

THE VICTORY OVER THE BEAST

How to Protect Yourself Against Satan's Identity Theft

by

Ervin K. Thomsen, D.Min.

Healing Stream Ministries
Loma Linda, CA 92354

Website: <http://www.streamofhealing.org/>

E-mail: info@streamofhealing.org

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Background for Seventh-day Adventist readers: In 1888 the Seventh-day Adventist Church held a General Conference in which the subject of salvation by faith alone was most prominently discussed. Many rejoiced in their new understanding of the grace of God, whereas others saw little reason for all the excitement about this, because, they claimed, they had always believed in salvation by grace. In the years since its founding in 1861, the church had emphasized its distinctive doctrines – the Sabbath, the sanctuary, the Ten Commandments, the nature of man in death et cetera. Furthermore, to many the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-12 was more an exposure of the heresies of the Babylon and the beast than a message of salvation by grace. And anything diluting this emphasis had to be solidly resisted.

About two years following this event, someone wrote Ellen White, one of the church's founders, inquiring if this teaching of justification by faith alone was really the third angel's message. She replied, that the message of justification by faith alone was indeed "*the third angel's message in verity.*" (*Review & Herald*, April 1, 1890). In her writings she also wrote extensively about the cruciality of Christ's imputed righteousness (justification) to radically transform the life of the believer.

"The thought that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, not because of any merit on our part, but as a free gift from God, is a precious thought. The enemy of God and man is not willing that this truth should be clearly presented; for he knows that if the people receive it fully, his power will be broken." *The Faith I Live By*, p. 111).

Though the terms "justification" or "justify" and its derivatives do not occur anywhere in the exact wording of Revelation 14:9-12, you will, nevertheless, find the concepts of justice, judgment, and justification permeating the entirety of the three angels' messages. Through this in-depth study of Revelation 14:6-12, it is my hope that you will discover that the message of God's grace is solidly embedded in this apocalyptic passage, and that this message is in full accord with the words of Paul when concerning justification by faith alone he wrote "*that He [God] might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus*" (Romans 3:26).

"And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God" (Revelation 15:1,2).

What is the victory over the beast? And what is the meaning of his image, his number and his name? Some people have tried to decode these symbols by newspaper headlines or by references to such things as – UPC labels, electronic chip implants in the brain or the hand, supercomputers watching over us all, alertness for any number [including Social Security numbers] with the digits 666. The only sure way of decoding these prophetic symbols is to let the Bible be its own interpreter. This is a method of decoding that cannot fail.

Decoding Revelation

Sometimes the study of the Book of Revelation is like looking at the various "transparency-overlays" of an anatomy textbook, showing the multiple systems of the human body – skeletal, circulatory, digestive, neurological etc. Perhaps up to this point in time

your study of Revelation has consisted of studying only the “prophetic/historical” overlay. Without disregarding this overlay, your study of this book can be tremendously amplified if you are willing to look at other “overlays” such the personal/experiential overlay, the Old Testament overlay, and above all, the Christo-centric overlay. As you do so, you will gain a renewed appreciation for the sufficiency and completeness of Christ’s redemptive work, not just for the world, but also for every area of your own life.

Here are some common-sense methods to help you decode the symbols of Revelation in a Biblically responsible way:

