

What's All This about "Anointing with Oil" and "Laying on of Hands"?

What do you mean, "Laying on of Hands"? Is this needful for receiving God's Holy Spirit? Is it an essential part of baptism itself? Why should hands be placed on people? What is its true meaning? What purpose does it serve? Is this to be part of the ordination of ministers? And what about "anointing" with oil? When should this be done? Who, in Scripture, was "anointed"? Here are answers YOU need to know!

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(Proof-Read For Typographical Errors & Updated May 2018)

Interestingly, when God called such men as Abraham, Moses, Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel to do His service -- to serve Him -- there is no record or account of any of them having "hands" laid upon them.

At the burning bush, God selected and appointed Moses to lead His people out of Egypt, and to perform awesome plagues (God did the plagues, but Moses initiated them by the word of his mouth). When God called Abraham to go to Canaan, to serve Him, Abraham obeyed -- he simply went. There was no "laying on of hands" for the undertaking and setting apart for the mission he was to perform.

The Calling of the Prophets

Again, when God called Isaiah to serve Him, was Isaiah "ordained" by the laying on of hands of men -- even other prophets who preceded him? Not at all! God never worked in that fashion. Notice! Isaiah's calling is explained in chapter 6 of his prophetic book. He records that he saw a vision of God sitting on His throne, with seraphim standing around Him, worshipping Him. Isaiah was shaken by the experience and cried out, "'Woe is me, for I am undone! [that is, destroyed, cut off] Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.' Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal, which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth with it, and said: 'Behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is purged.' Also I

heard the voice of the Lord, saying: 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?' Then I said, 'Here am I! Send me.' And He said, 'Go, and tell this people . . .'" (Isaiah 6:1-9).

Isaiah was called by God to become His servant. There was no "ordination" by laying on of hands involved at all.

Similarly, when Jeremiah was called by God to serve Him, there was no special ceremony of laying on of hands. Rather, we read in Jeremiah, chapter 1: "Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying: 'Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you; before you were born, I sanctified you [set you apart]; I ordained [appointed] you a prophet to the nations'" (Jeremiah 1:4-5).

What was Jeremiah's response? "Then said I: 'Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth.' But the Lord said to me: 'Do not say, "I am a youth," for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of their faces, for I am with you to deliver you,' says the Lord. Then the LORD put forth His hand and *touched my mouth*, and the LORD said to me: 'Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. See, I have this day *set* you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant'" (Jer.1:4-10, NKJV).

Notice! There was no laying on of hands here, in some ritual or ceremony of "ordination." Rather, God "ordained" him a prophet to the nations by merely APPOINTING him to be such! Then, when He touched him, he touched his *mouth!*

Ordination of Priests

When God established the Levitical Priesthood, appointing the tribe of Levi to serve Him at the tabernacle, and appointing the sons of Aaron, Moses' brother, to be the actual priests, He carefully instructed Israel as to the tabernacle or sanctuary itself, its contents, the altar, table of showbread, the menorah, the curtains, the laver for washing, the Ark of the Covenant, and all the attendant details (Exodus 35-38).

God also decreed that the priests should have special garments. "Of the blue, purple, and scarlet thread they made garments [or, woven garments] of ministry, for ministering in the holy place [the sanctuary], and made the holy garments for Aaron, as the Lord had commanded Moses" (Exodus 39:1). When everything was ready, special anointing oil was used to anoint the tabernacle and everything in it (Exo.40:9), including the altar and laver (v.10).

But what about the priests? "Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the door of the tabernacle of meeting and wash them with water. You shall put the holy garments on Aaron, and *anoint him and consecrate him*, that he may minister to Me as priest. And you shall bring his sons and clothe them with tunics. You shall anoint them, as you anointed their father, that they may minister to Me as

priests; for their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations" (Exo.40:12-15).

The anointing oil itself was very special. It was composed of 500 shekels of myrrh, 250 shekels of cinnamon, 250 shekels of sweet-smelling cane, 500 shekels of cassia, and a hin of olive oil (Exo.30:22-25). God said, "And you shall make from these a holy anointing oil, an ointment compounded according to the art of the perfumer. It shall be a holy anointing oil" (v.25). He instructed, "And you shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them [set them apart], that they may minister to Me as priests" (v.30). The priests themselves -- the sons of Aaron -- were set apart for their divine service by being anointed with special anointing oil.

