

Appendix 5

The Sanctuary and Apocalyptic

In its quiet but pervasive orientation toward Christ Dan 11 is a microcosm of Daniel, and Daniel in turn is a microcosm of Scripture. Note the claim carefully. Daniel is not unusual within the larger body of inspired writings when those writings are taken as a whole. On the contrary, it is representative of their central thrust. And the things that make Daniel apocalyptic are precisely the things that make it representative. The single most important of these is a timeless interest in and focus on the work and person of Christ. That work has a beginning and end. It takes place on earth as well as in heaven. Its purpose is to defeat Satan, the author of evil. Thus, whereas most of the canonical books are not apocalyptic individually, their cumulative effect is.¹

We commonly cite the books of Daniel and Revelation as examples of apocalyptic and contrast that style of writing with what we find in other books of the Bible. But, although its component parts must be evaluated individually, the Bible taken as a whole is apocalyptic in nature. Even the Bible's interest in the past can be harmonized with such a claim, since apart from the act of creation itself the history that it conveys is one of people looking forward to the future and to promised blessings not yet received (see Heb 11:13-16).

Thus, not only the Christian church but worshipers of the true God in past ages, taken together, comprise one great apocalyptic community. The reason why these people's lives are discussed at all in the Bible and are held up to us as examples is that they took heaven and eternity into their thinking. It could be expected that the sanctuary on earth, which summarizes and illustrates the overall course of the plan of salvation, should have a similarly broad perspective.

The annual cycle of ceremonies in the sanctuary depict the period from the crucifixion of Christ to the second coming (see Heb 9:9). All of the sacrifices represented Christ's death, which occurred on the earth. (That is why He came to our earth.) And yet, although His blood was shed here, it is ministered in heaven and the atonement is completed there.² Thus, if He had not risen from the dead--a prerequisite for His ascension--Christ's death alone would have done us no good (see 1 Cor 15:12-19). In all of this there is an apocalyptic perspective.

Even the fact that apocalyptic was generally given in writing rather than orally is consistent with what I am saying here. The sanctuary ceremonies were not written (in the manner of a prophecy). But my point is that they were not spoken. They were soundlessly acted out. The sanctuary presents a silent epitome of all the themes that run through biblical apocalyptic and, on a larger scale, through the entire body of inspired Scripture.

Despite these facts there is nothing apocalyptic or even remotely prophetic about the book of Hebrews. Hebrews discusses the sanctuary more extensively than any other book of the Bible apart from Exodus (chaps. 25-40) and Ezekiel (chaps. 40-48) but its author has an exclusively first century point of view.³ Thus, there is a tension between the epistle and its subject matter with regard to both time and space. As a literary document Hebrews is interested only in the present, but the sanctuary itself looks forward to the end of all things and points us

silently to the interplay between events in heaven and on earth. The event which brings the ceremonial year to a close is the day of atonement. When this is at an end, Christ comes in glory.

¹Hardy, "The Christocentric Orientation of Daniel and of Scripture Generally," *Historicism* No. 1/Jan 85, pp. 6-7.

²See idem, "Dan 9:24 and the Atonement," in this issue of *Historicism*.

³Four books of the Bible that lay especially heavy emphasis on the sanctuary are Leviticus, Daniel, Hebrews, and Revelation. "In terms of emphasis, these books fall into pairs. Whereas Leviticus and Hebrews are concerned primarily with the priestly functions associated with the sanctuary, Daniel and revelation relate the divine activity in the sanctuary to the end of the world" (Sanctuary Review Committee, "Christ in the Heavenly Sanctuary (Consensus Document)," in Holbrook, *Doctrine of the Sanctuary*, appendix E, p. 227). Thus, the book of Hebrews is more similar in outlook to the nonprophetic book of Leviticus than to the apocalyptic book of Daniel. And yet the sanctuary itself does clearly have an apocalyptic dimension.