

What Christian Israelites Believe ...

6. About the Laws & Commandments of the New Covenant

‘Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.’ Ecclesiastes 12:13.

The *Law & Testimony* and the *Guide for the General Assemblies* outline the full laws and commandments of the Christian Israelite Church. This lesson includes further information about a selection of them, including:

- *Clothing*
- *Images and Likenesses*
- *Hair and Beards*
- *Eating of Meats*
- *The Sabbath*
- *Tithing*
- *Circumcision*

Uncovenanted & Covenanted Members

When a member first joins the Christian Israelite Church, they are known as ‘uncovenanted’ members. To become an uncovenanted member, one must believe that the four books of Moses’ laws (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) and the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) are written through the divine inspiration of God. It is hoped that members believe this of the entire Bible, but these books are mentioned particularly because they are especially foundational to the Christian Israelite faith.

Covenanted members are those who have chosen to enter into an additional covenant with God (as per *About the Purpose of the Church*). They make a promise to uphold certain laws and commandments with the help of Christ and the Holy Spirit, and with the view of seeking the immortal life of the body when Jesus Christ returns. Covenanted members are like the Levi priests who entered into the tabernacle to do the sacred work of God (see Numbers 1:50).

While uncovenanted members are not obliged to uphold all of the same laws as covenanted members, joining the church presumes an interest in learning about the faith and working towards following the laws with the view of seeking the redemption of the body from the curse of death (Genesis 3:17,19).

There are many times throughout the Bible wherein God asks us to obey his laws and commandments, and several places where we are told that, if we do, we will be blessed:

‘Keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself.’ 1 Kings 2:3 (see also Deuteronomy 28:1, Joshua 1:8, and Psalm 103:17-18 as examples).

Jesus taught that following God’s laws and commandments is a demonstration of our love for him (John 14:21). As a sign of this love, covenant members aspire to show obedience to the Ten Commandments (as listed in Exodus 20) and other laws, including:

Clothing

‘Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woollen and linen together.’ Deuteronomy 22:11.

‘Neither shall a garment mingled of linen and woollen come upon thee.’ Leviticus 19:19.

Covenant members believe in wearing clothes that are not mingled but made entirely of one material, particularly during the Sabbath hour or any other church activity (members not being under any obligation as to what they may need to wear when they are working in the world). Wearing clothes made of one material is symbolic of pursuing purity and holiness, as God is holy:

‘Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy.’
Leviticus 19:2.

Christian Israelites also generally do not wear items that are solid black in colour, as black is often used to reverence the dead (as seen at funerals), and we are aspiring to reverence life, instead. Members also refrain from wearing items that are solid scarlet/red in colour, as it is seen as the colour of sin and blood:

‘Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.’
Isaiah 1:18.

Covenant members wear a uniform whilst at worship. The main purpose of the uniform is to please God by not following the fashions of the world, these fashions being made by man to be seen of man:

‘For the fashion of this world passeth away.’
1 Corinthians 7:31.

The instruction given from God (through John Wroe) about the uniform was introduced in the early stages of the church’s foundation and has been in place since then, with no changes to the design since approximately 1859. The uniform is worn as an outward sign or test of faith and obedience, and to show love for God. We also believe it to be symbolic of God’s protective, spiritual covering. Whilst this uniform sets us apart from the world, we believe that, in showing this obedience to God, we will be strengthened in our fight against the evil.

Images & Likenesses

‘Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.’
Exodus 20:4.

‘Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither rear you up a standing image, neither shall ye set up any image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it: for I am the Lord your God.’ Leviticus 26:1.

‘Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air, the likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth. And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them.’
Deuteronomy 4:16-19.

Christian Israelites believe in not having any graven (physical or carved) images of anything that God created in their house or on their belongings, bodies, or clothes, in order to obey the first and second laws of the Ten Commandments (that is, to honour the Creator and not the things created (Romans 1:25) and to not let anything be first in our hearts but God). By observing these instructions, it is hoped that the eye and mind will be single to God, looking to the future and not dwelling in the past:

‘Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old.’ Isaiah 43:18.

‘The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness.’ Luke 11:34.

Christian Israelites also refrain from getting tattoos as it is written, ‘Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the Lord’ (Leviticus 19:28).

Hair & Beards

‘Ye shall not round the corners of your heads, neither shalt thou mar the corners of thy beard.’ Leviticus 19:27.

‘They shall not make baldness upon their head, neither shall they shave off the corner of their beard.’ Leviticus 21:5.

Covenant members wear their hair (and beards) long and uncut as an outward dedication to God, showing a wish to please God and not man by again not following the fashions of the world. The children of Israel were given the Nazarite vow as outlined in Numbers 6, which included not cutting their hair. This vow could be taken for a period of time, or for life, e.g. Sampson did not cut his hair due to his dedication to God (see Judges 13:3-5), and John the Baptist was also reared according to the Nazarite vow (see Luke 1:11-17).

