

I. The Seventh Persecution: 249 A.D.

A. This persecution took place under the Emperor Decius, 240-251 A.D. Several things prompted his persecutions of the Christians.

1. Decius hated the previous Emperor Phillip, who was favorable to Christians.
2. Christianity was increasing at an alarming rate. The heathen temples were almost forsaken while the Christian churches were crowded with converts.

B. Examples of this persecution were taken from Foxe's "Christian Martyr of the World."

1. Peter, a young man of superior qualities of mind and body, was seized as a Christian and carried before Optimus, pro-counsel of Asia. On being commanded to sacrifice to Venus, he cried, "I marvel that you sacrifice to an infamous woman, whose crimes even your own historians tell of, and whose life was filled with such actions as your laws would punish. No! I shall offer only to the true God the sacrifice of prayers and praise."
2. "Optimus, on hearing this, ordered him to be bound on a wheel which was rolled over stones so as to break his bones. But torment only inspired him with fresh courage. He smiled on his executioners, and seemed by his serenity of his countenance, not to unbraid [backdown], but to applaud them. At last, the Proconsul commanded him to be beheaded, which was immediately done."
3. "The Emperor Decius, having erected a pagan temple at Ephesus, commanded all who were in the city to sacrifice to the idols. This order was nobly refused by seven of his own soldiers: Maximianus, Martianus, Joannes, Malchus, Dionysius, Constantinus, and Seraion. The Emperor Decius, wishing first to try persuasion, gave them time to consider until he returned from a journey. But, in the absence of the Emperor, they escaped and hid themselves in a cavern. Dacius was told of this upon his return, and the mouth of the cavern was covered up, so the seven soldiers all starved to death there."

C. At the death of Decius, Gallus became Emperor of the Roman Empire. Gallus accused the Christians of causing a plague that had broken out and the persecutions continued.

- II. The Eight General Persecution: 257 A.D.** After the death of Gallus, Valerian was made Emperor.
- A.** For four years Valerian governed with moderation and treated the Christian kindly.
 - B.** An Egyptian named Macrianus, gained great influence over the Emperor and pursued him to persecute the Christians.
 - C.** The persecution under Valerian continued for 31/2 years. Many Christians and Pastors met horrible deaths.

III. The Ninth General Persecution: 270 A.D.

- A.** Gallienus, son of Valerian, succeeded him as Emperor.
 - 1. During his reign the Empire suffered many setbacks such as earthquakes, pestilence, floods, attacks by barbarians, etc.
 - 2. Gallienus remembered that when his father favored Christians, he prospered and when he persecuted the Christians, he was unsuccessful. Upon this reflection, he stopped the Christian persecution and the churches had peace for several years.
- B.** Aurelian followed Gallenus as Emperor and began again the persecutions in 270 A.D.
- C.** The next four emperors which followed Aurelian were moderate and the church was left alone.
- D.** When Diocletian became Emperor in 284 AD, there began a furious persecution.
 - 1. A legion of soldiers, consisting of 6,000 soldiers were all Christians. This was called the Thebian Legion.
 - 2. Maximian, the Emperor's chief general, ordered these men to take an oath to help drive out Christianity. They refused.
 - 3. Maximian ordered every 10th to be executed. The remainder still refused.
 - 4. A second time, every 10th man was executed. Again, the remainder refused.
 - 5. Finally, the entire 6,000 men were executed and not one man faltered.



IV. The 10th General Persecution: 303 A.D.

- A.** Again, the prosperity of the Christian religion excited the envy of the heathen and resulted in severe Christian persecution.
- B.** Many, many thousands of Christians and their Pastors met death gallantly during this persecution.

Diocletian (east, 284–305 AD; divided the empire into east and west) Maximian (west, 286–305 AD)

V. Review of the first 300 years of Church History.

- A.** Jesus Christ, during His earthly ministry, founded the first church at Jerusalem in 30 A.D. This church was to go forth and preaching the gospel, winning folks to Christ and establishing other churches.
- B.** On the pages of the New Testament, we find the record of the growth of Christianity and the founding of many New Testament churches.
 - 1. At the close of the New Testament account, churches had been established all over the Roman Empire.
 - 2. The Apostle Paul, more than any other man, spread the gospel over the known world.
- C.** Nero, the Roman Emperor, blamed the Christians for the burning of Roamn in 64 A.D. and began the first of ten persecutions of Christians were to receive at the hands of the Roman Empire.
- D.** Despite all the persecutions, Christianity grew. At the end of 300 years, the religion of Jesus Christ had been established all over the then known world. There were churches in every town and community.

