

Fire in Rome & Neronic Persecution (Late 64)

By Ed Stevens -- Then and Now Podcast -- March 17, 2013

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Well, it is so good to be back with you again! Hope all of you had a blessed week of fruitful work for the Kingdom. This time we will talk about the Great Fire in Rome in July of 64 AD, and the Neronic persecution which occurred soon afterwards.
- B. Before we begin I want to mention the Lesson Outlines for These Podcasts: There is a PDF available for each podcast. Many listeners find it helpful to have that open in front of them as they listen. If you would like to get that PDF, simply email me and request it. If you are planning on being a regular listener to this program, and would like to automatically receive the PDF as soon as it is ready, without having to request each one separately, simply email me and ask to be put on the **PDF list**. My email address is: <preterist1@preterist.org>
- C. Let's ask God for His presence and blessing on our study here --
Our Heavenly Father, Lord, Creator, and King of all ages and worlds, we humble ourselves before you and ask for your forgiveness of our sins and your providential guidance in our lives. We pray for the leaders of this nation and of all the nations who have forsaken Your Ways. You sent your Son to be a blessing to all the nations, but they have rejected Him and brought a curse upon themselves instead. We pray that our fellow Christians all around the world will join with us in humbling ourselves, and praying, and seeking Your Face, and turning from our wicked ways. We all desperately need to turn back to the Bible and reapply its absolute truths to our lives, so that we can set the example as shining lights upon a hill. Use these historical studies to teach us the mistakes of the past, so we can avoid them in the future. We praise Your Holy Name for your first century saints who suffered unspeakable tortures and unthinkable horrors in the Neronic persecution in order to be salt and light in the midst of a very perverse and crooked generation. They deserved the great resurrection and rapture reward that You gave them at the Coming of Your Son Jesus in 66 AD. By looking at their amazing examples of faithfulness in the midst of terrifying persecution and overwhelming hardship, may we all be inspired to "deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly" like they did. (Tit. 2:12) It is in the Name of our precious Savior, and Your Glorious Son, that we pray. Amen.
- D. I get emails every week from listeners all over the country and around the world, thanking us for these historical studies which have helped them understand the Bible better. If you have benefited from these podcasts, we would encourage you to become partners with us in this teaching and publishing ministry, to enable us to share it with many others, and so that you will share in all the good fruit that comes from it. Those who contribute to *International Preterist Association* will receive some of our latest and greatest resources as our gift to you. Simply go to our website and click on the left sidebar button entitled "Make a Donation to IPA" where you can make a one-time donation or contribute monthly. Our website

address is <www.preterist.org> You can also make donations through PayPal. Our PayPal address is: <preterist1@preterist.org>

- E. Last time we looked at the Great Commission, and how the apostles completed that mission by the time they passed from the earthly scene in about AD 64.
- F. Now we will look at the Great Fire that swept through Rome in the Summer of 64, as well as the horrendous persecution of Christians by Nero shortly afterwards.

Fire in Rome and Nero's Persecution (AD 64)

Jul 19, 64 – Great Fire in Rome. The fire started on July 19th (AD 64), and burned for six days, and then broke out again and burned for three more days. Out of the fourteen sections of the city, only four remained intact after the fire (see Tacitus *Annals* 15:44). Most of the precious antiquities of Rome, including the decorated houses of its great leaders, its most sacred objects and temples, trophies, and antiques, all vanished in the flames. While Rome was burning, Nero supposedly watched from Mecena's Tower and was delighted with the beauty of the flames. He sang of the destruction of Troy in his lyre-player's costume. Philip Schaff does a good job of describing the fire and its damage to the city:

The cause of the conflagration is involved in mystery. Public rumor traced it to Nero, who wished to enjoy the lurid spectacle of burning Troy, and to gratify his ambition to rebuild Rome on a more magnificent scale, and to call it Neropolis. According to Tacitus *Annals* 15:39, and Suetonius 100:38, "Robbers and ruffians were seen to thrust blazing brands into the buildings, and, when seized, they affirmed that they acted under higher orders. The elder Pliny, Xiphilinus, and the author of the tragedy, Octavia, likewise charge Nero with incendiarism" . . . When the fire broke out [Nero] was on the seashore at Antium, his birthplace; he returned when the devouring element reached his own palace, and made extraordinary efforts to stay and then to repair the disaster by a reconstruction which continued till after his death, not forgetting to replace his partially destroyed temporary residence (*domus transitoria*) by "the golden house" (*domus aurea*), as a standing wonder of architectural magnificence and extravagance. [Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 1; Accordance electronic edition, 8 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910. n.p.]

