

The Doctrine of Laying on of Hands

Marlin Fannin—July 11, 2015

Since we just had an ordination, the topic I would like to speak on today is *the doctrine of the laying on of hands*. The Bible gives us many examples about the laying on of hands, and it's used to set apart those for different and specific purposes, as God has shown.

Today we'll be talking about the laying on of hands *to set apart*. There's a part where you lay hands on people who are sick, who want to be anointed for sicknesses. There is a part of the laying on of hands that we don't want, and that's where they come and seize you, like they did Christ. They laid hands on Him, and on Paul, Peter and some of the others.

The laying on of hand to be set apart for a specific position or function in the Church of God is good, and also to pray for the sick and afflicted.

Today we're going to look at a few examples as the Bible gives us. I was discussing this with a friend in the Church and he was studying on the topic and the first one that he talked about that he came up with was in Numbers. It is there, but I got to thinking that there is one before that in Genesis.

Adam

This is where God created man, Genesis 1:26: "And God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of heaven and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that crawls upon the earth.' And God created man in His *own* image, in the image of God He created him. He created them male and female" (vs 26-27).

We see that God was the first one to lay hands upon man, because He created him with His own hands. God had to lay hands on him, and we will see that He set him apart.

Genesis 2:7: "Then the LORD God formed man *of the* dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed" (vs 7-8).

So, the first one to have been set apart and have hands laid upon him for a special purpose was Adam and also Eve. God put them over all of His creation.

Psalms 100:3: "Know that the LORD, He is God. He has made us, and we are His; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture."

God created man, formed him and man was the first one to have hands laid upon him and be set apart. It doesn't say He specifically anoints them and sets them apart, but we know that by creating him God's hands were involved, both He and the One Who became Christ.

Ephraim and Manasseh

The next one is where Jacob lays his hands on his grandsons. We know that Joseph had the children there between his knees:

Genesis 48:14: "And Israel [Jacob] stretched out his right hand and laid *it* upon Ephraim's head, who *was* the younger, and his left upon Manasseh's head, crossing his hands, for Manasseh *was* the firstborn. And he blessed Joseph and said, 'May God, *before* Whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God Who fed me all my life to this day, the Angel Who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads. And let my name be perpetuated in them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac, and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.'" (vs 14-16).

We know that Joseph said that this was not right, you've got your hands on the wrong one, not on the firstborn, but Jacob said that he knew what he was doing. In blessing he put his hands on them and set them apart from the others and they were to become a multitude of nations and a great nation. Jacob laid his hands on his grandsons—Ephraim and Manasseh—and blessed them and set them apart.

The Levites

This is where the Levites were set apart for their specific duties and responsibilities that God had chosen them for.

Numbers 8:5: "And the LORD spoke to Moses saying, 'Take the Levites from among the children of Israel and purify them. And this is what you shall do to them to purify them. Sprinkle water of purifying upon them, and let them shave all their flesh and wash their clothes, and make themselves clean. Then let them take a young bull with its grain offering, fine flour mixed with oil, and another young bull shall you take for a sin offering. And you shall bring the Levites before the tabernacle of the congregation. And you shall **gather the whole assembly of the children of Israel together**. And you shall bring the Levites before the LORD. And **the children of Israel shall lay their hands upon the Levites**" (vs 5-10).

How did they do this, because we know that Israel was a great congregation, probably a million plus people. How in the world are you going to lay hands upon the Levites who were just one tribe?

It doesn't tell us how they did it, but we know that God had leaders setup over each tribe, and more than one in some cases. So, it could have been that just some of those who represented that particular tribe was there, and that way they could lay hands upon the Levites. The whole congregation was involved in it, and that's the point we need to understand here.

Why was it done this way? *Because God wanted the whole assembly to see that He—God—was going to set them apart for a special service!* The duties of an elder are to serve. We're not to lord it over the brethren, but are there to be a helper of their joy and serve them.

God set them apart so they would know, and they could not come back and say, 'Who put you in charge? Who made you the top dog?' God wanted all the congregation to know that **He** was specifically setting the Levites apart for a special service, and they were to serve their brethren.

Verse 12: "And the Levites shall lay their hands upon the heads of the bulls..." We see that offerings were made here and they had to lay their hands on the animals.

