

Belgic Confession, Article 27, "The universal church"

Scripture Lesson: 1 Kings 19:1-18

Lesson Aim	To understand what the invisible church is.
Steps to Learning	Read Belgic Confession, Article 27 and 1 Kings 19:1-18 . Discuss the sermon and the particulars of the lesson below. It may be best to work through the material over several days or sessions.
Discuss	<p>For context, what is the substance of articles 27-29? These articles are on the theology of the church. Article 27 is on the invisible church, article 28 is on the true visible church and article 29 is on the marks of true churches.</p> <p>What is the universal church? The universal church is the catholic (small "c" catholic, not the Roman Catholic church). "Catholic" means literally, "referring to the whole." This church is found all around the world and is made up of many different people.</p> <p>What do we mean by the terms composition, extent and preservation as applied to the universal church? The composition of this church refers to a holy congregation of true Christian believers. The extent of the church refers to the fact that it has existed from the beginning of time and will exist to the end of time. Preservation of the church means that God will preserve the church against the raging of the world.</p> <p>Does the universal church have visible aspects? Yes, this church is filled with people who hear the Word of God preached, partake of the Sacraments and are ministered to by the officers of the church (Ministers, Elders and Deacons).</p> <p>Does the universal church have invisible aspects? Yes, 1 Kings 19 demonstrates what while Elijah believed that he was the only believer left in Israel, God reveals to him that 7,000 Israelites remained faithful to him.</p> <p>What are other aspects of the universal church? The church is one in unity, holy in Christ and catholic by which we mean it is in fact universal and not limited to one place. Finally, the church is militant, which is to say it fights successfully against the gates of hell and it is triumphant, which means that it will be gathered by Christ from the ends of the earth when he returns again.</p>
Bible Reading	1 Kings chapters 1-5 (covering the great Bible stories)