Aug - 64 – Nero begins the persecution of Christians. It seems unlikely that any of the NT books would have been written after the persecution broke out. It would not have been safe for the scribes, the couriers, or the intended recipients. This implies that almost all of the NT canon was complete by the time Rome was burned. The only exceptions may have been 2 Timothy, Jude, and 2 Peter, which may have been written soon after the Neronian persecution broke out, while Paul and Peter were awaiting their execution. After those three books were put into circulation, there does not appear to be any further writings from any of the inspired writers. All missionary work ceases, all literary activities (scribes, couriers) cease, and what is left of the church goes into hiding until the Parousia.

We do not know the exact date when the persecution began, nor precisely when Paul and Peter were killed. But we do know that rumors arose shortly after the fire (and even during the fire) that Nero was to blame for ordering the fires to be ignited. Nero would have wasted no time clearing himself of that charge, and shifting the blame to someone else. So, the persecution must have started soon after the fire, most likely as early as August, while the disaster was still weighing heavily upon the Roman populace, and they were looking for someone to vent their wrath upon.

It is well worth the effort to examine the accounts of Tacitus, Suetonius (*Nero* 16:2), and Juvenal, along with Tertullian's lengthy critique of the persecution (*Ad Nationes*). First, we will read the full account from **Tacitus** [AD 56-117]:

But not all the relief of men, nor the bounties of the emperor, nor the propitiation of the gods, could relieve him [Nero] from the infamy of being believed to have ordered the conflagration. Therefore, in order to suppress the rumor, Nero **falsely charged** with the guilt, and **punished with the most intense tortures**, those persons who, hated for their crimes, were commonly called Christians. The founder of that name, Christus, had been put to death by the procurator of Judaea, Pontius Pilate, in the reign of Tiberius; but the pernicious superstition, repressed for a time, broke out again, not only through Judaea, the source of this evil, but also through the city [of Rome], whither all things vile and shameful flow from all quarters, and are encouraged. Accordingly, first, those only were arrested who confessed. [*Philip Schaff's Note: Confessed what? Probably the Christian religion, which was already regarded as a sort of crime. If they confessed to be guilty of incendiarism, they must have been either weak neophytes who could not stand the pain of the torture, or hired scoundrels.*] Next, on their information, a vast multitude (*multitudo ingens*), were convicted, not so much of the crime of incendiarism as of hatred of the human race. **And in their deaths they were made the subjects of sport; for they were wrapped in the hides of wild beasts and torn to pieces by dogs, or nailed to crosses, or set on fire, and when day declined, were burned to serve for nocturnal lights.** Nero had offered his own gardens [on the Vatican] for this spectacle, and also exhibited a **chariot race on the occasion**, now mingling in the crowd in the dress of a charioteer, now actually holding the reins. Whence a **feeling of compassion arose towards the sufferers**, though justly held to be odious, **because they seemed not to be cut off for the public good, but as victims to the ferocity of one man.**" [Tacitus *Annals* 15:44, written at the end of his life, c. AD 117]

Schaff elaborates further on what Tacitus has told us:

Under this wanton charge of incendiarism, backed by the equally groundless charge of misanthropy and unnatural vice, there began a carnival of blood such as even heathen Rome never saw before or since. It was the answer of the powers of hell to the mighty preaching of the two chief apostles, which had shaken heathenism to its [core]. A "vast multitude" of Christians [were] put to death in the most shocking manner. Some were crucified, probably in mockery of the punishment of Christ, some sewed up in the skins of wild beasts and exposed to the voracity of mad dogs in the arena. The satanic tragedy reached its climax at night in the imperial gardens on the slope of the Vatican (which embraced, it is supposed, the present site of the place and church of St. Peter): Christian men and women, covered with pitch or oil or resin, and nailed to posts of pine, were lighted and burned as torches for the amusement of the mob; while Nero, in fantastical dress, figured in a horse race, and displayed his art as charioteer. Burning alive was the ordinary punishment of incendiaries; but only the cruel ingenuity of this imperial monster, under the inspiration of the devil, could invent such a horrible system of illumination.

This was the "**great tribulation**" that Christ and the Apostles had warned the saints to prepare for. And it was the very event which provoked Christ to **cut short** the days of that persecution, **rescue** His elect saints, and **avenge** His martyrs by pouring out His **full cup of wrath** upon their persecutors.

The Roman historian **Suetonius** [AD 69-122] mentions the persecution in only one sentence: "*Punishment was inflicted on the Christians, a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition.*" [Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, "Nero" 16:2 – Found at this link:
http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Suetonius/12Caesars/Nero*.html]

Juvenal (AD 55-130?), a late first and early second century Roman satirical poet, who was probably an eye-witness of the horror (acc. to Philip Schaff), alluded to it with mingled feelings of contempt and pity for the suffering Christians: “*Darest thou speak of Tigellinus’ guilt [one of Nero’s favorites]? Thou too shalt shine like those we saw, stand at the stake with throat transfixed, smoking and burning.*” (Juvenal *Satires* 1:155)

Tertullian (d. about 220, Christian writer) alluded to the Neronic persecution in his defense of Christianity and the Gospel:

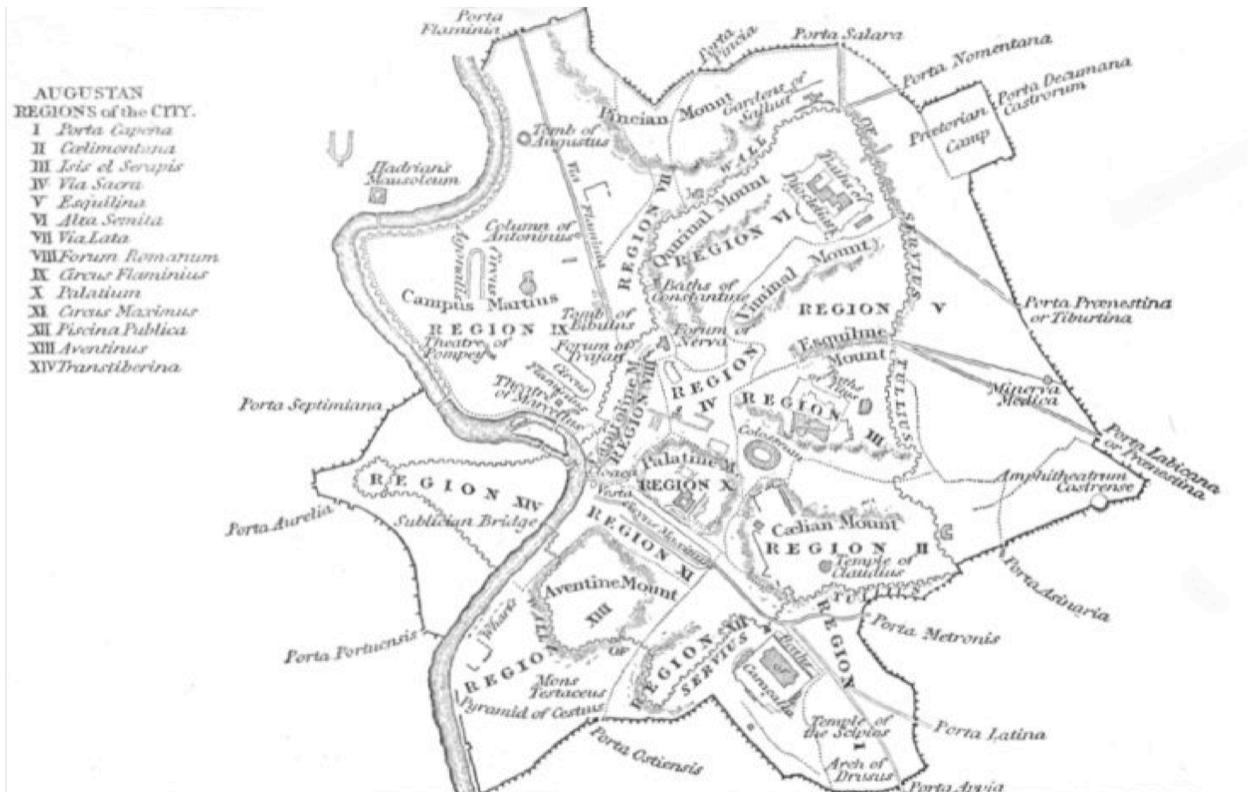
This name of ours took its rise in the reign of Augustus; under Tiberius it was taught with all clearness and publicity; under Nero it was ruthlessly condemned, and you may weigh its worth and character even from the person of its persecutor. If that prince was a pious man, then the Christians are impious; if he was just, if he was pure, then the Christians are unjust and impure; if he was not a public enemy, we are enemies of our country. What sort of men we are, our persecutor himself shows, since he of course punished what produced hostility to himself. . . . Although every other institution which existed under Nero has been destroyed, yet this of ours has firmly remained . . . [Tertullian *Ad Nationes* Bk. 1, Ch. 7]

