

The Basic Doctrines of Christianity

Laying On Of Hands

The Laying on of Hands was something that was very common in the early church, but predated the Christian New Testament church.

The Transfer of Guilt

Exodus 29:10 [NIV] *“Bring the bull to the front of the Tent of Meeting, and Aaron and **his sons shall lay their hands on its head.**”*

The priest laid hands on the animal that was about to be made a sacrifice.

Leviticus 1:4 [NIV] *“**He is to lay his hand on the head** of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him.”*

The laying on of hands signified a transfer of guilt to the head of a substitute, the transfer of guilt to a sacrifice.

This is what happened to Jesus Christ when He died for all humanity was our guilt was put on Him.

It was as though God laid hands on His Son, and He was indeed smitten of God and afflicted.

This is how we are saved from eternal death, by accepting the transfer of all the guilt of our committed sins on to Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

The transfer of authority

Leviticus 8:18-24 [NIV] *“He then presented the ram for the burnt offering, and Aaron and **his sons laid their hands on its head.** Then Moses slaughtered the ram and sprinkled the blood against the altar on all sides. He cut the ram into pieces and burned the head, the pieces and the fat. He washed the inner parts and the legs with water and burned the whole ram on the altar as a burnt offering, a pleasing aroma, an offering made to the LORD by fire, as the LORD commanded Moses. He then presented the other ram, the ram for the ordination, and Aaron and **his sons laid their hands on its head.** Moses slaughtered the ram and took some of its blood and put it on the lobe of Aaron’s right ear, on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot. Moses also brought Aaron’s sons forward and put some of the blood on the lobes of their right ears, on the thumbs of their right hands and on the big toes of their right feet. Then he sprinkled blood against the altar on all sides.”*

The laying on of hands was part of the ordination of Aaron and his sons to serve as priests in the tabernacle.

Numbers 27:18-20 [NIV] *“So the LORD said to Moses, “Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and **lay your hand on him.** Make him stand before Eleazar the priest and the entire assembly and commission him in their presence. Give him some of your authority so that the whole Israelite community will obey him.”*

Moses was commanded by God to transfer some of his authority to Joshua, son of Nun, who was already empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Both of these were the setting apart of people to perform special tasks for God and the laying on of hands was part of the consecration ceremony.

The transfer of a blessing

Matthew 18:1-4 [NIV] *“At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”*

Jesus used a child to illustrate the humble and teachable attitude we all need if we are to enter into the Kingdom [created family] of God.

Matthew 19:13-15 [NIV] *“Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to **place his hands on them** and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” When **he had placed his hands on them**, he went on from there.”*

The laying on of hands by Jesus and praying for these children was asking for a blessing to be given to them.

Jesus laid hands on the children to set them apart as an example the trusting nature we should have as we approach our Creator God.

The disciples had become so preoccupied with the organisation of Jesus' Kingdom that they had lost sight of the divine purpose.

Instead of seeking a humble attitude of a trusting servant, they sought positions of advantage and authority.

It is too easy to lose our eternal perspective and compete for promotions or status in the church, instead of humble positions of service with **no** status or influence.

Such a humble attitude of mind is a blessing and an opportunity we should pray for.

The ministry of healing

Luke 4:40 [NIV] *“When the sun was setting, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and **laying his hands on each one**, he healed them.”*

Although the laying on of hands was **not** the exclusive way that Jesus healed it was a way.

Sometimes Jesus just spoke the words and the people were healed.

This personal contact with Jesus also worked in reverse, in the healing process.

Matthew 9:20-22 [NIV] *“Just then **a woman** who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and **touched the edge of his cloak**. She said to herself, “If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed.” Jesus turned and saw her. “Take heart, daughter,” he said, “your faith has healed you.” And the woman was healed from that moment.”*

It is faith in Jesus being able to heal us that will cause God to touch us spiritually, we will experience His presence.

Acts 9:10-12 [NIV] *“In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, “Ananias!” “Yes, Lord,” he answered. The Lord told him, “Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and **place his hands on him to restore his sight**.”*

Saul [later renamed Paul] received his sight back as Ananias laid hands on him.

