

WAYS OF PRAYING - 1

LAYING THE SITUATION BEFORE THE LORD

Genesis 15

God has promised Abram that his offspring will inherit a vast land (Genesis 12:2,3,7; 13:14-17), and Abram responds in each case not by questioning this astonishing promise but in thanksgiving and praise by building an altar to the Lord his God. This is particularly poignant after Abram's nephew Lot has chosen the best grazing land for himself, when they come to separate after both having accumulated vast flocks and herds. Abram realises Sarai is barren (Genesis 11:30) and so when God promises a third time that his offspring will occupy land as far as the eye could see, he lays before the Lord his anxiety that he and Sarai are childless (Genesis 15:1-3).

God knows this already, of course. So why should Abram bother to mention it?

- It is an indication of friendship - sharing together, without pressure;
- It is an indication of humility - he does not presume or ask anything;
- It is an indication of faith - he trusts God to work in the best way.

God tells Abram that he will indeed have a son with many descendents, and Abram believes Him (15:4-6). God then rewards his faith with a reassurance, reminding him that as He has worked on his behalf in the past, so He will do so in the future (15:7). Abram, in his humanity, can't think how this can come about (15:8, and compare Mary's response to the Angel "how can this be?") - not that faith was lacking but he, like us, prefers something tangible to hang onto! Notice that Abram calls God "Sovereign Lord", showing a relationship of total dependence upon Him.

Graciously God gives him a graphic and unforgettable sign, (15:9-21) but even after that, both he and Sarai find the waiting hard to bear, and so take matters into their own hands by suggesting Abram has a child by Hagar, Sarai's maid. Is it possible that the fulfilment of the promised heir was delayed even longer by this? Certainly God seems to take His time, but issues yet another promise and another covenant with Abram before his own son would be conceived. Now Abram's name is changed to Abraham, 'father of many', and Sarai's to Sarah, 'mother of nations'. Patient faith has its reward and Isaac is born.

