**THE SECOND PROMISE - BLESSING OVER ABRAHAM**

The second element of the promise is *‘I will bless you’* (Genesis 12:2).

The promise was reaffirmed to Abraham immediately after he demonstrated his obedience by his willingness to offer his son, Isaac to the Lord (22:15-18): ‘*I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me’* (22:17,18).

The promise that Abraham would be blessed is accompanied by three elements: the promise of the offspring, security for Abraham’s posterity and the role of the offspring as the mediator of blessing to Gentiles. The promise of blessing relates to Abraham while the remaining elements extend to his posterity (while still recognising the impossibility of divorcing these elements from Abraham’s blessing). It would have been a blessing to Abraham to know that Isaac would live to father children, that God would give security to His descendants, and that his posterity would be an influence in the world.

In Genesis 24, Abraham’s servant defined his master’s blessing in terms of prominence, with an emphasis on material blessing as well: ‘*The Lord has blessed my master abundantly, and he has become wealthy … My master’s wife Sarah has borne him a son in her old age’* (24:35,36).

The promise of personal blessing was reaffirmed to Isaac in subsequent years (26:3). He was told to remain for a while in Philistine territory and the Lord would bless him. The blessing included material wealth. In 26:12-14 he is said to have great possessions ‘*because the Lord blessed him’* (26:12). In 26:24 an aspect of the Abrahamic promise was affirmed over him: ‘*Do not be afraid, for I am with you: I will bless you and will increase the number of your descendants for the sake of my servant Abraham*.’ Since Isaac was already wealthy (26:13,14) the promise of blessing relates more specifically to God bestowing favour in spiritual blessing.

The promise reiterated to Jacob (35:9-12) is prefaced by ‘*God appeared to him again and blessed him’* (35:9). The blessing is evidently the promise that Jacob, like Abraham, would be the father of a great nation and that his descendants would occupy the land of Canaan (35:11,12). Jacob apparently understood the blessing to refer only to the promise and not to material blessing. Shortly before his death, he recalled that moment when God reaffirmed the promise to him and said of that time: ‘*God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and there he blessed me and said to me*, *‘I am going to … increase your* *numbers’* (48:3,4).

The blessing of the Abrahamic promise embraces every aspect of God’s favour, both temporal and spiritual, bestowed on the patriarchs. The emphasis is more on the spiritual blessing of the promise. This secured a real future for the family of the patriarchs in a land in which they could become a great nation, and affirmed that in some unseen way, the offspring would become a blessing to Gentiles.

In the New Testament Paul emphasised the spiritual aspect of the blessing of Abraham in Galatians 3:3,4 where he noted that the people of faith share that blessing (3:9). He equated the blessing with ‘*the promise of the Spirit’* (3:14)

This study is a summary of ‘*The Covenants of Promise’* by T. E. McComiskey, (Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, England, 1988, pp.38-40)