

Where did Christmas Come From?

Yes, where did Christmas come from? It did not begin at the birth of Christ; it began earlier! The December 25 celebration had nothing to do with His birth. It is an interesting story; one I think you will be interested in.

WHEN WAS JESUS BORN?—When was Jesus born? It is well-known among Biblical scholars that Jesus was not born in December, because the shepherds were never out in the fields with their sheep at that time. "There were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night."—*Luke 2:8*—

Shepherds always brought their sheep in from the mountainsides and fields and corralled them not later than October 15, to protect them from the cold, rainy season that followed. (Also read *Songs 2:11* and *Ezra 10:9, 13*.)

"It was an ancient custom among Jews of those days to send out their sheep to the fields and deserts about the Passover [early spring], and bring them home at commencement of the first rain. During the time they were out, the shepherds watched them night and day. As . . . the first rain began early in the month of marchesvan, which answers to part of our October, we find that the sheep were kept out in the open country during the whole summer.

"And, as these shepherds had not yet brought home their flocks [when Christ was born in Bethlehem], it is a presumptive argument that October had not yet commenced, and that, consequently, our Lord was not born on the 25th of December, when no flocks were out in the fields; nor could He have been born later than September, as the flocks were still in the fields by night. On this very ground the nativity in December should be given up. The feeding of the flocks by night in the fields is a chronological fact . . . See the quotations from the Talmudists in Lightfoot."—*Adam Clarke, Commentary, Vol. 5, p. 370*.

The census of Caesar Augustus is mentioned in *Luke 2:1-2*, but historians are not certain when it was issued. But it is improbable that he would call for the citizens of the Roman Empire to return to their native homes to be enrolled in the census in the middle of

winter. Even his armies avoided marching during the hazards of winter weather.

Many authorities believe that Christ was born in the spring of the year, but, in the wisdom of God, the date of Christ's birth has been hidden from us.

Why then does all the world celebrate the birth of Christ—not merely in December—but on a *certain day* in December?

We need to know (1) what is "Christmas?" (2) how did Christmas get into the Christian Church? and (3) why did it enter back in those early days? Here are answers to these questions:

WHAT IS "CHRISTMAS"?—The word "Christmas" means "Mass of Christ," or, as it came to be shortened, "Christ-Mass." It came to the modern world from the Roman Catholic Church. They, in turn, got it not from the Bible, but from paganism.

"Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the Church . . . The first evidence of the feast is from Egypt." "pagan customs centering around the January calends [the pagan calendar] gravitated to Christmas."—*Catholic Encyclopedia, 1911 ed., article: "Christmas."*

Origen, an early Catholic writer, said this about celebrating birthdays in the Bible:

"In the Scriptures, no one is recorded to have kept a feast or held a great banquet on his [Christ's] birthday. It is only sinners [like Pharaoh or Herod] who make great rejoicings over the day in which they were born into this world."—*Catholic Encyclopedia, 11th ed., art: "Natal Day."*

HOW DID CHRISTMAS GET INTO THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH?—In one brief paragraph, the *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* tells us how the December 25 holiday entered the Christian Church:

"How much the date of the festival depended upon the pagan *Brumalia* [The December 25 celebration], following the *Saturnalia* [an eight-day December 17-24 festival preceding it], and celebrating the shortest day of the year and the 'new sun' . . . cannot be accurately determined. The pagan *Saturnalia* and *Brumalia* were too deeply entrenched in popular custom to be set aside by Christian influence . . . The pa-

gan festival with its riot and merrymaking was so popular that Christians were glad of an excuse to continue its celebration with little change in spirit and in manner. Christian preachers of the West and the Near East protested against the unseemly frivolity with which Christ's birthday was celebrated, while Christians of Mesopotamia accused their Western brethren of idolatry and sun worship for adopting as Christian this pagan festival."—*New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, art: "Christmas."*

Church leaders adopted a pagan holiday, in spite of the protests of some godly local pastors. It was considered idolatry to do this, since it was nothing more than a heathen day of worship. In addition, the day for this worship had been selected in honor of Mithra, the sun god. December 25 was dedicated to the keeping of his birthday. Therefore sincere Christians considered it to be a form of sun worship. The sun had reached its lowest angle in the sky on December 21 (the winter solstice), and the 25th was the first observable day in which it began rising in the noon sky. So December 25 had, for centuries, been celebrated as the "birth of the sun god."

