

# The Work of The Prophets

B. G. ECHOLS

"Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that would follow them. To whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto you, did they minister these things, which now have been announced unto you..." (1 Peter 1:10-12).

These verses are packed in almost every word with deep doctrinal content. The picture is of the Spirit working through the ages for one purpose — man's salvation. The apostle's purpose is to encourage the saints to persevere. He speaks of their present salvation and ultimate salvation in heaven as something that was a subject of prophecy. The innermost essence and the deepest purpose of the whole Old Testament system was to create an attitude of expectation, and to point onward to One Figure in which all the longings of men shall be accomplished, and all the purposes of God shall be fulfilled.

The prophets themselves had a great interest in the subject of salvation. They "sought" (gave careful study) and "searched diligently" (sifted in detail) into it. "And it came to pass, when I, even I Daniel, had seen the vision, that I sought to understand it" (Dan. 8:15). From a study of their own works they sought to determine when and during what circumstances this salvation would come. "But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men desired to see the things which ye see, and saw them not; and to hear the things which we hear, and heard them not" (Mt. 13:16, 17).

The doctrine of man's salvation has been the study and admiration of the greatest and wisest of men. Their concern for this noblest of subjects led

them to give it the most accurate attention and serious search. This shows their acceptance of the message they delivered as being a message from God, and that they did not fully comprehend all they said. They carefully studied to determine the meaning. If they did not fully comprehend the message, it stands to reason that God must have given them the exact words which they wrote. He did not merely give them an idea to put into their own words for they could not express in their own words what they did not fully comprehend. The most humble believer is now able to see clearly what the most distinguished prophet saw only faintly. They knew He was to come, but we have the full story.

The prophets were like an advanced guard sent before the Great Monarch to cry into slumbering ears, "He comes! He comes!" Our approach to the prophets must then include two elements. First, a belief that God spoke through them; and, second, that the very heart of their message was Christ.

The prophets were diligent in the study of their own writings to learn the significance of the matters foretold. "Time" refers to date. The prophets sought to find it. Their first hope would be that it would come in their life time. "What manner of time" refers to seasons or eras. They sought to find in what age or under what conditions the salvation would come. God did reveal that the message was for future generations to know.

The Spirit of Christ is the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9; Gal. 4:6). He dwelt in the prophets and supplied the revelation they delivered. The same Spirit that operated in the men of the Old Testament led the men of the New Testament. The Spirit of Christ foretold that which was according to the foreknowledge of God (1 Pet. 1:2). The Holy Spirit predicted the events in the prophets, and preached their fulfillment in the apostles. It was the same Spirit. The Jews showed great respect for the prophets. They should show great respect for the apostles who were guided by the same Spirit.

There is no true revelation of God for us that did not come from the Spirit of God. This is a claim for the inspiration of the New Testament. To the Jews it claims equal acceptance with the Old Testament. Anyone today who rejects the New Testament must negate in some way this claim of inspiration.