

EARLY CHRISTIANITY UNDER ROMAN EMPERORS

Dates	Roman Emperors	Christian History
27 B.C.–A.D. 14	Caesar Augustus	Birth of Jesus Christ, ca. 4–6 B.C.
14–37	Tiberius	Jesus begins his ministry, ca. A.D. 28/29; crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, ca. 28/31; Christ's resurrection transforms his disciples; Stephen stoned to death and becomes first martyr, ca. 35; Christians pushed out of Jerusalem into Samaria and other parts, ca. 35; Saul (Paul) becomes a Christian, ca. 37
37–41	Caligula	Christians suffer no Roman persecutions
41–54	Claudius	James, one of the twelve disciples, executed by Herod Agrippa I (grandson of Herod the Great), ca. 42; first church council meets in Jerusalem, ca. 50
54–68	Nero	James, half brother of Jesus and bishop of Jerusalem, martyred, ca. 62–65; an "immense multitude" of Christians, including Paul and Peter, are executed in Rome, 64–67
68–69	Galba, Otho, Vitellius	Christians not persecuted
69–79	Vespasian	Jude, the brother of James, crucified at Edessa, ca. 72
79–81	Titus	Christians live in relative peace
81–96	Domitian	Severe persecution of Christians, 92–96; John the Apostle exiled to Isle of Patmos; Luke, the writer of the Gospel, reportedly hanged in Athens, 93
96–98	Nerva	John writes the book of Revelation; Timothy martyred in Ephesus, 97
98–117	Trajan	Ignatius thrown to wild beasts, 107; Trajan's legate, Pliny the Younger, persecutes and executes some Christians for not denouncing Christ, ca. 111

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117–38	Hadrian	Golgotha (hill of Christ's crucifixion) leveled in Jerusalem; Faustus, a Roman army commander, and his family martyred; many other Christians also suffer persecution
138–61	Antonius Pius	Christians persecuted for bearing the name Christian; Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, burned at the stake, ca. 155
161–80	Marcus Aurelius	Justin Martyr, Christian philosopher and educator, and eleven other Christians executed in 166; numerous Christians tortured and slaughtered in Lyons, 177; additional Christians martyred elsewhere
180–192	Commodus	No apparent persecutions of Christians
193–211	Septimius Severus	Severus persecutes African Christians in 197–98; implements systematic persecutions in 202–3 in which Perpetua and Felicitas are tossed to wild beasts in arena, 202; Tertullian writes in defense of Christians
211–17	Caracalla	Some sporadic persecutions in 215; Tertullian continues defending Christians to the Romans
218–22	Elagabalus	Christians experience relative calm and peace
222–35	Alexander Severus	Christians experience more relative calm and peace
235–38	Maximinus Thrac	Two bishops of Rome (Pontianus and Anteros) martyred; some other Christians also martyred, including Hippolytus, ca. 237
238–44	Gordian I and II (238); Pupienus and Balbinus (238); Gordian III (238–244)	No Christians apparently persecuted
244–49	Philip the Arab	Christians again enjoy relative calm and peace; Origen writes Christian defense: <i>Against Celsus</i> , 246–48

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249-51	Decius	Edict of 250 commands all Christians to sacrifice to pagan gods; first empire-wide persecution; property confiscated from Christians who do not comply with edict; certificates (<i>brevilli</i>) issued to Christians who recant and perform pagan sacrifices
253-60	Valerian	One edict bars Christian worship in catacombs; another orders bishops, priests, and deacons to make pagan sacrifices under pain of death; property confiscated from many Christians; many Christians maimed and sent to the mines; Bishop Sixtus and his deacons, St. Cyprian, St. Aemilian, Bishop Saturninus, and St. Lawrence all executed
260-84	Ten emperors	Emperor Aurelian decrees <i>Natali sol invictus</i> (birth of the unconquerable sun) in 274, evidently to counter Christians in Egypt honoring the birth of Jesus Christ
284-305	Diocletian (East) and Maximian (West), co-emperors	All soldiers ordered in 298 to sacrifice to pagan gods; Christian soldiers who refused are discharged. Four edicts issued: (1) 303: order to destroy all churches and sacred Scriptures throughout empire; (2) imprison Christian leaders; (3) torture clergy and laity who refuse to sacrifice to pagan gods; (4) 304: order all Christians to offer pagan sacrifices under pain of death
305-10	Galerius and Maximinus Daia	Persecution of Diocletian and Maximian is extended
311	Galerius and Constantine	Edict of Toleration grants Christians freedom from persecution; Galerius decrees that Christian churches be built

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312	Constantine and Maxentius	Constantine with the sign of the Christian cross (Chi-Rho) conquers Maxentius at Milvian Bridge
313	Constantine (West) and Licinius (East)	Both emperors sign Edict of Milan giving Christianity legal status
320–24	Licinius in the East	Licinius resumes persecution of Christians in the East; many Christians and Christian soldiers martyred; Constantine defeats Licinius, 324 and becomes sole ruler
325–37	Constantine (sole emperor)	Emperor presides at Council of Nicaea, 325; introduces moral reforms: outlaws crucifixion and branding of slaves; he and mother Helena build numerous Christian churches in empire; Constantine dies day after his baptism on Pentecost Day, 337
337–61	Constantius II	Emperor implements additional moral reforms: segregates men from women in prisons
361–63	Julian the Apostate	As last pagan emperor Julian tries to stamp out Christianity, but dies of battle wounds in Persia, 363; his last words: "Vicit Christus" (You Christians [Christians] have conquered)
378–95	Theodosius I	Emperor declares Christianity as official religion of empire, 380; second ecumenical council convened in Constantinople, 381; Bishop Ambrose has Theodosius do penance for killing innocent people in Thessalonica riot, 390
395–423	Honorius	Augustine becomes bishop of Hippo, northern Africa, 396; Honorius outlaws gladiatorial contests in East and West; Augustine begins writing <i>The City of God</i> , 413; Augustine dies, 430