Acts 28:7-9 [NIV] *“There was an estate near by that belonged to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us to his home and for three days entertained us hospitably. His father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, **placed his hands on him** and healed him. When this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured.”*

Healing of public involved Paul laying hands on him.

James 5:14-16 [NIV] *“Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and **anoint him with oil** in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”*

Anointing with oil [depicting the Holy Spirit] was a type of laying on of hands in the method of healing by God.

The faith referred to in this scripture on healing is **not** the faith of the person seeking the healing but those who are praying, the elder and other people in the local congregation.

This is why God often waits for our prayers of faith before intervening to heal a person.

James is referring to physical healing but in scripture, oil is mentioned both as a medicine as well as a symbol of the Holy Spirit.

Luke 10:33-34 [NIV] *“But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, **pouring on oil and wine**. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him.”*

Olive oil helps a wound to heal as well as wine being a natural antiseptic.

We as Christians should **not** separate the physical and the spiritual.

Jesus Christ is Lord over both the body and the human spirit in us, [**Job 32:8**].

We should pray for spiritual healing of humanity, and this can only come through the direct intervention of God in the world.

Spiritual healing is also involved in these verses in the letter James wrote to the church in general.

Christ has made it possible to go directly to God for forgiveness of sins, spiritual healing.

But confessing our sins against other people in our church community is also important in the life of the church.

Matthew 18:15 [NIV] *“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.”*

Very often others may **not** know how they have hurt us with unconsidered remarks about us. This causes a rift that needs to be healed.

Matthew 6:12 [Good News Bible] *“Forgive us the wrongs we have done, **as we forgive the wrongs that others have done to us.**”*

This is what is meant by loving one another in the church and our neighbour, everyone we meet with on a day-to-day basis.

That is spiritual healing, and we need to involve the Holy Spirit through prayer, before we touch the other person's life seeking to heal any rift between us.

Ordination of the ministry

Acts 6:3-6 [NIV] *“Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.” This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and **laid their hands on them.**”*

The ordination of deacons to deal with the smooth running of the church included prayer and the laying on of hands.

1 Timothy 4:14 [NIV] *“Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders **laid their hands on you.**”*

With the ordination of Timothy came the additional gift from God to fulfil his added responsibilities.

1 Timothy 5:22 [NIV] *“Do not be hasty in the **laying on of hands** ...”*

Timothy was to ordain other elders and deacons but to get to know the people first before he ordained them.

2 Timothy 1:6 [NIV] *“For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the **laying on of my hands.**”*

Timothy was reminded never to neglect the special gift he had received from God through the laying on of hands.

2 Timothy 1:7-9 [NIV] *“For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life, not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,”*

When we use the gifts that God gives us we will receive the power, love, self-discipline and courage to testify to others about the good news that God is proclaiming to all humanity.

When we step out boldly in faith and proclaim the gospel message the Holy Spirit will go with us.

The receiving of the Holy Spirit

Acts 8:14-17 [NIV] *“When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John **placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.**”*

Although repenting and being baptised this group of believers did **not** receive the Holy Spirit until hands were laid on them.

Acts 19:1-6 [NIV] *“While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit*

when you believed?” They answered, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” So Paul asked, “Then what baptism did you receive?” “John’s baptism,” they replied. Paul said, “John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” On hearing this, they were baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus. **When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.**”

Again the receiving of the Holy Spirit is linked with the laying on of hands.

Sometimes the Holy Spirit came upon a person without the laying on of hands.

Acts 10:44-48 [NIV] “While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, “**Can anyone keep these people from being baptised with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.**” So he ordered that they be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.”

In this special event the Holy Spirit came on these gentiles before baptism to convince Peter and the other Jews with him that the gospel message was for all humanity **not** just the Jews.

Up to this time the church was mainly, if not totally, Jews who were converted to Christianity.

1 Corinthians 12:12-13 [NIV] “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. **For we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free, and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.**”

The Holy Spirit gives gifts to people who are believers, after repentance, baptism and laying on of hands, whatever their former status.