

Are we spiritual Israel?

This is a question that requires addressing. There is a lot of controversy about it. As with all of my studies I will tackle it FOR MY OWN EDIFICATION and put it online in case others may find it useful.

Are we spiritual Israel? By WE I mean present-day believers who are in Christ and in whom the Spirit of Christ dwells. – i.e. present-day members of the Church, the body of Christ.

I think it is a problem of definition. What do we mean by SPIRITUAL and what do we mean by ISRAEL?

The scriptures use the word HEAVEN to describe two very different realms.

1. There is the visible, temporal heaven. We can SEE the clouds, the sun, the stars and other bodies of the visible, temporal heaven. Scripture tells us that this heaven was CREATED.

“ In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1 AV)

Scripture also tells us that this heaven will be DESTROYED. It has a use-by date.

“ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” (2 Peter 3:10 AV)

2. There is also the invisible, eternal heaven. We can't see this heaven with the eyes in our head. We can only 'see' it with our imagination, fuelled by the WORDS of scripture – i.e. the WORD of God.

“ And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; **I am from above**: ye are of this world; **I am not of this world.**” (John 8:23 AV)

“ The first man is of the earth, earthy: **the second man is the Lord from heaven.**” (1 Corinthians 15:47 AV)

“ For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” (2 Corinthians 5:1 AV)

“ That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,” (Ephesians 1:17-20 AV)

“ If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ

sitteth on the right hand of God. **Set your affection on things above**, not on things on the earth." (Colossians 3:1-2 AV)

" Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1 AV)

God the Father of glory and our Lord Jesus Christ are most definitely not in our visible, temporal heaven. The invisible, eternal heaven is similar to the realms conjured up in our minds by works of fiction such as 'Dune', 'Harry Potter', 'Lord of the Rings', 'Thomas Covenant' etc. The difference between the realms of fiction writers and the eternal, heavenly realm of scripture is that we believe the heavenly realm evoked in our minds by scripture to REALLY EXIST, whereas we know the realms of fiction writers do not exist.

The scriptures use the word JERUSALEM to describe two different cities.

1. The Jerusalem which "now is, and is in bondage with her children" - the visible, temporal Jerusalem: a city situated on our visible, temporal earth at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea.

" For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children." (Galatians 4:25 AV)

It has existed in some form or another since before the time of Abraham. Melchizedek, to whom Abraham tithed, was king of Salem (has to be the early name for Jerusalem) and a priest of the most high God. Note that Melchizedek was both a king and a priest of God.

" And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God." (Genesis 14:18 AV)

2. There is also the invisible, eternal Jerusalem – the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of God. The scriptures refer to this city as "Jerusalem which is above".

"But **Jerusalem which is above** is free, which is the mother of us all." (Galatians 4:26 AV)

" But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, **the heavenly Jerusalem**, and to an innumerable company of angels," (Hebrews 12:22 AV)

Sion (or Zion) is the heavenly realm from which the Deliverer shall come (Psalms 14:7, Romans 11:26) and the name is sometimes applied to the earthly nation of Israel. But it is more often referring to the earthly or heavenly city of God – Jerusalem.

The earthly Zion is the religious heart of Jerusalem, the city of David where the tabernacle and later the temple were situated.

“ And the king and his men **went to Jerusalem** unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land: which spake unto David, saying, Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither: thinking, David cannot come in hither. **Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion: the same is the city of David.**” (2 Samuel 5:6-7 AV)

Is there is a visible, temporal ISRAEL and an invisible, eternal ISRAEL?

There is a visible, temporal heaven and an invisible, eternal heaven. There is a visible, temporal Jerusalem and an invisible, eternal Jerusalem.

We know that there is a visible, temporal Israel and we know what it is. It is a nation of people descended from one of the twelve sons of Jacob (the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham). The nation Israel are all members of the twelve tribes of Israel AFTER THE FLESH – members of the CIRCUMCISION. (Many Gentiles also proselytised into the Jewish nation.)

Paul light-heartedly boasted of his credentials in this Israel.

“ Are they Hebrews? so *am* I. Are they Israelites? so *am* I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so *am* I.” (2 Corinthians 11:22 AV)

“ Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;” (Philippians 3:4-5 AV)

Modern-day Judaisers would do well to read on a little beyond Philippians 3:5. Our apostle counted his impeccable credentials as an Israelite BUT DUNG that he may win Christ. Why are so many Christians today so keen on being Israel?

“ Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do **count them but dung**, that I may win Christ,” (Philippians 3:6-8 AV)

At this time I am only aware of one scripture that suggests that we grace age saints are citizens of a heavenly Israel – invisible and eternal – the scripture which refers to the ‘Israel of God’.

What is the “Israel of God”?

“ And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon **the Israel of God.**” (Galatians 6:16 AV)

What is the Israel of God? Was Paul referring only to Jews? He must have been referring to saints because they are “of God”. Christ-rejecting Israel is not “of God”. But there is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision but a new creature in Christ.

“ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.” (Galatians 6:15 AV)

A true Jew is not a Jew “after the flesh” but a Jew “after the Spirit”.

“ For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.” (Romans 2:28-29 AV)

There is an ‘Israel of God’ and being circumcised or not is irrelevant in determining who is in this Israel of God. But I think Paul is speaking only of Jews in Romans 2:28-29 above. Throughout his ministry he fiercely opposed those who tried to turn the Gentile believers into Jews. Why would he exacerbate this problem by encouraging Gentile believers to think of themselves as ‘true Jews?’ Did he not blast Peter for compelling the Gentiles to live after the manner of the Jews by the example of his separation from them?

“ But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before *them* all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?” (Galatians 2:11-14 AV)

It seems most likely to me that when Paul spoke of the ‘Israel of God’ he was speaking of the saved remnant (Romans 11:5) of his Hebrew people – Hebrews with heart circumcision. Could Paul not also have spoken of the “Greece of God” or the “Rome of God”? Is it not just confusing and confounding things to say that we are Israel in any way, shape or form?

The Melchizedekian priesthood is universal – not just Jewish

We are citizens of “Jerusalem which is above” (Galatians 4:26) but Salem was a Gentile city of God in the time of Melchizedek – prior to Israel ever becoming a nation. “Jerusalem which is above” need not imply a Jewish city.

“ And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he *was* the priest of the most high God.” (Genesis 14:18 AV)

The ascended and glorified Lord Jesus Christ is our ETERNAL and UNIVERSAL king and priest after the order of Melchizedek. Melchizedek was a Gentile king and priest of the most high God to the Gentiles. (There were no Jews around at that time.)

In a world in which “all have been concluded in unbelief (Romans 11:32)” the world is once again a world full of Gentiles. By being concluded in unbelief (along with the pagan Gentiles) the Jews are effectively Gentiles in God’s sight. Israel is fallen, diminished and cast away (Romans 11:12-15). This has worked to the Gentiles advantage by creating a level playing field for those who seek God. (We must keep in mind that with Israel’s fulness in ages to come, the Gentile nations will be even more blessed than they are at present by her fall and diminishing.)

“ Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?” (Romans 11:12 AV)

But there is no need to bless Israel in order to receive a blessing from God in this present age (Genesis 12:3). In fact, because we are no longer strangers from the covenants of promise (Ephesians 2:12-13) it seems much more likely that those who bless members of the church of God will receive a blessing from God. The manifest wealth, power and (relative) humanity of Great Britain and the United States during their respective ‘golden eras’ is testimony that they were blessed of God for as long as they remained the hospitable home of Protestant Christianity. Their fall and diminishing is parallel to their abandonment of the same.

The Melchizekian type of priest is not of the earthly Jewish Levite type of priest to a particular nation (Israel) but is the spiritual, heavenly king and priest of the most high God to the WHOLE WORLD.

“ The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.” (Psalms 110:4 AV)

“ For *it is* evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. For he testifieth, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.” (Hebrews 7:14-17 AV)

For the duration of his life on earth, Jesus Christ was an Israelite – his body and soul were the body and soul of an Israelite and he was an earthly “minister of the circumcision” (Romans 15:8). But his HEAVENLY ministry is after the order of Melchizedek – he is now the king and priest of the most high God in a universal and eternal sense. His ROLE and GLORY have changed and expanded. But he is forever humanly identified as “Jesus of Nazareth” because that is who he was for his time on earth.

There are varying degrees of glory in heaven (1 Corinthians 15:40-41) and, as a minister of the circumcision (Jesus of Nazareth) became God’s eternal king and high priest to the

world, so the heavenly roles of all his saints are expanded and universal also. They will not be NARROWED DOWN or STRAITENED to a particular nationality. Jesus' role was EXPANDED from a particular nation to the whole world.

