

Answer 25: 27 proofs of “The First Church”

25. They had a membership roll (Matt. 10:2-4; Acts 1: 13-15).

As does most every organization out there: it doesn't make them a church. However, this claim and proof expressly contradicts an earlier proof cited by S. E. Anderson. In point 17, the passage cited states 'the multitude and the disciples', and that passage is used as a proof of the existence of the New Testament church. I suppose there existed a membership roll of the multitude, or of the disciples (which includes the twelve and all dedicated to following the Lord Jesus)? Would these disciples also include some that would turn against Christ in just a few days? Certainly it would include Judas Iscariot, the betrayer of Christ.

In Matthew, it is the names of the twelve that are recorded – including Judas Iscariot:

Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James *the son* of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James *the son* of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him. (*Matthew 10:2-4*)

However, in Acts, a different roster is given as there is no Judas Iscariot:

And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James *the son* of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas *the brother* of James.

These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren. (Acts 1:13-14)

The reason for this is of course, Judas Iscariot's suicide. But beyond that, and more important to this discussion, is the issue of who Judas Iscariot was:

When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? *What* and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life. But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. From that *time* many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and **one of you is a devil?** He spake of Judas Iscariot *the son of Simon*: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve. (John 6:61-71)

If it is true, as S.E. Anderson contends, that the New Testament church is in existence at the point in time recorded in Matthew 10:2-4, then it raises serious questions and has serious implications for the polity (order and functioning) of the New Testament church for the following reasons:

- The Lord Jesus specifically choose Judas Iscariot.
- Judas Iscariot is a devil (is demon-possessed).
- Judas Iscariot is a thief (John 12:4-6).
- Disciples came and went. Often leaving in a huff (as recorded in John 6 quoted above).

- It is a church populated with unbelievers.
- A “church member” betrayed the leader of the church and then committed suicide.
- It sets the pattern set for subsequent churches to follow.

If it is true that a New Testament church exists at the time of Matthew 10 and John 6, then there is also a contradiction with another passage of Scripture:

Let all things be done decently and in order. (*I Corinthians 14:40*)

Hence, the issue of Judas Iscariot and his membership in the New Testament church must be addressed:

Was Judas Iscariot, who was specifically chosen by the Lord Jesus Christ, a member of a New Testament church?

If the New Testament church was in existence prior to Christ’s death on the cross, then Judas Iscariot was indeed a member of a New Testament church. If this is true, then it must also be asked:

- Did the Lord Jesus Christ intend for the New Testament church to have such a tumultuous existence?
- Did the Lord Jesus Christ intend for demon possessed individuals to be members of the New Testament church?
- If it is true that demon-possessed individuals are to be members of the New Testament church, doesn’t that affect the church’s ability to be the “pillar and ground of the truth?” (*I Timothy 3:14-15*)
- Doesn’t this directly contradict the contention and doctrinal statement of Baptists that ‘*only saved, baptized individuals are eligible to be members of the New Testament church?*’
- Isn’t this also directly contrary to the statement and directive “*Let all things be done decently and in*

order?"

Unfortunately, in his zeal to "prove" the existence of the New Testament church prior to the Lord Jesus Christ's death on the cross, S.E. Anderson opened up a can of worms, and created far more questions than he resolved. However, none of the above questions are even to be considered if we accept the clear testimony of Acts 20:28 and Hebrews 9:15-21 and acknowledge that the New Testament church came into existence when the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross.