

Reflections

Volume 1 Issue 18

A Weekly Publication Of The Pine Street Church Of Christ

July 27, 2008

Pine Street
CHURCH OF CHRIST
429 Pine Street
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ASSEMBLY TIMES

Sunday Bible Study
9:45 AM

Sunday Worship
10:45 AM & 6:30 PM

Wednesday Bible Study
7:30 PM

RADIO PROGRAM

"For The Glory Of God"
8:45-9:00 AM
MAGIC 99.5 FM
Cable Channel 15

WEB SITE

www.pinestreetcoc.com

Reflections is a weekly publication of the Pine Street church of Christ including Bible-based articles for the spiritual edification and education of all readers. Please contact us if you have comments or questions about the content of the paper.

The First Christians And Persecution

By Jeremy D. Joy

On the night between July 18 and 19, AD 64, the city of Rome burned consuming ten of the fourteen districts and decimating centuries of Grecian art and architecture. Rumor traced the cause of the fire to Nero, emperor of Rome, who dreamed of rebuilding Rome and renaming it Neropolis to immortalize his name. To quiet rumors of his involvement, Nero shifted the blame to the hated Christians. The resulting persecution was fierce. However, it was probably not religiously oriented. The Christians were simply a scapegoat.

Philip Schaff, a renowned church historian, described the savage cruelty: "A vast multitude of Christians was put to death in the most shocking manner. Some were crucified, probably in mockery of the punishment of Christ, some sewed in the skins of wild beasts and exposed to the voracity of mad dogs in the arena. Christian men and women, covered with pitch or oil or resin, and nailed to the posts of pine, were lighted and burned as torches for the amusement of the mob" (History Of The Christian Church Volume 1).

Tradition places the deaths of Paul and Peter in AD 64. Perhaps the bad publicity of Christianity and the general knowledge



**I will meditate on Your precepts, and
contemplate Your ways.
— Psalm 119:18**

of Paul's trial created a fearful attitude ready to believe even the most slanderous reports about the Christians. These circumstances presented a perfect opportunity for Nero to false accuse an innocent group.

Indeed, it was a dark hour in the short history of Christianity. Yet, the young churches continued to grow and the gospel flourished throughout the whole world. Local persecution in Rome became widespread and in the latter part of the first century, persecution intensified.

Domitian, who ruled from AD 81 to AD 96, was the second Roman emperor to persecute Christians. The beginning of his reign showed promise, but he later

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became as cruel and savage as Nero and exceeded him in arrogant self-deification. He began his letters, "Our Lord and God commands," and demanded to be addressed as so. Gold and silver statues of himself were even placed in the temples.

Anyone who stood in the way of his ambition or was suspected of such including senators and consuls was executed. Many Christians suffered martyrdom on the charge of atheism. Among the martyrs were his cousin and his cousin's wife who were banished to the island of Pandateria. Domitian was the most dangerous when he was the most friendly (Schaff).

His lingering fear of conspiracy and determination to crush the slightest bit of resistance led him to rule with an iron fist. Therefore, the hostility toward Christians was politically motivated, but to the Christians, it was religious. Nevertheless,

the line was drawn in the sand and the conflict would be long and bloody for the Christians (Ramsay qt. in Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary by Homer Hailey)

Revelation was written during the tenure of Domitian although evidence for an earlier date is equally convincing (I prefer the later date). The date, however, is immaterial to understanding the message of the book. Saints are warned of violent opposition, but assured of victory through the Lamb. It's message comforts the people of God for all ages. Conquerors can overcome sin, temptation, suffering, discouragement, death, etc. because of the "blood of the lamb" (Revelation 12:11) and ultimately receive the reward of Heaven (Revelation 21:7).

"But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry

Pine Street News And Notes

"Let brotherly love continue" — Hebrews 13:1

Members of our church family who are sick and in need of our prayers:

Members of our church family who are traveling:

Others who are sick and in need of our prayers: **Wanda Rockwell's**, brother-in-law, **Bill Price**, is in poor health...**Crystal Shockley's** grandmother, **Dorothy Myers**, is improving...**Janet Webber's** mother-in-law, **Florence Webber**, is confined to her home.

Thanks to everyone who participated in the Training Class last Sunday, especially **Tim Price** for his sermon on the subject of reconciliation. It was encouraging to

everyone who was present!

The next Training Class will be Sunday evening, August 17. The schedule is posted on the bulletin board.

Jeremy will be answering questions from "The Question Box" this evening.

Jeremy will be preaching for the Fox Avenue church of Christ at Minerva, OH on Thursday.

The Scripture reading today is: Psalm 119:121-128.

The sermon today is: "Are You Growing?" (AM).