

get more than a tiny glimpse of the stars. It is an entirely different situation from that of a century ago, when everybody saw a great deal of the stars and most people came to know the major constellations almost as if they were friends.

We can be sure that Abraham had this sort of knowledge. There was hardly any artificial lighting in the areas where he spent most of his time. He was often outdoors when the heavens were covered with brilliant stars and must have known a good deal about them. In addition Abraham had come from Ur of the Chaldees and had spent a large part of his life in Haran. Both of these were towns that were dedicated to worship of the moon god. Babylonian astronomy and astrology were widely cultivated. Even though one held an entirely different religion, he could hardly spend years in a Babylonian environment without knowing a good deal about the stars, to say nothing of the many observations that he would naturally make during long evenings in the out-of-doors, undisturbed by the artificial light that now keeps most of us from paying much attention to them. In view of all this, it must have been a very great surprise to Abraham when God gave him the particular promise recorded in Genesis 15:5.

In Genesis 12:3 God had already promised Abraham that He would make him a great nation. Having lived in the great nations of Mesopotamia, Abraham would hardly think of a group of a few thousand people as being a great nation. He must certainly have thought that this promise meant much