

APOCALYPSE OF JOHN

Isbon T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979),

THE PURPOSE OF APOCALYPSE – P. 208

The Apocalypse was written with the practical purpose of meeting a need of the particular readers addressed, in their existing condition and in the circumstances of their time or of the time supposedly about to come.

At the first century, to who's closing years the Apocalypse belongs, advanced through the later decades the antagonism of the world to the Church assumed a more and more distinct form. **Christianity, now spreading widely and growing in power, was by its very nature hostile to the social, moral and religious life of the time; it was making to itself bitter enemies in every rank of society, Jew and Gentile** were uniting against it; and finally it ranged among the forces opposing it the power of the imperial government. The general establishment of emperor-worship as a political and religious institution of the empire brought the Christian fact to face with the question of his loyalty to his lord Caesar and his Lord Christ. The Roman government, which held sway virtually over all the world, was adopting a policy, more or less settled and regular, of suppressing Christianity; **Persecution, begun under Nero**, was revived and society at large was quick to avail itself of this aid in its warfare. **The leaders among the Christians could see clearly that the Church was entering upon a life-and-death struggle, a time of storm and stress, of great suffering.** To meet this crisis Christians would be called to the supreme test of their faith, steadfastness and self-surrender. Of this they must be forewarned. Church needed also in the hour of awful trial coming upon it an assurance of its final deliverance and of the glorious reward which should be meted out to the faithful in the end. These urgent needs of the Church, were clearly perceived by **a great Christian prophet, and he saw himself commissioned by God to bring to the Church his wonderful message – a message designed on the one hand to forewarn the Church of its peril and arouse it to the purified, vigorous life; on the other, to fortify its courage and hope by revealing the ultimate destruction of the powers of evil, and the perfect consummation of the Christian hope in the establishment of the kingdom of God. Such were the circumstances calling for voice of the prophet, and such the purpose of his book** (Beckwith:208-209).