But earnest believers recognized that Christians dare not accept pagan practices or pagan holidays. Those heathen customs could not be found in the Bible, so they ought to be shunned by conscientious Christians.

The Roman world was essentially pagan and many converts to Christianity had come to enjoy those festivities, and did not want to forsake them after baptism into the Christian church. When these half-converted church members rose to leadership positions, they made policy changes in agreement with contemporary heathen customs. And that is how we got Christmas.

"A feast was established in memory of this event [Christ's birth] in the fourth century. In the fifth century the Western Church ordered it to be celebrated forever on the day of the old Roman feast of the birth of *Sol*, as no certain knowledge of the day of Christ's birth existed."—*Encyclopedia Americana (1944 edition), art: "Christmas."*

If the Bible contained no certain knowledge of when Christ was born, then we should not select a definite day on which to worship Him. Instead, we should remain with the only weekly worship day God ever gave us: the Seventh-day Sabbath (Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 20:8-11).

Sol means "sun" in Latin, and was another name for Mithra, the sun god. A strong controversy arose in the Christian church over this latest apostasy by Western church leaders:

"Certain Latins, as early as [A.D.] 354, may have transferred the birthday from January 6th to December 25, which was then a Mithraic feast . . . or birthday of the unconquered sun . . . The Syrians and Armenians accused the Romans of sun worship and idolatry."—*Encyclopedia Britannica*, (1946 ed.).

It was clearly understood by many that this pagan holiday should not be adopted as the memorial day of the birth of Christ:

HOW DID MITHRA WORSHIP BRING THESE THINGS INTO THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH?—In order to understand how and why Christmas came into the Christian Church back in those early centuries, we need to understand the tremendous influence of pagan Mithraism in the first few centuries after the time of Christ—and how Christian leaders decided to adopt the customs of paganism in order to win the battle against it.

The following information is vital, and comes from an earlier study by the present writer:

THE PLANETARY WEEK—The various days of the week were in ancient times called *the first day, the second day, etc.*, for these were their Biblical names. But about the time of Christ they were given

new names. The non-Christians began calling them *the Day of the Sun, the Day of the Moon, etc.*, in honor of different heavenly bodies. *This was known as the "planetary week."*

Each day was ruled over by a different god, but the most important of all gods was given the rule of the first day of the week, with the idea in mind that the first is always more important than that which follows it. The most important of all gods was given the rule over the first of the seven days. It was *his day, the day of the Sun*, and all the worship of the week centered on his day.

Now, although these names for the days of the week were new, the Sun god wasn't, for his worship came from a devotion to that most powerful of natural objects. It was one of the most ancient forms of worship and is represented by solar-disc images found on nearly every continent of our world.

"*Sun worship was the earliest idolatry.*"—*Fausset, Bible Dictionary*, page 666. The Arabians appear to have worshipped it directly without using any statue or symbol (*Job 31:26-27*). Abraham was called out of all this when he went to the promised land. *Ra* was the Sun god in Egypt, and *On (Heliopolis)* was the city of Sun worship (see *the Hebrew of Jer 43:13*). Entering Canaan under Joshua, the Hebrews again met Sun worship. *Baal* of the Phoenicians, *Molech* or *Milcom* of the Ammonites, and *Hadad* of the Syrians, and later the Persian *Mithras* or *Mithra*. *Shemesh* was an especially important Sun god in the Middle East, and, later, in Egypt *Aton* was the god of the Sun Disc. The temple at *Baalbek* was dedicated to Sun worship.

