

The Umayyad Dynasty

661-751 AD

Objectives

- ❖ To learn about the “Church History” and the “Islamic Invasion”.
- ❖ Egypt ruled by the Umayyad Dynasty.

References

- ❖ CD Audio for HG the late Bishop Youannis of Gharbeya

Scriptural Verse

- ❖ “So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus *as* the Christ” (Acts 5: 41-42).

Lesson Outline

The Umayyads

- ❖ A conflict took place among Moslems following the death of Caliph Othman.
- ❖ Moslems onward would be divided into Sunnis and Shiites, who believed the caliphate should have gone to Ali, the prophet's cousin, and his descendents.
- ❖ The gap of differences between the two sects widened and from time to time wars erupted between them.
- ❖ As a result of the conflict, a new caliphate called the Umayyad dynasty ruled from Damascus in 661 AD.
- ❖ Mouwayia Ibn Sofian became the First Ummayid Caliph.
- ❖ Abdel Malek Ibn Marwan (685-705) was one of the caliphs and he made Arabic the national language in administrative affairs.
- ❖ Islam had been the religion of the Arabs and it was very tribal and now it had spread to non-Arab peoples and therefore in order to maintain its Arab character, Arabic was enforced.
- ❖ Al-Waleed (705-715) his son expanded the caliphate from Spain to India.
- ❖ 22 caliphs ruled during this dynasty.
- ❖ A large number of Arab tribes immigrated to Egypt at that time.

Egypt under the Umayyads

- ❖ 21 Walys (Caliphs or governors) ruled Egypt under this dynasty.
- ❖ Each one tried to send large sums of money to the caliph as well as amass wealth for himself.
- ❖ Burning and destroying cities and churches was their common strategy for subduing the Copts.

Abd- Al Aziz Ibn Marwan

- ❖ Arrested and humiliated Pope John of Samanoud because he did not come to greet him.
- ❖ But he initially had good relations with the Copts.
- ❖ He built Helwan City and moved the treasury there which was headed by a Copt named Antinas.
- ❖ There were good relations between the Pope and the Caliph until the Roman Empire weakened.
- ❖ Then he increased the tax – one denarius for clergy and 3,000 for the Pope.
- ❖ Destroyed crosses and ordered statements to be placed on gates of churches that stated that God does not have children.

Al-Asbagh

- ❖ Was governor of Egypt and was one of the worst Egypt ever had.
- ❖ His thirst for levying taxes was insatiable, and was aided by a Copt named Benjamin, who showed him all the hiding places of Coptic wealth.
- ❖ Al-Asbagh imposed extraordinary taxation, and for the first time in history imposed it on the monks in the desert.
- ❖ He imposed a levy of 2,000 dinarii above the normal tax on every bishop.
- ❖ So squeezed were the Copts that many of them were constrained to convert to Islam as a means of escape from these financial burdens and many feigned conversion.
- ❖ He reviled the Lord Jesus Christ and spat in the face of the icon of Our Lady during a Coptic procession at a monastery in Hilwan.
- ❖ He was chastised by sudden death, and his father met his end forty days after his son.

Abd Allah Ibn Abd Al-Malik

- ❖ The Coptic deacon Athanasius, decided to go to Damascus to complain to the caliph.
- ❖ The caliph ordered the arrest of Athanasius and his companions, as well as the confiscation of the whole of their fortunes.
- ❖ In 705 he sent to Egypt a new governor, 'Abd Allah Ibn 'Abd Al-Malik, who proved to be worse than his predecessor.
- ❖ On his arrival in the capital, the patriarch went to greet him. Instead of receiving him, the governor ordered the patriarch's arrest and demanded the immediate payment of 3,000 dinarii as a price for his freedom.
- ❖ A deacon named Girga came forth to appeal for the release of the patriarch under his own guarantee for a few months, during which he would tour Upper Egypt to collect the amount requested from the faithful. Only after the payment of the illegal impost could the patriarch regain the full freedom to return to his capital.

Egypt under the Ummayyads

- ❖ The same story recurred throughout the patriarchate of Pope Alexander II, the only differences being that the financial imposts were multiplied and were accompanied by ferocious treatment of the innocent and helpless people.
- ❖ It had been customary for every new caliph to appoint a new governor, who naturally renewed his claim for more taxation beyond the previous limitations.
- ❖ The governors resorted to means of forcing the return of those who fled and invented all means of realizing their aims, by tattooing, cauterizing, and even chaining their victims with lead and iron bracelets or pendants.
- ❖ Confiscation of property and cattle was not unusual in farmlands, including that of the deceased.
- ❖ Incarceration, flogging, amputation of limbs, and even outright murder of a delinquent person were customary punishments.
- ❖ No one could escape the clutches of a new Waly.

