

# The Eternal Kingdom

Lesson #28

9/25/19

If you are new to this class, we've been studying church history; in particular, church history as it pertains to Lord's church that was established on Pentecost around 33 A.D.

We've also been using this book "The Eternal Kingdom" as a reference and guide.

Last week we looked at some notable Roman emperors.

## Roman Emperors

- Claudius (41-54)
- Nero (54-68)
- Vespasian (69-79)
- Domitian (81-96)

(List bullets).

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

## Trajan (98-117)

- We see for the first time a distinction between Jews and Christians under his reign.
- Trajan sought out Christianity, not for salvation, but for their destruction.
- What statements did Tacitus, Pliny (the younger), and Suetonius make regarding Christians?
- List some examples of Christians being persecuted under Trajan's reign.

Let's begin on page 90, starting with the second paragraph.

So who are Pliny, Trajan, and Tacitus (ns)

## Who are Pliny, Trajan and Tacitus?

- Pliny
  - Pliny the Younger, was a lawyer, author, and magistrate of Ancient Rome. Pliny's uncle, Pliny the Elder, helped raise and educate him. Pliny the Younger wrote hundreds of letters, of which 247 survive and are of great historical value. Some are addressed to reigning emperors or to notables such as the historian Tacitus. Pliny served as an imperial magistrate under Trajan (reigned 98–117).
- Trajan
  - Publius Cornelius Tacitus was a senator and a historian of the Roman Empire. Tacitus is considered to be one of the greatest Roman historians.
- Suetonius
  - Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus, commonly known as Suetonius, was a Roman historian belonging to the equestrian order who wrote during the early Imperial era of the Roman Empire.

(After reading bullets go to Next Slide).

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So what statements did these men make concerning Christianity? It was a "detestable superstition", "vicious and immoderate", and a "new and harmful superstition".

Can you imagine being the recipient of such accusations? Again, what was the underlying reason for such insults? Christians would not deny Christ and say "Caesar God".

We see examples of Christians being persecuted unto death such as Ignatius and Symeon.

When St. Ignatius of Antioch was on his way to martyrdom to Rome (for being a Catholic Bishop) he wrote to the Roman Christians the following . . . .

**ST. IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH** I write to the Churches, and impress on them all, that I shall willingly die for God, unless you hinder me. I beseech of you not to show an unseasonable good-will towards me. Allow me to become food for the wild beasts, through whose instrumentality it will be granted me to attain to God. I am the wheat of God, and let me be ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may be found the pure bread of Christ.

This was ALREADY going on there (the sacrifice of Christians) and St. Ignatius knew it. And he willingly embraced it.

Tradition tells us he was killed by two lions (see this) but as I said, others evidently

were already undergoing such treatment and St. Ignatius matter-of-factly refers to it, and assumes his readers are well aware of it.

## Hadrian (117-138)

- Some persecution during his reign.
- The laws of Trajan were not repealed or replaced.
- In all, it was somewhat peaceful for the church.

(Read bullets).

Do you remember my question last week? How do you turn off the hate? Folks, the only way they turn off the hate was tune into Christ! A beautiful passage that reinforces this is (Ephesians 2). Let's read it and talk about it.

## 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.