

MORMON SCRIPTURE: The Articles of Faith, Part X

By Marvin W. Cowan

Our previous discussions of the fourth LDS Article of Faith included faith, repentance, and baptism. We will now consider the final item in the fourth Article of Faith, "Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost." According to LDS Apostle James Talmage this involves "confirmation into the [LDS] Church" which is done shortly after baptism (*Articles of Faith*, p. 166). The fifth Article of Faith shows that LDS also use "Laying on of hands" in other ways when it says, "We believe that a man must be called of God by prophecy, and by the *laying on of hands by those who are in authority* to preach the gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof."

Who are "those in authority?" Mormonism claims it is only those who have the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods conferred upon them in the Mormon Church (*Doctrine & Covenants* 107:1). The sixth LDS Prophet, Joseph F. Smith, wrote, "What is the Priesthood? It is nothing more or less than the power of God delegated to man by which man can act in the earth for the salvation of the human family... by which they may *baptize for the remission of sins* and lay on hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost, and *by which they can remit sins* with the sanction and blessing of Almighty God. It is the same power and priesthood that was committed to the disciples of Christ while He was upon the earth..." (*Gospel Doctrine*, p. 73).

Milton R. Hunter wrote a book under the direction of the LDS General Authorities saying, "Adam also received the keys of the holy Priesthood after the Order of the Son of God directly from Jesus Christ, and he in turn bestowed it upon his posterity. *Priesthood is probably the most important single item in the Gospel*. Without it the ordinances could not be performed; neither could the true Church be established" (*Gospel Through the Ages*, p. 61).

Mormonism's founding Prophet, Joseph Smith, also declared, "The Priesthood was first given to Adam; he obtained the First Presidency, and held the keys of it from generation to generation. He obtained it in the Creation, before the world was formed.... He is Michael, the Archangel, spoken of in the scripture. Then to Noah, who is Gabriel; he stands next in authority to Adam in the priesthood.... The Priesthood is an everlasting principle, and existed with God from eternity, and will to eternity, without beginning of days or end of years. The keys have to be brought from heaven whenever the Gospel is sent. When they are revealed from heaven, it is by Adam's authority" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 157).

Since Mormonism claims to be Christian they must meet Christian standards when they make claims like those above. Mormons cannot use their "latter day revelations" as proof that their doctrines were taught by Christians in New Testament times. If LDS can make such claims, other cults could claim they also received revelations restoring lost Christian doctrines that contradict what Mormonism teaches! Genuinely Christian doctrine will be found in the New Testament and in authentic early Christian documents.

Having clarified what can or cannot be accepted as Christian doctrine, please notice that none of the above LDS claims give any Biblical reference to support them. The Bible does not say that the Holy Ghost (Spirit) can only be received by the laying on of hands as the fourth LDS Article of Faith states. Acts 2:4 says the Holy Spirit filled all of the men and

women in the upper room on the day of Pentecost, but there is no mention of hands being laid on anyone. In Acts 8:17-18 the apostles laid their hands on the new Samaritan believers and they received the Holy Spirit. But, in Acts 10:44-48 Peter was still speaking to Cornelius and those with him when “*the Holy Ghost fell on all them* who heard the word.” Verse 45 continues, “And they of the circumcision who believed were astonished as many as came with Peter, because on the Gentiles also was *poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.*” Thus, in the New Testament, hands were laid on *some* people when they received the Holy Spirit, but many others received the Holy Spirit *without* any “laying on of hands.”

Mormonism claims those who preach the gospel and administer ordinances must be “called of God by prophecy and *by the laying on of hands* by those in authority,” but no such command or example exists in the New Testament. When the Lord sent the 12 Apostles out to preach nobody laid hands on them. Jesus did lay His hands upon the little children in Matthew 19:13-15, but it would be absurd to think He gave them authority to preach! Philip and Stephen had hands laid on them when they were appointed as deacons to serve tables (Acts 6:2-6) but *not* when they went out to preach the gospel (Acts 6:8-10; 8:5, 35). Even when the qualifications for bishops (pastors) and deacons were given in I Timothy 3:1-13, no instructions were given for hands to be laid on them. Timothy received a gift through the laying on of hands (I Tim. 4:14; II Tim. 1:6) but it does not say it was a gift to preach the gospel!

Mormonism claims that the power to preach the gospel and administer ordinances is called the “priesthood.” But neither Christ nor the Apostles ever taught that “priesthood” was necessary to preach the gospel or to perform ordinances. The Jewish Priests and high priests in the New Testament still functioned under Old Testament law. But Christ is the believer’s *eternal* High Priest so that no one else can function in that office (Heb. 7:21-25). The only other priesthood in the New Testament is the holy or royal priesthood every true believer in Christ has, which is very different from LDS priesthood.

Next month we will look further into the LDS claim about Priesthood as taught in the fifth Article of Faith. For more information about LDS Priesthood or what the Bible says about it, see my chapter on Priesthood in *Mormon Claims Answered*.