Schaff tells us that **Sulpicius Severus** (c. 363-425) in his *Chronicle* (2:28-29) “gives a pretty full account [of the horrors suffered in Rome], but mostly [copied] from Tacitus. Both he and **Orosius** (c. 375-418, *History Against the Pagans* 7:7) [were the first to] clearly assert that *Nero extended the persecution to the provinces.*” Both of these were Christian writers, and Orosius worked with both Augustine and Jerome.

Schaff sums up the matter well when he says: “It is not unlikely that in this (as in all previous persecutions, and often afterwards) the fanatical Jews, enraged by the rapid progress of Christianity, and anxious to avert suspicion from themselves, stirred up the people against the hated Galileans, and that the heathen Romans fell with double fury on these supposed half Jews, disowned by their own strange brethren” (as both Ewald and Renan have suggested). [Schaff, *Hist. of Christian Church*]

In order to deflect accusations away from himself, Nero accused the Christians. The Jews in Rome (through Nero's "religious" wife Poppaea, *Antiq.* 20.195) may have helped Nero concoct this accusation. They had both "motive" and "opportunity." Eusebius quotes Justin Martyr as saying that the Jews throughout the Roman empire had more than once circulated such false slanders against the Christians in order to prejudice the Roman authorities against them. [Euseb. *Eccl. Hist.* 4.18] He quotes Melito also about such Jewish “informers.” [Euseb. *Eccl. Hist.* 4.26]

Another tidbit of history that supports these suspicions is the fact that the Jewish quarter of the city (region 14), which lay across the Tiber river to the southwest (see the map below), escaped the damaging fires. Consequently, some Romans suspected the Jews of lighting the fires, since their part of the city was virtually untouched. However, since Nero’s “religious” wife was somewhat friendly toward the Jewish people, Nero may have spared their part of the city from the torch. This raises the question about whether the Jews may have known about the burning of the city in advance, or simply were spared because of their friendly relations with Nero, and their trans-Tiber location. However, since many of the Christians were Jewish, and lived in the Jewish quarter of the city, it would have been easy for the Jews to divert the suspicion against them over to the Christians.



Philip Schaff notes that “**Dion Cassius** (born circa A.D. 155), in his *History of Rome* (preserved in fragments and in the abridgment of the monk Xiphilinus), from the arrival of Aeneas to A.D. 229, mentions the conflagration of Rome, but ignores the persecutions of the Christians.” [Philip Schaff, "Apostolic Christianity," *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 1; Accordance electronic ed. 8 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), n.p.]

Warmington is puzzled by the **strange silence** of ancient historians surrounding the persecution of the Christians by Nero. He says:

No convincing explanation of the silence of later generations about a connexion between the measures against the Christians and the fire of Rome exists. Tacitus' work was more or less forgotten; as for the Christian tradition, it may be supposed that almost the entire Christian community at Rome was destroyed and that later arrivals and converts in the city had no reason to cherish the memory of those who had suffered, particularly as no issue of religious faith was directly involved. (Warmington, *Nero: Reality and Legend* 127)

Warmington is obviously not a preterist, nor even a conservative Christian, so it is no surprise that he finds it hard to explain the silence surrounding the great fire in Rome and the subsequent persecution of Christians. He is certainly not aware of the possibility that the **Parousia** and **Rapture** may have occurred, and that this may have something to do with the **absence** and **silence** of the Christians afterwards.