Christian Israelites believe that long hair and beards were given to man when Adam and Eve fell, as a mark of that fall (1 Corinthians 11:14). Covenant members do not cut their hair or beards so as to appear as God made us after the fall but have hope of it being removed when our bodies are made immortal and redeemed from the corruption of sin.

Eating of Meat

We believe that God’s original, perfect plan was to not eat meat at all:

‘And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.’ Genesis 1:29.

The eating of meat was later allowed, but with strict conditions:

‘Ye shall therefore put difference between clean beast and unclean, and between unclean fowls and clean: and ye shall not make your souls abominable by beast, or by fowl, or any manner of living thing that creepeth on the ground which I have separated from you as unclean.’ Leviticus 20:25.

Christian Israelites believe that the eating of clean meat is allowable but choose to not partake of the meats that are listed as unclean in Leviticus 11 (see also Deuteronomy 14:6, Exodus 22:31, and Leviticus 7:24, 17:13-15).

In Leviticus 3:14-15, 17, a further explanation is given as to what parts of these clean animals are not considered fit to eat:

‘The fat that covereth the inwards, and all the fat that is upon the inwards, and the two kidneys, and the fat that is upon them, which is by the flanks, and the caul that is above the liver, with the kidneys, it shall he take away ... It shall be a perpetual statute for your generations throughout all your dwellings, that ye eat neither fat nor blood.’ (See also Leviticus 7:26-27.)

We believe that God alone has the knowledge to choose what is best for us to eat, as he is the creator of all things. We also believe that by following these instructions, our physical and spiritual health will be preserved. In Genesis 9, we see that God only allowed man to eat of animal flesh after the flood, but Noah was clearly told, ‘but flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat’ (Genesis 9:4)¹. This idea was also carried into the New Testament:

‘But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.’ Acts 15:20.

Christian Israelites therefore believe that all meat should be properly bled before cooking. The only ones who bleed their meat appropriately are those who follow the ‘kosher’ method of butchering animals. Most Christian Israelites prefer not to eat meat at all due to the uncertainty of how bought meat is prepared (unless it is prepared personally or by a trusted butcher) and as such generally follow a strict vegetarian diet.

The Sabbath

When God created the universe as we know it, he laboured six days, rested on the seventh day, and sanctified it:

‘Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.’ Genesis 2:1-3.

In the Ten Commandments, God instructs his chosen people, the Israelites, to do the same:

¹ The blood being the carrier of the evil, as well as where the soul dwells (as per *About Spirit, Soul, and Body*).

‘Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.’ Exodus 20:8-11 (see also Exodus 31:13-17).

Christian Israelites honour the Sabbath in obedience to God:

‘I am the Lord your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the Lord your God.’ Ezekiel 20:19-20.

Honouring the Sabbath brings a blessing:

‘If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.’ Isaiah 58:13-14.

Jesus Christ taught on the importance of the Sabbath:

‘The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.’ Mark 2:27-28 (see also Matthew 12:1-13).

To honour God’s commandment about the Sabbath, Christian Israelites ideally cease from paid work, trade, and other worldly pursuits at 6pm on Friday nights and do not resume them again until sunrise on Saturdays. This is in recognition of the law (Jewish Sabbath) and of the seventh day, with the time being measured from evening to morning (Genesis 1:5).

Through John Wroe, God instructed us to keep a ‘watch hour’ as part of his new covenant. Christian Israelites firstly do this on Friday nights. During the ‘watch hour’ (which can be held at any time between 6-9pm), Christian Israelites read the revealed word given to John Wroe, and sing songs to praise God. This is usually done at a church but, if a member is unable to attend a church for whatever reason, the watch hour can also be kept wherever they may be, and the Bible used for a text if needed.

The hour is kept only with other Christian Israelites – those who have made the same sacred commitment to follow the teachings of both the Old and New Testaments, i.e., to follow both the law and gospel.

Christian Israelites also keep one watch hour on Sunday mornings between 10-11am, recognising the Christian Sabbath or ‘first day’, which is kept on Sundays in commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christian Israelites again ideally cease from paid work and trade on Sundays (from 12am), particularly up until 12pm.

The Christian Israelite faith is a blend of the Old and New Testament teachings, which is reflected in the way the Sabbath is kept. Keeping both the Christian and Jewish Sabbaths is symbolic of breaking down the middle wall between them. Christian Israelites believe it takes both to make one full Sabbath and that, in keeping the watch hours with other members, we are strengthened in our faith and in our relationship with God.

