

Chapter 25: The Church

25.1 The catholic (that is universal) church, which is invisible, consists of all the elect who have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ its head. The church is his bride, his body, and the fullness of him who fills all in all.

25.2 The visible church, which is also catholic under the gospel (that is, not confined to one nation, as it was before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world who profess the true religion, together with their children. It is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, outside of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.

25.3 To this universal, visible church Christ has given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God for the gathering and perfecting of the saints, in this life, to the end of the age. For this purpose he makes these means effectual by his own presence and Spirit according to his promise.

25.4 This universal church has been sometimes more and sometimes less visible. Particular churches, which are members of this universal church, are more or less pure to the extent to which the doctrine of the gospel is taught and embraced, the ordinances are administered, and public worship is performed more or less purely in them.

25.5 The purest churches on earth are subject to both mixture and error, and some have so degenerated that they have become no churches of Christ at all, but rather synagogues of Satan. Nevertheless, there shall always be a church on earth to worship God according to his will.

25.6 There is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor can the Pope of Rome be its head in any sense.

Questions for Reflection:

1. What is the difference between the invisible church and the visible church? Read Hebrews 12 and think about the “great cloud of witnesses”. Does this encourage you to keep perseverance in faith?
2. What does it mean to be a family? Name all the good things and the hard things. Do you experience that at your church? How can you put yourself in a position to love your church well?
3. How does the WCF describe the role of God’s Word in the life of the church? What is the role of the Spirit in the life of the church?
4. What are the three descriptions of the Godly church? Does this match up with what your expectations are of your local church?
5. Chapter 25.5 references churches as being “both mixture and error” meaning there is no perfect church. Maybe you have experienced pain and heartache in a church or perhaps you have not; either way, reflect on what this means for you

church. Are your expectations too high, or are you aware of your own churches struggles.

6. Who is the head of the church? Have you seen churches that elevate a pastor, celebrity, political party, or persona above Jesus? What is so dangerous about this?
7. Knowing the answer to question 6, how should this frame our posture as participants in the church? What gift has God given you to be a part of His body?