

## **The Ecclesia: pillar and ground of the truth**

The weekend is intended to seek answers to the question,

*Why in His wisdom did God arrange that faithful believers should be brought together into ecclesias?*

We shall therefore consider some of the following aspects of the subject, in order to help develop scripturally-based answer to the question.

- What comprises an ecclesia?
- What does the word ecclesia mean?
- When was the ecclesia first introduced?
- What about earlier arrangements, such as synagogues?
- How were synagogues organised?
- Why didn't the apostles simply form new Christ-centred synagogues where the gospel could be preached?
- What did Stephen mean when he spoke about "the ecclesia in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38)?
- What would his hearers have understood by his comments?
- In the gospels, the ecclesia is mentioned only twice, both times in Matthew's gospel (Matthew 16:18; 18:17). Why is that?
- What would the disciples have understood when Jesus said he would build his ecclesia on the rock of Peter's great confession?
- Jesus' words in Matthew 18 anticipate the formation of ecclesias. What role did he ascribe to them?
- Why was it important for the Apostles to establish ecclesias as they preached the gospel?
- Does the account in Acts explain the role of the ecclesia?
- The Apostles established ecclesias "in every city" where believers lived. How did first century ecclesias relate to each other?
- How were ecclesias formed and organised in the first century?
- What role did spirit-guided brothers and sisters play in the first century ecclesias?
- How often did brothers and sisters meet together in their ecclesias?
- Did they meet only to break bread in memory of Jesus' sacrifice?
- The Apostle Paul provided advice to Timothy in Ephesus and Titus in Crete about ecclesial organisation – the appointment of elders (bishops and deacons). Does this advice apply today?
- What is a bishop, and what is his role?

- What is a deacon, and what is his role?
- Can any believer (a baptized brother or sister) be a bishop? ... or a deacon?
- What responsibilities do ecclesias have towards individual brothers and sisters?
- What responsibilities do individual brothers and sisters have towards ecclesias?
- Using the Corinthian ecclesia as an example, how should ecclesias tackle:
  - Moral problems?
  - Doctrinal differences?
  - Unruly behaviour?
- Try to complete the following sentence, “My ecclesia is particularly good at ... ”
- Try to answer the following question, “What is the best thing I can do to help my ecclesia fulfil its scriptural role?”