

# Blueprints for Belief

## *Laying the Theological Foundations for Constructing Your Faith*

### **Westminster Confession of Faith 25.1-6 – Doctrine of the Church**

- The “invisible church” is made up of all God’s elect across the world and throughout history. Christ is the Head; we are His body and bride.
  - *“And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”* Eph 1:22-23
  - *“Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her... that he might present the church to himself in splendor...”* Eph 5:25-27
  - *“A great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages...”* Rev 7:9
- The “visible church” is all the people who say they are Christians, along with their children. People outside the visible church are not ordinarily saved.
  - *“To the church of God that is in Corinth... called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...”* 1 Cor 1:2
  - *“For the promise is for you and for your children...”* Acts 2:39
- Christ has given to the visible church everything we need to grow closer to Him, including His Spirit.
  - *“And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints...”* Eph 4:11-13
  - *“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness...”* 2 Pet 1:3
- Individual churches may be more or less pure, depending on their faithfulness to the Gospel and the extent to which they follow God’s commands.
  - *“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel.”* Gal 1:6
  - Christ evaluates local churches—some faithful (Smyrna), some compromised (Pergamum), some nearly dead (Sardis). Rev 2-3
- There is no perfect church, but some churches may deteriorate to the point that they are no longer churches of Jesus, but synagogues of Satan. But there will always be a church on earth that worships Christ.
  - *“If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place...”* Rev 2:5
  - *“I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”* Matt 16:18
- Only Jesus is the Head of the church. The pope is in no sense the head of the church.
  - *“And he is the head of the body, the church...”* Col 1:18
  - *“And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church.”* Eph 1:22

### Discussion Questions

1. What would you say to someone who says, “I love Jesus, but I don’t need the church?”
2. What marks distinguish a “more pure” church from a “less pure” one?
3. If Christ alone is the Head of the church, how should that shape our view of church authority, leadership, and faithfulness?

## **Westminster Confession of Faith – Chapter 25**

1. The catholic or universal church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the Head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.
2. The visible church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children: and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.
3. Unto this catholic visible church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints, in this life, to the end of the world: and doth, by his own presence and Spirit, according to his promise, make them effectual thereunto.
4. This catholic church hath been sometimes more, sometimes less visible. And particular churches, which are members thereof, are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them.
5. The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated, as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan. Nevertheless, there shall be always a church on earth, to worship God according to his will.
6. There is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor can the pope of Rome, in any sense, be head thereof.