

Answer 21: 27 proofs of “The First Church”

21. They had divine power to do Christ's work (Luke 9:1).

Since it is implicit in the claim, the question must be asked:

What is “Christ's work?”

According to the verse referenced above it is the ability to perform a signs ministry:

Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. *(Luke 9:1)*

If this is S.E. Anderson's proof text, then Moses has serious claim to being in the New Testament church. After all, a signs ministry is a signs ministry, regardless of the signs performed. Now, it is noted that this power is expressly stated as being the power to cast out devils and cure diseases. But, both those things were not unknown to the Jews in the time of the Old Testament:

And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel. But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils. *(Matthew 9:33-34)*

If the Jews were not already familiar with the casting out of devils, the Pharisees could not have recognized what was going on, which they surely did know by the aspersion they cast. What was “never so seen in Israel” was the absolute power over the demons and devils that the Lord Jesus Christ exercised.

When we examine the issue of curing diseases, the names of Hezekiah and Namaan come to mind:

In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live. Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, saying, I beseech thee, O LORD, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done *that which is* good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore. And it came to pass, afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of the LORD came to him, saying, Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the captain of my people, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the LORD. And I will add unto thy days fifteen years; and I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake. And Isaiah said, Take a lump of figs. And they took and laid *it* on the boil, and he recovered. And Hezekiah said unto Isaiah, What *shall be* the sign that the LORD will heal me, and that I shall go up into the house of the LORD the third day? And Isaiah said, This sign shalt thou have of the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing that he hath spoken: shall the shadow go forward ten degrees, or go back ten degrees? And Hezekiah answered, It is a light thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees: nay, but let the shadow return backward ten degrees. And Isaiah the prophet cried unto the LORD: and he brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz. (*II Kings 20:1-11*)

So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha. And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean. But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar,

rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage. And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, *if* the prophet had bid thee *do some* great thing, wouldest thou not have done *it*? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean? Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. (*II Kings 5:9-14*)

Hence, if this is the “proof” offered by S.E. Anderson as attesting to the existence of a New Testament church, there is no choice but to answer his assertion of the church having divine power exclusively, with the statement:

So did Israel.

But, let us go further and look at one particular aspect of “Christ’s work” that others could engage in: The preaching of the gospel.

For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. (*Romans 10:12-18*)

So then, the only other part of “Christ’s work” in which men

could engage – the preaching of the gospel, Israel did as well.