


HISTORY, CONTRIBUTIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH

BISHOP YOUSSEF





**Have you ever visited
the Holy Land
????**



**Is there any other place called
The Holy Land
?????**



The answer is

YES

Egypt is also a Holy Land

- Egypt was visited by the Lord Jesus Christ, St. Mary and St. Joseph
- They stayed there almost 40 months = 3.5 years
- We boast that Egypt is the only country other than Jerusalem that was blessed by the Lord Jesus Christ
- As a Child, He started to speak in Egypt meaning that He spoke the Coptic language (language of Egyptians at that time)



- Egypt has a very rich history of Christianity (2000 years)
- Egypt contributed a lot to the Christianity and to the whole world



The Word Coptic

- It is derived from Pharaonic words
- Hac = house + Ka = god + Ptah = is one of the ancient Egyptian gods
- In Greek, Egyptos = Gypt = Egypt = Copt
- Therefore, Coptic = Egypt
- The word is used now to mean Christians but it in itself means Egyptian
- This means that there are Coptic Muslims and Coptic Christians
- Coptic Orthodox Church = Egyptian Orthodox Church

Who Are The Copts

- They are descendants of Pharaohs
- *“Now this is the genealogy of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And sons were born to them after the flood”* (Genesis 10:1)
- *“The sons of Ham were Cush, **Mizraim**, Put, and Canaan”* (Genesis 10:6)
- *“Mizraim begot Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, ¹⁴ Pathrusim, and Casluhim (from whom came the Philistines and **Caphtorim**)”* (Genesis 10:13)
- Mizraim = Misr & Caphtorim = Copt



History Of The Coptic Orthodox Church

- After the great commission, when the Lord Jesus Christ sent His disciples to the whole world, one of them was St. Mark who is also the author of the second Gospel in the New Testament
- He went to Egypt, stayed there around 46-48 AD and provoked Christianity there
- He was also martyred on the eve of the Resurrection Feast in the year 68 AD. He was dragged in the streets of Alexandria



- When St. Mark went to Egypt, he ordained a bishop, deacons and priests
- The first bishop was named Anianus and became the patriarch of the COC after the martyrdom of St. Mark
- St. Mark is then Pope number 1 and Anianus is Pope number 2





- Apostolic succession = uninterrupted chain from the patriarchs.
- Pope Shenouda III was Pope number 117
- Currently, Pope Tawadros II is Pope number 118




How God Prepared Egyptians To Christianity

- Egyptians, even before St. Mark, were spiritual
- Although pagans, yet they believed in eternity and heavenly things
- They believed in the trinity: Isis, Osiris, and Horus
- They had a symbol called Ankh which was a symbol of life



- They built huge pyramids and were concerned with embalming of the dead because they believed in the war between good and evil
- Horus battle was set between him and Seth which reminds us of the war between Archangel Michael and Satan