Qurrah Shurayk

- ❖ Governor of Egypt in 709.
- ❖ During his reign, there was a plague outbreak, which killed many.
- ❖ Ordered Pope Alexander to pay the 3,000 denarii tax as the previous governor.
- ❖ The Pope told him that he still owed 500 denarii to the previous governor.
- ❖ He died a painful death in 714 followed by the death of his wives and children.

Abd Al-Malik Ibn Rifaah

- ❖ Governor from 714-717.
- ❖ He was inaugurated in the midst of an outbreak of famine.
- ❖ Siege of Constantinople began in 716, and people were forbidden from hosting Byzantine sailors which halted the progress of international trade and impoverished the country even more, while the caliph's thirst for funding his Byzantine expeditions freed the governor's men to pillage whatever they could find in Egypt.
- ❖ All the gold and silver utensils used in sacramental services were looted, and even pillars of precious colored marble and beautiful carved wooden structures were taken from churches for other, profane uses.
- ❖ Occasionally, monasteries were invaded; some were completely ruined, and their monks carried away for slave work in the Islamic fleet.
- ❖ A Chalcedonian named Anastasius bribed the governor to place a Chalcedonian physician by the name of Onopus on the throne of Saint Mark instead of Pope Alexander II.
- ❖ This movement was foiled by the Alexandrian people, and Onopus rescinded his claim and asked forgiveness.

Ayyoub Ibn Sharhabil

- ❖ With the accession of Umar Ibn Abd Al-Azīz (717 -720) to the Umayyad caliphate, a period of respite dawned on the Copts.
- ❖ The new caliph issued a number of edicts for the relief of churches and episcopates from past, illegal financial imposts.
- ❖ He also directed his men to concentrate on the restoration of ruined towns and villages.
- ❖ People lived in relative peace and security until a new governor, Ayyoub Ibn Sharhabil, was appointed for Egypt in 717.
- ❖ A reversal of the policy of understanding followed.
- ❖ The caliph wrote the governor that only Muslims should be in his employ, and Copts who wanted to remain in office would have to apostatize to Islam.

Egypt Under the Umayyads

- ❖ The accession of Yazid II (720-724) as caliph brought a renewal of the rule of financial terror and miseries.
- ❖ The situation was somewhat mended only by his death and the succession of his brother Hisham (724-743) who was a God fearing man. .
- ❖ However, he appointed a new governor for Egypt, Ubayd-Allah Ibn Higab who raised taxes once again.
- ❖ Ibn Higab devised accurate registers of all property, vineyards, and even the cattle in all villages and towns, to ensure the payment of all dues to the state.
- ❖ He ordered all people, young and old, aged twenty to one hundred, to wear a distinguishing leaden badge around their necks.
- ❖ Further, the Copts were to be branded with the mark of a lion on their hands as their passport to practice trading, and anyone found without that mark would have his hand cut off.
- ❖ Also, groups of townsfolk were mustered for slave labor in the building of palaces for the governor at Giza and Memphis.

Rebellion

- ❖ A series of local revolts, especially in the cities of Lower Egypt.
- ❖ When it was decided to brand the patriarch, he refused to submit to this humiliation and asked to be allowed to go to Cairo to present his case personally to Ubayd-Allah.
- ❖ He was dispatched to the capital with a special military bodyguard.
- ❖ His request to see the governor was denied and was forced into house arrest.
- ❖ He became sick and decided to flee from incarceration on a ship heading for Alexandria.
- ❖ The sick patriarch died while the governor's soldiers pursued him.
- ❖ They found him dead and seized Anba Samuel who was accused of complicity in the patriarchal flight and fined 1,000 dinarii.
- ❖ He was flogged daily while being hung outside the church of St. George in Old Cairo.

- ❖ The faithful were able to raise 300 dinarii for his captors and the bishop was consequently allowed to go.

Pope John (40th)

- ❖ Ordained in 677 AD during the reign of caliph Mouwaya Ibn Sufian.
- ❖ Was tortured and fined 100,000 denarii for not greeting the governor.
- ❖ Had burning coals placed under his heels which he bore quietly and prayerfully.
- ❖ The governor's wife asked her husband not to torture him as she suffered in a dream because of him.
- ❖ The governor lowered the tax to 10,000 denarii which the Copts promised to collect on behalf of the Pope.
- ❖ God granted him favor in the eyes of the governor.
- ❖ He was able to rebuild and repair churches.
- ❖ When the governor became ill, the Pope hosted him in one of the monasteries.
- ❖ He departed in 686 AD.

Conclusion

- ❖ 21 Walys (governors) ruled Egypt under this dynasty. No one could escape the clutches of a new Waly. Burning and destroying cities and churches was their common strategy for subduing the Copts.

Activities / Discussion

- ❖ Have a print out for the most important points to be given to the youth to avoid distraction and to help them to follow easily. Let them share in organizing these events historically by date, governor, pope and events.