

We shall not at present make a detailed study of Paul's discussion of the matter. Rather we shall make a survey of the central aspects of the problem as seen in the Bible as a whole, dealing particularly with those points which illuminate the whole question and give the answer to this perplexing theme. We shall survey this material under four heads.

I. GOD'S PROMISES TO ABRAHAM ARE OF PERMANENT VALIDITY

In Genesis 12 and succeeding chapters we find the record of God's marvelous promises to Abraham. There is no suggestion in these passages that the promises were temporary in nature or would come to an end within a few centuries. God spoke positively and definitely as He predicted His continuing blessing upon Abraham's posterity.

The world as a whole had turned away from God and was trying to forget Him. In order to preserve the knowledge of the great Creator, and to prepare the way for the coming of His Son into the world, God called one man to leave the great center of civilization in Ur of the Chaldees and to go out into the unknown west, promising that through Abraham's descendants He would establish a nation whose whole life would center around its loyalty to God. God directed Abraham's attention to the things about him; to the sand that stretched interminably across the far reaches of the wilderness, and to the stars that gleamed so brightly in the heavens; and declared that these were symbols of the abiding faithfulness of God who would make of Abraham's descendants a nation too numerous to count.

Abraham is known to us preeminently as the man of faith. He believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness (Romans 4:3). God told Abraham that his posterity would be as numerous as the dust of the earth (Genesis 13:16). As Abraham looked across the flat country through which he traveled,