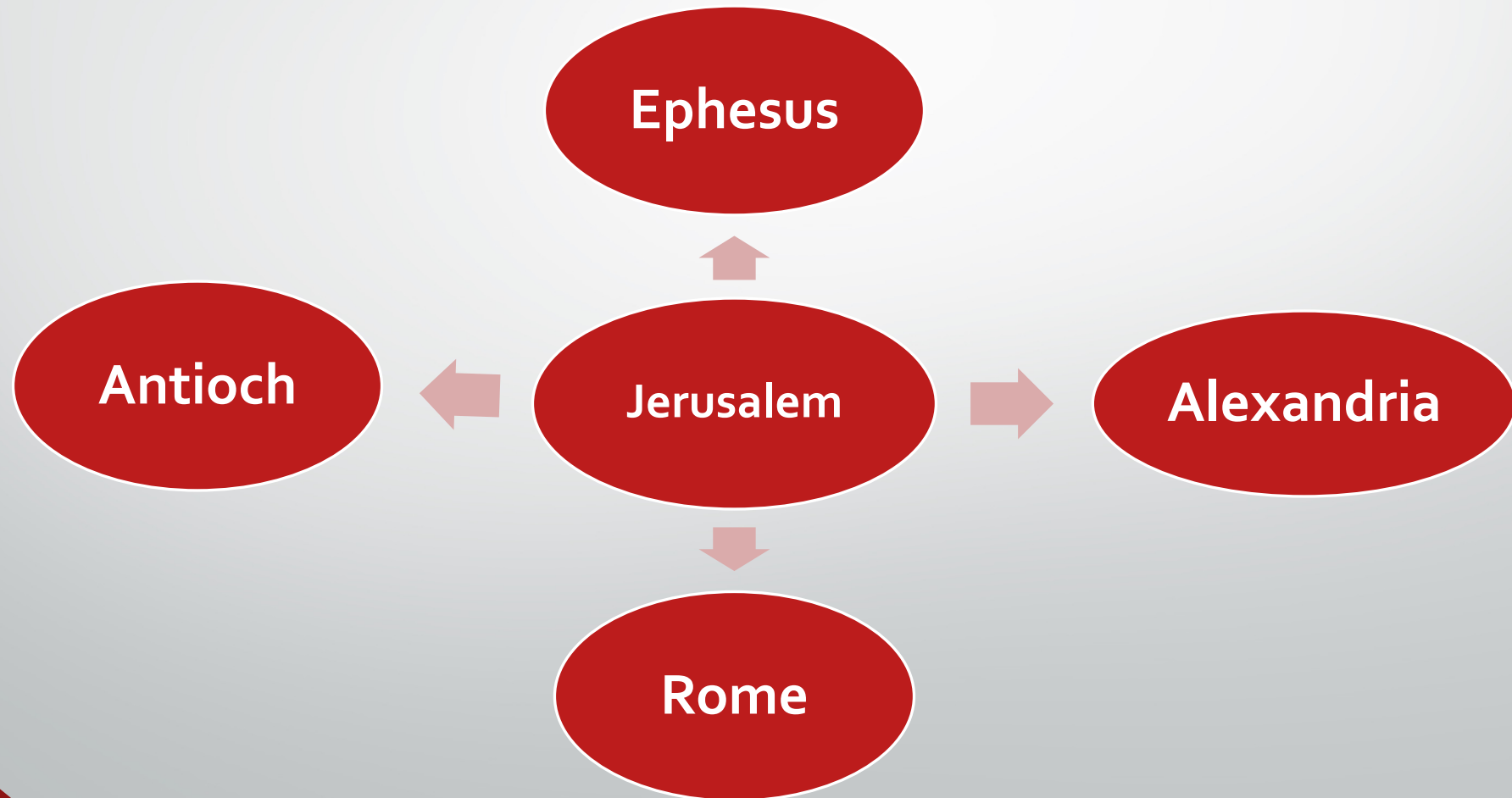


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- **Therefore, before hearing about the Lord Jesus Christ, Egyptian were able, through their meditation, reflection upon and searching for God, to reach to the same revelations about Him**
 - **This helped them, when St. Mark came and preached them, to accept Christianity**



Where Does COC Fall Among Other Denominations

- Until year 451, all Christians were one church in communion with each others
- There was no denominations and there were 5 important sees for Christianity



- Antioch was the first place where the followers of Christ were called Christians
- Asia Minor was not one of the very old sees. When King Constantine became emperor, he made Christianity the official religion of his empire and wanted to build a new Rome in Asia Minor. He called it *Constantinople* (Turkey right now). It became one of the sees during the time of Ecumenical councils
- Therefore, by the middle of the fifth century there were five sees: Rome, Constantinople, Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria
- All these churches attended the first three Ecumenical councils: Council of Nicaea at 325 AD, Council of Constantinople at 381 AD and Council of Ephesus at 431 AD

The First Split

- It happened in 451 AD in the Council of Chalcedon
- It was a bout the nature of Christ
- It is a big issue how we read the Council of Chalcedon whether it is a theological split, a political split or a misunderstanding of the terminology
- In this Council several churches did not agree on **Leo's Tome** which speaks about two separate natures in the Lord Jesus Christ
- Those churches which accepted Leo's Tome were called the Chalcedonian churches (believed in Diaphysis) and those which did not accept it were called were called the Non-Chalcedonian churches (believed in Miaphysis)

- We, the COC, are Non-Chalcedonian
- We follow the teaching of St. Cyril of Alexandria who was one of the greatest theologians
- He said in Greek: **μία φύσις τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου σεσαρκωμένη** **mía phýsis toû theoû lógu sesarkōménē** = one (mia) nature of the Word of God incarnate
- We thus believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is a perfect human and a perfect divine. These two natures were united together without mingling, without confusion and without alteration

The Second Split

- It happened among the Chalcedonian = **the Great Schism of 1054** = **The East-West Schism**
- It was about the **Filioque = The procession of the Holy Spirit**
- In the Nicene Creed, it is stated that we believe in the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father (according to John 15:26)
- Rome added the word **Filioque** in Latin which means the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son
- Constantinople rejected this term and a split happened among the Chalcedonian churches

