

The Ancient Roots of Supernatural Anointing

Is there a biblical precedent for the impartation of anointing? Is this doctrine and practice a part of our orthodox Christian heritage, or is it just a bizarre blip on the timeline?

These questions about impartation stir up a whole range of opinions and cause controversy that still swirls around today's renewal movement. It is my heart's desire to provide some common ground in the area of a scriptural and historical understanding of impartation, with the aim being to "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3).

The writer of Hebrews clearly considers "the laying on of hands" as so basic to the Christian life that he refers to it as foundational and as an elementary teaching of the apostolic Church:

"Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, *the laying on of hands*, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And God permitting, we will do so" (Heb. 6:1-3, emphasis added).

The Bible teaches in both the Old and New Testaments the principle of a person receiving an anointing from God. This anointing may be a gift or gifts of the Spirit, a filling of the Holy Spirit (especially for power) or the baptism in the Holy Spirit. This idea of impartation or transference of anointing is a strong biblical concept. In Brazil, where I frequently minister, the best translation of the English word impartation is, in fact, the phrase "transference of the

anointing.” I believe this understanding will be helpful for those who are unfamiliar with the term “impartation.”

As we look at biblical examples, we see that this anointing often came through the laying on of hands. But let me make an important clarification: The laying on of hands is certainly not the only way of receiving an impartation from God. It is simply one of two ways seen in Scripture. The other way is waiting on God through prayer. That second way is a means often forgotten and neglected by the church, so I have therefore emphasized it a number of times in the book from which this article is taken.

Old Testament Impartation

Let’s take a look at some Old Testament passages documenting this idea of impartation. The first reference to the concept of impartation is in Num. 11:16–18 (emphasis added): “The Lord said to Moses: ‘Bring me seventy of Israel’s elders who are known to you as leaders and officials among the people. Have them come to the Tent of Meeting, that they may stand there with you. I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take of the Spirit that is on you and put the Spirit on them. They will help you carry the burden of the people so that you will not have to carry it alone.’”

This passage makes no mention of Moses laying his hands on the elders for them to receive, but the concept of a transference of the anointing that is on one man to the others is clearly present. Equally evident from the Numbers text is the principle that this is not something man can do; it is an act of God, totally dependent on His calling and anointing.

In Deut. 34:9, again we see a transference of anointing: “Now Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him.” This time, specific mention is made of Joshua receiving or being filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses laid hands on him. With or without the

actual laying on of hands, though, the transference of anointing is clearly a biblically documented, God-initiated event.

Another example is found in 2 Kings 2:9-15, the famous passage that tells of Elijah's anointing being transferred to his spiritual son, Elisha. This passage indicates that it is possible to receive an anointing similar to that of another person. When Elisha begged, "Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit" (v. 9), he was not asking for the power of Elijah's human spirit, but for the Spirit of God to work through him as it did through his teacher. Likewise, when the people said, "The spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha" (v. 15), they did not mean that Elisha had received power literally from the spirit of the man Elijah, but that the Spirit of God was indeed working through Elisha in a powerful way similar to what they had witnessed in Elijah.

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