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The Oracles

Baptisms

Laying on of Hands

Resurrection of the Dead

Basic Principles #3

THE ORACLES OF GOD

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To my wife Teresa and children for their love and support

Preface

In his letter to the Hebrews, the author provides a list of the six basic doctrines of Christ also called the basic principles of the oracles of God. Historically, an oracle was known as someone through whom a god would utter hidden knowledge or divine purpose. Upon close review of these basic principles, it will become evident that God reveals His secrets to those who embrace Him. The believers to whom this letter is written had fallen short of God's expectation. They had failed to master the knowledge found in the six basic oracles of God. According to the writer, they should have already grasped these foundational principles. It was not the case. Note the list of the six basic doctrines:

- Repentance from Dead Works
- Faith Toward God
- Doctrine of Baptisms
- Laying on of Hands
- Resurrection of the Dead
- Eternal Judgment

The problem we find in this letter is not uncommon. As I visit churches here and abroad, I find that most believers are unable to express or voice an opinion about these basic ideas. The writer of the letter encourages the reader to move on to perfection, but maybe it would good to pause and review these six teachings before we proceed. It may be that the lack of our understand may cause us to stumble as we move into a higher plane of service to God. As we study these basic principles of the oracles of God, we will discover not only hidden knowledge, but also God's wonderful plan.

This study, we will focus on the following three doctrines:

- Baptisms
- Laying on of Hands
- Resurrection of the Dead

TABLE OF CONTENTS

BAPTISMS

THE BAPTISM OF WATER ACCORDING TO JOHN THE BAPTIST

THE BAPTISM OF WATER ACCORDING TO THE APOSTLES

THE MEANING OF WATER BAPTISM

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

THE TIMELINE

SYMBOLIC MEANING OF BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

THE BAPTISM OF FIRE

CONCLUSION

LAYING ON OF HANDS

LAYING ON OF HANDS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

LAYING ON OF HANDS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

THE APPLICATION

CONCLUSION

RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

WHAT IS RESURRECTION?

EVIDENCE OF VICTORY OVER DEATH

RECEIPT OF ETERNAL LIFE

HOW CAN I RECEIVE ETERNAL LIFE?

WHO WILL BE RESURRECTED?

THE STATE OF OUR PHYSICAL BODY NOW

THE DOCTRINE OF BAPTISMS

The writer to the Hebrews informs his readers about his expectation, namely, to understand and master the doctrine of baptisms. The idea of baptism was not born in the Christian community. Christian water baptism is primarily drawn from the Jewish practice of baptisms or washings. It is not the goal of this study to review the Jewish idea of baptism, but instead to study about its content from the New Testament writings. The various types of baptisms found in the New Testament, are as follows:

- Baptism of Water according to John the Baptist and the Apostles
- Baptism of the Holy Spirit
- Baptism of Fire

THE BAPTISM OF WATER ACCORDING TO JOHN THE BAPTIST

John the Baptist was sent by God to baptize with water. Jesus declared that his baptism was from heaven. John baptized all who came to him in various places, such as:

- the wilderness
- the Jordan
- beyond the Jordan
- in Aenon near to Salim because there was much water there

Scripture informs us that the Pharisees, Sadducees and lawyers came to John's baptisms to observe but refused to participate. The Bible states that they rejected the counsel of God. These religious leaders were called a generation of vipers. John had one question for them, "who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

John fulfilled all righteousness and baptized Jesus in the Jordan. Upon coming out of the water, Jesus prayed and saw the heavens open. He witnessed the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon him.

John preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins to all the people of Israel and taught them to believe on Christ Jesus.

Again, what was the emphasis of John's baptism? The evidence indicates that John's baptism focused on the following:

- Repentance for the remission of sins
- Belief on Jesus as Messiah

THE BAPTISM OF WATER ACCORDING TO THE APOSTLES

The writer of the Acts states the apostle Paul received his sight and was baptized. Paul, in turn, baptized others in the name of Christ. The apostles baptized men (i.e. Paul, Simon, a Eunuch, Crispus), women, households (i.e. jailer) and the multitudes. (3000 in Acts).

As to the **METHOD OF WATER BAPTISM**, Jesus instructed his disciples to baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The record indicates that baptism was carried out in the name of Jesus, in the name of the Lord, in the name of the Lord Jesus and in the name of Christ. Instruction often preceded the practice of baptism and its recipients were baptized immediately (Phillip and Eunuch). Those who were baptized were said to call upon the Lord.

