

The Holy Catholic Church (Ephesians 5:22-33)

- I. Her **Definition**: What *Is* the Church?
- The **Body** of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; 1 Cor. 12:12)
 - The **Bride** of Christ (**23-25; 31-32**; Rev. 21:9; Mt. 19:6)
 - Images from Architecture & Agriculture (Rev. 21:10; Gal. 4:26)
- II. Her **Expression**: Visible & Invisible (Rom. 9:6; 1 Jn. 2:19; Eph. 4:2-3, 11; 1 Ti. 5:20; Col. 3:16; Mt. 5:14)
- III. Her One **Foundation**: *Jesus Christ, Her Lord* (1 Pet. 2:6; **Eph. 5:25-29**; Eph. 1:4-5; Gen. 3:15; 4:26; 1 Cor. 10:1-4; Eph. 2:12-14; 4:4-5; Jn. 14:6)
- IV. Her Perfect **Protection**: *The Church Shall Never Perish* (Gen. 3:15, 4:1-8; Heb. 11:36-37; Rom. 11:3-4; Mt. 16:18; Dan. 2:44; Dt. 31:6; Mt. 28:18, 20; Eph. 6:10; Lk. 13:18-21)
- V. Her **Catholicity**: *Elect from Every Nation, Yet One O'er All the Earth* (Mt. 28:19; Acts 2:39)
- VI. Applications (Mt. 10:32; Mt. 5:24; Rom. 5:6-8; 1 Jn. 3:16-18)

Belgic Confession Art. 27: We believe and confess one single catholic or universal church—a holy congregation and gathering of true Christian believers, awaiting their entire salvation in Jesus Christ being washed by his blood, and sanctified and sealed by the Holy Spirit.

This church has existed from the beginning of the world and will last until the end, as appears from the fact that Christ is eternal King who cannot be without subjects.

And this holy church is preserved by God against the rage of the whole world, even though for a time it may appear very small in the eyes of men—as though it were snuffed out.

For example, during the very dangerous time of Ahab the Lord preserved for himself seven thousand men who did not bend their knees to Baal.

And so this holy church is not confined, bound, or limited to a certain place or certain persons. But it is spread and dispersed throughout the entire world, though still joined and united in heart and will, in one and the same Spirit, by the power of faith.

Questions for Family Discussion

- What should we learn from the Biblical imagery of the church as the body of Christ and the Bride of Christ? How must this affect your love for the church, and your commitment to her—and to each member of her?
- Does every member of the visible church belong to the invisible church? Why should our membership in the one holy catholic (invisible) church become visible through membership in a local congregation? Is this important?
- Should we expect church life to be difficult, victorious, or both? How should we cultivate a *Biblical* optimism?
- What are some practical ways we express our union with Christ and with one another, as a congregation?