

# The Eternal Kingdom

Lesson 30

10/9/19

## Severus (193-211)

- What did he forbid the Christians from doing 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?

Severus forbade conversions to Christ or Christianity. Sound familiar to anything we read the book of Acts? (Explain the events in Acts 3 and 4, then read Acts 4:15-20).

The Christians looked to the example of the apostles. Aren't you grateful for good godly examples? This certainly should give us a reason to pause and ask ourselves, "I'm I being a good example?" Of course the early church looked to the apostles example

## Decius (249-251), Gallus (251-253) & Valerian (253-260)

- What plan did Decius implement that guaranteed compliance with his decree favoring pagan worship?
- Gallus was a poor military leader and was eventually replaced.
- After Decius and Gallus, Valerian continued his predecessors policies regarding persecution.
- A period of peace from 260-303.

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. He ensured compliance of pagan worship when he issued certificates to adherents after worshipping pagan gods. I want to read from Justo Gonzalez's book "The story of Christianity" (read pages 85-88).

Another interesting fact about Decius was that he 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.

Gallus was a poor emperor and military leader. He lost significant battles which lead to his rejection by the Roman army.

Valerian came into power and reignited persecution of Christians. He was cut from the same old cloth as Decius. Loyalty to Rome meant honoring the Roman religion and gods!

There was a period of peace from 260-303.

## Diocletian (284-305) & Galarius (305-311)

- Diocletian assumed dictatorial powers in 284
  - What evidence do we have that he as much?
- He viewed Christianity as a militant group and considered it a threat to his attempt to unify Rome.
- What drastic act did Diocletian embark upon to hurt the church in 303?
- In 304, Diocletian issued a second decree. What did it demand of Christians?
- What horrific stories did Eusebius share regarding Christian persecution?
- In 305 Diocletian renounced his throne.
- Galarius (305-311) attempted to persecute the Christians, but it had no affect on them.

Diocletian assumed dictatorial powers in 284. We have evidence of this because he banned the Senate. He alone ruled Rome.

He viewed Christianity as a threat to his purpose and plans for Rome. He couldn't unify them if pesky Christians were resisting his abuse of power to make them conform to his desires. Interestingly, his wife Prisca, and daughter Valeria were Christians.

In 303, he issued an edict to burn down churches, imprison Christians, and burn copies of the bible.

In 304, he demanded Christians worship false gods or die. If you are wondering if his wife and daughter complied, they did!

Eusebius writes about Christians being murdered, and sent off to camps and forced to work.

In 305 Diocletian renounced his throne. He became ill and Galarius persuaded him to resign from office.

Galarius attempted to persecute the church, but realized that it was ineffective. (Next week we will look at the Edicts that were issued).