We read further, "And he [Moses] poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head and anointed him, to consecrate him" (Lev.8:12).

There is no mention, however, of any human "laying on of hands" in this anointing. Rather, oil was poured over their heads in the ordination ceremony.

The Anointing of Kings

When Israel later decided they desired to have a king over them, God accepted their proposal, but warned them of the trouble and mischief such a decision would lead to (1 Samuel 8). Nevertheless, He chose their first king, Saul, for them, and told the prophet Samuel, "you shall anoint him commander [prince or ruler] over My people Israel, that he may save My people from the hands of the Philistines" (1 Sam.9:16). Samuel later said to Saul, "The LORD sent me to anoint you king over His people" (1 Sam.15:1). Saul, however, went astray -- his kingship later went to his head, and he disobeyed the commandments of God.

Therefore, God sent Samuel to anoint another. He said to him, "Fill your horn with oil, and go; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided Myself a king among his sons" (1 Sam.16:1). When David came up last among Jesse's sons (he was the eighth son, a "new beginning"), God said to Samuel, "Arise, anoint him; for this is the one!" (v.12). "Then 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" (v.13).

The kings of Israel, down through history, were also "anointed" with oil (see 1 Kings 1:34). God commanded Elijah to also anoint as king of Syria Hazael, and to anoint Jehu as king of Israel, and further commanded, "And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place" (1 Kings 19:16).

In this case, a prophet was specially anointed. This was not generally the practice, but since Elisha was to follow in the "place" of Elijah, with a similar office and calling, God instructed him to

personally "anoint" Elisha, as a demonstration of the conveying or passing on of this same office and spiritual authority.

Again, however, there is no mention anywhere of "laying on of hands." It was not part of the ceremony of anointing and setting apart for spiritual service!

How Christ Chooses His Servants

Likewise, in the New Testament, when Jesus Christ selected His disciples, and appointed them to be apostles, we find no trace of evidence that there was any "laying on of hands" involved in the process or calling! Rather, we find the simple words: "And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then He said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men'" (Matt.4:18-19, NKJV). This was a simple beckoning -- and they were "called" and "chosen." We read: "They immediately left their nets and followed Him."

The Lord then called James and John, two more brothers. We read: "Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him" (vs.20-22).

In another account of their calling, we read in the book of Luke where Jesus was preaching to a crowd, and then saw two boats by the lake, and the fishermen -- Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John -- were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats and asked Peter to launch out into the lake, where He "sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat" (Luke 5:1-4). When He was finished, He asked Peter to go further out into the lake, and to let down their nets. Peter was reluctant, saying to Him that they had fished all night, but caught nothing. Nevertheless, at His word, Peter let down the net -- and behold! Never saw they so great a catch of fish -- so many that they were breaking the net! -- so many that they signaled to the other boat, and both boats were filled with fish, to the very point of sinking! (vs.4-7).

Can you imagine it? "When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!' For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men.' So when they brought their boats to land, they forsook all [left behind all] and followed Him" (Luke 5:8-11).

Do you see any "laying on of hands" here? Of course not!

We know how Christ chose the apostles. We read, "Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to

cast out demons" (Mark 3:14). Notice again -- these men were chosen, appointed, but there is no mention at all of "ordination," as the world thinks of it, anointing with oil, or "laying on of hands"!

Later, Jesus tells His disciples, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you" (John 15:16).

They were chosen -- *appointed* to become "apostles" -- but there was simply NO "laying on of hands" required, or any special "ceremony" of any kind, whatsoever! The word "appointed" in this verse is translated "ordained" in the King James Version. It is the Greek word *tithemi* and means literally "to place," in the widest application, as in "advise, appoint, bow, commit, conceive, give, make, ordain, purpose, put, set (forth)," etc.

Ordination in the Church

How were ministers and elders chosen and selected in the early church?

Many churches today practice a custom of having ministers "ordain" others to the ministry by "laying on of hands," and sometimes also accompanied by "anointing" with oil -- meaning olive oil. Some churches also "raise" a minister in "rank" by a similar "ordination service" involving laying on of hands. Can you find even one single solitary scripture in the entire New Testament about such a practice as "raising in rank" a minister?