As to the **PREREQUISITE OF WATER BAPTISM**, those baptized firstly received instruction from the Word (things concerning the kingdom of God or things concerning the name of Jesus). Those baptized believed the Gospel, repented and believe in the Lord. Some were baptized prior to receiving the Holy Spirit, whereas others were baptized after receiving the Holy Spirit.

In the book of Acts, Peter seems to provide a possible order of events and experience in the life of the believer. Those who added to the church:

- Heard and received the message
- Repented
- Were baptized in the name of Jesus symbolizing the remission of sins
- Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit

THE MEANING OF WATER BAPTISM

As to the apostolic **MEANING OF WATER BAPTISM**, Scripture indicates that it symbolizes the washing away or forgiveness of sins. The meaning of baptism seems to be straight forward. The practice itself does not seem to provide any benefit, but does point to a divine truth. It represented being buried with Christ into his death.

Again, on the negative side, baptism represents the washing away of our sins. When we are water baptized, we, along with our guilt, failure and sins are buried with Christ. All those things brought in by the curse of sin through Adam are now buried. This is what it means to be baptized.

There is also a positive meaning. Scripture teaches that baptism also symbolizes being immersed into Christ as well as putting on Christ.

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

As we move through the four accounts of the gospel, we are informed that Father baptized His Son with the Holy Spirit. As Jesus was being baptized in water, the Holy Spirit was said to descend upon him in bodily shape (as a dove) while a voice from heaven declared, this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.

After the resurrection and ascension of Christ, 120 individuals, in obedience to the command of Christ, gathered in an upper room to await the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. As they waited, they heard a sound from heaven. It was like a rushing mighty wind that filled the house. There appeared cloven tongues like as of a fire that sat upon each of them. Scripture records that they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance.

Peter immediately made a connection between the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the upper room and the prophet Joel. He quoted,

“In the last days, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh. Your sons and daughters will prophesy and see visions. Your old men will dream dreams. I will pour out my Spirit upon my servants & handmaidens. They will prophecy.”

THE TIMELINE

As we chronologically follow the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we discover the following timeline:

- Jesus receives the promise of the Holy Ghost without measure.
- Jesus teaches his disciples about the Holy Spirit.
- Jesus breathes on the twelve and says, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”
- Jesus gives the church the Great Commission
- Jesus commands his disciples to wait to be endued with power

After his death, resurrection and ascension,

- Father and Son sent the Holy Spirit to the church.
- The disciples (120) are filled with the Holy Spirit.
- The disciples are empowered to witness.

The apostles minister the Holy Spirit through their message and laying on of hands. On one occasion, while Peter spoke, the Holy Spirit fell on those that heard the Word of God. Both Jew and Gentile were recipients of the gift. All the disciples were filled with both joy and the Holy Spirit.

Repeatedly in the accounts of the gospel, we are informed of the following:

- John baptized with water unto repentance
- Jesus baptized with the Holy Spirit
- Jesus baptized with fire

The baptism or the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was not a single experience in Scripture. There was an outpouring to the Jews in Jerusalem. There was an outpouring to the Gentiles. The Holy Spirit poured out his power throughout the Acts. While laying hands on those who believed, the Holy Spirit would fill them. Peter preached repentance, baptized in water and then introduced the gift of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 19, a group of disciples had been baptized in water but were unaware of the Holy Spirit. They were re-baptized in the name of the Lord and received the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit has already been sent from Father and Son and is available to those who believe. To those who repent, receive the gift of Christ, the gift of forgiveness, the gift of eternal life, Father and Son offer the gift of the Holy Spirit.

SYMBOLIC MEANING OF BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Peter declared that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit signified that Jesus had been inaugurated as both Lord and Christ. Holy Spirit baptism is firstly a declaration of the Lordship of Jesus. The apostle Paul informs us that this baptism also brings us into the one body of Christ. When we review the activity of the Holy Spirit in the Scripture, it becomes evident that he is the member of the Godhead who is responsible for applying the purpose Father conceived and the Son accomplished.

The Holy Spirit brings us to life and empowers us. He is said to deposit a new nature into us. He desires to refresh, renovate and make changes in us for the better. He searches out the deep things of God and unveils them to us. He reveals those things God has freely given, produces fruit in us and proceeds to distribute wonderful ministry-gifts to us. He also intercedes for us according to Father's will when we pray.