It is interesting that **Josephus** does not mention any of this either, even though he was in Rome at the time of the great fire and the persecution afterwards. He did allude to some of the crimes of Nero, but nothing specific, and certainly nothing related to the fire and the persecution (*Antiq.* 20.8.2-3). Furthermore, Josephus had

cordial relations with Nero and Poppaea at that very time through a mutual acquaintance named **Aliturius**, "an actor of plays and much beloved by Nero, but a Jew by birth" (Josephus *Life* 1:16). Josephus met Aliturius in Puteoli right after he had recovered from the shipwreck. Evidently Aliturius had performed in Nero's palace. Josephus said that it was "through his interest that [Josephus] became known to Poppaea, Caesar's wife, and took care, as soon as possible, to entreat her to procure that the priests might be set at liberty; and when, besides this favor, I had obtained many presents from Poppaea, I returned home again" (Josephus *Life* 1:16). Josephus does not say what other favors Poppaea granted him, nor why Poppaea was so generous. What had Josephus and Aliturius done for Nero and Poppaea that excited such lavish gratuities? Could it be that the Jews in Rome used this connection between Aliturius and Poppaea to suggest a way for Nero to get out of the blame for the fire, by blaming it on the Christians? It is certainly possible. Nero and Poppaea would have been extremely grateful for such a suggestion. It was a "win-win" for both Nero and the Jews. Again, there is motive and opportunity, the two key ingredients for identifying a crime suspect.

At the time Josephus wrote the *Wars* (in AD 70-78) there were not very many Christians back in existence yet. The **Neronic persecution**, the **great apostasy**, and the **rapture** had removed them. It took a while for the gospel seed that had been planted in the hearts of countless thousands to sprout and grow. Since Christians were so **scarce after AD 70**, Josephus may have felt no need to mention them, thinking that they had been dealt such a **crushing blow** in the Neronic persecution that they would **never be a significant factor** in the Roman world again.

That would have been the worst case of underestimation in history! After the war, those who had heard the gospel before the war began accepting Christ and **restarted the church** again, but without any trained leadership to guide them. The Christians were certainly not a threat to the Jews at that point. Josephus does not mention any Christians being around until he wrote the *Antiquities* in AD 93, saying that "the tribe of Christians, so named from him, **are not extinct at this day**" [*Antiq.* 18:64 (18.3.3)]. It is hard to tell from this statement what was his opinion of Christians. Is he merely stating the situation as it was, or is he lamenting the fact that they were not extinct, as he and his fellow Jews in Rome might have hoped? This statement, written over twenty years after AD 70, shows that Christianity had finally reappeared on the radar screen after the Neronic persecution and rapture. There were enough of them around for Josephus to notice that they were not extinct after all, much to the chagrin of his Jewish comrades.

I can think of several different possible motives why Josephus did not mention the fire in Rome in July 64, nor the persecution of Christians afterwards. Perhaps Josephus thought that the Neronic persecution eliminated the vast majority of Christians, so there were not enough left around to be worth mentioning, and that the Church was effectively destroyed, never to be a significant factor again. He may also have wanted to avoid mentioning the fire in Rome and its associated Neronic persecution of Christians, since he may have been involved with the group of Roman Jews who influenced Nero to blame the fire on the Christians. Maybe he did not want to give Christians any publicity so that his Gentile readers would not hear about Christ and be converted. Perhaps he did not want to say anything about the affairs in

Rome that might reflect adversely upon Rome or the emperors (Nero and Vespasian) from whom he and the Jews had obtained so many favors. Maybe his friends in Rome (Agrippa and Bernice) advised him to leave out any mention of the fire and the accusation against Christians for neutrality sake. Who knows? Maybe all of the above are true, plus a whole lot more reasons why he did not mention it. But it is certainly peculiar that he does not say anything about the fire in Rome or the persecution of Christians afterwards. Very intriguing. Historians are puzzled by this silence about the Fire and the persecution afterwards.

How widespread was the Neronic persecution? Of course, futurist expositors try to downplay the significance of the Neronic persecution and greatly exaggerate the persecution under Domitian. But Orazio Marucchi, a Roman Catholic scholar, mentions several Roman and Italian sources who indicate that the Neronic persecution was not just confined to Rome or Italy, but rather:

"...extended throughout the length and breadth of the Empire. The burning of Rome was but a pretext, for the Christians were to be considered as enemies of the human race." [Orazio Marucchi, *Manual of Christian Archeology*, p. 29]

Philip Schaff, in his classic eight-volume *History of the Christian Church*, cites both ancient and modern historians who believed the Neronic persecution was much broader in scope than just Rome and Italy:

The heathen historians, if we are to judge from their silence, seem to confine the persecution to the city of Rome, but later Christian writers extend it to the provinces: e.g., **Orosius** (about 400), *Hist.*, VII. 7 . . . So also **Sulpicius Severus**, *Chron.* II. 28-29. . . **Ewald** (VI. 627, and in his *Commentary on the Apocalypse*) and **Renan** (p. 183) very decidedly affirm the extension of the persecution beyond Rome. . . **C. L. Roth** (*Werke des Tacitus*, VI. 117) and **Wieseler** (*Christenverfolgungen der Cäsaren*, p. 11) assume that Nero condemned and prohibited Christianity as dangerous to the state. **Kiessling** and **De Rossi** have found in an inscription at Pompeii traces of a bloody persecution [120 miles south of Rome] . . .