"...And you shall offer the one *for* a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering, to the LORD, to make an atonement for the Levites. And you shall set the Levites before Aaron, and before his sons, and offer them *for* an offering to the LORD. So, **you shall separate the Levites from among the children of Israel. And the Levites shall be Mine.** And after that the Levites shall go in to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation. And you shall purify them and offer them *for* a wave offering" (vs 12-15).

The whole congregation of Israel knew that the Levites were set apart, that God had chosen them specifically so that they could serve the rest of the tribes.

Leviticus 8:14: "And he brought the young bull for the sin offering. And **Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head** of the young bull for the sin offering."

Verse 18: "And he brought the ram for the burnt offering. And **Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head** of the ram."

Verse 22: "And he brought the second ram, the ram of consecration. And **Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head** of the ram."

We see here the laying on of hands on the animals that were to be offered as offerings.

Verse 23: "And he killed *it*. And Moses took of the blood of it, and put ***it* on the tip of Aaron's right ear, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot.** And he brought Aaron's sons, and Moses put the blood on the tip of their right ear, and on the thumbs of their right hands, and on the great toes of their right feet. And Moses sprinkled the blood against the side of the altar all around" (vs 23-24).

Before reading this you wonder sometimes, why did they take the blood and put it upon the ear, the thumb and the big toe? Basically covering the whole body, you might say?

from footnotes (no source given): A portion was placed upon the tip of Aaron's right ear, upon the thumb of his right hand and upon the great toe of his right foot. Likewise this was done to each of his sons. This indicated that in view of the blood that has been shed, one who is truly serving God must be ready ^[#1] to hear His Word, ^[#2] to undertake his work, ^[#3] to move at His command.

God says there are seven things that He hates.

Proverbs 6:16: "These six *things* the LORD hates; yea, seven *are* an abomination unto Him: a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that plots wicked imaginations, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness *who* speaks lies, and he who sows discord among brethren" (vs 16-19).

These are things that God says that He hates to see in people. When you think about the head, that is the cleansing of our mind, put the blood there. We could possibly use that analogy there, the cleansing of our mind. We have to do that in order to be able to serve God and serve His people. We think with our mind—the head.

What do we do with the hands; the blood upon the thumb of the right hand? *We act, we do and we work!*

Then the feet, the big toe, we walk. Certainly we must walk in God's way, not the way of this world. I think I have a little better understanding. I don't know how much of that is truly what it meant back there, but it give a little better explanation as to why the ear, the thumb and the big toe, you're covering basically the whole body. We know that Christ sits at the right hand of God.

Joshua:

Numbers 27:18: "And the LORD said to

Moses, 'Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom *is* the Spirit, and lay your hand upon him. And set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation... [the congregation is going to see this] ...and you shall commission him in their sight. And you shall put of your honor on him, so that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient'" (vs 18-20).

God wanted the to know that he has been set apart by God. It's not a political situation where people get together. *No!* This is from God and He wants the people to understand that as Joshua is going to take Moses' place, because Moses is going to go on to sleep.

Verse 21: "And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask for him according to the judgment of Urim before the LORD. At his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, he and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation."

As we pray and ask for wisdom, and we see here that as Joshua stood before Eleazar to ask for wisdom to be shown by God. Sometimes it had to be done by the Urim and Thummim, which were lights up on the breastplate of the Levites.

People have said, 'What should we do? How do we handle this?' I say, 'This is a case where we have to have the Urim and Thummim. We don't have them today, unfortunately, but it would nice if lights would light up so we can tell whether someone is lying to us or not. That's not the case. We have to just gather as many facts as we can. These are things we all have to deal with.

Verse 22: "And Moses did as the LORD commanded him. And he took Joshua and set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation. And he **laid his hands upon him and commissioned him, even as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses**" (vs 22-23).

This was before all the people and there was no doubt, because God shows them specifically that Joshua was the one who was going to step in and be the servant of His people after Moses had died

Deuteronomy 34:9: "And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the Spirit of wisdom, **for Moses had laid his hands on him.** And the children of Israel hearkened to him, and did as the LORD commanded Moses."

We see the setting apart of Joshua with the laying on of hands, and God commissioned it and the people were there. This was God's will that this be done.

