

FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLE IV: LAYING ON OF HANDS

Hebrews 6:1-2 NASB

[1]Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

[2]of instruction about washings and **laying on of hands**, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.

Introduction

Laying on of Hands is our next consideration.

As we have seen thus far, there is much in these foundational principles that harks back to the Old Covenant of Moses. Much here too does. Lev 1:4; 3:2; 3:2; 4:15; 16:21; Num 8:10; 27:18; Deut 34:9.

It is quite clear from these passages that laying on of hands is a matter of identifying one thing or person with another. So, if Moses laid hands on Joshua, he was identifying himself with him and essentially saying that Joshua was to be treated as if he were Moses (Deut 34:9). This is really the whole idea. It is also the principle behind the Lord's use of laying on of hands to heal (Is 53:4; Mt 8:15).

This practice carried on into the early post-Cross days. Ac 8:17; 6:6; 13:3; 28:8; 1 Tim 4:14; 5:22; 2 Tim 1:6.

As has been said, this practice was used to identify the one upon whom hands were laid with the one who was laying hands on them. It made them one. So, what one possessed was thus transferred to the other (Mk 5:30; Lk 8:45-46), or what favor they enjoyed with God was shared with the other in some manner.

This is why in the early post-Cross period, the Apostles would lay hands on some people so that they could receive the Holy Spirit (Ac 8:17-19; 19:6). This happened to identify those new Samaritan and Gentile believers with them and thus enable them to share in God's Promise to the Jews (Jn 4:22).

The Situation In the Apostolic Age

1. Salvation Is From The Jews. The Plan of God for Salvation involved selecting a man out of whom He made a nation through which the Christ would be born Whose Sacrifice would save all of humanity (Gen 12:2-3). In other words, while God was always going to save all humanity, He was more intimately committed to one nation on earth. This is the nation Israel. The flow of history from Adam to Abraham was to preserve the line of the righteous in order to make this nation in which He would preserve a

memory of Himself in the earth (Is 49:6). This is why the Flood happened in Gen 6-9 and why God intervened again at the Tower of Babel debacle in Gen 11. God chose Abraham a little after that to become the patriarch of this nation in question and from that time preserved and shaped this family and nation directly until it became a full-fledged nation with its own geographical boundaries. As small as it was and as many times as it was attacked, the Lord preserved it so that through it He would save the whole world.

Although the doors of salvation were always open to all who wanted to be saved from Adam until the Cross, during the time from the formation of the nation of Israel to the Cross, the majority of believers were Jews. Foreigners certainly chose to join them in Faith and often came to Jerusalem to worship. Naaman the Syrian (2 Ki 5:15,17-19) was one such foreign believer and so was the Ethiopian eunuch in Ac 8:27. But Salvation was IN Israel. But after the Cross, the Lord commanded to have the Gospel taken to non-Jews in an active manner.

These non-Jews (including the Samaritan) would need to respect God's Place for the Jews. Salvation does come from the Jews as the Lord Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the Well of Sychar (Jn 4:22). The Gentiles are always to keep this in mind (Rom 11:17-18). We have been grafted into Israel as wild olive branches. We are not those to whom the Promises were given but through faith of the same kind as Abraham's we have been granted to partake in them. This is why the Lord ordered things so that the early Gentile believers would appreciate their debt to the Jews through whom Salvation was brought to them. Laying on of hands was thus a way for Jewish Apostles to identify the first Gentile believers with them so that they could share in the Gift of the Holy Spirit with them.

2. Association Of Authority. It was also a way to identify new leaders of the churches with the authority of the apostles until the Bible was completed (2 Tim 1:6; 1 Tim 4:14). These leaders acted in the place of the apostles in providing Truth to the churches that they served at that time. Since the Bible was still in the process of being completed at that time, some special gifts were given to cover the lack. It is of such a gift that Paul speaks in 1 Tim 4:14.

The Situation Today

Today, the situation is different. The Lord has given the complete Bible. Those who hear the Gospel now have in it the means of learning all the Truth including that the Church is built on the Foundation of Jewish Apostles and Prophets. So, there is no more need for that demonstration that Salvation comes from the Jews. Also, because the Bible is complete, special gifts through which churches can access the full Truth of God are no longer necessary so there is no further place for imparting such gifts through identification with Apostolic authority. What all that means is that the practice of laying hands on anyone is no longer necessary.

Each believer receives a unique spiritual gift when they are saved. As they grow to maturity, these gifts become more discernible and effective for the Lord in the Church. And the Church has been given pastor-teachers and evangelists now to build it up. These two are spiritual gifts that come from the New

Birth not from laying on of hands. The pastor-teachers have a responsibility to learn from other pastor-teachers and grow to spiritual maturity and then train rigorously in important skills which they require to be able to effectively teach the Bible. There is no Apostle today (although the common belief is that there is) through whom any special gift is given for the purpose of shepherding the Church. So, no laying on of hands on that count either.

Conclusion

The important lesson to take away here is that laying on of hands was the way the Lord associated one thing with another. When our Lord healed the sick by laying hands on them, He "took their infirmities" and shared healing with them. When the apostles laid hands on new believers so that they received the Holy Spirit, that too was an association of Jewish believers with Gentile believers so that the latter could share in the Holy Spirit with the former (Ac 11:17). Now, however, we know from the Bible that faith is what makes us one with the Jews. Because we believe in the Lord Jesus as they do, we have become one with them, one Body with the Lord Jesus Christ. So, each one of us whether Jew or Gentile receives the Holy Spirit once we believe.

Grace be with you.