

The Council of Chalcedon

Objective:

- 🕒 To be acquainted with the reasons behind the Schism of the church.

Memory Verse:

“You may charge some that they teach no other doctrine” (1Tim 1:3)

References:

- 🕒 “Nestorianism” Anba Gregory
- 🕒 “Eutychianism” Anba Gregory
- 🕒 “Pope Dioscorus the Defender of Faith” Anba Gregory
- 🕒 “Pope Dioscorus” St. George Church, Sporting

Introduction:

I. The Heresy of Eutyches

Eutyches was an archimandrite of a monastery at Constantinople. He defended the Orthodox faith against the heresy of Nestorus but his great zeal for the sound faith led him to a new heresy. He believed that Christ’s body was not like ours but it was an ethereal body. Many people followed him in his belief, so a small council was held in the city of Constantinople under the leadership of its Bishop, Flabianus and the council decided to excommunicate Eutyches because he said that the Manhood of Christ was totally lost in his Divine Nature as a drop of vinegar is lost in the waters of an ocean. The heresy of Eutyches caused a great split in the church so King Theodosius decided to hold a new council in the city of Ephesus. He invited all the churches to attend that council and he also invited Pope Dioscorus to exercise supreme authority over it as president. Twenty Egyptian bishops attended with Pope Dioscorus.

Lesson Outline:

I. The Second Council of Ephesus (449 AD)

The Bishops of Alexandria, Jerusalem and Antioch and all the churches came to Ephesus but the Pope of Rome sent two delegates with a message “Leon’s Tome”. Pope Dioscorus presided the council according to the king’s desire. The Pope began the meeting by reading the king’s decree of holding the council then he asked someone to read the message sent by the Pope of Rome but one of the bishops suggested that Eutyches should stand before the council so that his beliefs might be examined and all agreed. So Pope Dioscorus summoned Eutyches to appear before the council.

II. Eutyches Declares Orthodox Statement

Eutyches appeared before the council and said that he repented his wrong belief and that he confessed the belief of the church so the council declared him innocent and rehabilitated him.

III. The Roman Pope Protests

There was no chance for them to read the message sent by the Roman Pope to the council and that was a new heresy about the Lord Christ, so the Pope's delegates went back to Rome and told the Pope that his message was not read and the Pope was annoyed. The Roman Pope asked the king to hold another council in Rome to re-examine Eutyches' beliefs but King Theodosius did not agree to hold that council saying that the Second Council of Ephesus declared the true faith and there was no need for holding another council.

IV. The goal is achieved

King Theodosius died and his sister Pulcheria and her husband Marcian reigned Rome. Pulcheria hated Dioscorus because he used to reproach her because of her sins as she was a nun but she married. Pope Leo seized the chance and asked the queen to hold another council. At last there was an agreement to hold a council in Chalcedon.

V. The Council of Chalcedon (451 AD)

It is clear that the council of Chalcedon was not held to discuss a dogmatic creed but it was held for personal reasons. The queen desired to take revenge of Pope Dioscorus because he used to reproach her for her sins and Pope Leon wanted to declare himself as the head of all the churches of the world including the church of Alexandria as he saw that the Popes of Alexandria preside the Ecumenical Councils and some of the excommunicated bishops wanted to be rehabilitated. In this way all the parties were against Pope Dioscorus and they tried to prove that he did not follow the Orthodox faith and that he followed the heresy of Eutyches. Because that was out of their power, they asked for the meeting to be postponed for five days. Then they held a meeting and ordered the soldiers to keep him within the confines of his house and prevent him from going out so that he might not attend the council. Then they excommunicated Pope Dioscorus and deposed him.

VI. Schism Inside the Church

The council of Chalcedon had a very bad effect on the church in the whole world. The church split into two: The Eastern churches included the church of Alexandria and the church of Antioch and the western churches included the church of Rome and the church of Constantinople. It was love that gathered and united the hearts of the fathers in the first three councils of Nicene, Constantinople and Ephesus so those councils succeeded and the church became more powerful through them but when the spirit of jealousy and dispute appeared in the council of Chalcedon, the church divided into groups.

Conclusion:

Our church, which is one of the non-Chalcedonian churches, believes in "Miaphysis" which means the unity of the two natures of Christ (the Divine and the Human Natures) into one nature of the incarnate God. The two natures never separated and never changed each other.

Applications:

- ⌚ "For where envy and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work" (James 3:16). Show how this verse came true in the Council of Chalcedon.
- ⌚ Why St. Dioscorus was condemned in the Council of Chalcedon?

- ⌚ Write a list (a diagram) showing: The councils you know and their dates, the names of the famous fathers of each council, and the heresies they discussed.
- ⌚ Raise many prayers so that the church may be reunited and all become one according to the desire of the Lord Jesus and the heavenly Fathers that we may be one in Him as He and the Father are one.