Saul:

1-Samuel 9:27: *When* they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, 'Tell the servant to pass on before us.' And he passed on. 'And you stand still a while, so that I may cause you to hear the word of God.'"

1-Samuel 10:1: "And **Samuel took a vial of oil and poured it upon his head,** and kissed him, and said, '*Is it* not because **the LORD has anointed you** for a prince over His inheritance?'"

We don't see the laying on of hands, but we see the pouring of the oil out of the flask, symbolic of God's Holy Spirit to set him apart to become the first king over Israel. They wanted a king so God gave them a king.

David:

1-Samuel 16:1: "And the LORD said to Samuel, 'How long will you mourn for Saul since I have rejected him from reigning over Israel?....'" God says that He is rejecting Saul for the things that he has done and will not rule over Israel properly.

"...Fill your horn with oil and go. I will send you to Jesse of Bethlehem, for I have seen a king for Me among his sons'" (v 1).

We know the story there how the sons of Jesse all went and passed by and Samuel kept saying, 'No, it's not that one.' Finally, it got down to David who was out in the field taking care of the sheep. So, he was truly and shepherd.

I as a deacon for many years in God's Church before I was ordained an elder. I was learning to become an elder. You learn many things as a deacon. If you are ordained as an elder that's kind of the groundwork.

The same way with David. He was used to being out there taking care of the flock, even putting his own life in jeopardy a couple of times to kill a bear and a lion to protect the sheep. We know that Christ, as the Lamb of God, gave His life for the sheep so that we could sit here today and hear God's Word and practice God's Word and have His Holy Spirit in us. We have been called out of this world and granted repentance, baptism and to receive the Holy Spirit so that we can grow in grace and knowledge.

David had preparation in being able to care for something, to protect something. And that's what we are to do as servants of God's people and His flock.

Verse 11: "And Samuel said to Jesse, 'Are all your children here?...' They all passed by and some were big, strong and handsome, and he thought surely this is the one. He's got muscles, you would think he was a big weight-lifter,

whatever.

“...And he said, ‘There remains yet the youngest, and behold, he keeps the sheep.’ And Samuel said to Jesse, ‘Send and bring him, for we will not sit down until he comes here.’ And he sent and brought him in. And he *was* ruddy with beautiful countenance and good form.... [handsome and good looking] ...And the LORD said, ‘Arise, anoint him, for this is he’” (vs 11-12). *This is the one whom I want to be king over Israel!*

Verse 13: “And Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up and went to Ramah.”

Don’t you know that the other brothers were all disappointed. David was the youngest and you can imagine how they were, tall, strong and grown men. They were passed over and said, ‘I can’t believe this!’ Here is the runt of the family, the youngest one and he is the one whom God has chosen.

God showed that David was the one who was set apart to become king over Israel. He had characteristics that God noticed. God knows the mind and the heart so He could choose the one whom He wanted to be king over Israel.

Seven Men of Antioch:

We’ll look in the New Testament to show hands being laid upon those who are to be set aside in service to God’s people.

Acts 6—the apostles were taking the time to study God’s Word and they had complaints that some of the widows were being neglected. So, the apostles were choose out seven men. The people themselves chose among them. That’s pretty wise.

Acts 6:3: “‘Therefore, brethren, search out from among yourselves seven men of good repute, full of *the* Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word.’ And this declaration was pleasing to all the multitude; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and *the* Holy Spirit; and Philip; and Prochorus; and Nicanor; and Timon; and Parmenas; and Nicolas, *who was* a proselyte of Antioch. **And they set them before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them.** And the Word of God spread, and the number of the disciples in Jerusalem was multiplied exceedingly, and a great multitude of the priests were obedient to the faith” (vs 3-7).

They were set apart, had hands laid upon them; the people knew exactly. They had a choice in

the choosing, then brought them to the apostles. We know that Stephen went on to be might there and lost his life because of preaching and teaching God’s Truth to them. Later on Philip became an evangelist.

Believers in Samaria:

Acts 8:14: “Now, when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent Peter and John to them; Who, after coming down *to Samaria*, prayed for them, that they might receive *the* Holy Spirit; for as yet it had not fallen upon any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. **Then they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit**” (vs 12-17).

Again, we see the Holy Spirit comes *after* the laying on of hands.