**By 1054
AD**

**Non-
Chalcedonian
Churches**

- Miaphysis
- Procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father

**Eastern
Chalcedonian
Churches**

- Diaphysis
- Procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father

**Western
Chalcedonian
Churches**

- Diaphysis
- Procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son

**Now Each
Group Has
A Name**

**Non-
Chalcedonian
Churches**

**Oriental Orthodox
Churches**

**Eastern
Chalcedonian
Churches**

**Eastern Orthodox
Churches**

**Western
Chalcedonian
Churches**

Roman Catholic Church

The Third Split

- It happened in the Roman Catholic Church around the 16th Century
- A Catholic monk from Germany called “Martin Luther” (different from Martin Luther King) wanted to reform the Catholic Church. He, therefore, split from it and protested many practices done by it
- He started the **Lutheran Church**. They are called the **Protestants**
- After Luther, they called for liberal theology. Therefore, many other denominations started to be formed after that

The Fourth Split

- It happened also in the Roman Catholic Church in 1531
- King Henry the eighth wanted to divorce his wife but the Catholic Church did not approve it.
- He split from the Catholic Church, divorced his wife and made himself the head of the church
- His church was called The **Anglican Church** meaning the church of England
- When people of Anglican Church came to America, they used the term **Episcopal Church**

Coptic Orthodox Church



Eritrean Orthodox Church



Ethiopian Orthodox Church



Syrian Orthodox Church



Indian Orthodox Church

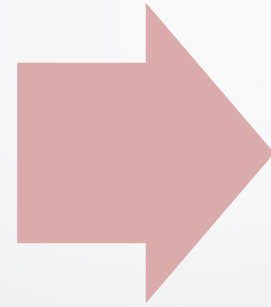


Armenian Orthodox Church



**The Oriental
Orthodox
Churches**

**Eastern
Orthodox
Churches**



16 different
churches
whose names
are based on
the country

Council of Chalcedon

451 AD

Non-Chalcedonian Churches
(Miaphysis)
Oriental Orthodox Churches

Chalcedonian Churches
(Diaphysis)

Eastern Orthodox Churches
(rejected Filioque)

Roman Catholic Churches
(added Filioque)

The Lutheran Church (The Protestants)
16th century

The Anglican Church
(The Episcopal Church)
1531 AD

Dialogue Between The Two Orthodox Families

- It started in 1964 AD but became serious towards the eighties.
- In 1989, a very important document was signed between the theologians of the Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Oriental Orthodox Churches
- This statement was about the nature of Christ and was called “The Agreed Statement between the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Church”
- It simply states that we believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is a perfect human and a perfect divine. These two natures are united together without mingling, without confusion and without alteration



Contributions Of The Coptic Orthodox Church To The Whole World



(1)

Monasticism

- The COC takes pride that the first monk and the father of monasticism is a Coptic Egyptian man born in province of Beni-Sweif named St. Anthony the Great

- There are three forms of monasticism:
 - 1.** Hermitic monasticism: complete isolation. St. Paula was the first hermit
 - 2.** Coenobitic monasticism: founded by St. Pachomious in Upper Egypt. Monks live together in communion and the monastery is like a village having an abbot and rules
 - 3.** Semi-hermitic monasticism: most common form. Most of our monasteries follow it as it keeps balance between solitary and communal lives. Monks live together in the same place but each one has a separate cell. They gather for prayer, divine Liturgy and spiritual meetings





El-Moharak Monastery

"In that day there will be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the Lord at its border"
(Isaiah 19:19)





(2)

Teaching And Keeping Dogma

- The first theological school was the School of Alexandria. The dean of this school used to be ordained as the pope of Alexandria. Many great theologians graduated from this school
- In the first three Ecumenical councils, the Coptic Church leaders were the pioneers. St. Athanasius in the council of Nicaea, Pope Timothy the 22nd in the council of Constantinople and St. Cyril the Great in the council of Ephesus
- COC defended the faith against all heresies and kept it unchanged
- The creed recited by all churches was composed by Coptic saints from Egypt
- St. Athanasius is known by his very well known book *The Incarnation Of the Logos*



(3)

Martyrdom

- COC is the church of martyrs
- During the time of Diocletian, hundreds of thousands of martyrs, from all ages, were killed in Egypt whether individually or in groups



(4) Evangelism

- Egypt preached Christianity in Europe, namely in Switzerland. Its Patron Saint is St. Verina who is from Egypt. St. Maurice is also from Egypt
- Seven monks from Egypt preached Christianity in Ireland
- Most of African churches are considered daughter churches to the COC in Egypt
- Coptic church fathers contributed a lot to the doctrine and spiritual writings