

which fit the context. In the case of a sentence that is extremely vague, it is permissible to infer the possibility of certain meanings or interpretations from context, but this cannot be accepted as conclusive unless similar possibilities are reasonably inferred from occurrences of the same words or forms in other contexts.

If the context of Is. 65:1 were such that the verse could not possibly refer to nations other than Israel, it might be very difficult to derive a reasonable sense from it. However, this is not the case.

Isaiah 65:1-2 presents a contrast between two groups of people. Unexpected blessings are promised in verse 1 to "a nation that was not called by my name." In the following verses strong rebuke is given to "a rebellious people" (v.2), "that provoketh me to anger" (v.3), "Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou" (v.5). In verses 13 to 15 there is again a strong contrast between two groups of people, and the Lord says that He will "call his servants by another name." This context that follows 65:1 fits very well with Paul's interpretation. What about the passage that precedes it?

Isaiah 63:7-64:12 is a long prayer in which Israelites recall the great mercies of God in the past (cf. 63:7-9), regret that they rebelled against Him (63:10), and call upon Him in a time of great difficulty to remember that they are His chosen people (63:8,17-19; 64:8-9). There is acknowledgment of iniquity (63:17; 64:5-7) but no real expression of repentance. The tone of the passage seems almost to blame God for their having fallen into difficulties.(cf. 64:8 and particularly 63:17). It seems to express a pharasaic attitude, rather than one of penitence. God has blessed them in the past. They belong to Him. It is His duty to bless them in the future. One has the feeling that this attitude is what is so strongly rebuked in 65:5, as quoted above. The attitude of the prayer is to quite an extent summed up in 63:19: "We are thine: thou never barest rule over them; they were not called by thy name."