

Answer 7: 27 proofs of “The First Church”

7. They were ordained (Matt. 10:1.5; John 15:16).

It is imperative to remember at this point that all 27 points presented are supposed to be proof of the existence of a local New Testament church during Christ’s earthly ministry, particularly prior to His death on the cross. Thus, each point that does not support that contention in any substantive way really does not need to be included in the list of proofs, and is thus extraneous.

So it is with the above point. Yes, it is entirely true that the New Testament church has members ordained for specific functions. It is also true, and not in dispute that some of the disciples of Christ were ordained to perform certain functions during His ministry prior to His death on the cross. However, in both instances cited, the purpose of ordination is either non-specific, or not as yet defined. In the case of the citation from Matthew the purpose of the ordination of the apostles was not defined at that point. In fact, there is no mention of a church, or building a church until quite some time later. Thus, though the twelve were ordained inasmuch as they were specifically chosen, their express reason for being chosen was not yet revealed. This is very much not the case with ordination in the church. Plainly, a member of a church would think it very odd if suddenly the elders of that church came up one day and said they were appointing that member to do this or that and now they were ordained. Rather, what we see, and what is orderly in the church is for an individual to express a call upon their life, and then be ordained – not the reverse. In the case of the passage from John, the ordination is nonspecific as to duties. The Lord Jesus Christ simply tells them that He

ordained them to bring forth much fruit. We can see the evidence of the lack of specificity in that after the resurrection, but before Christ's ascension, they were not particularly dedicated to accomplishing the task given of bringing forth much fruit.

Now, that is not to say that the church did not exist prior to Christ's ascension, rather it is to say that the ordination to bring forth much fruit lacked specifics without the great commission and several other ingredients necessary to make it meaningful. If we will remember, it is in this same discourse with the apostles that the Lord told them that there were many things He had to teach them, but they were not ready to receive them yet.

Finally, does simply being ordained prove anything about the existence of a New Testament church? If it does, doesn't the purpose of the ordination factor in somewhere? Or, as the cited references would tend to indicate, the purpose is irrelevant, and only the fact that an ordination was performed matters. Since it is unclear what S.E. Anderson meant by this, perhaps it is necessary to show that ordination in and of itself is not a proof of anything, and in this case could be used to prove that at least one of the Old Testament prophets had to be a member of a New Testament church:

Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; *and* before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. (*Jeremiah 1:4-5*)

Now, it is expressly plain that Jeremiah was not a member of any New Testament church, nor could he be as there existed no church in the New Testament sense. However, based upon the logic of the proof cited above, we could well reason that we are also ordained as prophets to the nations (the great commission), and since Jeremiah and members of the New Testament church share these two commonalities, Jeremiah must

have been a member of the New Testament church.