This kind of practice for choosing elders and ministers is NOT found in the Scriptures! It is rather a custom that is a carry-over from Babylon, Mystery Religion -- the custom followed by the Daughter of Babylon, the Whore of Rome, the Roman Catholic Church!

Rather, in the Scriptures, we find that GOD is the One who places servants in His Church, and gives them different "offices" or duties. "And *God has appointed* these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps," etc. (1 Cor.12:28). Notice! Not men, but GOD does this. How do we know, then, which gifts and responsibilities a particular man has? *By His fruits!*

Also, we read in Ephesians, "And *He Himself gave some* to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting" (Ephesians 4:11-14, NKJV).

There is no hint in these passages that ministers, at their appointing, were to have "hands" laid on them, or that they were to be anointed with oil. Notice again! "And *He Himself* gave" out these various offices and ministries in the Church! *God* places each one in the body of Christ, in the Church -- "But *God* has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as *He* pleased" (1 Cor.12:18). God does these things -- not men!

Why, then, have many churches, following the example of the Roman Catholic Church, the fount of all apostasy and ringleader in the movement away from God's truth, accepted their methodology of "ordination" of priests and bishops, with laying on of hands? Let's understand!

What Do You Mean, "Ordained"?

An example of ordination in the early church is found in Titus 1:5 where we read Paul's words to Titus, an evangelist: "For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and *ordain elders* in every city, as I had appointed thee." The New King James Bible makes this more clear: "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and *APPOINT ELDERS* in every city as I commanded you."

In the book of Acts, we also read: "So when they [Paul and Barnabas] had *appointed elders* in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed" (Acts 14:23). Notice that this selection of elders was accompanied with fasting and prayer. But there is no mention at all of any "laying on of hands"! It was not necessary. These men were appointed as "elders" or leaders in the local churches by the apostles and leaders -- in this case, by Paul and Barnabas.

The Greek word for "ordained" or "appointed" is the word *kathistemi*, and means "to place down (permanently), i.e., designate, constitute, convey -- appoint, be, conduct, make, ordain, set." It simply means to appoint, select, or choose -- to designate or set in office.

At no time and in no place is there ever any indication that this act, of itself, EVER involved the so-called "laying on of hands" of the ministry of the Church!

A Special Ministry

Where, then, does the "laying on of hands" come into the picture? Does the Bible discuss it? Indeed it does! Let's understand!

Notice Acts 13. We read: "Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger; Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit

said, 'Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' Then, having fasted and prayed, *and laid hands on them*, they sent them away" (verse 1-3).

This was the beginning of Barnabas' and Saul's first journey preaching the gospel in the Greek-speaking world. The hands of the elders and prophets were laid upon Barnabas and Saul -- but this was definitely not an "ordination" ceremony. They were already appointed by God to be apostles and servants. Paul himself was taught by Christ in the desert of Arabia (Gal.1:11-17), by revelation. He had already been appointed to be an apostle (Acts 9:15).

The laying on of hands, therefore, in this instance was simply a way of *blessing* these men, and committing them into God's hands, as they prayed over them and for them, before they departed on this ground-breaking journey preaching the gospel in new regions where it had never before been preached. But for "ordination," it was not required, and there is no evidence that it was involved.

Notice also the passage in Acts 6, where we read of a problem that came up in the early church. Some of the widows were being neglected (verses 1-2). We read, "Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, 'It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.' And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them" (Acts 6:2-6).

The apostles asked the congregation to select seven men of good reputation to deal with this matter. Philip and Stephen were two of those who were set apart for this service. This passage plainly says these men had hands placed upon them, after the apostles prayed, and set them apart for this special service.

But this passage of Scripture does not refer to this laying on of hands as some sort of "ordination." They were not anointed with oil. Rather, they were "BLESSED" by the apostles, as they began this new ministry in the church!

The Laying on of Hands

The first account in the Bible of "laying on of hands" is in Genesis 48. Joseph brings his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh before his father, Israel (Jacob), when he is old, and soon to die. On this occasion, we read: "Then Israel saw Joseph's sons, and said, 'Who are these?' And Joseph said to his father, 'They are my sons, whom God has given me in this place.' And he said, 'Please bring them to me, *and I will BLESS them*'" Gen.48:8-9).

