"As to Nero, I shall not say that he was the worst of kings, but that he was worthily held the basest of all men, and even of wild beasts"

From Sulpicius Severus, see “Section XXVIII, Sacred History” and www.preteristarchive.com.

“....a career of wickedness, extortion, atrocious cruelty, which it is not necessary to describe, but which has made his name a synonym for all that is vicious in human nature, and despicable in a ruler”.


“...savage madman in whose reign Peter and Paul were martyred...Nero, a man with light blue eyes, thick neck, protruding stomach, and spindly legs, was a crazed and cruel emperor, a pleasure-driven man who ruled the world by whim and fear.”

“One of the most despicable manifestations of human flesh ever to disgrace this planet was Nero Claudius Caesar”.
From “Nero Caesar and the Christian faith” by Wayne Jackson, Christian Courier.

“....an ineffectual, neglectful and brutal leader.”
from “Nero (37 AD to 68 AD) at www.bbc.co.uk.

“Through the influence of his conniving mother, Agrippina, Nero seized the throne (54-68) and soon became one of the great monsters of history”.
From “Nero: Maniac or Genius?”, Semester class on “The Roman Empire”, University of Colorado, Noel Lenski.

“Roman Emperor Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus....the most depraved monster that ever disgraced the annals of history. The name Nero is proverbial for murder, rape, sodomy, incest, cruelty, and every kind of crime imaginable....”.

“Nero, that monster to his race...”.
from 1923 Abilene Christian College Lectures, “"THE GOSPEL, THE POWER OF GOD, UNTO SALVATION " By W. D. CAMPBELL, page 205.
Periodically, reports surface from across the globe that evangelizing Christians face arrest, and in some cases, even death, for promoting their beliefs. Documented cases such as these have become, in the minds of many, expected in Christian-hostile regions such as China, North Korea, and heavily Muslim-influenced areas of the Middle East. Simply stated, there exist governments across the globe which do not tolerate the promotion of Christian ideals and beliefs, and those who choose to do so in such regions may literally be putting their own safety, or even their own life, in jeopardy. Americans are often aghast at these reports and cannot comprehend such extreme opposition to their faith.

Government-sponsored opposition to Christianity is NOT, however, a new development. Cases such as these have existed throughout the centuries in every corner of the globe. Interestingly,
such pressures against Christianity have often proven to be the driving force behind the continued growth of Christianity.

This article will focus briefly on perhaps the greatest earthly enemy the church has ever known in human history….Nero, whose acts of barbarism were the fulcrum not only behind the mass genocide of Christians in 64 AD, but led directly to the siege of Jerusalem in 70 AD, foretold by Jesus Christ himself in Matthew 24:2. Additionally, we will look briefly at the Great Fire of Rome of 64 AD and how Nero, ruler of the Roman Empire at the time, capitalized on this event in his first-century attempt to quash the fledgling religion from gaining any further ground within his empire.

Nero was, regardless of one’s denominational bent, a massively important figure in the establishment of Christianity. This persecution was to be rather limited in scope (although not in ferocity) compared to later crusades against Christianity. This was not the first government-sponsored crusade against Christianity but has proven to be perhaps the most barbaric and well-known example.


Nero is not mentioned by name in the Bible, but was obviously the Caesar to whom Paul appealed (see Acts 25:11), perhaps even hearing Paul’s case in person (the Apostle Paul would later suffer a martyr’s death via Nero)...

“Originally the surname of the Julian gens (thus, Caius Julius Caesar); afterward a name borne by the
Roman emperors. In the New Testament the name is definitely applied to Augustus (Luke 2:1, "Caesar Augustus"), to whom it belonged by adoption, and to Tiberius (Luke 3:1, "Tiberius Caesar"; compare Matthew 22:17, 21). The "Caesar" to whom Paul appealed (Acts 25:11, 12, 21) was Nero.

From International Standard Bible Encyclopedia.

"Under Roman law, each citizen accused of crime had the right and privilege of being heard before the imperial seat. Authorities on Roman law assert that local magistrates had discretionary power where appeal was concerned. They could decide if the case warranted such a privilege where guilt was obvious and the crime of such enormity that a delay would thwart true justice."


“Nero was the Caesar to whom Paul appealed for justice... (Acts 25:11). After Paul was delivered to Rome, Nero placed Paul under house arrest (Acts 28:19). Paul writes of teaching the gospel to the some of the Praetorian Guard and that some members of Nero's own household were Christians during his imprisonments (Philippians 1:13; 4:22). Paul was eventually released, but then later rearrested and executed.”

from “Render unto Caesar” by Jon W. Quinn, Expository Files 13.8; August 2006.

It becomes both fascinating as well as horrifying to read in detail the lengths to which Nero would resort to combat this "new" religion, and it is likewise frightening, as well as inspiring, to read
of the terrors, horrors, and persecution first-century believers were forced to endure. (To many, Nero was also the unnamed “beast” in the Book of Revelation, his atrocities garnering him attention from John on the Isle of Patmos). These early Christians and their ability to survive almost-incomprehensible tyranny and government opposition are by and large one of the very reasons we are able to possess the Bible today and worship as we do.

Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, better known simply as “Nero” was born on December 15, 37 AD. His birth name would be Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus. His mother, Agrippina the Younger, was the sister of the emperor Caligula and Nero’s father, Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus, is described thusly…

“….the father of Nero, a man hateful in every walk of life; for when he had gone to the East on the staff of the young Gaius Caesar, he slew one of his own freedmen for refusing to drink as much as he ordered, and when he was in consequence dismissed from the number of Gaius' friends, he lived not a whit less lawlessly. On the contrary, in a village on the Appian Way, suddenly whipping up his team, he purposely ran over and killed a boy; and right in the Roman Forum he gouged out the eye of a Roman knight for being too outspoken in chiding him. He was moreover so dishonest that he not only cheated some bankers of the prices of wares which he had bought, but in his praetorship he even defrauded the victors in the chariot races of the amount of their prizes. When for this reason he was held up to scorn by the jests of his own sister, and the managers of the troupes made complaint, he issued an edict that the prizes should thereafter be paid on the spot. Just before the death of Tiberius he was also charged with treason, as well as with acts of adultery and incest with his sister Lepida, but escaped owing to the change of rulers and died of dropsy at Pyrgi…”.

Nero’s father (December 11, 17 BC – January, 40 AD) was the only son of Antonia Major, niece of the emperor Augustus and daughter of Augustus’ sister Octavia Minor, wife of Mark Antony. Agrippina, Nero’s mother, was a great-granddaughter of Augustus, granddaughter of Emperor Tiberius, sister of the Emperor Caligula, niece and 4th wife of the Emperor Claudius (whom by some accounts she poisoned). It is interesting to speculate on the moral foundations and environment in which Nero would be raised and the resulting results which would become obvious in his later life.

Nero’s path to the throne was not typical, to say the least. Nero’s uncle, Caligula, assumed the throne in 37 AD at the age of 25 and along with his wife, Caesonia, and infant daughter, Julia Drusilla, was murdered in 41 AD. Afterwards, Claudius, Caligula’s uncle, assumed power and became emperor. Claudius would have his wife Messalina executed in 48 AD and would then marry Agrippina, Nero’s mother. Nero, still known as “Lucius”, was adopted officially in 50 AD and renamed Nero Claudius Caesar, and became heir to the throne upon the death of Claudius, which would occur in 54 AD. At 16 years of age, Nero was thus Emperor.

As the ruler of the vast Roman Empire, Nero and his mother Agrippina would quarrel frequently, often to bitter extremes. Nero, wed to Octavia, began an adulterous affair with Claudia Acte, a former slave, a development which did not sit well with Agrippina; in 55 AD, she attempted to demand that her Emperor son dismiss Acte, which Nero refused. Nero’s friends and advisors began to advise Nero to avoid his mother and her efforts to control his actions.

In 58 AD, Nero would orchestrate the murder of his own mother.
“But being terrified with her menaces and violent spirit, he resolved upon her destruction, and thrice attempted it by poison. Finding, however, that she had previously secured herself by antidotes, he contrived machinery, by which the floor over her bed-chamber might be made to fall upon her while she was asleep in the night. This design miscarrying likewise, through the little caution used by those who were in the secret, his next stratagem was to construct a ship which could be easily shivered, in hopes of destroying her either by drowning, or by the deck above her cabin crushing her in its fall. Accordingly, under colour of a pretended reconciliation, he wrote her an extremely affectionate letter, inviting her to Baiae, to celebrate with him the festival of Minerva. He had given private orders to the captains of the galleys which were to attend her, to shatter to pieces the ship in which she had come, by falling foul of it, but in such manner that it might appear to be done accidentally.”

From Suetonius, The Twelve Caesars, Nero, XXXIV.

Multiple attempts to have his mother killed had proven fruitless. Nero finally resorted to constructing a boat which was designed to collapse upon the seas, thereby causing the drowning of Agrippina. The boat did indeed sink, yet Agrippina was able to swim to shore. 19 Agrippina likely knew what was happening as she watched an attendant of hers clubbed to death on the shore after claiming that SHE was Agrippina. Finally, Nero likely tiring of repeated failures, sent a detachment of soldiers to kill his mother; Agrippina, no pillar of morality herself but ashamed at the specter of evil she had brought into this world, faced death with the following comment…. 
“When she was struck across the head, she bared her womb and said, "Strike here, Anicetus, strike here, for this bore Nero," and she was brutally murdered”.

from “Nero” at www.roman-emperors.org.

Nero had become romantically involved with Poppaea Sabina, wife of future emperor Otho. Reports differ as to the rationale behind Nero’s killing of Agrippina, as many suggest that his dalliance with Sabina was frowned upon by Agrippina (Nero would indeed marry her in 62 AD) while others argue that the execution was motivated by Agrippina’s attempts to have Nero removed from the throne. Nero would divorce and banish Octavia on “grounds of infertility”, allowing him to marry the already-pregnant Poppaea (Octavia would ultimately return from exile, but like Agrippina, would be summarily executed, scalded to death in a boiling hot bath, under orders from Nero). Nero would then kill his pregnant wife Poppaea by violently kicking the woman in the stomach, his victims now including his mother, his first wife, his second wife, and unborn child.

Arguably, Nero would then commit arguably his most shocking act of moral depravity…

“Besides abusing freeborn boys and seducing married women, he debauched the vestal virgin Rubria. The freedwoman Acte he all but made his lawful wife, after bribing some ex-consuls to perjure themselves by swearing that she was of royal birth. He castrated the boy Sporus and actually tried to make a woman of him; and he married him with all the usual ceremonies, including a dowry and a bridal veil, took him to his house attended by a great throng, and treated him as his wife. And the witty jest that someone made is still current, that it would have been well for the world if Nero’s father Domitius had had that kind of wife. This Sporus, decked out with the finery of
the empresses and riding in a litter, he took with him to the assizes and marts of Greece, and later at Rome through the Street of the Images, fondly kissing him from time to time. That he even desired illicit relations with his own mother, and was kept from it by her enemies who feared that such a relationship might give the reckless and insolent woman too great influence, was notorious, especially after he added to his concubines a courtesan who was said to look very like Agrippinina. Even before that, so they say, whenever he rode in a litter with his mother, he had incestuous relations with her, which were betrayed by the stains on his clothing.”

(from Suetonius, The Twelve Caesars, Nero, XXVIII).

“Now Nero called Sporus "Sabina" not merely because, owing to his resemblance to her he had been made a eunuch, but because the boy, like the mistress, had been solemnly married to him in Greece, Tigellinus giving the bride away, as the law ordained. All the Greeks held a celebration in honour of their marriage, uttering all the customary good wishes, even to the extent of praying that legitimate children might be born to them. After that Nero had two bedfellows at once, Pythagoras to play the rôle of husband to him, and Sporus that of wife. The latter, in addition to other forms of address, was termed "lady," "queen," and "mistress." Yet why should one wonder at this, seeing that Nero would fasten naked boys and girls to stakes, and then putting on the hide of a wild beast would attack them and satisfy his brutal lust under the appearance of devouring parts of their bodies? Such were the indecencies of Nero.”

From Cassius Dio, Roman History, LXII, 13.
“He so prostituted his own chastity that after defiling almost every part of his body, he at last devised a kind of game, in which, covered with the skin of some wild animal, he was let loose from a cage and attacked the private parts of men and women, who were bound to stakes, and when he had sated his mad lust, was dispatched by his freed man Doryphorus; for he was even married to this man in the same way that he himself had married Sporus, going so far as to imitate the cries and lamentations of a maiden being deflowered. I have heard from some men that it was his unshaken conviction that no man was chaste or pure in any part of his body, but that most of them concealed their vices and cleverly drew a veil over them; and that therefore he pardoned all other faults in those who confessed to him their lewdness.”


“Although at first his acts of wantonness, lust, extravagance, avarice and cruelty were gradual and secret, and might be condoned as follies of youth, yet even then their nature was such that no one doubted that they were defects of character and not due to his time of life. No sooner was twilight over than he would catch up a cap or a wig and go to the taverns or range about the streets playing pranks, which however were very far from harmless; for he used to beat men as they came home from dinner, stabbing any who resisted him and throwing them into the sewers…Little by little, however, as his vice grew stronger, he dropped jesting and secrecy and with no attempt at disguise openly broke out into worse crime…Besides abusing freeborn boys and seducing married
women, he debauched the vestal virgin Rubria. The freedwoman Acte he all but made his lawful wife, after bribing some ex-consuls to perjure themselves by swearing that she was of royal birth. He castrated the boy Sporus and actually tried to make a woman of him; and he married him with all the usual ceremonies, including a dowry and a bridal veil, took him to his house attended by a great throng, and treated him as his wife.

And the witty jest that some made is still current, that it would have been well for the world if Nero’s father Domitian had had that kind of wife.

This Sporus, decked out with the finery of the empresses and riding in a litter, he took with him to the assizes and marts of Greece, and later at Rome through the Street of Images, fondly kissing him from time to time. That he even desired a sexual relationship with his own mother, and was kept from it by her enemies, who feared that such a relationship might give the reckless and insolent woman too great influence, was notorious, especially after he added to his concubines a courtesan who was said to look very like Agrippina. Even before that, so they say, whenever he rode in a litter with his mother, he had incestuous relations with her, which were betrayed by the stains on his clothing....

Quoted “The Life of Nero”, XXIX from Suetonius.

“In A.D. 67 Nero ordered Sporus, a free man, to be castrated and then married to him. He allowed the boy to take the role of "bride" while Nero played the "groom." After extravagant public ceremonies that were celebrated in both Greece and Rome, they lived together as supposed "husband" and "wife." According to Tacitus, Nero engaged in "every filthy, depraved act, licit or illicit."
The practice of homosexuality in the Roman Empire had increased during the early years until the Romans accepted and adopted the pederasty of the Greeks (fornication with boys ages 12 to 18). Though at first the acts were considered acceptable only if the boy was a slave, the Romans eventually extended their tolerance of homosexual acts to adult men, both free and slave. Same-sex marriage, once unthinkable, was not far behind.

Early Roman poets and critics wrote about the practice, from Juvenal's satire that mentions Gracchus, who "arrayed himself in the flounces and train and veil of a bride," to Martial, a first-century poet who observed that homosexual marriage was not uncommon in the empire during the first century. Both Juvenal and Martial gave us accounts of men who "played the bride" in wedding ceremonies, wearing bridal veils like women.

But our most detailed images of homosexual marriages come from the descriptions of Roman emperors. Nero, a depraved first-century emperor, married at least two men. He wed Pythagoras in a formal same-sex wedding by first putting on a bridal veil that made Nero the "bride" and Pythagoras the "groom."

Every symbol of a classical marriage was present at this ceremony: a dowry, marriage bed, torches, and witnesses. Tacitus, the great Roman historian who records the event, even alludes to the fact that Nero engaged in coitus with the man in front of all the guests,
stating that "everything was public which even in a natural union is veiled by night."
from “Same-Sex "Marriage": The Roman Emperors” by Craig Turner, Fitzgerald Griffin Foundation.

“Much has been said on the subject of Nero’s rapacious and depraved sexual appetite, particularly by Gaius Petronius...The orgies arranged by Petronius for Nero’s satisfaction reached spectacular levels of debauchery, typically involving hundreds of prostitutes and mass incidents of sodomy and torture. Apart from his allegedly incestuous relationship with his mother, Nero was said to enthusiastically participate in both homosexual and heterosexual rape. One of his favourite activities was to have male and female slaves tied naked to stakes; he would then dress himself up in animal skins and savage their genitals like a wild beast. At one point, Nero had a favourite male lover, Pythagoras, castrated and dressed up in women’s clothing. He then scandalised Rome by “marrying” Pythagoras in a mock ceremony held in front of the court. Supposedly, the couple were often seen out and about in public, kissing and embracing. “

From “Despot of the Week #2-Nero”, 8-3-2009, The Inquister.

"He had received the finest of pagan philosophical educations, and yet he degenerated into one of the worst conceivable men. He visited brothels, frequently in disguise. He practised, as one historian says, "lewdness on boys...striking, wounding, murdering." He took a mistress. He
wanted to have an affair with her and his wife objected. What do you do in a case like that? Well, it should be obvious to any and all: you simply kill your wife! - Which is what he did. But his mother objected. So he killed his mother. But he wasn't completely without feeling. In fact, when he looked down on her corpse at her funeral he said, "I did not know I had so beautiful a mother."

And so he married his mistress. Then one day she made the sad mistake of nagging him because he came home late from the races. She was in the latter stages of pregnancy. Nero kicked her in the stomach, killing both her and the child. Keep in mind, this was the ruler of the world at that time!"

from “What if Jesus had never been born?” by James Kennedy and Jerry Newcomb, page 160.

One can only imagine the sufferings Sporus and others endured at the hands of Nero. 20 On a wider scale, there seemed to be no degree of immorality to which Nero would not descend in order to fulfill his own wants, wishes, and political ambitions.
It would be the Great Fire of Rome which would reveal him as not only a monster in terms of generally-accepted morality, but as perhaps the ultimate earthly nemesis of Christianity.

On the morning of July 19th, 64 AD, a fire erupted in the shops (filled with “merchandise of a combustible nature”, as per Tacitus) in Rome near the famous Circus Maximus. Strong winds fanned the flames and the fire quickly spread and became deadly, engulfing the Circus and moving across Rome and the nearby hills. Rome was home to some one million people and some 7000 vigiles (or firemen) and citizens were unable to check the progress
of the fire, which would rage for 6 days and burn to the ground 3 of the 14 districts of Rome and heavily damage 7 other districts. Buildings destroyed included the Temple of Jupiter Slatoor, The Temple of the Vestal Virgins, the Domus Transitoria, and perhaps most importantly, Nero’s palace. Fires were relatively common (the city would suffer likewise from large fires in 69 AD and 80 AD) but the 64 AD fire would be the one most remembered.
Always theatrical 17, both Suetonius and Cassius Dio claim that Nero sang the “Sack of Ilium” in full stage costume while the city burned. Nero had particular obsessions with the arts and his own musical “abilities”....15 thus, legend has it that Nero was playing a fiddle at the time of the fire (hence the term “fiddling while Rome burned”), while Nero was indeed known for playing a lyre, not a fiddle, during his performances.16

“Nero had the wish---or rather it had always been a fixed purpose of his---to make an end of the whole city in his lifetime. Priam he deemed wonderfully happy in that he had seen Troy perish at the same moment his authority over her ended. Accordingly, Nero sent out by different ways men feigning to be drunk, or engaged in some kind of mischief, and at first had a few fires kindled quietly and in different quarters; people, naturally, were thrown into extreme confusion, not being able to find either the cause of the trouble nor to end it; and meantime met with many strange sights and sounds. They ran about as if distracted, and some rushed one way, some another. In the midst of helping their neighbors, men would learn that their own homes were blazing. Others learned, for the first time, that their property was on fire, by being told it was burned down. People would run from their houses into the lanes, with a hope of helping from the outside, or again would rush into the houses from the streets seeming to imagine they could do something from the inside. The shouting and screaming of children, women, men, and gray beards mingled together unceasingly; and betwixt the combined smoke and shouting no one could make out anything.
All this time many who were carrying away their own goods, and many more who were stealing what belonged to others kept encountering one another and falling over the merchandise. It was impossible to get anywhere; equally impossible to stand still. Men thrust, and were thrust back, upset others, and were upset themselves, many were suffocated or crushed; in short, no possible calamity at such a disaster failed to befall.

This state of things lasted not one day, but several days and nights running. Many houses were destroyed through lack of defenders; and many were actually fired in more places by professed rescuers. For the soldiers (including the night watch) with a keen eye for plunder, instead of quenching the conflagration, kindled it the more. While similar scenes were taking place at various points, a sudden wind caught the fire and swept it over what remained. As a result nobody troubled longer about goods or homes, but all the survivors, from a place of safety, gazed on what appeared to be many islands and cities in flames. No longer was there any grief for private loss, public lamentation swallowed up this—as men reminded each other how once before the bulk of the city had been even thus laid desolate by the Gauls.

While the whole people was in this state of excitement, and many driven mad by calamity were leaping into the blaze, Nero mounted upon the roof of the palace, where almost the whole conflagration was commanded by a sweeping glance, put on the professional harpist's garb, and sang "The Taking of Troy" (so he asserted), although to common minds, it seemed to be "The Taking of Rome".

From Dio Cassius on Nero and the Great Fire 64 A.D., Roman History, 62.16-18.
“In the year 64 A.D., a devastating fire occurred in Rome. The Emperor, who was at Antium, on learning of the conflagration, returned to the city and undertook relief measures. He threw open his gardens and public buildings to the dispossessed populace and brought in grain from the neighboring towns. But, according to Tacitus, "his measures, popular as their character might be, failed of their effect; for the report had spread that, at the very moment when Rome was aflame, he had mounted his private stage, and, typifying the ills of the present by the calamities of the past, had sung the Destruction of Troy."

Suetonius, writing at almost the same time, tells the story as if it were a fact, changing the details as follows: "Viewing the conflagration from the tower of Maecenas . . . he sang the whole of the Sack of Ilion in his regular stage costume."

from “"Nero Fiddled While Rome Burned" by Mary Francis Gyles.

“Among other diabolical whims, he ordered that the city of Rome should be set on fire, which order was executed by his officers, guards, and servants. While the imperial city was in flames, he went up to the tower of Macaenas, played upon his harp, sung the song of the burning of Troy, and openly declared that 'he wished the ruin of all things before his death.' Besides the noble pile, called the Circus, many other palaces and houses were consumed; several thousands perished in the flames, were smothered in the smoke, or buried beneath the ruins.

This dreadful conflagration continued nine days; when
Nero, finding that his conduct was greatly blamed, and a severe odium cast upon him, determined to lay the whole upon the Christians, at once to excuse himself, and have an opportunity of glutting his sight with new cruelties. This was the occasion of the first persecution; and the barbarities exercised on the Christians were such as even excited the commiseration of the Romans themselves.”


As per Tacitus, Nero was in Antium during the disaster and rushed back to Rome to organize and coordinate a relief effort for those now homeless, hungry, and desperate, and in fact opened his own palaces to provide food and shelter. Nero also unveiled a new “development plan”, with houses spaced out and built by brick, and more importantly, a 30 foot statue of himself to be known as the “Colossus of Nero” (or “Colossus Neronis”). His philanthropic interests in his citizenry would not last long, however.

According to Tacitus, rumors began to fly around the city that Nero himself had been responsible for the fire, in an effort to enact his own buildings and tributes to himself. Nero would react by ordering the wholesale tortures, throwing to wild dogs, crucifixions, and deaths of Christians…

“Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judæa, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome,
where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular.

Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired”.

From Tacitus, “Annals”, 15.44.

“As the fire raged, Nero returned to the city from Anzio and immediately took extensive, even heroic measures to relieve popular suffering and to resurrect the city on a much sounder basis, with a strict and sensible building code.

As a good emperor should, he looked for religious relief as well: elaborate efforts were made to propitiate the gods, and the perpetrators were alleged to have been discovered among an aberrant Jewish sect which hated the human race and predicted that the earth would soon end in flames.”


“The first persecution of the Church took place in the year 67, under Nero, the sixth emperor of Rome. This monarch reigned for the space of five years, with tolerable credit to himself, but then gave way to the greatest extravagancy of temper, and to the most atrocious barbarities. Among other diabolical whims, he ordered that the city of Rome should be set on fire, which order was executed by his officers, guards, and servants. While the imperial city was in flames, he went up
to the tower of Macaenas, played upon his harp, sung the song of the burning of Troy, and openly declared that 'he wished the ruin of all things before his death.' Besides the noble pile, called the Circus, many other palaces and houses were consumed; several thousands perished in the flames, were smothered in the smoke, or buried beneath the ruins.

This dreadful conflagration continued nine days; when Nero, finding that his conduct was greatly blamed, and a severe odium cast upon him, determined to lay the whole upon the Christians, at once to excuse himself, and have an opportunity of glutting his sight with new cruelties.

This was the occasion of the first persecution; and the barbarities exercised on the Christians were such as even excited the commiseration of the Romans themselves. Nero even refined upon cruelty, and contrived all manner of punishments for the Christians that the most infernal imagination could design.

In particular, he had some sewed up in skins of wild beasts, and then worried by dogs until they expired; and others dressed in shirts made stiff with wax, fixed to axletrees, and set on fire in his gardens, in order to illuminate them.

This persecution was general throughout the whole Roman Empire; but it rather increased than diminished the spirit of Christianity. In the course of it, St. Paul and St. Peter were martyred.”

from Fox's Book of Martyrs, Chapter II, “The Ten Primitive Persecutions”, “The First Persecution, Under Nero, A.D. 67”.
“Early Christians expected suffering. Christ had died on the cross, so there was no higher honor than to imitate that death through accepting martyrdom (witness by one’s blood). The Jewish legacy portrayed, in writings such as the Fourth Book of the Maccabees, the glorious nature of death rather than
renunciation of Israel; even without this, Christianity would inevitably have held the martyr’s death in high esteem. As the writer of 1 Peter expressed it, “If you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.” (4:16).

How was it that the church underwent such sacrifices? The Roman religion was not intolerant; Rome had accepted into its pantheon deities from the Italian tribes and from Asia Minor. In the provinces, the great territorial gods—such as Saturn in North Africa and Jehovah among the Jews—were accepted as “legal religion” on the grounds that their rites, even if barbarous, were sanctified by ancient tradition. Countless local gods and goddesses, worshiped by the ordinary inhabitants of the Greco-Roman world, were often provided with a classical equivalent name and worshiped as “Roman” deities.

Despite this toleration, by the early second century the Roman governor of Bithynia (on the Black Sea) had no hesitation in sending to immediate execution those who had been denounced as being Christians. The name alone was a sufficient death warrant.

Persecution did not begin with the Roman authorities. The New Testament writings tell of fratricidal strife between Jews and Christians, the latter challenging the Jews by claiming to be “the New Israel.” In the early chapters of Acts, Stephen (7:57) and James, the brother of John the disciple (12:2), became victims of the Jerusalem mob and of King Herod Agrippa, respectively. Indeed, the writer of Luke-Acts appears to go out of his way to reassure the Roman authorizes of the loyalty and general val-
ue of the Christians and the hostility of the Jews toward them.

The persecutors and their motives changed in A.D. 64. On July 19 that year a great fire engulfed much of Rome; only four of the fourteen quarters of the city escaped damage. Suspicion immediately fell on Emperor Nero: was this a madcap way of clearing part of the city to make room for new, magnificent streets and buildings in his honor? Nero, however, managed to deflect blame first, apparently, on the Jews, who had a reputation for large-scale arson but also had friends at court; and then onto the Christians. Many Christians (perhaps including Peter) were seized, tortured, and done to death in the arena.

Tacitus, writing in c. 115, included an account of the incident in his *Annales* (XV, 44). Except for the manner of the Christians’ deaths, which he thought excessively cruel, he showed no sympathy for the Christians. Recording that “Christus, from whom the name [Christians] had its origin” was executed by “one of our procurators, Pontius Pilate,” Tacitus described the Christians as a “class hated for their abominations” and guilty of “hatred of the human race,” an accusation he also made against the Jews. Theirs was not a “religion” but a “deadly superstition,” and hence worthy of repression. Though there was no immediate sequel to Nero’s persecution, the fire forfeited any chance Christians might have had of being recognized as “legal religion” (*religio licita*) separate from Judaism.”
From “Persecution in the Early Church; Did you know?” by Everett Ferguson, Abilene Christian University, July 1, 1990, Christianity Today.

“When Emperor Nero said let there be light, there was light. Mainly thanks to the bodies of crucified Christians he set on fire and used as torches to illuminate the Colosseum's night games...He not only dipped Christians in boiling pitch and used them as human candles, but murdered his pregnant wife by repeatedly kicking her in the stomach and killed his own mother.

“Nero, Ivan, Adolf – so who was the most depraved tyrant of all?”, by John Costello, 1-27-2013, www.independent.ie.

“The church was often under local and sporadic (though intense) persecution from the Jews from her earliest years. But following the burning of Rome in July of 64 A.D., the infamous Nero, seeking to shift blame for the fire from himself accused the Christians of having fired the city, and inaugurated an empire-wide effort to exterminate the entire body of Christians in all his domain. This was the first of ten such imperial persecutions, and many thousands perished in the awful onslaught.”


Why would Nero decide to choose the Christians as his nemesis and assign them the blame as the culprits of the massive fire? How Christians were viewed by the citizens of the city and the ruling authorities provides great insight into this question....
“The Christians were regarded by both the common people and the authorities as being separatists. The Christian lifestyle itself distanced it from that of the pagan world. The very moral standards of the Church were seen as a severe reproach of the pagan way of life. Indeed, some Christians lived an almost excessively puritanical life and thus incurred the wrath of the populace...A regular accusation propagated against Christianity was that of atheism. Christianity, because of its monotheistic faith, would not offer the customary sacrifices and worship to other gods: a duty of Roman subjects.”

From “Roman Persecution of the Early Church” by Adrian Russell.

“The popular indignation endured by the Christians made them Nero's natural scapegoats. All kinds of slanderous reports about Christians had been circulating. The Lord's Supper gave rise to rumors that they held secret cannibalistic meetings where they ate someone's body and drank his blood. Christians were despised because they refused to participate in the wicked pagan festivals of the Gentiles.

The attitude of the Roman government toward the Church gradually changed from indifference to hostility. They had come to see that Christianity and Judaism were different. Christianity came to be regarded as a religio illicita ("prohibited religion"). It is clear that though in AD 64 the Christians were charged with arson, soon they were being persecuted for the mere fact of being Christians, and for
the supposed abominations connected with that name.”

from “Christians Persecuted By Nero” by Daniel W. Petty, Truth Magazine.

“Clearly for Roman governors in the first and second centuries, to be a Christian was in itself a subversive act, because it entailed a refusal to sacrifice to the gods of Rome, including the deified emperor. However, until the reign of Septimus Severus (193-211) persecution was local and sporadic.

Christianity does not seem to have been a serious enough problem to warrant the attention of the emperors. Nero’s persecution appears to have been limited to the city of Rome itself; Tacitus’ claim that it was an act of opportunism, and the Christians a convenient scapegoat for the fire of Rome is plausible.”


“The legal ground for the persecution of Christians by Roman rulers is still obscure. The first persecution under Nero in 64 seems inspired by the emperor's desire to find some one to blame for the great fire of that year in Rome, for rumor had accused Nero of starting it. The Christians were unpopular enough that it seemed plausible to accuse them of the crime. Tertullian says that from that time on, it was unlawful to be a Christian — the name alone was the crime.
To be sure, there was no continuous effort to suppress the Church, but rather sporadic action by governors. These men had authority to forbid and punish any movements they believed dangerous or subversive. Persistent rumor held that the Christians were dangerous, "haters of the human race," and guilty of secret crimes. In any case it was notorious that they refused to worship the Emperor as divine, or make sacrifices to the gods on his behalf. This was interpreted as disloyalty, if not treason."


“Paul is thought to have written the First Corinthian letter about 56-57 A.D., and the Neronian persecutions occurred between those dates and the end of Nero's reign, which terminated in 68 A.D. These persecutions were not to be construed as Empire-wide bans against Christianity, but reflected the personal attitude and temperament of Nero toward Christians. For the first five years of Nero's rule, no abuse was tendered the Christians.

But during the latter portion of his reign, he appeared to take personal delight in subjecting Christians to all manner of tortures. It is known that Nero even brought the torture of Christians to the various provinces of his Empire, as he went from city to city, engaging in the grossest immoralities...in this series of debaucheries.”

from “Clerical Celibacy And God's Word” by Luther W. Martin, 10-10-1957 issue of “The Gospel Guardian”.

The general population of Rome may have been likewise fully complicit and supportive of the “Christians” being blamed for the fire....
“Although an unsavoury subject to the modern reader, and to later Roman historians as well, Nero’s persecution of Christians may have been well-received by the citizens of Rome... After the massively destructive fire of A.D. 64, all those people who had lost their homes and livelihoods must have wanted a scapegoat. And although it was very doubtfully correct to put the Christian population of Rome in this position, it would have appeased the bereaved from “The Imperial Message: Nero’s propaganda and its reception” by Lieke Meulenbroek, page 36, www.academia.edu.

An additional theory as to the rationale for persecution of Christians during this era centers around one of Nero’s few personal relationships; his mistress Poppea...

“Poppea was favorable to Judaism and had certainly enough influence over Nero to protect the Jews; she was regarded by them as a proselyte and is termed by Josephus (Ant., XX, viii, 11) theosebes, "god-fearing." When the populace and Nero were seeking victims for revenge, the Jews may have been glad of the opportunity of putting forward the Christians and may have been encouraged in this by Poppea. Farrar (Early Days of Christianity, I, chapter iv) sees "in the proselytism of Poppea, guided by Jewish malice, the only adequate explanation of the first Christian persecution."


Nero’s wrath was not quenched by the massacres, deaths, and tortures inflicted upon the Christians. Christianity’s two most well-known (at the time) voices were also stilled by Nero, the Apostle Paul via beheading in Rome in approximately 66-68 AD,
preceded by the execution of Peter in approximately 64 AD.\textsuperscript{13,14} (Other writers suggest Paul’s death by decree of Nero may have occurred as early as 64 AD…see “Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy” by J. Barton Payne, page 536 as an example).

“As his popularity waned, Nero and Tigellinus realized that individuals were needed who could be charged with the disaster. It so happened that there was such a group ready at hand, Christians, who had made themselves unpopular because of their refusal to worship the emperor, their way of life, and their secret meetings. Further, at this time two of their most significant "teachers" were in Rome, Peter and Paul. They were ideal scapegoats, individuals whom most Romans loathed, and who had continually sung of the forthcoming end of the world.

Their destruction was planned with the utmost precision and cruelty, for the entertainment of the populace. The venue was Nero's circus near the Mons Vaticanus. Christians were exposed to wild animals and were set ablaze, smeared with pitch, to illuminate the night. The executions were so grisly that even the populace displayed sympathy for the victims. Separately, Peter was crucified upside down on the Vatican hill and Paul was beheaded along the Via Ostiensis. But Nero's attempt, and hope, to shift all suspicion of arson to others failed. His popularity even among the lower classes was irrevocably impaired.”

From Tacitus 15.38-44, Suetonius 38.

“The final years of Peter and Paul at Rome are shrouded in uncertainties. The last historical scriptural reference to Peter has him at the Council of Jerusalem advocating Paul’s mission to the Gentiles (Acts 15). The last to
Paul puts him at Rome awaiting trial before the emperor (Acts 28).

That both men perished there, probably in the Neronian persecution, is accepted by most historians, and church tradition, considerably strengthened by twentieth-century archeology, identifies the places where each died and where each is buried. In addition to that, however, is a wealth of legend and mythology, most of it appearing 150 years after the apostles died.

The best known appears in the Acts of Peter, a third-century work that records that, when the Neronian persecution begins, Peter leaves the city rather than face crucifixion with other Christians in the Hippodrome. As he flees south along the Appian Way, he encounters Jesus walking toward the city. “Quo vadis, Domine?” he asks. “Where are you going, Lord?” Jesus, in what became known as the Quo Vadis Legend, replies. “To Rome, to be crucified again.” Peter, once again humiliated, thinks further, turns, and goes back to the city where, at his own request, he is crucified upside down, feeling himself unworthy of being crucified in the same way as his master.”

Halley’s Bible Handbook provides the following from page 635…

“In and around Rome multitudes of Christians were arrested and put to death in the most cruel ways. Crucified. Or tied in skins of animals, and thrown into the arena to be worried to death by dogs, for the entertainment of the people. Or thrown to the wild beasts. Or tied to stakes in Nero’s gardens pitch poured over their bodies, and their burning bodies used as torches to light Nero’s gardens at night, while he drove around in his chariot, naked, indulging himself in his midnight revels, gloating over the dying agonies of his victims”

A more modern account of Nero’s rationale appeared in the September 16, 2010 “National Ancient History” by Don Keko…

“The Christians made the perfect scapegoats. They had no political power, enjoyed little public support, and suffered from a public relations problem. Although considered Jewish, the Christians distinguished themselves with their practices. In particular, they tended to worship in secret. This led to bizarre rumors based on distortions of Christian rituals. For example, Romans believed baptism involved drowning babies. They also believed communion was cannibalism. When Christians talked of having a love feast, Romans thought they were talking of orgies.

Nero used public mistrust and misinformation to turn Rome against the Christians. As a result of the cultural misunderstandings, Romans supported Nero’s persecution. The government sanctioned gruesome
Christian executions. Rome burnt Christians alive using their bodies to light the streets at night. They unleashed dogs onto people. Romans fed the Christians to lions and other wild beasts. They crucified others including St. Peter. Mercifully, they beheaded St. Paul because he was a Roman citizen.”

And from History of the Christian Church by Jesse Lyman Hurbut, page 40…

“….the gardens of Nero, where multitudes of Christians were burned as ‘living torches’, while the emperor drove his chariot among them, are now the seat of the Vatican palace, the home of the Roman Catholic pontiff, and of St. Peter’s Church.”

Rumors swirled about the city even at that time that Nero himself may have ordered the fire to be set. After the fire had gutted much of the city, Nero ordered the construction of the “Domus Aurea” (“Golden House” in Latin), a spectacularly adorned and massive residence for his highness. The aristocratic dwellings on the slopes of Palatine Hill were destroyed, clearing the way for Nero’s new home, and the 300 acre house would feature gold-leaf, stones and diamonds covered the ceilings, and the walls within in room were frescoed to convey a different theme in each major room.⁴,⁵ The residence also contained groves of trees, vineyards, and an artificial lake, all topped off by the 35 meter bronze statue of himself, known as the “Colossus Neronis”.⁶

Nero's level of narcissism would reach almost-incomprehensible heights....
“John is told to write seven letters to seven churches who find themselves in the epicenter of a Caesar cult in Asia Minor, which began with Jupiter Julius (Julius Caesar) the father of the Roman Empire in 46 B.C., to Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus (born Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus) in A.D. 68. Julius Caesar (Jupiter) was voted into the hierarchy of the gods by the Roman senate, calling him “divine Julius.” His successor, Octavius, took on the title “Augustus,” meaning “venerable, worthy of reverence and worship.” Tiberius was worshiped, when the Roman senate voted to build a temple for him in the city Smyrna. Caligula, so convinced of his divinity, erected a colossal image of himself in the temple of the Jews in Jerusalem. Claudius believed the spiritual supremacy of the state was paramount, being summed up in the phrase, “Caesar is Lord” (NT in Antiquity, 36-446). This philosophical pretense was common among the people, including the Jews. When Pilate wanted to release Jesus the Jews cried out, “Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar” and when Pilate responded, “Shall I crucify your king?” the Jews answered, “We have no king but Caesar” (John 19:12, 15).

A generation later Nero succeeds Claudius and is worshiped not only as “Lord” but as “Savior.” It is within this milieu John admonishes the seven churches to stand firm in the conviction that Christ, NOT Caesar, is both Savior and Lord! (Revelation 2:10, 13:15).

It should be noted that the Jews are equating the title of “king” with the title of Caesar, making them synonymous, a concept which Suetonius, Josephus, Dio Cassius, and the Sibylline Oracles all refer to. “Caesar” was the family name of Julius, making him
“Nero became even more tyrannical, claiming that he was equal to Apollo and the other gods. He encouraged emperor worship and had a huge statue of himself erected in Rome.”


“One of the ways the Imperial cult was reflected in Roman religion was in the notion of a divine apotheosis of the emperor at death (i.e. deification or, more literally, a “goddling” away to heaven. Julius Caesar had been deified in this manner. Imperial art often shows an emperor or empress being carried away to heaven from the funeral pyre of an angelic figure.

Some of the Roman emperors, however, would show even less restraint in accepting or adopting divine status while still alive. During the first century CE, Caligula (37-41), Nero (54-68), and Domitian (81-96) were criticized for such megalomania, but in later centuries it became more common.”
“Julius Caesar allowed himself to be worshiped as a god, but his successor Augustus only allowed emperor worship outside of the city of Rome. Augustus is known in some inscriptions as CAESAR DIVI FILIUS, Son of God, that is, Son of eternal Caesar. Oaths were taken on the divine spirit of the emperor. His image was publicly adored. Worship of the image was a regular military duty. Caligula was the first emperor to demand to be worshiped, he demanded that citizens everywhere bow to his statue.

Nero also claimed to be divine, although in neither case was there a requirement to worship the emperor. As Augustus had been Zeus incarnate, so Nero was Apollo incarnate. Even Seneca called him as the long-awaited savior of the world.”


“Two titles given here to Nero should be noted. The first of these is actually "Augustus" (English Revised Version margin), which was the title given by the Roman Senate on January 17, 27 B.C. to Gaius Caesar Octavianus (63 B.C. to A.D. 14). "Augustus" also translates "Sebastos," and sometimes emperor, as in this verse. It was later applied as a title to any head of the Roman state. The same is true of "Caesar." Still a third title of Roman emperors, "Lord," is used a little later in this chapter (Acts 25:26). This title of "Lord" or "Dominus" carried a divine connotation and was first
used by Caligula (A.D. 12-41). "Augustus and Tiberius rejected such a title and would not suffer it to be applied to them." However, we may suppose that Nero would have received it gladly”.

From Coffman’s Commentaries on the Bible, Burton Coffman, see www.studylight.org.

Some opposing views exist on whether Nero “worship” was mandated and obligatory or not, and are included as follows….

“As history records, there were only two Roman Caesars who persecuted Christians on a scale comparable to what Revelation may suggest or be inferred to, considering John of Patmos is alleged to have died at the close of the first, or just following the turn of the second century. These Roman emperors were Nero and Domitian. There were those that followed them that sent our gracious brethren to their martyred deaths indeed, but historically, tyrants by name, as is recorded, Nero and Domitian fit the bill. Nero is responsible for the deaths of Paul and Peter, yet there is no evidence or historical record that Nero banished Christians, including John, to Patmos. Nero had a preference for keeping his atrocities much closer to home, as his actions against the Christian church were local and short lived, and his disturbed purge fueled by the fire in Rome, not based or founded on the Christian’s unwillingness to submit to him as god or the son of god.

Yet, this persecution was the first time the government of Rome differentiated Christians from Jews. Tertulian referred to this as institutum Neronianum which was written describing the
persecutions starting with Nero and those who followed in his footsteps.

(1) After Nero it became a capital crime to be one, unless you renounced Christ publicly and acknowledged the Roman gods. “Those who denied that they were or had been Christians, when they invoked the gods in words dictated by me, offered prayer with incense and wine to your image, which I had ordered to be brought for this purpose together with statues of the gods, and moreover cursed Christ— none of which those who are really Christians, it is said, can be forced to do — these I thought should be discharged.”

(2) Nero did not, as William Henry Simcox states in Revelation of St. John the Divine, “reign and claim divine honors..” to anything as suggested in Revelation. It can be argued based on the varying degrees in which Christian persecutions took place during Nero or Domitian’s reign, or even whether they existed at all. But in the end, the patrological consensus attribute that they did indeed exist pointing directly to these two men, and it is believed to be first rate”.

From “Preterism, Nero and Domitian” at Www.historicalpreterism.com.

“The basic problem with the Neronian application is that there is no historical evidence that Nero enforced emperor worship, especially on the level portrayed in Revelation and against Christians in particular. In fact, Nero refused but a few years prior to is death, while his persecution was in full swing, to accept an official senatorial decree, advanced by one of his few friends, proclaiming him to be a living god. He was afraid that some would take as a portents of his imminent death. Also,
Nero died two years before the destruction of Jerusalem. The reigning emperor at the time of this event was Vespasian, who had basically an indifferent attitude toward Christianity before that event. The destruction of Jerusalem, as previously noted, would change his perception. This is based upon a document cited by Sir William Ramsay describing Titus, the eldest son of Vespasian and the general completing the siege of the city, and his observations that he thought the Christian sect, like a vine, would die with the death of its root, Judaism. However, as Ramsay notes that did not happen, which fact affected the attitude of the Romans toward the church”

Howard Daniel Denham, Truth Bible Institute. 9

As perhaps an interesting aside, history provides additional insight into Nero’s massive ego. The nefarious ruler would himself participate in the Olympic Games in 67 AD, racing a ten-horse chariot, from which he was thrown (he also performed as a singer for the entertainment of those in attendance). It should come as no surprise that despite Nero’s failings within the competition, he was awarded the crown, likely as a result of bribery and/or fear of what might transpire if he were NOT named the victor.3

“Nero…went to Greece to display his artistic abilities in the theatres of Greece. He won contests in the Olympic Games, winning the chariot race although he fell of his chariot (as obviously nobody dared to defeat him), collected works of art, and opened a canal, which was never finished.”

From www.roman-empire.net.
“When the Roman emperor Nero opted to compete at Olympia in A.D. 67, he bestowed astronomical bribes on the judges, who then agreed to add musical events and poetry reading—activities that Nero considered to be his strong suits—to the Olympic program. The Roman emperor entered the four-horse chariot race with a team of 10 steeds. Although Nero fell out of the chariot and was unable to finish the race, the judges still awarded him the top prize. Nero returned from the Olympics and other Greek sporting events with a haul of 1,808 first-place prizes.”

From “5 Myths about the Ancient Olympics” by Christopher Klein, 8-10-2012.

“Nero was certain that he was a great artist. And if he was not, no man in Rome dare say so. Nero added his own touch to dramas, when the story called for a character to die, he put a prisoner on the stage and actually killed him.


“The sums of money which Nero spent in the pursuit of sensual pleasures were incalculable. In fact there were no bounds to his extravagance and profusion. He had command, of course, of all the treasure of the empire, and he procured immense sums besides, by fines, confiscations, and despotic exactions of various kinds; and as he undertook no public enterprises—being seldom engaged in foreign wars, and seldom attempting any useful constructions in the city—the vast resources at his command were wholly devoted
to the purposes of ostentatious personal display, and sensual gratifications.

The pomp and splendor of his feasts, his processions, his journeys of pleasures and the sums that he is said to have lavished sometimes in money and jewels, and sometimes in villas, gardens, and equipages, upon his favorites, both male and female, are almost incredible.

On some of the pleasure excursions which he took to the mouth of the Tiber, he would have the banks of the river lined with booths and costly tents all the way from the river to the sea. These tents were provided with sumptuous entertainments, and with beds and couches for repose; and they were all attended by beautiful girls who stood at the doors of them inviting Nero and his party to land, as they passed along the river in their barges. He used to fish with a golden net, which was drawn by silken cords of a rich scarlet color. Occasionally he made grand excursions of pleasure through Italy or into Greece, in the style of royal progresses. In these expeditions he sometimes had no less than a thousand carts to convey his baggage—the mules that drew them being all shod with silver, and their drivers dressed in scarlet clothes of the most costly character. He was attended, also, on these excursions, by a numerous train of footmen, and of African servants, who wore rich bracelets upon their arms, and were mounted on horses splendidly caparisoned.”

The famed Jewish historian Flavius Josephus wrote of Nero in his “Antiquities of the Jews” (Book XX, Chapter 8, verses 2-3). The comments of Josephus are a bit puzzling; he confirms many of Nero's killings, such as Octavia and Agrippina (along with “many other illustrious persons”); however, he also states that many of Nero's crimes have been both understated, by those receiving benefits from him, and likewise OVERstated, by his numerous enemies....

“2. But now Agrippina was afraid, lest, when Britannicus should come to man's estate, he should succeed his father in the government, and desired to seize upon the principality beforehand for her own son [Nero]; upon which the report went that she thence compassed the death of Claudius. Accordingly, she sent Burrhus, the general of the army, immediately, and with him the tribunes, and such also of the freed-men as were of the greatest authority, to bring Nero away into the camp, and to salute him emperor. And when Nero had thus obtained the government, he got Britannicus to be so poisoned, that the multitude should not perceive it; although he publicly put his own mother to death not long afterward, making her this requital, not only for being born of her, but for bringing it so about by her contrivances that he obtained the Roman empire. He also slew Octavia his own wife, and many other illustrious persons, under this pretense, that they plotted against him.

3. But I omit any further discourse about these affairs; for there have been a great many who have composed the history of Nero; some of which have departed from the truth of facts out of favor, as having received benefits from him; while others, out of hatred to him, and the great ill-will which they bare him, have so impudently raved against him with their lies, that they justly deserve to be condemned. Nor do I wonder at such as have told lies of Nero, since they have not in their writings preserved the truth of history as to those facts that
were earlier than his time, even when the actors could have no way incurred their hatred, since those writers lived a long time after them. But as to those that have no regard to truth, they may write as they please; for in that they take delight: but as to ourselves, who have made truth our direct aim, we shall briefly touch upon what only belongs remotely to this undertaking, but shall relate what hath happened to us Jews with great accuracy, and shall not grudge our pains in giving an account both of the calamities we have suffered, and of the crimes we have been guilty of...”.

Nero’s ultimate fate was an ignoble ending. In 68 AD, Nero’s reign was undermined by a military coup. Suetonius’s description of Nero’s final moments shows that even in the face of impending death and/or capture, Nero’s obsession for himself and ego never faltered…

“A runner brought him a letter from Phaon. Nero tore it from the man's hands and read that, having been declared a public enemy by the Senate, he would be punished in 'ancient style' when arrested. He asked what 'ancient style' meant, and learned that the executioners stripped their victim naked, thrust his head into a wooden fork, and then flogged him to death with sticks. In terror he snatched up the two daggers which he brought along and tried their points; but threw them down again, protesting that the final hour had not yet come.

Then he begged Sporus to weep and mourn for him, but also begged one of the other three to set him an example by committing suicide first. He kept moaning about his cowardice,
and muttering: 'How ugly and vulgar my life has become!' And then in Greek: 'This certainly is no credit to Nero, no credit at all,' and: 'Come pull yourself together, man!' By this time a troop of cavalry who had orders to take him alive were coming up the road. Nero gasped: 'Hark to the sound I hear! It is hooves of galloping horses.' Then, with the help of his scribe, Epaphroditos, he stabbed himself in the throat and was already half dead when a cavalry officer entered, pretending to have rushed to his rescue, and staunched the wound with his cloak. Nero muttered: 'Too late! But, ah, what fidelity!' He died, with his eyes glazed and bulging from their sockets, a sight which horrified everybody present. He had made his companions promise, whatever happened, not to let his head be cut off, but to have him buried all in one piece.”

  From Suetonius, Nero, 49-50.

“....by the end he was a monomaniac with no regard for human life - a monster of the order of Idi Amin.”

  from “Nero emerges as ruthless but less baffling”, Eric Pace, New York Times, June 18, 1985.

“As it turned out, Nero's end was encompassed not by senatorial conspirators or praetorian guardsmen but by the troops stationed in the provinces, whose loyalties Nero had done little to secure. A minor revolt in Gaul in March AD68
led to the Spanish legions renouncing their allegiance to Nero and declaring their general, Galba, emperor. Returning from Greece, Nero panicked and fled Rome, finally committing suicide in a friend's villa with the last words “What an artist dies in me!” (qualis artifex pereo).

From “Who were the Julio-Claudians?”, CLIO journal.

Amazingly, even Nero’s death in 68 AD would not calm the fears of the Roman population. Many believed that reports of Nero’s death were untrue, and that the evil despot had simply fled to another nearby nation and would assemble an army in order to once again seize control by force of Rome (“The Sibylline Oracles” is the earliest written record of this belief, which came to be known as the “Nero Redivivus” legend). These “Oracles” specifically state that Nero had fled to Parthia and would soon return with a military force.

Nero imposters (or “Pseudo-Neros”) began to arise, the first appearing in 69 AD during the reign of Vitellius. The “imposter” shared physical characteristics with Nero (and also played the lyre) (Tacitus, Histories II.8). A second imposter (“Terentius Maximus”) appeared during the reign of Titus (79-81 AD) (Dio, LXVI.19.3), and finally, some 20 years after Nero’s death, a third Nero pretender appeared during the reign of Domitian. In short, the terror that Nero had spawned did not abate with his death, nor did Christian persecution, as fear continued for decades and even centuries that Nero, and all of his horrors and evils, would soon reappear.

“After Nero's suicide in AD 68, there was a widespread belief, especially in the eastern provinces, that he was not dead and somehow would return (Suetonius, LVII; Tacitus, Histories II.8; Dio, LXVI.19.3). Suetonius (XL) relates how court astrologers had predicted Nero's fall but that he
would have power in the East. And, indeed, at least three false claimants did present themselves as Nero redivivus (resurrected). The first, who sang and played the cithara or lyre and whose face was similar to that of the dead emperor, appeared the next year but, after persuading some to recognize him, was captured and executed (Tacitus, II.8). Sometime during the reign of Titus (AD 79-81) there was another impostor who appeared in Asia and also sang to the accompaniment of the lyre and looked like Nero but he, too, was exposed (Dio, LXVI.19.3). Twenty years after Nero's death, during the reign of Domitian, there was a third pretender. Supported by the Parthians, who hardly could be persuaded to give him up (Suetonius, LVII), the matter almost came to war (Tacitus, I.2). Such fidelity no doubt can be attributed to the magnificent reception (and restoration of Armenia) that Tiridates, the brother of the Parthian king, had received from Nero in AD 66 (Dio, LXII.1ff).

As popular belief in Nero's actual return began to fade, he no longer was regarded as an historic figure but an eschatological one.”

from “Nero as the Antichrist”, www.penelope.uchicago.edu.

Fears of Nero’s return, even from the dead, would continue for decades and even centuries. The Sibylline Oracles, from the second century, specify Nero returning to spawn destruction and revenge (Books 5 and 8). In 310 AD, some 240+ years after Nero’s death, as per Lactantius, Nero “suddenly disappeared, and even the burial place of that noxious wild beast was nowhere to be seen. This has led some persons of extravagant imagination to suppose that, having been conveyed to a distant region, he is still reserved alive; and to him they apply the Sibylline verses”. 12
Alexander of Hippo would write in 422 AD of the ongoing legends of Nero’s imminent return 10.

“..there soon arose a belief that Nero had not really died, but was living somewhere in retirement or had fled among the Parthians, and that he was destined in a short time to return and bring great calamity upon his enemies or the world (quasi viventis et brevi magno inimicorum malo reversuri: Suetonius lvii). This belief was a force among the Parthians who were ready to take up arms at the report of a pseudo-Nero (Tacitus, History i.2).


And what would become of Sporus, one of history’s most pitiable characters?

“Little is known about Sporus’ background except that he was a young man to whom Nero took a liking. Nero considered Sporus to be his wife, and their marriage ceremony included Sporus wearing a bridal veil, Nero providing Sporus with a dowry, and afterwards, a wonderful honeymoon in Greece. (Nero also married two other men, although they were not castrated because in those marriages, Nero was the wife).

It’s possible that Nero used his marriage to Sporus to assuage the feelings of guilt he felt for kicking his pregnant wife, Sabina, to death in 65 AD. Sporus bore an uncanny resemblance to Sabina, and Nero even called him by his dead wife’s name. The affair was
short-lived, however, because Nero killed himself in 68 AD.

Sporus was not widowed for long. He soon married Nymphidius Sabinus, who made an unsuccessful bid for emperor that ended with his death at the hands of his opponent’s followers. Sporus again became involved with another powerful man, Emperor Otho, who was also killed by his enemies. Sporus then became linked to greedy, gluttonous, and debauched Emperor Vitellius, who later had a villainous idea for a halftime show during one of the gladiatorial combats: he planned for Sporus to dress as a young woman and be raped for the viewing enjoyment of the crowds. Sporus committed suicide to avoid the humiliation.”

From “6 famous eunuchs” by Martha Brozyna.

The tragedy of Sporus' tortured life and self-inflicted death has been the center of much analysis for decades. Many have offered various rationales for his suicide AFTER the death of his tormenter, Nero...

“As the circumstances surrounding his suicide a year later under Vitellius reveal... he could not assume that he would necessarily fare any better under a successor to Nero, no matter how uncertain or cruel life with Nero seemed.”

from “Nero and Sporus”, David Woods, page 82.

Thus, Nero is one of the handful of rulers throughout history, including the likes of Adolf Hitler or Vlad the Impaler, whose
“In both a historical and modern context, the reign of Nero bears much significance. Nero’s reign reflects the possible answer to some of the most terrifying questions in history, such as, what would happen if a mad-man with severe insecurities and a god-complex were to become the world’s most politically powerful individual?

But most of all, Nero bears significance in comparisons to modern day tyrants. His purges of the senate bearing a ghostly reminiscence of Stalin’s political purges. His lustful and over-indulgent lifestyle reflecting perhaps some of the monarchs of Medieval Britain. In short, Nero could be viewed by historians as a mirror of some of the world’s worse rulers yet to come. Perhaps best said by Mark Twain (the American writer) “The past does not repeat itself, but it rhymes”.

From “What is the Historical Significance of the Roman Emperor Nero?”, page 8, www.activehistory.co.uk.

“The barbarous acts against the Christians were worse than any they had previously endured, especially those committed by Nero. Only a Satan-inspired imagination could have conceived them. Before killing the Christians, Nero used them to amuse the people in his gardens. González (2010) writes, —Some were dressed in furs to be killed by dogs while
others were crucified (p. 45). Foster observes, —The executions were turned into a cruel sport to amuse the crowds in the Emperor’s gardens. Christians were dressed in animal’s skins and hunted by the Emperor’s hounds (p. 69). Foxe (2001) also describes the horrible and excruciating persecution thus: —shirts stiff with wax were put on others and they were then tied to poles in Nero’s garden and set on fire to provide light for his parties (p.12). Traditionally, Nero was believed to be the Caesar in whose reign Paul and Peter suffered martyrdom. Foster (1972) explains, —…some were nailed to crosses – among them probably St Peter, …St Paul who was in prison in Rome could not be crucified because he was a Roman citizen and so he was beheaded, this was during Nero’s reign (p. 69).”

from “Persecution and Martyrdom of Christians in the Roman Empire from AD 54 to 100: A lesson for the 21st century church” by Emeka C. Ekeke Department of Religious and Cultural Studies University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria.

“As Suetonius states, Nero craved immortality and undying fame. During the Middle Ages infamy was his lot. Medieval writers do not recall his achievements, such as rebuilding much of the city of Rome and liberating Greece, which, ironically, classicists now spotlight as they search for factors other than Nero’s viciousness to explain the fall of the dynasty. In the Middle Ages, Nero is condemned as an impious emperor who cruelly and tyrannically persecuted Christians and others, and, finally powerless, took his own life in despair.”

from “Nero, Emperor and Tyrant, in the Medieval French Tradition” by Glynnis M. Cropp, page 33.
“Nero ranks with Gaius for folly and vice, while his cruelties recall the worst years of Tiberius. Very effeminate in his tastes, particular about the arrangement of his hair and proud of his voice, his greatest fault was inordinate vanity which courted applause for performances on non-Roman lines. He neglected his high office and degraded Roman gravitas by zeal for secondary pursuits. Nero, like his three predecessors, was very susceptible to female charms. He was licentious in the extreme, even to guilt of that nameless vice of antiquity-love of a male favorite. His cruelty, both directly and through his instruments, made the latter part of his reign as detestable as the quinquennium had been golden. He loved the extravagant and luxurious in every exaggerated form. He was a weakling and a coward in his life, and especially in his death.”

The Book of Revelation is in itself another matter of separate study, but a comparison of the social, economic, and political matters of the day, when coupled with Christianity’s struggles, lead one to obviously speculate on this final book of the Bible. Revelation was penned by “John” from the Isle of Patmos (we are unsure if this was the Apostle John). Likewise, we are unsure of the date of the book, most suggesting either the early 70s AD or mid 90s AD.

Let us speculate for a moment….”John” has fled to Patmos, likely in fear of his life, acutely aware of the fate of any “Christian” within Nero’s reach. Nero has massacred thousands of Christians in the most barbaric ways possible, has orchestrated the killings of both Peter and Paul, has wed a hapless eunuch, and is engaged in nothing less than what could be perceived as an attempted total and complete eradication of Christianity. John would have every possible motive to detest Nero as both a leader
and as a human being. Thus, many suggest that John’s frightening writings (specifically of the “beast”) were based on and aimed at Nero, whom he would have every possible justification to view as such.\textsuperscript{8,9} Even if John was aware that Nero had died in 68 AD, we have seen that many were convinced that Nero would return to continue his extermination attempts, and many simply did not believe that Nero was gone. It makes logical sense to consider how John, a first century refugee from these horrors, both could have and possibly did view Nero and offered coded language (i.e. 666) to warn Christians of their environment.

- “Gematria” is a Hebrew system of assigning letters for numbers.
- For example, a 1st century spelling of Nero Caesar’s name in Greek would translate to NRVN QSR…
  - Resh= 200
  - Samekh= 60
  - Qoph= 100
  - Nun = 50
  - Vav= 6
- Thus, Nero’s Greek name would equate to 50+200+6+50+100+60+200…
- Equaling 666 (Nero’s Latin title, spelled simply “Nero Caesar” and translated NRV QSR, would equal 616).
“...in the Book of Revelations, as often in mystical literature, a number is credited with special powers. There are other numbers in that fantastic vision of the Apocalypse: four Horsemen, seven Trumpets, 24 Elders, and so on -- the familiar small numbers of ritual. Not so 666, which hardly occurs elsewhere in Scripture. The Revelation text draws particular attention to that number: ``here is wisdom'', ``the number of a man'' -- hinting at some secret code, the hidden ID number of the Devil, the final hint that would unmask him if only we knew where and how to look.

In fact we probably do know just what wisdom the author of Revelations intended to convey with that number. Yes, it's Roman, and it's numerals, but the numerals aren't Roman. The Roman is the emperor Nero; the numerals are letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Each letter has a numerical value: Aleph is 1, Beth is 2, and so on until 10, then count by tens till 100, then by hundreds till we run out of letters. Nero Caesar in Hebrew is NeRON QeiSaR; adding up the letters we get ``the number of the man'', 666.

This kind of numerical signature is called gematria, and is still used in Hebrew and Arabic. But it's notoriously malleable: as you can imagine, almost any claim can be supported with gematria if you look hard enough... So, coming back to the Number of the Beast, how do we know that, of all the things that could add to 666, it's Nero that was meant?

We can never know beyond all doubt, but there's fairly good evidence. It made sense for an early Christian to represent Nero, and the pagan and powerful Empire that Nero stood for, as the Beast. It also made sense to use the code of gematria. If you write plainly that Nero and Rome are doing the Devil's work, then you're an enemy combatant, and the Roman legal code had no Bill of Rights. But give only the number, and you have plausible deniability: maybe the
gematria is just a coincidence, and you were really hinting at the Pope or Roman numerals or whatever, or honestly reporting a mystic prophecy of the far future. So far, that's not a lot, even for circumstantial evidence.

But the really suggestive hint is that the oldest manuscripts don't agree on the number: some have 616 instead. It's much harder to concoct an explanation that fits both numbers, and only one of the proposed interpretations of the Number of the Beast accounts for both: Nero. Remember it was NeRON QeiSaR in Hebrew. But the final N of NeRON is optional: the name can also be rendered NeRO, subtracting the letter N [Nun] and its value of 50 to get -- 616.


From “"666" in the book of Revelation" at www.religioustolerance.org...

“…scholars who believe that the Book of Revelation refers to historical people and events argue that the number represents [the Roman Emperor] Nero. In Hebrew gematria, every letter has a corresponding number. Summing these numbers gives a numeric value to a word or name. In Hebrew, "Nero Caesar" is spelled "נרון קסר", pronounced "Neron Qei[is]ar". Adding the corresponding values yields 666, as shown:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resh</th>
<th>Samekh</th>
<th>Qoph</th>
<th>Nun</th>
<th>Vav</th>
<th>Resh</th>
<th>Nun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Was John offering a coded message to early Christians, warning them of the persecutions Nero would inflict upon them?

(for additional analysis of the possible Nero-“gematria” linkage, see “The Mark of the Beast at www.ecclesia.org, “Gematria” at www.biblehub.com, etc.

“...transforming names into numbers (gematria) was common in antiquity. For example, in the Lives of the Twelve Caesars Roman historian Suetonius identifies Nero by a numerical designation equal to a nefarious deed. This numerical equality (isopsephism) is encapsulated in the phrase: “Count the numerical values of the letters in Nero’s name, and in ‘murdered his own mother’ and you will find their sum is the same.” In Greek the numerical value of the letters in Nero’s name (Greek: Nevrwn, English transliteration: Neron) totaled 1,005, as did the numbers in the phrase murdered his own mother. This ancient numerical cryptogram reflected the widespread knowledge that Nero had killed his own mother.

Finally, while “Nero” in Greek totaled 1,005, the reader of John’s letter familiar with the Hebrew language could recognize that the Greek spelling of “Nero Caesar” transliterated into Hebrew equals 666. Moreover, the presence in some ancient manuscripts of a variation in which 666 is rendered 616 lends further credence to Nero as the intended referent. The Hebrew transliteration of the Latin spelling of “Nero Caesar” totals 616, just as the Hebrew transliteration of the Greek, which includes an additional letter (Greek: “n”=50, English transliteration: “n”=50), renders 666. Thus, two seemingly unrelated numbers lead you to the same doorstep—that of a beast named Nero Caesar. Twenty-first-century believers, like their first-century counterparts, can be absolutely
certain that 666 is the number of Nero’s name and that Nero is the beast who ravaged the bride of Christ in a historical milieu that included three and a half years of persecution. In the end, Peter and Paul themselves were persecuted and put to death at the hands of this Beast”.

From “What is the Meaning of 666?” by the Christian Research Institute.

“Nero’s infamous character merits the title of “beast applied to him by the seer of the Apocalypse (v.1). Revelation 13:1-6 gives the generic background of the beast, which is the roman empire of the first century, The seven heads correspond to the seven hills of Rome, while the ten horns allude to the Caesars of the first century, however one may number them (v.1). The blasphemous worship demanded by the beast distinctly reminds one of the imperial cult of the first century, and the war the beast wages on the saints cannot help but recall the intense persecutions Nero, and later Domitian, inflicted on Christians because they did not worship Caesar. Nero’s persecution of Christians from November AD 64 to June AD 68 could account, in part, for the forty-two months (or 3 ½ years) of oppression mentioned in Rev. 13:5. The reference in Revelation 13:11-15 to the beast of the land securing worship for the beast from the sea (Rome was across the sea from the place of the writing of the Apocalypse, Asia Minor) reminds one of the local priests of the imperial cult in Asia Minor whose task was to compel the people to offer a sacrifice to Caesar and proclaim him Lord. Megalomaniac that he was, Nero had coins minted in which he was called “almighty God” and “Savior.” Nero’s portrait also appears on coins as the god Apollo playing a lyre.

While earlier emperors were proclaimed deities upon their deaths, Nero abandons all reserve and demanded divine
honors while still alive (as did also Caligula before him, AD 37-41). Those who worshipped the emperor received a certificate or mark of approval – *charagma*, the same word used in Revelation 13:16. Furthermore, in the reign of Emperor Decius (AD 249-251), those who did not possess the certificate of sacrifice to Caesar could not pursue trades, a prohibition that conceivably goes back to Nero, reminding one of Revelation 13:17”

From “Doomsday Delusions” by C. Martin Pate and Calvin Haynes, pages 41-42.

“Luis De Alcazar (1554-1613) wrote a commentary called Investigation of the Hidden Sense of the Apocalypse, which ran to some 900 pages. In it he proposed that it all of Revelation applied to the era of pagan Rome and the first six centuries of Christianity. According to Alcazar (or Alcasar):

- Revelation chapters 1-11 describes the rejection of the Jews and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.
- Revelation chapters 12 - 19 were the overthrow of Roman paganism and the conversion of the empire to the Church.
- Revelation 20 describe the final persecutions by Antichrist, who is identified as Cæsar Nero (54-68 A.D.), and judgment.
- Revelation 21 -22 describe the triumph of the New Jerusalem, the Roman Catholic Church.”

A few final opinions on Nero from historians of his era….

- Pliny the Elder (23-79 AD), “"Marcus Agrippa is said to have been born in this manner [i.e., breech position], almost the solitary instance of a successful career among all those so born – although he too is deemed to have paid the penalty which his irregular birth foretold, by a youth made unhappy by lameness, a lifetime passed amidst watiare and ever exposed to the approach of death, by the misfortune caused to the world by his whole progeny but especially due to his two daughters who became the mothers of the emperors Gaius Caligula and Domitius Nero, the two firebrands of mankind. . . . Nero also, who was emperor shortly before and whose entire rule showed him the enemy of mankind", Natural History, 7:45.
- Suetonius (70-160 AD); “neither discrimination or moderation were employed in putting to death whosoever he pleased on any pretext whatever.”
- Eusebius, “Nero was the first of the emperors who showed himself an enemy of the divine religion.”
- Apollonius of Tyana, “In my travels, which have been wider than ever man yet accomplished, I have seen many, many wild beasts of Arabia and India; but this beast, that is commonly called a Tyrant, I know not how many heads it has, nor if it be crooked of claw, and armed with horrible fangs. . . . And of wild beasts you cannot say that they were ever known to eat their own mothers, but Nero has gorged himself on this diet".

Descriptors such as “sociopath”, “lunatic”, etc. are tossed around carelessly nowadays, but Nero perhaps epitomized these terms better than anyone in Roman history. It was these character
flaws which have interwoven him so tightly into world history, and more importantly, Biblical history, as well. Despite Nero’s best efforts to destroy the “fledgling” religion, he could not… Christianity would ultimately spread across the globe, and evil despots such as Nero are now largely ignored, and forgotten about completely by many.

We have no idea today what actual and bona fide “persecution” is like; it is preposterous to compare ANY of our modern-day “persecutions” in the US to those of these years of horror. First-century Christians, under the maniacal rule of Nero, certainly knew what actual “persecution” meant…We have not seen our families captured, or tortured, or sold off into slavery, or tossed into a gladiatorial coliseum to be ripped apart and devoured by wild animals. We have not witnessed friends flayed and crucified, to satisfy the lunatic whims of a psychopathic madman. We have not been forced to worship in secret and in hiding, while a nefarious government decrees that I address earthly rulers as “Lord” or as a god. We have not seen sexual slavery. We have not witnessed church members beheaded, or crucified upside-down, or tortured. All of these examples, as bizarre and ludicrous as they may sound, were commonplace during the reign of Nero and the Roman Empire.

Let us also never lose sight or the carnage and devastation one madman can wreck upon a society, as well as a religion. More importantly, let us never lose sight or appreciation of the freedoms which we have today…we are still able to worship the most holy God as we see fit, a blessing that millions both throughout history as well as in our current world do not share. We often take freedoms such as this for granted. But as has been documented, freedom to worship has certainly NOT been a constant throughout the history of the past 2000 years. Nero and his reign of terror is but one of many historical examples of Christianity threatened,
affected, and devastated by the whims of tyranny, but never defeated.

“When Nero uttered the words “Qualis artifex pereo,” he gave not only his own interpretation of his life, he also revealed one great secret of its ghastly failure.

It may be admitted that Nero had a certain artistic enthusiasm, a real ambition to excel. He painted with some skill, he composed verses not without a certain grace. In spite of serious natural defects, he took endless pains to acquire the technique of a singer. Far into the night he would sit in rapt enthusiasm listening to the effects of Terpnus, and trying to copy them. His artistic tour in Greece, which lowered him so much in the eyes of the West, was really inspired by the passion to find a sympathetic audience which he could not find at Rome. And, in spite of his arrogance and vanity, he had a wholesome deference for the artistic judgment of Greece.

Yet it is very striking that in the records of his reign, the most damning accusation is that he disgraced the purple by exhibitions on the stage. His songs to the lyre, his impersonation of the parturient Canace or the mad Hercules, did as much to cause his overthrow as his murders of Britannicus and Agrippina....”

“No one can be worse than Nero…He personified evil about as well as anyone can personify evil”.

“Traditions about Nero furnished a basis, amongst other things, for reflecting upon and formulating ideals of government free from tyranny and lawlessness: Nero's violent end even furnished warrant for armed revolt against secular and religious tyrants”.


2-Church History, Volume 1, by Everett Ferguson, page 46.

8- “There are actually 4 historical traditions for the dating of Revelation: during Claudius, or Nero, or Domitian, or Trajan. However, there is only scant and indirect historical evidence for a large scale Domitian persecution, as noted by several credible scholars. There was both Emperor and Empire worship prior and during Nero's reign. The very name "Caesar" evoked "worship" which is one reason the common Jews despised Rome”, Doug Post, Tolland, CT Church of Christ, 2-5-2015.

9- Comments from Doug Post of Tolland County church of Christ conducted via email on 2-6-2015. Comments from Howard Daniel Denham of Truth Bible Institute conducted via email on 2-5-2015.


11- “Sibylline Oracles” 5.361–376, 8.68–72, 8.531–157.

12- “Of the Manner in Which the Persecutors Died II”. Lactantius.

13- “Backgrounds of Early Christianity”, Dr. Everett Ferguson, Abilene Christian University, page 35.

14- “Church History: Volume 1” by Everett Ferguson, page 46.

15- ”The quality of Nero's actual performances is also overwhelmingly derided. Dio (62.6.4) has Boudicca declare that the Romans are slaves to a lyre-player, and a poor one at that. Dio further reports (61.20.2) that Nero had 'but a slight and indistinct voice, (brachu kai melan) so that he moved his audience to tears and laughter at once'. Suetonius reports (Nero 20.1) that Nero's voice was weak and husky (exiguæ vocis et
fuscae). Juvenal mentions (8.225) Nero's horrid or unseemly singing (foedo cantu). These claims of a weak and indistinct voice are offset by Suetonius who, immediately after stating Nero's voice was weak, records (Nero 20.2) that at Neapolis Nero promised the crowd he would 'ring out something good and loud,' (aliquid se sufferti tinnitum). Tacitus reports (Ann. 15.33) that Nero regarded the Juvenalia as too small for his ample voice (tantae voci). These claims of amplitude may be taken as empty boasts. Dio also records (63.20.5) the exclamations of Nero's (sycophantic) audiences: 'Divine Voice' (hiera phone) and 'Blessed are they that hear thee' (makarioi oi sou akountes). Likewise Tacitus records (Ann. 16.22) that sacrifices were made to the emperor's 'celestial voice' (caelesti voce). We also have descriptions of Nero's conduct during competitions — he even indulged in sledging (see Dio 63.9.2).”, from “Performing Nero” by Murray Dahm.

16-”... Nero had for years made a fool of himself by publicly playing the lyre and singing before, literally, command performances”, from “Persecution in the Early Church: A Gallery of the Persecuting Emperors” by Mark Galli, Christianity Today, 1990, Issue 27.

17-Nero's “theatrics” would ultimately be one of the facots leading to open rebellion against his rule....as per Vindex, “I have seen him... in the circle of the theatre, that is, in the orchestra, sometimes holding the lyre and dressed in loose tunic and buskins, and again wearing highsoled shoes and masks. I have often heard him sing, play the herald, and act in tragedies... Will anyone, then, style such a person Caesar and emperor and Augustus? Never. Let no one abuse those sacred titles Therefore rise now at length against him”, from “Nero: The Artist, the Athlete and His Downfall John Mouratidis, Visiting Lecturer of Physical Education, McGill University, Journal of Sport History, Spring 1985.


19-”Tacitus, Annals XIV.8

Some argue today that Christians were merely punished by Nero after the fire, not necessarily killed. See “Demythologizing Christianity’s Most Cherished Moment: Nero and the Christians, Part Two” By Hrafnkell Haraldsson, www.politicsusa.com....”...we are not without evidence from the Pagan Roman camp for this event as it is described for us by both Suetonius (born c. 70) and Tacitus (born c. 56), who both grew up in the post-fire Rome, as well as by Dio, writing later. These accounts all have a common (anti-Neronian) source, perhaps Fabius Rusticus. We also have some later sources, which appear to be based on these accounts but which do not qualify as independent witnesses in themselves. All Christian witnesses date from a much later period....it is important that we look first to what our biographer Suetonius has to say. In his Life of Nero he says “punishment” by Nero was inflicted on the Christians, “adherents of a new and dangerous superstition.” Note that no executions or tortures are mentioned, despite Suetonius’ well known appetite for salacious rumor-mongering. Christian tradition has it that both Peter and Paul died in the persecution along with 977 other Christians”. See also “The Myth of Christian Persecution, 3-20-2013 Huffington Post, by “Candida Moss, Author, 'The Myth of Persecution: How Early Christians Invented a Story of Martyrdom' and Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity and the University of Notre Dame”....”If Nero did target Christians after the great fire of Rome in 64 C.E. -- and the are good reasons for thinking he did not -- his treatment of them stemmed less from a desire to harm Christians than it did from his need to deflect blame from himself. Ancient Romans who spread the story about Nero saw his actions as contemptible and unjust.”
Gold aureus of Nero, AD 54, obverse

Facing portraits of Nero and Agrippina the Younger.

Legend: AGRIPP. AVG. DIVI CLAVD. NERONIS CAES. MATER ('Agrippina Augusta, wife of the Divine Claudius, mother of Nero Caesar'). Found at Herculaneum, among victims of the eruption of Vesuvius.

Nero and his mom, Agrippina Minora, whom he killed

National Archaeological Museum, Naples.