

## The Council of Chalcedon

### Objectives

To learn about the Council of Chalcedon, and understand why it was held and what were its outcomes.

### References

- ✠ The Era of Ecumenical Councils (Asr El Magamee) by Fr. Kyrollos El Antouny
- ✠ [www.suscopts.org](http://www.suscopts.org) (Servants & Preservants)
- ✠ The Nature of Christ by H.H. Pope Shenouda the 3<sup>rd</sup>
- ✠ The Coptic Orthodox Church & the Ecumenical Movement by Maged Attia

### Scriptural Verse

“We should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting” (**Ephesus 4: 14**)

### Lesson Guidelines

#### 1. Qualifications of an Ecumenical Council

- 1- Held because of a heresy.
- 2- Held by an emperor’s invitation.
- 3- Attended by bishops to represent the whole world.
- 4- Must issue a statement of faith.

#### Only 3 Ecumenical Councils filled these Criteria

1. Council of Nicea, 325 AD.
2. The Council of Constantinople, 381 AD.
3. The Council of Ephesus, 431 AD .

#### 2. The Council of Chalcedon

- ✠ The Chalcedonian Council is not one of the ecumenical councils as it did not fulfill the above criteria.
- ✠ The heretic - Eutyches, the head of a monastery near Constantinople.
- ✠ The heresy of Eutyches: The humanity of Christ dissolved in His Divinity so He has one mingled nature and He did not suffer on the cross.

#### Local Council of Ephesus

- ✠ Flavianos, bishop of Constantinople, tried in vain to correct Eutyches’ belief but he failed. He excommunicated him and ordered his writings to be burnt and made a resolution that Christ has two Natures after the union. He thus went back to the heresy of Nestor.
- ✠ Emperor Theodosius asked Pope Dioscorus of Alexandria to form a council to condemn Eutyches. Eutyches was handed a script of the right faith of the church, which he confessed orally.
- ✠ The council canceled his excommunication and let him return to his monastery.

- ✠ The council excommunicated Flavianos, who insisted on his heresy.
- ✠ Leo, bishop of Rome, (who was angry because they did not read his letter in the council of Ephesus, which was supporting Flavianos) tried to hold a council in Rome to clarify the faith but Emperor Theodosius refused stating that the council of Ephesus had settled everything.
- ✠ Pope Dioscorus excommunicated the bishop of Rome in a local council in Alexandria.

### Death of the Emperor

- ✠ When Emperor Theodosius passed away, his sister Pulchra, who was a nun, broke her vow and married Markian who was a Nestorian officer in her brother's army. They became Emperor and Queen.
- ✠ They allowed Leo to hold a council in Constantinople and invited Pope Dioscorus who attended and refused to accept Leo's tome (letter) which says that Christ had two natures and he explained to them the right faith so they postponed the session.
- ✠ The emperor ordered to make a council in Chalcedon. They all attended the erroneous council, which was the cause of division of the one holy church of God.

### Sessions of the Council

#### **1<sup>st</sup> Session:**

- ✠ The Emperor attended with bishops (some were excommunicated), judges, and the representative of Leo and Pope Dioscorus.
- ✠ They started to blame Pope Dioscorus about the resolutions of the council of Ephesus but he answered all their questions honestly and with great power. The bishops who accused him asked for his forgiveness (strange attitude).
- ✠ They ended the 1<sup>st</sup> session and appointed another one to be held in 5 days.

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> session (Flawed)**

- ✠ Very frustrated, the representative of Rome decided to make a quick secret session in the absence of Pope Dioscorus to be able to accuse him and excommunicate him.
- ✠ The session was held in the 3<sup>rd</sup> day (2 days earlier). They guarded the Pope to prevent him from attending the session.
- ✠ During the session, they sent him messengers to attend. He said: Beside that I am guarded and not able to attend, I will never attend a session without the presence of the judges. They sent him again but he held onto his beliefs.
- ✠ They made the resolution to excommunicate Pope Dioscorus from any of the church's orders because:
  - & **He accepted Eutyches after he had confessed the right faith.**
  - & **He presided over the council (The Emperor appointed him leader).**
  - & **He did not allow Leo's tome to be read. He has been invited three times to attend the council and refused.**

### Pope Dioscorus declared the right faith

- ✠ Pope Dioscorus asked to read the resolution of the council of Chalcedon regarding the faith (about the Nature of Christ). They gave it to him hoping that he may approve the faith of Leo.

- ✠ The great Pope read it and corrected the wrong faith by writing the right faith on the margins with an excommunication to whoever permits himself to accept the wrong faith or change the resolutions of the three Ecumenical Councils.
- ✠ The Emperor who signed the resolutions of the council became furious and wanted to kill Pope Dioscorus but was afraid of an uprising so he exiled him to the island of “Ghaghra”.

### End of Unity and Beginning of Separation

The council of Chalcedon marked the beginning of the division of the great church of God into two main families:

**1. The Non Chalcedonian Churches:** those who believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has only One nature that is “God Incarnate” which reveals the Hypostatic Union of both natures and that His Divinity parted not from His Humanity for a single moment nor a twinkling of an eye and that they are united without mingling, confusion or alteration. They are the Coptic, Syrian, Armenian, Ethiopian, Malankara Indian and Eritrean Churches.

**2. The Chalcedonian Churches,** those who believe that the Lord Jesus Christ had a Divine nature and a human nature (2 natures) each one of them is revealed when needed, i.e. He healed people with the Divine nature and was hungry with the human nature.

The Holy Church of God is still suffering from this division and we pray for the reunion of the church.

### **Conclusion**

The Council of Chalcedon was an unfortunate event in the history of the church. It was held to discuss the nature of Christ, and led to the division of the churches.

### **Activities/ Discussion Points**

1. Discuss the biblical proofs of the One Nature of God:

- ✠ Before Abraham was, I AM (John 8:58)
- ✠ No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is the Son of Man who is in heaven (John 3: 13)
- ✠ You denied the Holy One ...and killed the Prince of life (Acts 3: 14-15)
- ✠ Had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory (1 Corinthians 2:8)
- ✠ To shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28)
- ✠ I am He who lives, and was dead and behold, I am alive forevermore (Revelation 1: 17-18)

2. Why is it so important to believe in One Nature of God after the union?