By associating with Sun worshipers, the Israelites frequently practiced it themselves (*Lev 26:30, Isa 17:8*). King Manasseh practiced direct Sun worship (*2 Kg 21:3, 5*). *Josiah* destroyed the chariots that were dedicated to the Sun, and also removed the horses consecrated to Sun worship processions (*2 Kg 23:5, 11-12*). *Sun altars and incense were burned on the housetops for the sun (Zeph 1:5)*. And *Ezekiel* beheld the

"*greatest abomination*": *direct Sun worship at the entryway to the temple of the true God. This was done by facing eastward to the rising sun. (Ezek 8:16-17)*

MITHRA AND THE DAY OF THE SUN—*A* this time there was no particular day that was used for his heathen worship. But then, about the time of Christ, or a little before, the various days of the week were dedicated to specific pagan gods—*dies Solis*—the day of the Sun, *dies Lunae*—the day of the Moon, and so on.

The sacred day of the Jews and Christians was the memorial of Creation—the true Sabbath—the Seventh day—the only Sabbath given in the Bible. The sacred day of paganism was the memorial of the Sun-god—the first day of the week. His day was called, "the Venerable Day of the Sun."

Sunday-keeping never occurred in the Old or New Testament, nor was it commanded. In the time of Christ and the Apostles, the official religion of the Roman government did not have a sacred day, *but gradually Sunday-keeping began to become common among the non-Christian people of the empire.*

The planetary week, each day named after a different planet in the sky, played a very important part in the worship of the sun. By the time of Christ, Sun worship was most powerfully represented in *Mithraism*. Now, *Mithra* (or *Mithras*) was originally an ancient god of Iran, and had been worshipped as the god of strength and war by the descendants of the Persians. But by the first century A.D., he had been transformed, oddly enough, into the *leading Sun god, and the foremost pagan god of any kind, of the western civilized world*. The Romans often called him by a new name, *Sol Invictus*, "the Invincible Sun." *During the early centuries of the Christian Era, Mithra was the greatest pagan rival of Christianity.*

And this was not without a carefully developed plan, for Satan had arranged that this religion would closely approximate in several ways the only true religion in the world—Christianity. It had such features as

CHRISTMAS COUNTERFEITS OF CHRIST

SANTA

CHRIST

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| 1. Comes as a thief in the night..... | Comes in the night - 2 Peter 3:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:2 |
| 2. Comes at midnight..... | "It was at midnight that God chose to deliver His people." EW 285 |
| 3. Dressed in white and red..... | White and red - Revelation 19:13-14; Isaiah 63:1-3 |
| 4. Bringing gifts and rewards..... | Brings rewards - Revelation 22:12 |
| 5. Knows if you've been good or not..... | Revelation 2:23 |
| 6. White, curly hair..... | His [Jesus'] hair was white and curly." LS 65; Revelation 1:14 |
| 7. Sits and talks with your children..... | Talks with children - Matthehw 19:14 |
| 8. Portrayed as coming with reindeer..... | With horses - Revelation 19:11, 14 |
| 9. Comes with a sleigh..... | With chariots - Isaiah 66:15 |
| 10. Lives in the North Pole..... | Lives on the sides of the north - Psalm 48:2 |
| 11. Children tell him what they want..... | Prayers - Matthew 7:7 |
| 12. Santa Claus is not real, but only make-believe: a lie..... | We should not partake in lies - Revelation 22:14-15 |

Old Saint Nick, one of Santa's names, is a name for Satan. See "Old Nick" in the dictionary. Revelation 17:15. "Santa" unscrambled is Satan.

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a dying, rising Saviour, special religious suppers, a special holy day out of the weekly seven—the Sun Day, initial baptism of its converts (in the blood of a slaughtered bull), and other similarities. It counterfeited the religion of the true God more cleverly than any other religion up to that time in history.

Gradually, large numbers of non-Christians began observing Sunday as a holy day in honor of Mithra. He was especially liked by the Roman soldiers, for his worship included athletic feats of skill and "warlike manliness."

Gradually, the worship of the Invincible Sun became even more popular and widespread among the Roman Empire. Emperor Aurelian (270-275 A.D.), whose mother was a priestess of the Sun, made this solar cult the official religion of the empire. His biographer, Flavius Vopiscus, says that the priests of the Temple of the Sun at Rome were called pontiffs. They were priests of their dying-rising Saviour—Mithra, and vicegerents in religious matters next to him.

