



THE ETERNAL KINGDOM

Lesson #42

January 8, 2020

Welcome.

Introduce topic and material.

As a brief review, we left off last week discussing the event surrounding the emperor Constantine.

CONSTANTINE 272-337 A.D.

- **He authorized elaborate church buildings to be constructed with funds from the government and ministers be paid (Consider the Edict of Milan pg.97-98).**
- **He was directly involved in settling disputes within the church.**
- **He ordered retribution to be paid to churches who were persecuted.**
- **He was involved in ordering decrees for the church (no work on Sunday's, witchcraft, etc.).**

Before reading bullets, remind the class that his mother was a convert to Christianity. This could have influenced him regarding him showing favoritism to the church.

(Read bullets).

We next made a transition into the Council of Nicaea.

THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA

- The city of Nicaea hosted a council of bishops in 325 A.D. to resolve matters of disputed doctrine, namely the nature of Christ as it relates to God.
- Ironically, Constantine called himself the bishop of bishops, albeit he was not even converted to Christ as he served as the chairman.
- It mattered not to Constantine what the Bible taught, that which mattered to him was unity be achieved.
- When persecution ended, the church fought over opinions.

(Read bottom of page 129-130 top paragraph).

(Read bullets and make comments).

“**Arianism** is a nontrinitarian^[1] Christological doctrine^{[1][2][3]} which asserts the belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who was begotten by God the Father at a point in time,^[1] a creature distinct from the Father and is therefore subordinate to him, but the Son is also God (i.e. God the Son).^{[1][4]} Arian teachings were first attributed to Arius^{[1][3]} (c. AD 256–336), a Christian presbyter in Alexandria of Egypt. The term "Arian" is derived from the name Arius; and like "Christian", it was not a self-chosen designation but bestowed by hostile opponents—and never accepted by those on whom it had been imposed.^[5] The nature of Arius's teaching and his supporters were opposed to the theological views held by Homoousian Christians, regarding the nature of the Trinity and the nature of Christ. The Arian concept of Christ is based on the belief that the Son of God did not always exist but was begotten within time by God the Father.^{[1][4]}

Agenda and procedure

The agenda of the synod included:

The Arian question regarding the relationship between God the Father and the Son (not only in his incarnate form as Jesus, but also in his nature before the creation of the world); i.e., are the Father and Son one in divine purpose only or also one in being?

The date of celebration of Pascha/Easter

The Meletian schism

Various matters of church discipline, which resulted in twenty canons

Organizational structure of the Church: focused on the ordering of the episcopacy

Dignity standards for the clergy: issues of ordination at all levels and of suitability of behavior and background for clergy

Reconciliation of the lapsed: establishing norms for public repentance and penance

Readmission to the Church of heretics and schismatics: including issues of when reordination and/or rebaptism were to be required

Liturgical practice: including the place of deacons, and the practice of standing at prayer during liturgy^[38]

THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA

- **According to our author, earlier teachers failed to teach on the subject of the Trinity.**
- **Alexander of Alexandria taught on “The Unity of the Trinity”. However Arias disagreed.**
- **Arias believed that Christ was created, but not fully God’s Son until the N.T.**
- **Arias was labeled “a false teacher” and had to leave Alexandria. Eusebius of Nicomedia welcomed him to his city.**

(Read pages 130 to 131 paragraphs 2-4).

(Read slide and answer questions).

THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA

- **Who wrote about the history of the church covering a span of 322 to 427?**
- **What purpose did Arias give for being persecuted?**
- **Because the disagreement was so sharp, Constantine ordered all the bishops assemble to resolve the matter of Christ's nature. How many bishops attended the meeting?**
- **Arias would be excommunicated.**

(Begin reading on pg 131 "Theodoret, bishop...") and read to page 133 paragraph ending with the final reading the articles of faith end with "variation or change").

(Read bullets).

Although our author doesn't mention it, the meeting lasted from May 20 – June 19. Almost one month exactly to the day.

THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA

- **Another decision the council made was regarding Easter. The council determined when and how it was to be celebrated.**
- **Who did Constantine say the councils spoke on behalf of?**
- **List the things Constantine did that was positively viewed by the church (bottom of page 133 to top of page 134).**
- **What did Constantine's letter state regarding church buildings and who was the carrier of the letter?**
- **What evidence do we have that active religion was more like an elaborate production?**

(Read page 133 "Another decision of the council...", and end with on page 134 "the ordinance of baptism.").

THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA

- **Who succeeded in gaining the emperor's ear and gained power?**
- **Who was restored to fellowship but died one day before the most holy communion?**
- **How did Constantine respond to the rise in power by the Arians?**
- **What did the church give up to show her respect for Constantine?**
- **When and where did Constantine locate his new capital?**