Saul & Barnabas:

Acts 13:1: “Now, there were certain prophets and teachers in the Church that was at Antioch, including Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius the Cyrenian, and Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch), and Saul [Paul]. And as they were ministering and fasting to the Lord, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Separate both Barnabas and Saul to Me for the work to which I have called them.’ And **when they had fasted...**” (vs 1-3)—about what’s taking place and the one who is being ordained. We want to make sure that God is in it. God has to be involved!

“...and prayed, they laid hands on them and sent them out” (v 3). We see that they were set apart for a specific task/duty that God was sending them to do.

Acts 9:10: “Now, there was in Damascus a certain disciple named Ananias. And the Lord said to him in a vision, ‘Ananias.’ And he said, ‘Behold, *I am here*, Lord.’ And the Lord *said* to him, ‘Arise *and* go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in *the* house of Judas for *one* named Saul from Tarsus; for behold, he is praying, And he [Paul] has seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming and putting *his* hands on him, so that he may receive sight” (vs 10-12).

Verse 13: “Then Ananias answered, ‘Lord, I have heard from many *people* about this man, how many evil things he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. And *even* in this place he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.’ But the Lord said to him, ‘Go, for this *man* is a chosen vessel to Me... [chosen by Christ] ...to bear My name before *the* Gentiles, and kings, and *the* children of Israel; for I will show him what great things he must suffer for My name” (vs 13-16).

Paul brought a lot of harm upon the saints, but he has a lot of trials that he was going to have to go through: shipwrecks, sickness, night and day in the deep on a ship; many, many things that Christ said he would suffer.

Verse 17: “Then Ananias went away and came into the house; and **after laying his hands on him**, he said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord has sent me, *even* Jesus, Who appeared to you on the road in which you came, **so that you might receive sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.**’ And it was as if scales immediately fell from his eyes, and he instantly received sight; and he arose *and* was baptized” (vs 17-18).

We see that Christ specifically told Ananias to go there. It wasn’t just something that he thought about doing himself, because he knew the history of Paul and the things he was doing to the saints. God/Christ was setting Paul apart to do His work and to serve His people.

from footnotes (no source given): Ananias was common name among the Jews, which in its Hebrew form was ‘Hananiah.’ Three men have the name in the New Testament, but the most important of the three were the disciples from Damascus whom God used to minister to Saul/Paul after his conversion.

Paul describes him as a devout man according to the law with a good testimony of others. When Ananias laid hands upon Paul, Paul received his sight and was filled with the Holy Spirit.

It is significant that Ananias was simply a disciple, not an apostle in that Paul’s apostleship was not founded on the ministry of another apostle.

It wasn’t Peter, John, James or any of the others that went to lay hands upon Paul, so they could say, ‘I was the one who anointed you.’ *No!* Christ specifically called him, dealt with him and later it talks about how Paul was taught specifically by Christ in the desert for three years. God specifically call Paul and set him apart. He used this man Ananias, and God can do what He wants to do.

from footnotes (no source given): It goes on to say Gal. 1 where Paul retells the story.

Tradition says that Ananias later became a bishop or an elder of Damascus and he died a martyr.

Many people sometimes like to use a Scripture, especially this Scripture, to say anybody can anoint or lay on hands, but that’s not what Christ

is saying. Christ specifically told him, ‘You go,’ and he did it. I thought that not of the other apostles laid hands upon him. He was separate.

Paul said, ‘I am behind the apostles in some ways, but yet, as far as what I’ve been able to accomplish, through God and His Holy Spirit, I’ve done things that even the original 12 apostles have not been able to do.

Christ specifically set Paul apart and certainly our love for all of God’s Word, through the writings of Paul and how to live our Christian lives, God has used him. His words still today speak to us from the pages of his epistles, to be able to learn from the knowledge and understanding and the things that Paul went through—the sufferings. Like Christ, Paul went through those things in order that we could be taught and learn from them.

Timothy:

1-Timothy 4:11: These things command and teach.... [Paul is telling Timothy] ...Do not allow anyone to despise your youth; but be an example to the believers—in word, in conduct, in love, in Spirit, in faith *and* in purity. Until I come, devote *yourself* to reading, to encouragement, *and* to doctrine.... [teachings of God’s Word] ...Do not neglect the *spiritual* gift *that is* in you, which was given to you by prophecy with *the* laying on of the hands of the elderhood” (vs 11-14).

