

## TWO TYPES OF PREDICTIONS

In order properly to understand the prophetic books of the Old Testament, it is well that we study particularly those sections of the Old Testament which tell us of the work of prophets as they dealt with conditions of their own day. In these accounts we learn the exact situations in which God sent the prophets to His people. We learn how the prophets behaved in relation to these situations. We see how God used them in their own times and also how through them He prepared the way for the carrying out of His great purposes in future ages. Thus we find that the predictions which they made almost always had a definite relationship to conditions in their own day: - most commonly either to bring warnings to sinners and lead them to forsake their evil way or to encourage the people of God in their loyalty to Him. Very often a prediction had the purpose of giving people confidence that the prophet was a messenger from God or of accrediting beforehand a messenger who was to come in the future.

In the account of the victory over Sisera contained in the fourth and fifth chapters of Judges, we see the prophetess Deborah actively engaged in carrying out the work of the Lord. In the course of her work she makes certain predictions and we see their actual fulfillment. As we examine her predictions, it is interesting to note that they fall into two quite distinct classes and this may give us a clue for the understanding of prophecy where the background is not so fully stated: for instance, in many parts of the books of Isaiah, Ezekiel and Daniel and of the various Minor Prophets.

Let us examine the situation in which Deborah spoke her predictions. Israel has been in terrible oppression for twenty years, Jabin, the king who reigned in Hazor, and Sisera, the captain of his host, have treated them cruelly as a result of their sin against God. The time has now come when the Lord feels that the lesson from this captivity should have been fully learned and that it is now time to deliver His people. Deborah, the prophetess, calls Barak, a man of war, and tells him that it is the Lord's will that he shall free the people. In this connection Deborah makes a prediction