By this time, the middle of the second century, worldly Christians apparently, from the records in Alexandria and Rome more than anywhere else, in order to be better accepted by their pagan neighbors, began keeping Sunday, and in order to excuse their practice, since it was not Scriptural, they called it "the Lord's Day," even though it was obvious to all that Revelation 1:10 said nothing about Sunday.

Sun worship continued to be the official religion of the empire until Constantine I defeated Licinius in 323, after which it was replaced by Romanized Christianity.

In every case that the present writer can locate, the few men advocating Sunday-keeping prior to 400 A.D.—were the very ones who were introducing pagan heresies to the brethren in the Christian Church. The primary exception were the Roman Bishops, who appeared to be better at legislating these heresies upon the churches, than inventing them.

Along about this time, a youngster was growing up that was destined to powerfully affect the Christian world for all time to come—a boy named Constantine.

CONSTANTINE AND A STATE CHURCH—On the retirement of Emperor Diocletian in A.D. 305, it was an uphill fight among several men for the coveted title of Emperor. Fighting continued on and off from 305 till 323. **But out of it Constantine emerged as the sole ruler of the vast Roman empire.** The crucial battle occurred just north of Rome in October of 312, following which by the *Edict of Milan*, he gave Christianity full legal equality with every other religion in the empire. More favors to the church soon followed.

Then, on March 7, 321, was issued the **first national Sunday Law in history.** This was the first "blue law" to be issued by a civil government. Here is the text of Constantine's Sunday Law Decree:

"Let all judges and townspeople and occupations of all trades rest on the **Venerable Day of the Sun** [Sunday]; nevertheless, let those who are situated in the rural districts freely and with full liberty attend to the cultivation of the fields, because it frequently happens that no other day may be so fitting for ploughing grains or trenching vineyards, lest at the time the advantage of the moment granted by the provision of heaven be lost. Given on the Nones [seventh] of March, Crispus and Constantine being consuls, each of them, for the second time."—*The Code of Justinian, Book 111, title 12, law 3.*

Five additional Sunday Laws were to be issued by Constantine within a very few years to strengthen this, his basic one.

It is to be observed that Constantine's Sunday law was just that—a Sunday law—and nothing more. It was a Sunday law that both Mithraites and compromising Christians could easily accept. **In that law, Christianity is never mentioned.** The day is called "**the Venerable Day of the Sun,**" (*venarabili die solis*). This was the mystical name for the Day of the Sun god. Both the heathen and the Christians well knew this. It is an historical fact that when Constantine issued this first imperial Sunday edict of 321, enforcing the observance of Sunday by the people of the Roman Empire, he was still a worshiper of *Sol Invictus*—"the Invincible Sun," as well as being the *Pontifex Maximus* (supreme pagan pontiff or priest) of Roman heathen worship as the state religion.

But though Constantine meant the law to unite all contending religions into one giant compromising conglomerate, Christian leaders in Rome saw it as a great victory.

CHURCH ENFORCEMENT—Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea (270-338), generally considered to be Constantine's outstanding flatterer in the church, made this remarkable statement:

"All things whatsoever it was duty to do on the [Seventh day] Sabbath, these we [the church] have transferred to the Lord's day [Sunday]."—*Commentary on the Psalms, in Migne, Patrologia Graeca, volume 23, column 1171.*

Commenting on this heaven-daring statement, one historical writer says this:

'Not a single testimony of the Scriptures was produced in proof of the new doctrine. **Eusebius himself unwittingly acknowledges its falsity, and points to the real authors of the change.** 'All things,' he says, 'whatever that it was duty to do on the Sabbath, these we have transferred to the Lord's day.' But the Sunday argument, groundless as it was, served to embolden men in trampling upon the Sabbath of the Lord. **All who desired to be honored by the world accepted the popular festival.**"—*Great Controversy, page 574.*

This was the beginning of something new and ominous within the Christian Church. Rome, itself, the capitol of the

mammoth empire, was more licentious, dissipated, and political, than any other city. The influence of it all had reached to the local Christian church there, and a concern to meet the world's standard, as well as a fascination with power-politics had gripped it.

