



THE ETERNAL KINGDOM

Lesson #29

10/2/19

Thus far we've been looking at the book entitled, "The Eternal Kingdom", it is a history of the Lord's church from basically the first century and beyond.

Last week we were continuing to look at Rome's emperors and their treatment of Christians in that time period.

ROMAN EMPERORS

- **Claudius (41-54)**
- **Nero (54-68)**
- **Vespasian (69-79)**
- **Domitian (81-96)**
- **Trajan (98-117)**
- **Hadrian (117-138)**

(List bullets).

Tonight, we are going to continue to look at the Roman emperors and their involvement, their actions, and attitudes towards Christianity.

ANTONIUS PIUS (138-161)

- **No account or actual persecution of Christians.**
- **What might have influenced him to be lenient towards Christians?**
- **Were lenient sentiments agreed on by all of Antonius' subordinates?**

There were no actual accounts of persecution, however haters still hated. We see this based upon the sentiments of his subordinates.

What may have encouraged him to be lenient towards Christians? Letters, much like what we see written by apologists.

However, we see Antonius' reigning empower after him was not favorable to Christians. (Ns).

MARCUS AURELIUS (161-180)

- **List some examples of how persecution broke out against Christians.**
- **When Polycarp was arrested, what did the police attempt to get him to do?**
- **Read Romans 12:17-21 and explain how Polycarp fulfilled this text.**
- **List some key comments Polycarp made during his crucifixion.**
- **What apologist wrote to Marcus Aurelius about the unjust persecution of Christians?**

Examples of persecution was Justin and other disciples were beheaded in Rome 166. Polycarp and eleven others were killed in Smyrna. There are accounts of persecution occurring in Thyatira and Laodicea. The Christians from Smyrna recorded Polycarp's arrest and persecution.

When the police arrested Polycarp, we see his spirituality in that he requested an hour in solitude to pray. He asked for the officers to be fed and cared for. When they led him away to be tried, the police begged him to denounce Christ so they could let him go. Imagine how Polycarp touched their hearts through his example of goodness and godliness. This reminds me of (Romans 12:17-21 read).

His comment about saying "away with the "Atheist". Kind of humorous.

The Lord had been loyal to him for 86 years, and how could he dare deny Christ now.

He asked them to fix a day and he would tell them about Jesus and his doctrine. This reminds me of the former blind man's comments in John 9:27 (read and review event).

He refused to repent because he would be going from better to worse. When threatened with fire, he pitied them for the fire they were about to endure.

The apologist, Melito, bishop of Sardis, wrote to M.A. about the unfair treatment of Christians.

SEVERUS (193-211)

- **What did he forbid in 201 A.D.?**
- **Who's example did the Christians look to for encouragement while being persecuted?**
- **Tertullian wrote about the persecution of Perpetua and Felicity. What details are we provided regarding these women?**
- **How does their example jive with Jesus' words in Matthew 10:32-39?**

DECIUS (249-251) & VALERIAN (253-260)

- **What plan did Decius intend to implement that would have been disastrous for the church?**
- **After Decius' death, Valerian continued his predecessors policies regarding persecution.**

Decius was tyrant. He was very hostile towards Christians. He seemed to hate the idea that Jews and Christians would not worship the Roman gods and emperors. Decius was fascinated with his predecessors. He even had coins made with their images. His favorite emperor was Trajan. As a matter of fact he adopted the name Trajanus for himself. Of course Trajan was hater of the Jews and Christians. He persecuted them with vigor. Funny, we imitate those whom we idolize.