

LECTURE NOTES

The persecution of the church in Israel started with the Jewish authorities and not the people. Paul persecuted the church until his conversion and then the persecution was turned on him also. As long as the Romans thought that Christianity was a sect of Judaism they were not persecuted. When the Romans realized that Christianity was a separate group from the Jews, they persecuted the Christians. The first persecution of the Christians was by the emperor Nero. Nero was the first to oppose the divine religion and he killed Paul and Peter. Nero sought to abolish the name of Christians during the period 64-68 A.D. However, persecution was not empire wide. The next persecution came under Domitian who hated both Jews and Christian, and he sought to destroy them. Domitian was the second son of Vespasian who seized Jerusalem and was spoken of by Jesus in Matthew 24. In the second century, Christianity was a crime and Christians were charged for being atheists. Marcus Aurelius, a stoic philosopher, persecuted Christians. During this period Ignatius, a disciple of John, encouraged the church and wrote six letters to six churches and one to Polycarp while he was on the road to his martyrdom in Rome.