

THE LAYING ON OF HANDS

Text: Hebrews 6:1-2

INTRO: In this lesson, we will look at a very common Bible expression--laying on of hands. First we will examine four different ways the expression is commonly used. Then we will examine some difficult passages in which the phrase is used.

I. LAYING ON OF HANDS WAS OFTEN USED IN CONFERRING AN OFFICE OR DUTY UPON INDIVIDUALS

- A. This practice seems to have had its beginning in the OT when Moses appointed Joshua to lead the Israelites into Canaan.

[Moses] laid his hands on [Joshua] & inaugurated him, just as the Lord commanded. (Num. 27:23).

- B. NT instances of this usage: Acts 6:1-6; 13:1-3

II. LAYING ON OF THE APOSTLES' HANDS WAS OFTEN USED FOR CONFERRING SPIRITUAL GIFTS,

Acts 8:14-19.

Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God, which is in you thru the laying on of my hands (2 Tim. 1:6).

For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift (Rom. 1:11).

NOTE: Even tho Philip had a spiritual gift & could work miracles, he obviously could not impart gifts to others. Only apostles could do that. Philip had probably received his spiritual gifts at the time of his appointment in Acts 6:6. At any rate, it was not till peter & John, apostles, came down to Samaria that spiritual gifts were imparted to the Samaritans.

III. LAYING ON OF HANDS WAS OFTEN PRACTICED IN CONNECTION WITH MIRACLES OF HEALING, ETC.

Now when the sun was setting, all who had anyone sick with

various diseases brot them to [Jesus] & He laid His hands on every one of them, & healed them (LK 4:40).

They will take up serpents & if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick & they will recover (MK 16:18).

IV. THE EXPRESSION WAS OFTEN USED TO DESCRIBE THE GRABBING OF AN INDIVIDUAL TO ARREST OR PERSECUTE HIM.

A. This use of the term seems to have its background in a symbolical act of the priests laying their hands on an animal to symbolically transfer human sins to the animal & ceremonially cleanse the sinner.

And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat & confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, & all their transgressions concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat & shall send it away into the wilderness (Lev. 16:21)

Then the Levites shall lay their hands on the heads of the young bulls & you shall offer one as a sin offering & the other as a burnt offering, to the Lord, to make atonement for the Levites (Num. 8:12).

B. The expression then came to be used in a symbolic act upon a convicted criminal about to be executed.

Take outside the camp him who has cursed; then let all who heard him, lay their hands on his head & let all the congregation stone him (Lev. 24:14).

[The Judean soldiers] laid hands on [Athaliah, a woman who had taken over the kingdom of Judah by murdering all the heirs to the throne] & she went by the way by the which the horses came into the king's house & there she was slain (2 Kings 11:16, KJV). NKJV says they seized her.

- C. Finally, the expression became generally used to denote violent intentions directed toward anyone.

[After Jesus told the parable of the wicked vine dressers] the chief priests & the scribes that very hour sought to lay hands on Him, but they feared the people: for they knew that He had spoken this parable against them (LK 20:19).

Then they came & laid hands on Jesus & took Him. (Matt. 26:50). See LK 21:12; Acts 5:18, etc.

V. WITH THIS BACKGROUND, LET US NOW TURN OUR ATTENTION TO A FEW OF THE MORE DIFFICULT PASSAGES THAT CONTAIN THIS EXPRESSION.

A. Acts 9:10-12, 17-18.

1. The purpose for the laying on of hands is clearly stated in vs. 12.
2. Ananias did not appoint Paul as an apostle. Jesus did that.
3. Ananias did not impart spiritual gifts to Paul. Only an apostle could do that, 8:18. He certainly could not baptize with the Spirit. Only Jesus could do that, LK 3:16.
4. Then, what about vs 17? We need to realize that the phrase “full of the HS” can have more than one meaning, just as “laying on of hands” can have more than one meaning. Ananias’ part in making it possible for Saul to be “filled with the HS” was in teaching Him the gospel which came by revelation of the HS. When Saul believed & obeyed that gospel, he received the gift of the HS as promised in Acts 2:38-39. His head & his heart were filled with the truth that came by the HS.
5. We do not know at what precise moment Paul

received HS baptism & his apostleship began, but neither of these things were accomplished by the hands of Ananias.

B. 1 Tim. 4:14. Do not neglect the gift that is in you which was given to you by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

1. Apparently, the gift that Timothy received by laying on of elders' hands was the **office** of evangelist. "Do not neglect the gift" probably means the same thing as "do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Tim. 4:5).

2. "Which was given to you by prophecy" may suggest that Timothy's appointment as an evangelist was in response to a Divine revelation, just as Paul & Barnabas had been selected to go spread the gospel, Acts 13:2-3.

3. Timothy did have spiritual gifts, but they were given by the laying on of Paul's hands, not by the hands of elders, 2 Tim. 1:6.

C. 1 Tim. 5:22. The context shows that appointing to the office of elder is under consideration, vs. 17-22.

D. Hebrews 6:1-2. This passage probably refers to appointing one to the office of elder. It may include a proper distinction between all the uses of that term, as "baptisms" would imply an understanding of the distinctions between John's baptism, great commission baptism, & the purely ceremonial washings of the Jews.

CONCLUSION: It is hoped that this study may be helpful in making a proper application of the expression "laying on of hands" so that we may be more aware of the full implications of the statement wherever we may find it in the Scriptures.

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