Partial list of Roman Emperors (27 B.C. – 423 A.D.)

1st century AD

[Augustus](#) (27 BC–14 AD)
[Tiberius](#) (14–37 AD)
[Caligula](#) (37–41 AD)
[Claudius](#) (41–54 AD)
[Nero](#) (54–68 AD)
[Galba](#) (68–69 AD)
[Otho](#) (January–April 69 AD)
[Aulus Vitellius](#) (July–December 69 AD)
[Vespasian](#) (69–79 AD)
[Titus](#) (79–81 AD)
[Domitian](#) (81–96 AD)
[Nerva](#) (96–98 AD)

2nd century AD

[Trajan](#) (98–117 AD)
[Hadrian](#) (117–138 AD)
[Antoninus Pius](#) (138–161 AD)
[Marcus Aurelius](#) (161–180 AD)
[Lucius Verus](#) (161–169 AD)
[Commodus](#) (177–192 AD)
[Publius Helvius Pertinax](#) (Jan–Mar 193 AD)
[Marcus Didius Severus Julianus](#) (Mar–June 193 AD)
[Septimius Severus](#) (193–211 AD)

3rd century AD

[Caracalla](#) (198–217 AD)
[Publius Septimius Geta](#) (209–211 AD)
[Macrinus](#) (217–218 AD)
[Elagabalus](#) (218–222 AD)
[Severus Alexander](#) (222–235 AD)
[Maximinus](#) (235–238 AD)
[Gordian I](#) (March–April 238 AD)
[Gordian II](#) (March–April 238 AD)
[Pupienus Maximus](#) (April 22–July 29, 238 AD)
[Balbinus](#) (April 22–July 29, 238 AD)
[Gordian III](#) (238–244 AD)
[Philip](#) (244–249 AD)
[Decius](#) (249–251 AD)
[Hostilian](#) (251 AD)
[Gallus](#) (251–253 AD)
[Aemilian](#) (253 AD)

[Valerian](#) (253–260 AD)
[Gallienus](#) (253–268 AD)
[Claudius II Gothicus](#) (268–270 AD)
[Quintillus](#) (270 AD)
[Aurelian](#) (270–275 AD)
[Tacitus](#) (275–276 AD)
[Florian](#) (June–September 276 AD)
[Probus](#) (276–282 AD)
[Carus](#) (282–283 AD)
[Numerian](#) (283–284 AD)
[Carinus](#) (283–285 AD)
[Diocletian](#) (east, 284–305 AD; divided the empire into east and west)
[Maximian](#) (west, 286–305 AD)

4th century AD

[Constantius I](#) (west, 305–306 AD)
[Galerius](#) (east, 305–311 AD)
[Severus](#) (west, 306–307 AD)
 Maxentius (west, 306–312 AD)
[Constantine I](#) (306–337 AD; reunified the empire)
[Galerius Valerius Maximinus](#) (310–313 AD)
[Licinius](#) (308–324 AD)
[Constantine II](#) (337–340 AD)
[Constantius II](#) (337–361 AD)
[Constans I](#) (337–350 AD)
[Gallus Caesar](#) (351–354 AD)
[Julian](#) (361–363 AD)
[Jovian](#) (363–364 AD)
[Valentinian I](#) (west, 364–375 AD)
[Valens](#) (east, 364–378 AD)
[Gratian](#) (west, 367–383 AD; co-emperor with Valentinian I)
[Valentinian II](#) (375–392 AD; crowned as child)
[Theodosius I](#) (east, 379–392 AD; east and west, 392–395 AD)
[Arcadius](#) (east, 383–395 AD, co-emperor; 395–402 AD, sole emperor)
[Magnus Maximus](#) (west, 383–388 AD)
[Honorius](#) (west, 393–395 AD, co-emperor; 395–423 AD, sole emperor)