The example set by the emperor in the capital could hardly be without influence in the provinces, and would justify the outbreak of popular hatred. If the *Apocalypse* was written under Nero, or shortly after his death, **John's exile to Patmos** must be connected with this persecution. It mentions **imprisonments in Smyrna**, the martyrdom of **Antipas in Pergamus**, and speaks of the murder of prophets and saints and **all that have been slain on the earth** (Rev 2:9, 10, 13; 16:6; 17:6; 18:24). . . Peter, in his first Epistle . . . warns the Christians in Asia Minor of a **fiery trial** which is to try them, and of sufferings already endured or to be endured, not for any crime, but for the name of "Christians" (1 Pet. 2:12, 19-20; 3:14-18; 4:12-19).

Christianity, which had just reached the age of its founder, **seemed annihilated** . . . With Peter and Paul, the first generation of Christians was buried. Darkness must have overshadowed the trembling disciples, and a despondency seized them almost as deep as on the evening of the crucifixion, thirty-four years before. But the morning of the **resurrection was not far distant**. . . [and] "the gardens and circus of Nero on the Vatican, which were polluted with the blood of the first Christians, have been rendered still more famous by the **triumph . . . of the persecuted religion**" [Gibbon, ch. 16].

None of the leading apostles remained to record the horrible massacre . . . This mysterious book [the book of Revelation] . . . was undoubtedly **intended for the church of that age** as well as for future ages, and must have been sufficiently adapted to the actual condition and surroundings of its first readers to **give them substantial aid and comfort in their fiery trials**.

Owing to the nearness of events alluded to, they must have **understood it even better**, for practical purposes, than readers of later generations. John looks, indeed, forward to the final consummation, but he sees the end in the beginning. He takes his standpoint on the historic foundation of the old Roman empire in which he lived, as the visions of the prophets of Israel took their departure from the kingdom of David or the age of the Babylonian captivity. He describes **the heathen Rome of his day** as "the beast that ascended out of the abyss," as "a beast coming out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads" (or kings, emperors), as "the great harlot that sitteth among many waters," as a "woman sitting upon a scarlet-colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns," as "Babylon the great, the mother of the harlots and of the abominations of the earth" [Rev. 11:7; 13:1; 17:1, 3, 5; cf. Daniel's description of the fourth beast in Dan. 7:7ff]. The seer must have in view the **Neronian persecution**, the most cruel that ever occurred, when he calls the woman seated on seven hills, "**drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus**" (Rev. 17:6), and prophesied her downfall as a matter of rejoicing for the "saints and apostles and prophets" (Rev. 18:2. cf. Rev. 6:9-11). [Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 1; Accordance electronic ed. 8 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), n.p.]

Notice what Schaff said about the Harlot City being *drunk with the blood of the saints* (Rev. 17:6). He saw this bloodshed of the Harlot City as a reference to the Neronian persecution. In Rev. 7:9-17, there is another clear reference to the Neronian persecution when it talks about the "great multitude" of martyrs who were killed in the "great tribulation." Plus, there were warnings to the churches in Asia (and "all the churches" in the empire) that "troublesome times were near" (cf. Rev. 2:10f; 3:10; and the idea of rewarding the "overcomers" is repeated throughout the book).

If the Neronian persecution only affected the city of Rome, then we would have seen most of the first generation of Christians still alive and active throughout the war and afterward for the next three or four decades. The Gentile Christians outside Palestine especially, should have continued doing mission work, building churches, and traveling around the empire like Paul and the other apostles had done. But we see none of that kind of activity after the Neronian persecution and the beginning of the revolt in AD 66. All missionary activity and writing of inspired books ceased, and the churches where the apostles labored have vanished. *There is nothing from any of them to explain the sudden and mass disappearance of the Gentile Christians outside of Rome and Palestine, except for the Neronian Persecution and the Rapture.* This alone, if we had nothing else, strongly implies that the Neronian persecution was empire-wide, and encompassed both Jewish and Gentile Christians. The shroud of silence that descended upon the church after the Neronian persecution tells us that the vast majority of Christians were killed at that time.

