

What Christian Israelites Believe ...

6. About 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:

“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 Saturday mornings. This is in recognition of the law (Jewish Sabbath) and the seventh day:

“And the evening and the morning are one day.”
Genesis 1:5.

Through his messenger John Wroe (the founder of the Christian Israelite Church), God instructed us to keep a “watch hour” as part of his new covenant (see *What Christian Israelites Believe About the 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 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 with other Christian Israelites, i.e. those who have made the same sacred commitment to follow the teachings of both the Old and New Testaments and to follow God’s laws and commandments.

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 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”.

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. This gives us the opportunity to re-centre our minds and purpose on him, and to also rest and thereby maintain much needed work-life balance:

“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 11:30.

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