We see that Timothy has had hands laid on him by the elders. Evidently he was younger than some of the others, and Paul said, “...Do not allow anyone to despise your youth...” ‘Don’t be intimidated because you’ve learned the Scriptures from your mother and your Aunt Eunice.’ He was qualified in the Scriptures and the understanding of God’s Word so that he could teach and help the people in all the places that he would go and be sent.

Hebrews 6:1: “Therefore, advancing beyond the beginning principles... [the elementary discussion] ...of the doctrines of Christ, we should go on to perfection; not laying again *the* foundation of repentance from dead works, and *of* faith in God, of *the* doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of *the* resurrection of *the* dead, and of eternal judgment” (vs 1-2).

We see that the laying on of hands is one of the doctrines set in the Church by Christ Himself. That’s why we still practice and do those things today in God’s Church.

Romans 9:20: “Yes, indeed, O man, who are you to answer against God? Shall the thing that is formed say to the one who formed *it*, ‘Why did you make me this way?’ Or doesn’t the potter have authority over the clay to make from the same lump

of clay one vessel unto honor, and another vessel unto dishonor?" (vs 20-21).

As the Potter with the clay, molding it, or just totally destroying it, mashing it up and making it all over again. God has the right to set whom He will in His Church as those to be helpers of the people's joy. To be able to help them as overseers, or bishops in some cases, to be there to help the people, just as David was there as a shepherd to shepherd God's flock.

Christ told Peter to 'shepherd My sheep, take care of My lambs.' That is the office and responsibility of an elder, those whom God has place over His people. Today we have seen the ordination of an elder before the people. We know that the people had a hand in this, knowing this was going to happen, and to be able to have input.

God has the right and He chooses, just like He did David from all the brothers. God rejected them, but David had something, and later it says that David 'was a man after God's own heart.' Even though we know that he made some very bad choices, mistakes and heavy sins, he repented and God says that he's going to come up and be king over Israel under Jesus Christ in the Millennium.

Galatians 4:19: "My little children, for whom I am again laboring in pain until Christ has been formed in you." So that you might be born some day into the very Kingdom of God. He was to watch over them, teach them and instruct them.

That is the purpose of those whom God has called and set apart; to help those whom Christ has called. To help them to hold fast, grow in grace and knowledge and build the mind and character of Jesus Christ.

We see then that the laying on of hands is Biblical, and it's still practiced in God's Church today, as an example that a person or persons have been set apart for the function to serve God's people in order, as Paul said, that 'Christ might be all in all of us.'

It is a very responsible function that God puts us in; just like different functions in the body: the hand, ear and foot. We talked earlier about the thumb. What would it be like if the body didn't have an ear or a thumb or a big toe. We would be affected.

As the members of the body are attached together, it is the office, responsibility or position to help, not to overlord over. Really, all of us have been set apart by God Himself. He called us, granted us repentance and has given us His Holy Spirit upon repentance and baptism.

We're all a part of the Body of Christ—

whatever it might be—and the purpose is that we all grow in grace and knowledge and *that we someday be in the very Family and Kingdom of God and reign forever and ever and help bring other children—millions or billions—into the very Family of God.*

Scriptures are from *The Holy Bible In Its Original Order, A Faithful Version* by Fred. R. Coulter

Scriptural References:

- 1) Genesis 1:26-27
- 2) Genesis 2:7-8
- 3) Psalm 100:3
- 4) Genesis 48:14-16
- 5) Numbers 8:5-10, 12-15
- 6) Leviticus 8:14, 18, 22
- 7) Proverbs 6:16-19
- 8) Numbers 27:18-23
- 9) Deuteronomy 34:9
- 10) 1 Samuel 9:27
- 11) 1 Samuel 10:1
- 12) 1 Samuel 16:1, 11-13
- 13) Acts 6:3-7
- 14) Acts 8:14-17
- 15) Acts 13:1-3
- 16) Acts 9:10-18
- 17) 1 Timothy 4:11-14
- 18) Hebrews 6:1-2
- 19) Romans 9:20-21
- 20) Galatians 4:19

Scripture referenced, not quoted: Galatians 1

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