"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 firstborn. And he *blessed* Joseph, and said: 'God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, The God who has fed me all my life long to this day, The Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, BLESS THE LADS; Let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth" (Gen.48:14-16).

"Now when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him; so he took hold of his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. And Joseph said to his father, 'Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head.' But his father refused and said, 'I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall become great; but truly his younger brother shall become GREATER than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations'" (Gen.48:17-19).

In verse 20 we read, "So he blessed them that day, saying, 'By you Israel will bless, saying, "May God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh!" And thus he set Ephraim before Manasseh."

Notice, this was an account of a BLESSING placed upon CHILDREN! Israel, or Jacob, laid his hands on the heads of the lads, and then *blessed them* in the name of the Lord. They were not "ordained," but BLESSED! And notice, there was no "anointing oil" involved -- but simply a blessing!

The laying on of hands, then, confers a BLESSING -- it is not some kind of "ordination" as such at all!

A Special Ministry -- Healing the Sick

A rather unique example of the blessing of laying on of hands is in found in the New Testament. We read in the book of Mark, that Jesus gave special spiritual power or authority to His twelve disciples. "So they went out and preached that people should repent. And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them" (Mark 6:12-13).

Jesus' last instructions to His disciples, where He said: "And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons . . . they will *lay hands on the sick*, and they will recover" (Mark 16:17-18).

In the book of James we read a very interesting account relating to this power. James tells us: '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. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses one to another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent [supplication] prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:14-16).

Laying on of hands was involved in a special miracle relating to the apostle Paul. God had struck Paul down, and blinded him, while he was on the way to Damascus, because of his persecuting the saints. God was calling him to His service. In a vision Paul saw a man named Ananias coming in "and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight" (Acts 9:12).

We read: "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.' Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized" (vs.17-18).

Notice that in this instance we find that the laying on of hands was related to Paul's being *healed of blindness*, and being blessed and filled with God's Spirit. After this, he was baptized, as an outward sign of his newfound faith and belief in Jesus Christ, Yeshua the Messiah! But the laying on of hands was not part of the baptism itself! There was no direct connection between the two things. In this case, the laying on of hands came FIRST -- for healing -- and later, afterwards, Paul was baptized, as an outward sign of his repentance and acceptance of Christ as his Saviour and Redeemer!

There is no connection indicated in this passage between the laying on of hands and the act of baptism. Paul had hands laid upon him for healing, first, and then, **AFTERWARDS**, he was baptized as a symbolic act of his conversion and acceptance of Christ as his Saviour..

Laying on of Hands and Baptism

Is the laying on of hands, then, commanded, and necessary, when a person is baptized for remission of sins, as an expression of their faith in God and conversion?

Baptism, itself, pictures our old "man" being buried unto death, and our coming up out of that watery "grave" as a new man, a new creation, in Christ. Paul wrote, "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed [margin, cleared] from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him" (Romans 6:4-8).

Baptism, then, is an act of symbolic significance. It pictures the burial of our old "self," in a watery grave, and the resurrection of our "new self" in Christ, and in His likeness, from that watery grave. The laying on of hands is not a part of the picture. It is therefore not normally necessary when a person is baptized! Notice!

Before Jesus ascended to heaven, He commanded His disciples, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, *baptizing them* in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt.28:18-19). Notice that there is no mention here of the "laying on of hands."

Furthermore, on the day of Pentecost, when the New Testament Church began, Peter commanded the repentant crowds, "Then Peter said to them, Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

Again, there is no mention of the need of any "laying on of hands" to accompany the baptism!

Also, when Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, we read that "He remained with them and baptized" (John 3:22). The Pharisees soon "heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples)" (John 4:1-2). In these instances, there is no account of any "laying on of hands" to accompany the baptism.

Jesus Himself set us an example, by being baptized by John the Baptist. When this was done, we read, "When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, 'You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased'" (Luke 4:21-22).

Here again, in this example which Jesus set for us, there is no mention of any laying on of hands. It was not necessary!

