

Heavenly people and earthly people

One of the teachings currently popular within the expanding population of gurus of the mid-Acts movement, is that the Church are God's heavenly people and that Israel are his earthly people. This is a stunning division and an interesting concept - worthy of some investigation.

God's people on earth

Israel were God's earthly people until they were blinded by unbelief and stumbled at the stumbling stone of Jesus Christ, then rejected his Holy Spirit with the stoning of Stephen. From Abraham to Stephen was about two thousand years.

The Church, though citizens of heaven, are nevertheless God's earthly ambassadors during this present age of grace. From Stephen to the present day is again about two thousand years.

After the rapture of the Church, Israel will again take over as God's earthly people for the duration of the millennium. God will be represented on earth by Israel, during the reign of King Jesus and the twelve tribes.

So it is true that Israel have been, and will be again, God's earthly people. But it is also true that the Church have been God's representatives on earth for the last two thousand years.

Saints in outer space?

I think the idea behind the earth/heaven division is that the grace age saints are destined to populate planets in the physical heavens above – i.e. outer space. Some mid-Acts teachers divide the Bible from Genesis 1:1 on this basis, therefore they are referring to the heaven created in Genesis 1:1.

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

“And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.” (Genesis 1:8 AV)

If the heaven of God's heavenly people is the heaven of Genesis 1:1 and 1:8, then it is the physical heaven of stars and planets, the realm fictionally explored by Captain Kirk and the crew of the Enterprise.

But this heaven will be destroyed by fire, according to the word of God.

“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)

When the saints are caught up, the scripture says “and so shall we ever be with the Lord”. We cannot “ever be with the Lord” in a heaven that has a use-by date.

“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” (1 Thessalonians 4:17 AV)

There is another problem too. When the saints are clothed upon with their “house which is from heaven” (their celestial bodies), they will be “as the angels of God in heaven”.

“*There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.*” (1 Corinthians 15:40 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. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:” (2 Corinthians 5:1-2 AV)

“Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.” (Matthew 22:29-30 AV)

The saints will be clothed upon with an eternal, celestial body and then sent to populate planets in a temporary, physical realm? I don't think so. The angels have similar bodies and they never stick around in the physical realm very long. The Lord's celestial body was too bright for any inhabitant of an earth-like planet to look upon.

“And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.” (Matthew 17:1-2 AV)

“At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.” (Acts 26:13 AV)

The saints will be clothed upon with an eternal, celestial body and dwell ETERNALLY in the ETERNAL heavens.

“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)

Unfortunately the scriptures use the same word to describe the temporary, physical realm of stars and planets as they use to describe God's ETERNAL heavenly realm – Sion, 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)

The eternal heaven cannot be the heaven created in Genesis 1:1, which has a beginning and an end and can be seen. The things which are seen are temporal. The heaven and earth created in Genesis 1:1 are TEMPORAL.

“While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” (2 Corinthians 4:18 AV)

The heaven which is not seen is ETERNAL. Paul was caught up to this realm (probably during a near-death experience after being stoned and left for dead at Lystra). He called it the third heaven.

“I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.” (2 Corinthians 12:2 AV)

The third heaven is beyond the realm of the heaven and earth created in Genesis 1:1.

“He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.” (Ephesians 4:10 AV)

It is the realm FROM which the creation of Genesis 1:1 took place – God's eternal heavenly realm. God existed prior to Genesis 1:1. He must have. I cannot say when he populated this invisible realm with the angels but it was obviously prior to Satan's first appearance in Genesis 3.

“For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:” (Colossians 1:16 AV)

Eternal life has no beginning and no end therefore the eternal realm has no beginning and no end. God and his (presently) invisible, infinite, eternal heavenly realm are indivisible.

After the rapture, the Church will most likely replace Satan's angels who will be cast down from the third heaven to earth. The saints go up. Satan and his angels come

down. Satan and his angels must currently be in the third heaven. From where else could they rule the kingdoms of the earth? Satan has access to God himself so he must be in the third heaven, the realm beyond the physical universe of stars and planets.

“Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.” (Job 1:6 AV)

The saints will be caught up to the third heaven, Jerusalem which is above, and will live among the population of beings with celestial bodies – i.e. angels and resurrected men and women. They will neither marry nor be given in marriage, so it is unlikely that the saint’s celestial bodies will have a particular gender.

“But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage:” (Luke 20:35 AV)

The new heaven and the new earth will be created by God for all of his resurrected saints (both Jew and Gentile) and they will descend to this new earth in the Holy City from God, out of the third heaven. The population of heaven (saints and angels) cannot be in the physical earth or heaven during their destruction. And they cannot be in the new earth or heaven during their creation. So they must be in the eternal third heaven from which they will descend to the new earth and the new heaven.

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” (Revelation 21:1-2 AV)

Where are Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?

If the Church are exclusively God’s heavenly people, and Israel are exclusively God’s earthly people, then other problems also arise. For example, where are Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?

