. He wanted the power of the Holy Spirit, and offered Peter money for it. Read for yourself what Peter told Simon (Acts 8:14–25).

If you have truly repented of breaking God’s holy and righteous laws, you too should be baptized and experience the laying-on-of-hands to receive God’s Holy Spirit.

After these rituals, God gives the Holy Spirit of power,

which will convict your heart and mind, and help you make decisions for your life that will be pleasing to God. God's Spirit will help individuals to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ Jesus, overcoming self and becoming more like Jesus every day, for the remainder of your life.

Review

1. *Even the apostle Paul had to have another human being lay hands on him so he could receive the Holy Spirit.*
2. *Paul received the Spirit and then was baptized, reversing the normal order. This is an*
3. *Those who had been baptized into John the Baptist's baptism needed to be rebaptized before having hands laid on them to receive the Holy Spirit.*
4. *Those of Samaria had been baptized but had not received the Spirit because hands had not been laid on them.*
5. *Simon the sorcerer found out you cannot buy the power of the Holy Spirit.*
6. *God gives His Holy Spirit to those who believe, have a repentant heart, are baptized, and receive the laying-on-of-hands of His*

servants.

**Scriptures to Read,
Remember, and Recite:**
Acts 9:17; 19:1-6; 8:14-25

Conclusion

The laying-on-of-hands ceremony is quite relevant to this society, and to you and me!

God is alive, and, through His chosen agents and ministers, is actively dealing with mankind today. Yes, God still deals with imperfect people, through a physical group of human beings, the church, doing His work. May God bless you to understand! □

Study Notes:

The Church of God International

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Understanding
the Laying-On-
of-Hands

Test Yourself

Write your answers to
the questions on a
separate sheet of
paper. Check *your*
answers with the
answers found at the
end of the test.

Detach the return
coupon at the bottom
of the page and mail
back to us. We will
send the next lesson
in the series to you.

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True or False Questions

1. The laying-on-of-hands was used to symbolically transfer sin to the sacrificial animal.
2. Sins do not need to be atoned for. We just say we are sorry.
3. Atonement can only be accomplished through Christ's blood.
4. Jacob blessed his grandsons without God's approval.
5. Jacob must have been a fortuneteller.
6. Jesus told His disciples to keep the little children away.
7. Jesus laid His hands on the little children and blessed them.
8. The kingdom will be made up of those with the humility of little children.
9. We should follow Jesus' example in the church and bless infant children.
10. The laying-on-of-hands is not necessary for ordination.
11. We don't really have to follow the apostles' example in ordination.
12. The laying-on-of-hands is a nice ceremony but not necessary.

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| 13. Elders use the laying-on-of-hands to pass on authority. | 22. Simon the sorcerer wanted to be able to lay hands on people so they could receive the Holy Spirit because he was a good man. |
| 14. The authority for the laying-on-of-hands comes from the apostles and Christ. | 23. God will bless anything as long as we ask Him to. |
| 15. Christ never set an example for healing. | 24. We should not bother God when we get sick. |
| 16. Paul followed the example of Jesus when he laid hands on Publius. | 25. Anyone can be a minister of Jesus Christ if he or she wants to. |
| 17. The Bible never said we should go to the elders of the church. | 26. Baptism is essential if we expect to receive salvation. |
| 18. The elders will pray for us and anoint us with oil for healing. | 27. The laying-on-of-hands is a basic doctrine of the church. |
| 19. The apostle Paul didn't need to have hands laid on him. | 28. We can receive the Holy Spirit all by ourselves, and then be baptized. |
| 20. If you had been baptized by John the Baptist, that is all you would have needed. | 29. We don't need to pray before we study God's Word. |
| 21. There were those who said they had never heard of the Holy Spirit. | 30. God gives His Holy Spirit to everybody, even if we don't repent. |

Answers to True or False Questions:

Score Yourself: Miss 0-3 = Excellent; Miss 4-6 = Good; Miss 7-9 = Fair

Answers: 1, True; 2, False; 3, True; 4, False; 5, False; 6, False; 7, True; 8, True; 9, True; 10, False; 11, False; 12, False; 13, True; 14, True; 15, False; 16, False; 17, False; 18, True; 19, False; 20, False; 21, True; 22, False; 23, False; 24, False; 25, False; 26, True; 27, True; 28, False; 29, False; 30, False.