In the case of Cornelius, the Roman centurion, and his family, we discover that when Peter preached to them, introducing them to the true gospel of Jesus Christ and salvation, that as he was preaching "the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word" (Acts 10:44).

Peter then exclaimed, "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (verse 47-48). Again, no laying on of hands was required. They had already received the Holy Spirit!

Exceptions to the Rule: When Laying on of Hands Is Needed

Later, in Acts 8, we read of Philip who went down to Samaria to preach the gospel for the first time to the Samaritans. Multitudes believed his message, and were baptized. At the time, Philip was

still a deacon in the church, but he was also filled with God's Spirit. When the Samaritans repented, they were baptized. We read, "But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized" (Acts 8:12).

They were baptized as a sign of their repentance. However, they did not receive God's Spirit at this time. God withheld it, evidently for a purpose. These were, remember, Samaritans, and they had no concourse with the Jews. There was a lot of enmity and hostility between the two groups (compare John 4:9).

When the apostles at Jerusalem heard that the Samaritans had received the gospel, they sent Peter and John to them, "who, when they had come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet he had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they *laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 8:14-17).

On this special occasion, since they had not received the Holy Spirit upon their baptism, to complete the process, Peter and John were sent to pray for them, and they laid hands on them to bless them, and God gave them the Holy Spirit! By sending the apostles, the whole Church then recognized that even the Samaritans were acceptable to God, when they repented and turned to Him. Apparently, Philip's stature and authority, in the eyes of the brethren, at this point, was not sufficient for such an important advance of the gospel to a new region. Therefore, the appearance of the apostles, and their prayers, placed God's stamp of approval to the ministry that Philip had begun among the Samaritans. In this case, the "laying on of hands" was itself symbolic of the fact that Samaritans, too, could and did receive God's Holy Spirit.

We read of a similar case in Acts 19. An eloquent preacher by the name of Apollos was leading many to conversion in Ephesus, in Asia Minor. But he only knew about the baptism of repentance, taught by John the Baptist. Luke records, "This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately" (Acts 18:24-26).

Later, Paul came to Ephesus and found some disciples who had repented at the preaching of Apollos. He asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, 'We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.' And he said to them, 'Into what then were you baptized?' So they said, 'Into John's baptism.' Then Paul said, 'John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.' When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had *laid hands on them*, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues [languages] and prophesied" (Acts 19:2-6).

Notice that these men had already been baptized. Their baptism was done properly, so they did not need to be baptized all over again. But since they had not understood about Christ being the Messiah and Saviour, they had not received the Holy Spirit. Therefore, Paul did not feel it necessary to baptize them again, but he did lay hands upon them, and pray for them to receive the Holy Spirit -- and at that

moment God then gave them His Holy Spirit! In this case, the laying on of hands by God's apostle was necessary -- as in the case of the new converts in Samaria. But generally speaking, this is the exception to the rule, and not the rule itself!

The Right and Wrong Way

The study of anointing, laying on of hands, and how God uses these things in the history of God's people, is truly amazing, unique, and wonderful. However, it is important that we understand these things properly, and do things the right way. Solomon warned, "There is a way that *seems right* to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Proverbs 14:12).

There is a time to "lay hands on" people, and to anoint them, and a time not to. Appointing ministers is not one of those times. Laying hands on and anointing the sick is definitely a proper time to do so. When we are blessing people, or children, this is a proper time to "lay hands on" them -- or to stretch out our hands in blessing toward them, as in the case of a large group or congregation.

Priests of God were to be anointed with a special anointing oil; but not ministers of the New Covenant. Prophets were generally called directly by God. Only one that we know of was "anointed" specifically to be another's successor in his prophetic office.

If we grasp these principles correctly, we can avoid much danger, mischief, and peril in the church in the future! If you have been immersed in baptism, having repented on your sins, and accepted Christ as your Saviour, and your life demonstrates that you have received God's Holy Spirit, then there is no need to be baptized again, or to have hands laid upon you. As Paul said, "Whatsoever is not from faith is sin" (Rom.14:23). But if you feel you never received God's Spirit, and you have not been sincerely striving to obey God in your life, then you may want to reconsider your baptism and conversion! Jesus said, "You will know them by their fruits" (Matt.7:20).