The Holy Spirit does not only visit us once, but is present to continuously empower, strengthen, comfort and fill us for divine service. Paul states, "be being filled with and controlled by the Holy Spirit."

THE BAPTISM OF FIRE

There is not much written about the baptism of fire. John informs us that Jesus came to baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. There are several references made to fire in Scripture.

The positive references to fire deal with the purifying work of God in the life of the believer. On and off, believers will have to endure afflictions, tribulations and persecutions. These experiences do not destroy, but purify and make us stronger. The fire prepares us to become ideal servants to God.

The negative references to fire deal with the eternal punishment of the nonbeliever. Scripture also speaks about a day in which the devil, his angels, and those who disobey the gospel will be cast into a lake of fire. I believe a case could be made for both views.

CONCLUSION

Water baptism symbolizes the **taking away** from us something old. Water baptism points to the work Christ has accomplished as he washed away and buried our sin and all that was brought into being as a result of Adam's disobedience.

Holy Spirit baptism symbolizes the **arrival of** something new. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit firstly declares the inauguration of Jesus as both Lord and Christ and represents the arrival and indwelling of divine life. Today, we possess God's life because of the Work of the Holy Spirit in us.

Baptism of fire symbolizes the continuous purifying and sanctifying work of God. The sufferings we endure do not destroy, but bring profit to us. The light afflictions we face are not worthy to be compared with the glory which will be manifested. If we are chastened, it is because we are loved. In this case, a baptism of fire is positive and temporal. This baptism prepares us for service.

Baptism of fire may also refer to God's judgement in both time and eternity. The wicked will be judged with a baptism of fire. Their baptism is eternal. Scripture informs us that those who reject God will be cast into a lake of fire along with the devil and his rebellious angels.

Water baptism takes away our trash. Spirit baptism brings to us God's treasure. Fire baptism prepares us to serve.

THE LAYING ON OF HANDS

Historically, the laying on of hands has been a means for the transfer of blessing, authority and distinctiveness. Unfortunately, its practice has been lost to many churches. Prior to ascending into heaven, Jesus declared to the his disciples, “these signs shall follow those who believe... they shall lay hands upon...” The command is part of the Great Commission and is issued to every believer. We have been called to transfer blessing to others. In this study, we will provide a brief overview of the idea of laying on of hands in both Old and New Testaments and then discuss the benefits of its practice.

Laying on of Hands in the Old Testament

There are various examples and reasons for the laying on of hands in the Old Testament.

Through the laying of hands...

- the Aaronic priests were **purified for service** to God
- **Guilt** and **judgement** were **transferred** to an animal
- **Authority** was **transferred** (Moses and Joshua)
- A **verdict** was **accepted** (witness placed hands upon a guilty person)
- A special **blessing** was **transferred** (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob)

Laying on of Hands in the New Testament

There also many examples and reasons for the laying on of hands in the New Testament. Jesus, the apostles, the disciples, the church and elders laid of hands upon infants, children, men and women in order...

- to transfer **heal**
- to transfer a **blessing** or **impart a spiritual gift**
- to transfer the **Holy Spirit**
- to **stir up the gift** of God resident in a believer
- to **prepare believers for service**
- to **send believer forth** to ministry

In the Old Testament, the laying on of hands transferred guilt, judgement, authority, and blessing. The practice purified men for service, and indicated the acceptance of a verdict. In the New Testament the practice was used to transfer healing, blessing, spiritual gifts, and the Holy Spirit. It was used to stir up a gift resident in a believer and symbolized participation when sending out God’s servants to do divine work.

The examples above highlight the importance of the laying on of hands. Note that the word 'transfer' is used repeatedly when dealing with this practice. Remember, when our hands touch another, God may chose to transfer something to that individual.

The Application

The laying on of hands should not be an option. If we fail to lay hands upon those in need, it may be that we will rob them of God's blessing. This practice includes both a divine and human component. The visible part of the practice (laying on of hands) is simple. We touch the one in need. The invisible component deals with God's activity. God is responsible for the transfer of blessing. If we obey (touch), it is possible that God may act. (exercise His power)

Human hands cannot impart anything. God uses human hands to do His work. God, in essence, commands us to lay hands on those in need while He exercises His power to restore, renew and revive.