But the point that even most of us preterists have missed, is that the Neronian persecution, and its associated great apostasy, did not eliminate ALL of the true Christians. There were still some true "elect" Christians who "lived and remained" until the Parousia. And Christ did not kill them at the Parousia, so unless they were raptured out of there, they should have still been around on earth after the Parousia to explain what had just happened in AD 70.

The book of Acts and Paul's epistles mention over 80 different people who worked with Paul and the other apostles in their missionary work (Timothy, Titus, Gaius, Aristarchus, Tychicus, Silas, Luke, Epaphras, Hermas, Clement, Mark, etc.). It is simply not likely that every one of them were killed in the Neronian persecution, or fell away from the faith in the great apostasy. Some of them would have escaped to

safe places where they would have "lived and remained" until the Parousia.

Jesus made it clear in at least two texts that there would still be Christians "living and remaining" until His return (Matt. 16:27-28; 24:21-31). Apostle Paul taught the same thing (1 Cor 15:51-52; 1 Thess 4:15-17), as did Apostle John in the book of Revelation (chs. 2-3, esp. 2:25f) and his gospel (John 21:22).

So, the Neronic persecution did not kill all the Christians. Not all of them died then, nor did all of them fall away in the great apostasy. Jesus said that at His Parousia His remaining "elect ones" (faithful Christians) would be gathered into His heavenly Kingdom by the angels. Some of those "elect" saints would live and remain until the Parousia.

However, for some reason, there is NO evidence of them still being around on earth AFTER the Parousia. But, there should be LOTS of evidence coming from them, unless they were raptured out of there. Since Jesus called them "elect" saints, implying that they were faithful Christians, they would have KNOWN that the book of Revelation had been fulfilled, and that the Parousia had occurred. They would have TAUGHT the next generation the truth about it, so that we would not find second century church writers like Papias, Polycarp, and Ignatius totally confused about it, and teaching that the Parousia was still future.

If any of those first generation "elect ones" were still around after the Parousia, why didn't they speak up and tell the next generation of Christians what they had seen, heard, and experienced at the Parousia? Why didn't they set the record straight when Papias, Polycarp, and Ignatius started teaching that the Parousia was still future? It would certainly be unfaithfulness on their part, if not criminal negligence, to remain silent about what they had seen and heard and experienced at the Parousia, especially in view of the next generation of Christians saying that the Parousia was still future.

Their silence becomes even more disturbing and incriminating when we look at the kind of things those first generation Christians were promised to see, hear and experience at the Parousia. They were definitely NOT expecting that event to come and go without them being aware of it, and without them experiencing the benefits of it. They were told that they would "see" Him at His return, and glorify Him on that day, and marvel in the presence of all who had believed. They were commanded NOT to shrink away from Him at His coming, but rather to draw near to Him and be gathered into His presence. They were told that they would be rescued from the wrath that was coming upon the unbelievers. They were promised relief from the persecution and reward in His presence. Did they experience all those things that Jesus and the Apostles had promised them? Why were they so silent afterwards? Why did they let Papias, Polycarp, and Ignatius teach that the Parousia was still future? Do you see the problem there? *Their silence is deafening!* **Do you catch the power of that?**

Well, that will do it for this session. I hope this story about Neronic persecution was inspiring for all of us to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present time of darkness.

Thank you so much for listening. If any of our listeners have questions or comments about what we looked at here in this session, do not hesitate to email me. My email address is: **preterist1@preterist.org**

If any of this material has raised any questions for you,
or if you need more information, do not hesitate to email me at:
<preterist1@preterist.org>

There are a lot of great supplementary articles posted on our website,
plus books and audio/video media for purchase. Go there and browse all you want.
Here is the link: <http://preterist.org>

If you would like a couple of great books which detail all of these events, I would recommend **ISRAEL AND THE NATIONS** by F. F. Bruce, which is available for order at our website (www.preterist.org), and **JEWISH BACKGROUNDS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT** by J. Julius Scott, which is available from Amazon.com. Be sure to get a copy of my book, **First Century Events**, which deals with the Roman, Jewish, and Christian events of the first century. We are using it as a study guide here in our studies of the first century. You can purchase it from our website: www.preterist.org

Some further recommended reading:

Josephus *Antiquities and Wars*