

Abraham was told that in his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed. In our first full-length picture of the work which the Servant of God was to do, in Isaiah 42, stress was laid upon the fact that He would be a light to the Gentiles and that the distant isles would wait for His law. Here God answers the narrow exclusive prayer of those who felt themselves to be the only ones who could be called God's people by declaring that He will extend His mercy to a nation that has not been called by His name.

This phrase, "unto a nation that was not called by my name," should remind us of Amos 9:11-12, where the prophet declared that when the Lord comes to this earth to set up His kingdom of righteousness it will contain Gentiles who are called by His name. The word in Amos 9:12 which is translated "heathen" in the King James Version and "nations" in the American Standard Version can be equally well translated "Gentiles," as in the quotation in Acts 15:17, where James pointed out that this promise of Amos was being fulfilled through the calling of the Gentiles. God could very properly call believers who had not been circumcised and thus become Jews "gentiles which are called by my name." The idea that God's favor is to go to the Gentiles was nothing new. It is frequently touched upon in various sections of the Old Testament. It was in mind when Abraham was first called to follow God.

In striking contrast to the blessing promised to the Gentiles in verse 1, verse 2 shows the attitude of those who had previously been called by His name. He says, "I have spread out my hands all the day long unto a rebellious people which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts."

Thus we may be sure that the apostle Paul made no mistake when he quoted these two verses in Romans 10:20-21 as evidence that God had predicted long before that He would turn His mercy to the Gentiles. In the context in Isaiah there is no other reasonable way to explain these verses.

Verses 2-7 consist entirely of denunciation of those who, though claiming to be God's people, are actually a disgrace to His name. In these verses many types of sin are attributed to the people who have made the prayer in chapter 64. They