When tested by the Sadducees, the Lord used scripture to prove the resurrection from the dead. He declared that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were living in the resurrection kingdom at the time God spoke to Moses from the burning bush.

“But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” (Matthew 22:31-32 AV)

I can’t explain how this is possible, seeing that the Lord was not the firstborn from the dead until fifteen hundred years later. Yet there it is in scripture and God cannot lie. Clearly we will have to throw out our linear concept of time when we are resurrected.

The resurrection of the dead is also Israel's hope. Paul used it to divide the Pharisees and Sadducees at one of his trials.

"But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question." (Acts 23:6 AV)

Therefore any of Israel who are resurrected from the dead will also be clothed upon with an house which is from heaven – they will be clothed upon with a celestial body. They will go to heaven, the third heaven. In fact, according to scripture, many of Israel are already there.

"There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out." (Luke 13:28 AV)

We have already established that Abraham is in the resurrection kingdom of God because the Lord used him to prove the resurrection of the dead to the Sadducees.

So the Gentile saints will enter the same realm as all of the resurrected saints of Israel at the end of this present age – the third heaven, Jerusalem which is above.

"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)

Israel's restored kingdom on earth – the millennial kingdom

One problem remains. According to Ezekiel's prophecy there will be a mass resurrection of 'these slain' of Israel to the earth. The Lord also called them the 'whole house of Israel'.

"The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the LORD. So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them. Then said

he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon **these slain**, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the **whole house of Israel**: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. Therefore prophecy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD." (Ezekiel 37:1-14 AV)

The term 'whole house of Israel' cannot mean that ALL dead Jews will be resurrected. I believe the 'whole house' to mean 'ALL TWELVE TRIBES' of Israel. For the twelve apostles to judge the twelve tribes in the millennial kingdom, God will have to populate the tribes from somewhere other than the Jews living at the time. Many of the tribes have disappeared over the thousands of years since the Northern Kingdom tribes were scattered and interbred with other races.

This resurrected 'whole house of Israel' shall be brought into the land of Israel. This aligns with Job's hope that he would see God in his flesh.

"For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:" (Job 19:25-26 AV)

The 'latter day' of these events must be prior to Israel's millennial kingdom and probably coincides with the first resurrection of Revelation.

"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." (Revelation 20:6 AV)

This resurrection to a fleshy, earthy body seems to be a total contradiction to the Lord's declaration that the resurrected become as the angels which are in heaven.

"For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven." (Mark 12:25 AV)

And if Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are resurrected in this manner then they should be walking the earth today. Jesus told the Sadducees that Abraham was living at the time God spoke to Moses from the burning bush - but Abraham was not on earth at that time. He was living in heaven.

“But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” (Matthew 22:31-32 AV)

The prophets Moses and Elijah appeared at the mount of transfiguration so they too were alive at that time. But they were not walking the earth. They made a short appearance here but had obviously come from somewhere else – the eternal, heavenly kingdom of God.

“There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and **all the prophets**, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.” (Luke 13:28 AV)

I think the answer is that those of the first resurrection will spend 1000 years on earth PRIOR to their ascension and becoming ‘as the angels’ by being clothed upon with an house which is from heaven. This is not a contradiction to the Lord’s teaching on resurrection – just a prolongation of the period of time that they walk the earth after their resurrection and prior to their ascension. Jesus walked the earth for forty days after his resurrection and prior to his ascension. Israel of the first resurrection will walk the earth for 1000 years prior to their ascension.

“Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.” (Luke 24:39 AV)

“To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:” (Acts 1:3 AV)

Most mid-Acts teachers leave the Church out of Israel’s millennial kingdom. We will be off in outer space somewhere supposedly. How then will the saints judge the world?

“Do ye not know that **the saints shall judge the world?** and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?” (1 Corinthians 6:2 AV)

The saints of the Church will be judging the world at the same time that the Lord’s Jewish saints will be judging Israel – during the millennial kingdom.

“And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” (Matthew 19:28 AV)

So even during Israel’s millennial kingdom the Church will still be involved with the earth.

In conclusion

Israel are not exclusively God's earthly people. We are testimony to this. Israel is not representing God on earth during this present age – the latter end of the times of the Gentiles. We are.

The Church are not exclusively God's heavenly people. We are attracted to the idea of populating other planets in the physical heaven and leaving the earth to Israel. It sounds cool to me too. But the physical universe is not the realm of the angels and the resurrected saints will be clothed upon with an eternal, celestial body and become "as the angels which are in heaven".

The saints will be resurrected to the third heaven, the same realm that those of Israel accounted worthy are ultimately resurrected to. The same realm that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, all the prophets and an innumerable company of angels, (and of course the Lord seated at the right hand of the Father) are currently living in.

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." (Colossians 3:1 AV)

Christ and God are not currently situated on a planet near Betelgeuse.