To make the church spiritual Israel is to narrow it down, or straiten it, from its true role as the CHURCH OF GOD – the God who made the Gentiles also (Romans 3:29).

The ascended, glorified Jesus introduced himself as Jesus OF NAZARETH

If Jesus was still “Jesus of Nazareth” after his ascension and glorification,

“ And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.” (Acts 22:8 AV)

then will I not still be “John of Hamilton, New Zealand” after my (hoped for) ascension and glorification?

Yes. I am in Christ but I am a GENTILE SOUL in Christ. My Gentile soul has not become a Jewish soul by my being in Christ. The Spirit of Christ, the longsuffering, compassion and love of Christ dwells in me, but I am a lousy carpenter and not in the least interested in fishing. My manner of living is not in my spirit but in my soul. The Spirit of Christ is conforming my spirit to his but my soul is still John of Hamilton, New Zealand. The Lord's soul is still Jesus of Nazareth.

I am a Gentile by the manner in which I live – an aspect of my soul-nature. Others are Jews by the manner in which they live.

“ But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?” (Galatians 2:14 AV)

If I meet Jesus of Nazareth in heaven he will still be a Jew from Nazareth and will not have a Kiwi accent and be into rugby and meat pies. Likewise Paul and Peter will retain some of their Jewishness. But I will still be a Kiwi and will surely retain some of my Kiwiness. God could have stopped at creation with the angels if he didn't want the extraordinary variety of people that have come about since Adam and Eve started making babies.

Adam and Eve were Gentiles. Enoch was a Gentile. Noah was a Gentile. Melchizedek was a Gentile. Abraham started out as a Gentile. Luke was a Gentile. There is nothing wrong with being a Gentile for eternity.

No – we are not spiritual Israel

I started out this investigation feeling fairly sure that I would prove that we are spiritual Israel but instead have concluded that we probably are not.

I have both EARTHLY and HEAVENLY reasons for this conclusion.

The earthly reason we are not spiritual Israel

BECOMING SPIRITUAL, i.e. BEING BORN OF THE SPIRIT, DOES NOT CHANGE YOUR NATIONALITY. YOUR NATIONALITY BELONGS TO YOUR SOUL, NOT YOUR SPIRIT.

Spiritual Israel means the same as the 'Israel of God'. I presently belong to 'spiritual New Zealand' or the 'New Zealand of God' – i.e. saved people of New Zealand. In a broader sense I am a member of the 'spiritual world' or the 'world of God' or to use a correct term, the Church of God or the Church the body of Christ.

The soul has a nationality but the spirit has no nationality. To give the spirit a nationality is to try and give it an impossible attribute. Our spirits transcend things like nationality. Love is love regardless of nationality. The love that shone through the British Beatles music was a major factor in the dismantling of the Russian Iron Curtain – a love that transcended nationalities and languages.

My Spirit is joined to the Lord's Spirit but that does not make my soul an Israelite's soul. I was a Kiwi soul long before my spirit was quickened.

“ And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.” (1 Corinthians 15:45 AV)

The Spirit has no gender or nationality. One's character, gender and nationality, one's manner of living, are NOT ASPECTS OF THE SPIRIT BUT ASPECTS OF THE SOUL.

The soul of Jesus is the soul of an Israelite from Nazareth. My soul is the soul of a Kiwi from Hamilton. And I feel sure that God would not have it any other way.

The heavenly reason we are not spiritual Israel

Jesus was the “firstborn from the dead (Colossians 1:18)” and the “firstborn among many brethren (Romans 8:29).” As his role in heaven was GLORIFIED and EXPANDED from his earthly role, so our roles in heaven will also be EXPANDED and GLORIFIED – NOT STRAITENED BY OUR NATIONALITY OR ANY OTHER EARTHLY ATTRIBUTE.

The earthly role of Jesus of Nazareth, a minister of the circumcision (Israel) mocked and crucified as “the King of the Jews”, was expanded and glorified to his becoming the Lord Jesus Christ, the KING AND PRIEST of the most high God to the whole world - typified by Melchizedek, the king of Salem.

So we who are IN Christ are not IN a priest of Israel. We are IN the KING AND PRIEST OF THE MOST HIGH GOD TO THE WHOLE WORLD.

To call the Church spiritual Israel is to STRAITEN her role and nature and DEMOTE the King of kings.