Jesus kept a watch hour as an example to Israel and asked his disciples to do the same:

‘What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.’ Matthew 26:40-41.

Christian Israelites believe that, if we have our prayers always on our minds, we are in a continuous Sabbath and always ‘watching’ (Ephesians 6:18).

We believe that keeping the Sabbath is a moral responsibility that honours God as the Creator. It provides us with time to step away from the world and to focus on and worship God, and to also rest:

‘Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.’ Matthew 11:28-30.

Overall, Christian Israelites believe the Sabbath provides us with the blessings of peace, sanctity, and rejuvenation.

Tithing

Tithing – the giving of ten percent of one’s earnings to the church and God – was first mentioned as offering up the ‘first fruits’ of the harvest to God:

‘The first of the first fruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the Lord thy God.’ Exodus 23:19.

It became a more formal instruction that God gave to Moses on Mount Horeb (Sinai) (along with numerous other laws and commandments):

‘And all the tithes of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord’s: it is holy unto the Lord. And if a man will at all redeem ought of his tithes, he shall add thereto the fifth part thereof. And concerning the tithes of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord.’ Leviticus 27:30-32.

Tithing was done as a sign of respect to God:

‘Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year. And thou shalt eat before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithes of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always.’ Deuteronomy 14:22-23.

Tithing gave God’s people a way to do his work and support those in the community who were disadvantaged, and was also a form of worship, thanksgiving, and obedience:

‘And now, behold, I have brought the first fruits of the land, which thou, O Lord, hast given me. And thou shalt set it before the Lord thy God, and worship before the Lord thy God: And thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God hath given unto thee, and unto thine house, thou, and the Levite, and the stranger that is among you. When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled; Then thou shalt say before the Lord thy God, I have brought away the hallowed things out of mine house, and also have given them unto the Levite, and unto the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all thy commandments which thou hast commanded me: I have not transgressed thy commandments, neither have I forgotten them.’ Deuteronomy 26:10-13.

The Bible tells us that tithing brings prosperity and a blessing to those who give it:

‘Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.’ Malachi 3:10.

‘Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.’ Proverbs 3:9-10.

Paul also taught that giving brings a blessing, but pointed out that the heart with which we give is just as important as the act of giving:

‘He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.’ 2 Corinthians 9:6-8.

Christian Israelites believe that by giving a tenth of our earnings to God and the church, we gratefully acknowledge that everything we have is given to us by him, and show him that he is a higher priority to us than our wealth and possessions:

‘Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.’ Matthew 6:19-21.

As such, Christian Israelites believe that tithing is important in keeping our hearts right with God, in showing him obedience and thanksgiving, and in allowing the church do the work that he set us out to do (as per *About the Purpose of the Church*).

Circumcision

Paul wrote in Galatians 5:2, ‘If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing’. Why then do Christian Israelites believe circumcision is still relevant?

God first gave the law of circumcision to Abraham, to be kept by him and his descendants:

‘And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their

generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.’ Genesis 17:9-14.

This was God’s first covenant with Israel and was an important instruction to follow:

‘Thus saith the Lord God; No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any stranger that is among the children of Israel.’ Ezekiel 44:9.

In the New Testament, Paul tells us he was a Jew with a true belief in the Israelite faith:

‘I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.’ Romans 11:1.

Paul was chosen of God to be an apostle to the Christian church (Acts 9:1-29) and he preached primarily to the Gentiles (i.e., non-Jews) (Romans 11:13). Paul knew that the Gentiles could not be held accountable for the Israelite law of circumcision, as the Gentiles were never under the law.

In Romans 3, the question is asked:

‘What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.’ Romans 3:1-2.

Israelites, for whom the laws (in the books of Moses) were written, are justified (made right with God) by following these laws. The Gentiles or non-Jews are justified through faith in Jesus Christ alone. God wishes to be reconciled to both:

‘Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the

law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.’
Romans 3:29-31.

When God commanded Abraham to circumcise himself and his house, it was that the shedding of blood might be an atonement for sin (Hebrews 9:22). Circumcision and the shedding of the blood are important to our faith as it is symbolic of the purging of the evil from the body. In the same way, Jesus’ blood was shed on the cross as a remittance of sin for all souls:

‘In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.’
Ephesians 1:7.

Christian Israelites believe that our souls are saved through the sacrifice of Jesus, but we are also seeking to be made wholly free of evil, which we believe is achieved through following both the law and gospel. As such, Christian Israelites understand that circumcision does not give us soul salvation, but believe it remains an important, outward sign of faith in God’s laws and commandments, and honours God’s original covenant with Abraham and his descendants.

Why We Follow These Laws

For more information on why Christian Israelites uphold these laws, see *About the Purpose of the Church*.