In 325 A.D. the Council of Nicaea met, at which time the church leaders decreed that all honor the resurrection of Christ by keeping the Easter festival—and only on a certain Sunday of each year. Immediately, following this ruling, Constantine issued an imperial order commanding all Christians everywhere to obey the decree of this council. **Church and State had united, and whenever in history this has happened persecution of religious dissenters has generally followed.** Trouble was ahead for the people of God.

PERSECUTION BEGINS—From A.D. 350, onward, the persecution of Christians by their fellow Christians began.

In order to placate church and government authorities, there were those who attempted to keep both days—Sabbath as well as Sunday holy—thus endeavoring to obey God as well as man, for religious persecution against non-observance of Sunday was growing stronger.

For this reason, Sozomen, a church historian of that time, tells us that many "were assembling together on the Sabbath as well as on the first day of the week, which custom is never observed at Rome or at Alexandria."—*Sozomen, Ecclesiastical History, book 7, chapter 19, in A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, volume 2. [Lk 16:13, Ac 5:39]*

Even at this late date, Rome and Alexandria continued to be the only bulwarks of Sundaykeeping.

The keeping of both days might seem a practical solution, but it wasn't. The Seventh-day Sabbath was the divinely ordained day for the worship of the Creator. God had never changed it. The Sun day was a man-made institution of worship in honor of a pagan god. **To obey both was impossible.** [Matt 6:24]

This was exactly the problem the three Hebrew worthies faced at Dura (Read Daniel 5.) **They were not at this time forbidden to worship the true God. They need only bow down that day with others in a semblance of worship to the false. But, of course, to do so would signify an acceptance of heathen worship.**

And this they could not do. **They would rather die first.** They would rather die than lose something that many in our day consider to be of little value—**The Sabbath of the Fourth Commandment given by the God of Heaven Himself.**

Thus it was that Christmas—the birthday of the sun god,—and Sunday sacredness both came into the Christian Church because early church leaders in Rome and Alexandria, working with government leaders, wanted to unite Christianity with Mithrism—by requiring Mithric practices in the worship of Christ.

MISTLETOE—Where did the mistletoe custom originate? Among the ancients, because mistletoe was considered sacred to the sun, it was used at the December festival of the winter solstice, when the sun was lowest in the noon sky.

Kissing under the mistletoe was thought to be an act of solar worship, empowering the worshipers for still further worship. As this indicates, pagan sun-worship services were very licentious. Temple prostitution was performed during the eight-day Roman *Saturnalia* which immediately preceded the December 25 sun-birth celebration.

WREATHS AND HOLLY—Circular wreaths of evergreen branches (especially holly) were a featured part of the festival. These were formed in the shape of the sun, and represented life which could not exist without sunlight. These wreaths were placed on inside and outside walls during the celebrations. At the time of initiation into the Dionysian mysteries, these were worn by the initiates as fertility symbols. They represented the perpetuity of existence through on-going cycles of life, death, and rebirth.

Holly berries were also considered sacred to the sun-god.

CHRISTMAS TREES—Green trees were cut down, mounted, and then decked with offerings of food and precious gifts to Mithra.

"The use of Christmas wreaths is believed by authorities to be traceable to the pagan customs of decorating buildings and places of worship at the feast which took place at the same time as Christmas. The Christmas tree is from Egypt, and its origin dates from a period long anterior to the Christian Era."—*Frederick J. Haskins, Answers to Questions.*

Evergreens, because of their ability to remain fresh and green all year, symbolized immortality and fertility. Egyptian priests taught that the evergreen tree sprang from the grave of their god Osiris, who, after being murdered by another god, was resurrected through the energy in an evergreen tree.

Even the Bible speaks about the pagan custom:

"Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the heathen . . . For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not."—*Jeremiah 10:2-6.*

YULE LOG—The Yule log did not come from the Bible, nor from Near Eastern paganism. It came from heathen Celtic worship practices in Britain. The Celts also worshiped the sun, and they too had a celebration at the time of the winter solstice. Their December sun festival, called *Julmond*, was taken into Christianity when it came to Britain.

During the Yule festival, evergreen branches were used for decoration, and, after the branches were stripped off, the log was considered sacred to the sun. It was round like the sun and its length symbolized movement, just as the sun was round and moved through the sky. (All this may sound ridiculous, but paganism always is.)

