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the nations should be in the forefront of the discussion of the results of his work at the beginning of chapter 54.

At the beginning of chapter 41 God called all the nations before Him and declared that their idols were powerless. Here He again addresses them, promising the rich blessings that knowledge of His Servant would bring.

The prediction of the great spread of the knowledge of God among the Gentiles, so that those who were formerly barren would have even more spiritual sons than the married woman, was exactly fulfilled in the early days of the spread of Christianity. This was a development quite unexpected by the apostles when their ministry began, even though Christ had told them that they should be witnesses to Him, not only "in Jerusalem and in all Judea, " but even "in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Within a few decades the leaders of the Christian community, which had at first been composed entirely of Israelites, saw that a great change was occurring. The fact that the number of Gentiles who were receiving Christ was far greater than the number of Jews who recognized Him as their Messiah gave the apostle Paul much uneasiness of mind. He went so far as to say, "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren... who are Israelites" (Rom 9:3-4).

After his classic description of God's provision for justification and sanctification through Christ in Romans 1-8, Paul devoted the next three chapters to this matter. First he expressed his great concern for his own people and mentioned some of the many blessings that God had brought into the world through Israel (Rom 9:4-5). Then he declared that there is a sense in which the real Israel includes all who truly believe, rather than all who are physically descended from Abraham (vv. 6-13). His resolution of the problem was based on these three main principles:

1. God is sovereign and has a right to decide as He chooses (vv. 14-20).