Conclusion

The laying on of hands should be part of the ministry of every believer. We should not hesitate to touch others when we pray for them. It may be that God will chose to impart something divine (a gift, the Holy Spirit, a call) or exercise His power to heal. When we send forth workers to do ministry, we should identify ourselves with them by laying our hands upon them to pray. When we pray for others, we should expect God to impart blessing upon them. When we consecrate our children, we should do it by laying hands upon them and should expect God to transfer something divine. May the Lord recover this practice and may it bring blessing to us and those to whom we minister.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

Death is a topic that strikes more fear on the human heart than any other. The writer to the Hebrews (2:14-15) informs us that Jesus took part of flesh and blood in order to accomplish two things:

- to destroy him (the devil) that had the power of death
- to deliver those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage

Since the beginning of time, the human race has been plagued by two enemies - the devil who holds the power of death and the fear of death itself. The good news is that Jesus has come to rescue us from both the devil, who holds the power of death, as well as the fear he inflicts upon the human race. Scripture teaches that Jesus swallowed up death in victory. We will one day declare, "Death, where is your sting? Grave, where is your victory?"

WHAT IS RESURRECTION?

Resurrection is the experience of being brought back to life after death. In Scripture, it carries a two-fold meaning. First, it is the **evidence of victory over death** and secondly the **receipt of eternal life**.

EVIDENCE OF VICTORY OVER DEATH

There are several examples of evidence of victory over death in both Old and New Testaments. The following list is a record of those individuals who were resurrected after they had died.

In the Old Testament:

- Elijah resurrected the son of Zarephath's widow (1 Kings 17:17-24)
- Elisha resurrected the son of the great Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4:35)
- A dead man came back to life when he came into contact with Elisha's bones (Kings 13:21)

In the New Testament:

- Jesus resurrected the widow's son at Nain (Luke 7:13-15)
- Jesus resurrected Jairus' daughter (Matthew 9:25; Mark 5:42; and Luke 8:55)
- Jesus resurrected Lazarus (John 11:43-44)

- Many saints are resurrected at Jesus' crucifixion (Matt. 27:52-53)
- Peter resurrected a female disciple named Tabitha (Acts 9:36-42)
- Paul resurrected Eutychus (Acts 20:9-12)
- Paul may have been raised from the dead (Acts 14:19-20)

All the examples provided above have two things in common. First, they were resurrected and overcame death. Secondly, they all died again. They were all defeated by death and await a final day of resurrection. How do one come back from the dead without being conquered by death again?

RECEIPT OF ETERNAL LIFE

God promised eternal life before the world began. Resurrection not only deals with the **coming back from the dead**, it must also include the **receipt of eternal life** (everlasting life, divine life). The difference between the resurrection of the individuals listed above and that of Jesus is that his resurrection permanently overcame death. Death had no dominion over him. In fact, Jesus abolished death and brought life and immortality to light. Though he died, he saw no corruption. I don't know about you, but I want the experience Jesus had. Scripture teaches that he is himself the embodiment of both resurrection and eternal life.

The Bible not only promises a **hope of coming back from the dead**, but also **offers eternal life**. I do not just want to come back from the dead. The Bible informs us that every human being is going to experience resurrection. (just and unjust) I want to make sure that I am not conquered by death again. Jesus declared if you believe in Father and that He sent me, though you are dead, you will possess eternal life. Receiving eternal life ensures that we are not overcome by death. Death is too weak to overcome eternal life. (everlasting life, divine life, God-kind of life) Eternal life is divine life. Eternal life is God's life. It cannot be touched by death.

HOW CAN I RECEIVE ETERNAL LIFE?

Jesus informs us that in order to receive eternal life we must acknowledge God as Father and believe that He has sent Jesus into the world to be our Savior. Jesus said, if you believe the words I speak, you will receive everlasting life, avoid condemnation and pass from death into life. We must embrace Father as the sender and the Son as sent. We must receive Jesus as our only source of salvation. When we do so, Father will dispense into us life that is eternal in nature (eternal life). Those who reject Jesus as Lord make themselves unworthy of everlasting life.

WHO WILL BE RESURRECTED?

The resurrection of the dead in Scripture applies to every human being. All that are in the grave will hear the voice of Jesus. God has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness. He will raise both the just and unjust. For those who practice the good and receive God's gift in Christ, there will be a resurrection of life. For those who practice evil and reject God's gift in Christ, there will be a resurrection of damnation.