The family would, each year, go out and specially select a nice round tree from which to cut the yule log. When burned it sent out heat, just as the sun-god burned and sent out heat.

SANTA CLAUS—St. Nicholas is thought to be a fine, old saint in the church, but not so. It is true that there may have been a Nicholas, bishop of Myra, who lived in the fourth century and was said to have helped the poor. But Santa Claus was named after another "old Nick."

The legends of Santa Claus are quite similar to those of the ancient Egyptian god, Bes. Bes was a short rotund god who was said to give gifts to children. They were told he lived in the far north, where he spent most of the year making toys for them.

The Roman God, Saturn, was similar—and probably copied from Bes. He too was said to live in the northernmost part of the world, making gifts for children who were good. The Romans said he was the one who, each December, brought them the gift of the new year.

The name "*Santa Claus*" and "*Kriss Kringle*" do not go as far back into history. "*Santa Claus*" is a corruption of the Dutch "*Sant Nikolaas*" (Sant-Ni-Klaus), and "*Kriss Kringle*" is from the German "*Christ Kindl*" or "*Christ Child*." So we have here a counterfeit Christ.

Parents punish their children for telling falsehoods, then tell them this big one in December! Later, when their children are grown, they wonder why they question the existence of God.

Teach your children about Jesus Christ, their best Friend, their only Saviour, and the only One who can really bring them the gifts they need. Do not waste time telling them myths, lest, when they grow older, they will not believe the realities you tell them of.

CHRIST'S MASS—"Christmas" means "Christ's Mass." This is a special Roman Catholic mass performed on December 25. It must be attended by the faithful, under penalty of mortal sin for not doing so. At this mass—as at every other,—Christ is offered by the priest in a wafer. The people are to worship this wafer as the true body, blood, mind, and soul of Jesus Christ!

One of the most recent Vatican statements on this reveals that this worship of a piece of bread remains unchanged:

"There should be no doubt in anyone's mind that all the faithful ought to show to this most holy sacrament [the communion wafer] the worship which is due to the true

God; as has always been the custom of the Catholic Church. Nor is it to be adored any the less because it was instituted by Christ to be eaten."—*Vatican II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents.*

This Vatican II statement reaffirms the doctrinal statement made in 1648 at the Council of Trent (Session 13: *Decree on the Eucharist*, chap. 5, Denz. 878, 1648).

SHOULD WE THEN GIVE PRESENTS?—The pagan Romans exchanged food, small statues of gods, and trinkets to one another during the winter festival. The church in adopting the custom, declared that it was to be done on December 25.

"The interchange of presents between friends is alike characteristic of Christmas and the *Saturnalia*, and must have been adopted by Christians from the pagans, as the admonition of Tertullian plainly shows."—*Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 12, pp. 153-155.

Should we today give gifts to our friends and to those who need them? Yes, it is well to do this all through the year,—especially to the needy. But our choicest gifts should be brought to Christ. For that we have a Biblical example:

"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea . . . and when they [the wise men] came into the house, they . . . fell down, and worshipped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh."—*Matthew 2:1-11.*

Give Him the best you have; give Him your life. Dedicate all you have to Him, to be used in His service. Read the Bible daily and obey its commands through the enabling grace of Christ. Only then can you have genuine happiness.

But let not ancient paganism select the day on which you will worship God. The weekly, Bible Sabbath was given as the day appointed us on which to worship Him. If we want to have happy gatherings with our loved ones, that is good. But let us not copy the heathen in doing it.

"Take heed to thyself, that thou be not snared by following them . . . that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise. Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God: for every abomination to the Eternal, which He hateth, have they done unto their gods."—*Deuteronomy 12:30-31.*

"In vain, do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."—*Matthew 15:9.*

It is obeying the Inspired Word of God—the Bible,—keeping the Sabbath He gave us (Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 20:8-11), and giving our lives in His service that we become worshipers of the Living God. That is what pleases Him, and we would rather please Him than do anything else. He has been so good to us all our lives. In Him we live and move and have our being, and only through Him can we be saved