

## **The Three Groups Which Make Up the Peoples of God in Eternity:**

In the writings of Paul, we find that Paul writes often of the three people groups, all of whom are saved by faith out of the Old Creation:

- Gentiles, or the nations (coming from the beginning of mankind to the end of the Millennium – except for the *church parenthesis* between the day of Pentecost and the Rapture described under the third “bullet” below)
- Israel, the sons of Jacob (coming from the sons of Jacob in Genesis to the end of the Millennium – except for the *church parenthesis* described under the third “bullet” below)
- The Church, which is composed of both those from ethnic Israel & the Gentiles (from the day of Pentecost to the Rapture. This is the parenthesis in time, often called “the *church parenthesis*”, which postpones, but does not replace God’s program for Israel)

These groups of those who are saved from the Old Creation unto the New Creation have a number of things in common, including:

- They are all saved by faith
- They all have an eternal relationship with God
- They all are referred to as saints
- They all enjoy the innumerable benefits of their fixed position in the New Creation, including no risk of another fall and cursing, as in the Old Creation
- They are all called by God “My people”

### **The Peoples of God**

The gentiles, Israel and the church are all called or to be called “My people” at some point:

Gentiles: My People – Zechariah 2:10-12

10 " Sing for joy and be glad, O daughter of Zion; for behold I am coming and I will dwell in your midst," declares the LORD. 11 "Many nations will join themselves to the LORD in that day and will become My people. Then I will dwell in your midst, and you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you. 12 "The LORD will possess Judah as His portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem.

Israel: My People - Ezekiel 37:24-28

"My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them. 25 "They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons' sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever. 26 "I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. 27 "My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. 28 "And the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever.""

The Church: The People of God, too - 1 Peter 2:9-10

9 But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but **now you are THE<sup>1</sup> PEOPLE OF GOD**; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

These groups, while each having an eternal relationship with God, and enjoying many common benefits of eternity appear to maintain a separate identity and relationship with God into eternity. Consider the following:

### **The Church:**

- The church is the Bride of the Lamb (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:22-33; Revelation 19:7-9).
- A marriage is to be dissolved only upon the death of one of the partners, but we will have been joined to Christ (Romans 7:1-4).
- Since there will be no more death or dying once we are with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:17), the church uniquely will have an unbreakable marriage relationship with the Lamb for eternity, which those outside the church will not share.

Ephesians 3:20-21

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, 21 **to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever.** Amen.

From this verse we see that Paul is calling attention to the glory of the Father in the church and in Jesus Christ into eternity. The church, therefore, has an ongoing identity into eternity, as does Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). The Father will eternally be given glory in both the church and in Jesus Christ.

### **Israel:**

Luke 1:26-33 (NASU)

Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, 27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. 28 And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." 29 But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. 30 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. 31 "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. 32 "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and **the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; 33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.**"

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<sup>1</sup> This lacks the definite article in the Greek text, so Peter did not say that the Church was now exclusively the people of God or replaced Israel's position as the people of God.

- The reign of Christ on David's throne will be over the house of Jacob forever (Luke 1:32, 33; see also 2 Samuel 7:12-16).
- The house of Jacob is the nation of Israel, which is not the same as the church, the bride of Christ.
- Christ will reign on David's throne over the sons of Jacob forever, but not over the church.

### **The New Jerusalem:**

Revelation 21:1-4, 9-14, 22-27 (NASU)

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His [people \[the Greek text here is plural, so actually \*peoples\*\]](#), and God Himself will be among them, 4 and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, [I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.](#)"

10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, 11 having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper. 12 It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are [the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel](#). 13 There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west. 14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were [the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb](#).

22 I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23 And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 [The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it.](#) 25 In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; 26 and [they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it;](#) 27 and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

The portions shown in [blue print](#) above reflect three identifiably different people groups continuing their relationship with God, saved out of the Old Creation the New Creation:

- The 12 tribes of Israel (“the sons of Israel” in both Revelation 7:4 and 21:12)
- The 12 apostles of the Lamb (all listed by name & called apostles in Acts 1:12-26)
- The nations (*ethnos* = Gentiles<sup>2</sup>), also referred to as led by “the kings of the earth”<sup>3</sup>

This passage summarizes those things that all those who are saved out of the Old Creation and into the New Creation enjoy in common. It also identifies the three people groups that had separate identities as saved out of the Old Creation and that maintain their identity as they are in the New Creation. Each of the three people groups are most certainly “His people”, but their identities and relationships to God or to the Lamb remain distinct throughout eternity. The church alone is forever the bride of Christ, the Lamb. Christ is forever the King of Israel, ruling from David’s throne. The Gentiles – the nations – will forever come to the Lamb from throughout the earth to bring honor and glory to the Lamb. All three groups together constitute “the peoples of God” into eternity.

**Postnote:** William Newell in his 1935 commentary on the book of Revelation (Moody Press), pages 335-356 covers Revelation 21. Newell’s explanation of the peoples of God is consistent with the above, and conveys additional observations from Revelation 21 and related passages. John Walvoord, in his 1966 commentary on Revelation (Moody Press), on pages 322 and 323, remarks regarding Revelation 21:12-14:

It is noteworthy, however, that not only are the twelve apostles represented but also the twelve tribes of Israel. This should settle beyond any question the matter of the inclusion of Old Testament saints. It apparently is the divine intent to represent to the reader that the new Jerusalem will have among its citizens not only the church, or saints of the present age, but also Israel or saints of other ages, whether in the Old Testament or in the tribulation period. Later on there is mention also of Gentiles. The careful expositor, therefore, on the one hand will not confuse Israel and the church as if one were the other. On the other hand, he will not deny to both their respective places of privilege in God's program. The anticipation of Hebrews 12:22-24 is specifically that the heavenly Jerusalem will include not only God and an innumerable company of angels but also the general assembly and church of the firstborn, that is, the saints of the present age and the spirits of just men made perfect, that is, all other saints. As far as this scripture is concerned, there is only one eternal resting place for the saints, and that is the new Jerusalem. *All saints, therefore, must necessarily participate in the city, just as many of them did also in the millennial scene without destroying the distinction between different companies of saints.* [italic/bold print style and blue font color added for emphasis]

Lewis Sperry Chafer, in his *Systematic Theology* (Dallas Seminary Press, 1948; IV:142), writes, “The Church is an elect company, called out from Jews and Gentiles and to be forever with Christ in His highest glory.”

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<sup>2</sup> The nations (aka Gentiles) are referred to repeatedly in the New Testament as *ethnos*, as well as in many passages in the Greek Old Testament (LXX), extending all the way back into Genesis chapter 10.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Kings 4:34; 10:23; 2 Chronicles 9:22,23; Psalm 2:2; 76:12; 89:27; 102:15; 138:4; Isaiah 24:21; Lamentations 4:12; Matthew 17:25; Revelation 1:5; 6:15; 17:2, 18; 18:3, 9; 19:19; 21:24.