THE STATE OF OUR PHYSICAL BODY NOW

How does Resurrection Power affect us before death?

Before physical resurrection, the Bible teaches us that we are resurrected from spiritual death. Paul states that we were dead in our trespasses and sins. As a result of the work of Christ, Father granted us the following:

- The Gift of Christ
- The Gift of Forgiveness
- The Gift of the Holy Spirit
- The Gift of Eternal Life (the life of God)

The Father and Son have quickened us from the dead. Father called us to eternal life and Jesus brought us to life by giving us living water to drink that has become in us a well that springs up unto everlasting life. Formerly dead in terms of our relationship with Father, we are now alive unto God because of Jesus. We can now bear fruit unto God.

We believe that Father sent His Son into the world and raised him from the dead. We believe that the work Jesus accomplished on earth brings us full salvation. He cancelled our sin debt, rescued us from the wrath of God and delivered us from eternal death and judgement. Father has given us birth unto a lively hope and we now possess a good conscience toward God because of the resurrection of His Son. Father has infused us with his eternal nature and life.

We now walk in newness of life and seek those things which are above where Christ sits at the right hand of God. We are free from the power of sin and bear the fruit of holiness. We sow to the Spirit and have laid hold on eternal life. We live with him. He has made us heirs according to the hope of eternal life. We have been raised with Christ through faith in God's operation.

We have tasted of the good word of God and of the powers of the world to come. The power that raised Christ is now at work in us. Our mortal bodies will be quickened by his Spirit that dwells in us. Though our outward man perishes, our inward man is being renewed day by day. We seek to know the power of his resurrection. Though we have received resurrection life and our relationship with God has been restored inwardly, we wait for Christ from heaven who will bring a resurrection of our body and grant us face to face access to Father where we will enjoy our eternal inheritance.

The State of our Body Now

Why do we consider it incredible that God can raise the dead? It is He who brings to life all things. He is the God of the living.

If we are young and fit, it is possible that the state of our body is a pleasant experience, but as we age, we will note a change in terms of our fitness and sense of well-being. Paul states that our outward man perishes and that we eventually groan in this body. It is a temporary and earthly house. It is called a mortal and vile body, but will be changed by Christ. In fact, Jesus will eventually fashion it like unto his own glorious body. While we are present in this body, we are said to be absent from the Lord.

The State of our Body at Death

When we come to die, we will be buried. Scripture teaches that our body is like a seed that must be planted. It will be buried in corruption, dishonor, and weakness. It is a natural body and is said to bear the image of the earthly. It will be buried as mortal while it quietly awaits resurrection day.

The State of our Body after Resurrection

If we have become a recipient of eternal life, we die in hope of the resurrection of life. When a seed is planted, there is an expectation that something new will flourish. Scripture teaches that those who die in Christ will be raised in glory and power. Our new body will be raised a spiritual body which will bear the image of the heavenly. We will be raised incorruptible and immortal. We will be changed. Our new body will be called a house from heaven and a building of God. It will not be made with hands, but will be a house eternal in the heavens. We will be clothed again. Mortality will be swallowed up of life. We will be present with the Lord. Our new body will be like unto the glorious body of Christ himself and will allow us to enjoy the bliss and glory of God for all eternity. There, we will be called children of the resurrection and be as the angels of God.

OTHER BOOKS AND QUICK READS

BOOKS

The Narratives of Christ (Gospel)
Is God Speaking? (Minor Prophets)
God's Life-Changing Curriculum (An Agent of Change)
Worship (In the New Testament)

QUICK-READS

The Authority of the Believer
Transforming Power
Redeemed from the Curse (Entitled to the Blessing)
Emotional Intelligence (Models: A Brief Review)
Why He Came
The Kingdom (13 Parables)
Divine Transition
Divine Expectation
Unclaimed Wealth
Times of Refreshing
Unlocking God's Diary
The House of James
The Will of God (In James)
The Pure Gospel (Galatians)
Paul's Vision of God (Ephesians)
The Journey
The Oracles: Repentance from Dead Works #1
The Oracles: Faith Toward God #2
The Oracles: Baptisms, Laying on of Hands & Resurrection of the Dead #3
The Oracles: Eternal Judgement #4

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