

# LESSON 14

## CHAPTER 26. “Of the Church”

From the Greek word “ekklesia,” translated church, we get the word “ecclesiology,” which is the theological term for church government (aka, church order or polity). The definition of “the church” depends on the context in which we ask the question and who we ask. A covenant theologian will say that “the church” is all of the elect in all ages. A dispensationalist will say that “the church” did not exist until Pentecost (i.e., the church is only a NT institution). The New Covenanter would say “the church” is Abraham’s seed.

Notably, although this is a Baptist confession, the confessors do not claim that only saints, baptized as believers, constitute “the church.” It is unclear if the confessors intended not to make believer’s baptism requisite to membership or if it was an oversight.

The Landmark Baptist movement of the late 1800s, which continues to this day, holds that “the church” has only ever been comprised of those persons who have been baptized by immersion after profession of faith. The Landmarkers separated from the Southern Baptists because of SBs cooperation and fellowship with pedobaptist denominations. The main objection was allowing Presbyterian preachers into Baptist pulpits and joint observation of the Lord’s Supper between Baptists and Presbyterians.

### **The Church Universal**

#### I. Paragraph 1: The church universal (invisible)

- A. The church is a spiritual entity consisting of the elect in all ages placed in Christ.
- B. The church is the body of Christ, of which He is the head.

#### II. Paragraph 2: The church universal (visible)

- A. The visible church should be made up of believers who adhere to the gospel truth and are not blatant hypocrites.

#### III. Paragraph 3: The preservation of the visible church

- A. No church is perfect, but some churches have drifted so far from the truth that they are serving Satan in the name of Christ.
- B. No matter how corrupt churches may become, Christ will always have His church on earth for He is still about His Father’s business till the end of the age.

IV. Paragraph 4: Christ, the Head of the church

- A. Christ is the only head of the church.
- B. The Pope of Rome is the antichrist.

**The Church Local**

V. Paragraph 5: Christ, the Door of the church

- A. Persons are called into the church by God's sovereign grace and the Word.
- B. The saints are commanded to congregate for worship and mutual edification.

VI. Paragraph 6: Local churches are gatherings of saints

- A. The members of local churches are saints by calling and live their lives in obedience to the ordinances of the Gospel.
- B. The saints desire to live a Christ-like life.

VII. Paragraph 7: Authority resides in the local church

- A. The Lord Jesus has empowered the churches and given them authority necessary for worship and discipline in the churches.
- B. The rules and commands for proper use of this power and authority is given in His Word.

VIII. Paragraph 8 and 9: Officers of the church

- A. Officers of a church are bishops or elders, and deacons, who are chosen by Christ, and made known by Him through a voting church membership.
- B. Ordination is by prayer, fasting, and laying on of hands.

IX. Paragraph 10: Pastors

- A. Pastors should constantly attend the service of Christ, in His churches, in His Word, and in prayer.
- B. Churches should respect their pastor and recompense him sufficiently to protect him from involvement in secular employment so that he can live and preach the Gospel.

X. Paragraph 11: Preaching

- A. Church members, who are called and gifted by the Spirit to preach, should preach.

XI. Paragraph 12: Church discipline: membership

- A. All believers should join a church to receive its privileges, censures, and government according to the rules of Christ.

XII. Paragraph 13: Church discipline: fellowship

- A. Do not disengage from or disrupt the church because you have been offended by another member.

XIII. Paragraph 14: Cooperation of local churches: communion

- A. Every church should pray that Christ's churches everywhere would prosper.
- B. Churches should commune together.

XIV. Paragraph 15: Cooperation of local churches: discipline

- A. When disagreements in matters of doctrine or administration of church(es) arise, representatives of communing churches should meet to consider the matter. However, the representatives shall not have authority over the church(es).

Discussion questions:

Should we cooperate with different denominations in mission efforts?

Should we include the Roman Catholic Church in "the church?"

Is admitting people to membership a function of church discipline?