- Always focus on the centrality of the person of Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:1). Discern in every symbol its relationship to the Savior and His plan of redemption as revealed in the great controversy between Christ and Satan.
- Let Scripture interpret Scripture. While it may be tempting to match news headlines with Bible texts, rely rather on patiently comparing Scripture with Scripture. Let the Old Testament interpret the New Testament. Someone has said, “the New Testament is in the Old concealed, and the Old Testament is in the New revealed.” Study closely all the interwoven threads from Old Testament history, the sanctuary and the temple services, the theme of God’s covenant, and much, much more.
- Ask yourself - how might early Christians in the first three to four centuries after Christ have understood the Book of Revelation? Many of the prophecies, for which we now see specific fulfillments by looking in the rearview mirror of past history, had not yet been fulfilled. Is it possible that these people saw things in Scripture that we do not as readily see today?
- Discern the “literary structure” of the passage as you see the relationship of the individual parts of this Bible passage to the larger whole of the Book of Revelation as well as the rest of Scripture. The Book of Revelation is not a seemingly haphazard collection of bits and pieces of Biblical material. There is a definite order and progression in the development of its various themes. Look upon Revelation as a tapestry of intricately woven threads that, with patient appreciation and study, will reveal a most stunning picture of Jesus Christ.
- Understand God’s covenant. The covenant is like a river running through the entire Bible, sometimes you see it, and sometimes you don’t, but it is always there. When you see the relationship of the three angels’ messages to God’s covenant purposes, you’ll know so much clearer God’s purpose for your own life.
- Study God’s covenant appeals to people down through history. See how He yearns for His people to return to a relationship with Him. His very first appeal was His cry in the Garden of Eden, “*Adam, where are you?*” (Genesis 3:9). These appeals and warnings, found throughout Scripture, culminate in the three angels’ messages in the Book of Revelation. In addition to the warnings about the impending judgments on Babylon and the beast, do not forget the final tender appeal, “*And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely*” (Revelation 22:17).
- See the Big Picture. In the Book of Revelation God open the doors of heaven so we can see into heaven’s open courtroom and understand things on earth from God’s heavenly perspective. Do not become so lost in the details of this books that you fail to see the forest for the trees.

- Try looking at the three angels messages as God's prescriptions for your own sin-disease. These messages are not just warnings for you to give to others about impending last-day events, but they also contain God's diagnosis and His prescriptions for your own sin-disease. In order for you to win the victory over the beast and to develop immunity to Satan's last-day deceptions, it is a must for you to take the entirety of the three angels' messages as God's medicine for your own life today.

There is no doubt that the symbols of both Babylon and the beast refer historically to the apostasies of last-day religious movements, temporarily allied with the state, as they seek to deceive and persecute God's faithful people on earth just before the second coming of Jesus. But is your knowledge of prophetic fulfillments of these last-day powers all that is necessary for you to make it through a future time of trouble? Will such knowledge also help you be an overcomer over sin in your own life? Will an increasing alertness to impending events really cause you to be ready? I suggest that *to be an overcomer is more dependent on discovering and living out your own identity in Christ rather than on your ability to identify the traits of 'Babylon' and the 'beast' in others. To intimately know and worship Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God is the best antidote to counterfeit worship of the beast.*

The Bible truths discovered in this study are not intended to replace the tried and true last-day historical applications about the beast. These new discoveries are rather intended as amplifications of existing truths for intensely personal and practical applications. How could you be an overcomer if you were only alert to the deceptions of the beast in history and world politics, but you had failed to discern the "beast principle" and its possible operations in your own life?

Identity Theft – It Is Everywhere in Scripture

"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10 NKJV). Satan's ultimate purpose is to kill and destroy. But to accomplish this he first steals one of your greatest personal assets – your identity. Modern-day criminals no longer need to resort to violence, robbery or burglary to gain access to your money. By obtaining select data about you (i.e. Social Security numbers, drivers license numbers, bank account numbers), these thieves can silently, and without your knowledge, siphon off your monies through identity theft. Our enemy, Satan, works in a similar manner. He has engaged in identity theft, often undetected, since the beginning of time. While thousands of Christians may be on high alert to the more obvious last-day prophetic fulfillments of the beast power, is it possible that the enemy right now may be engaging in a most subtle fraud of stealing your identity – and you were the last to know?

Since the very beginning Satan has engaged in identity theft because He knows that the theft your identity is crucial to his program of leading you away from the worship of Jesus Christ. Identity theft is Satan's most successful program to tempt and deceive you. In spiritual identity theft Satan does overtly tempt you so do evil, but he will tempt you to do good things in order to establish an identity for yourself. "Satan does not tempt to gross sin; the one thing he tempts to is putting myself as master instead of God" (Oswald Chambers).

- In heaven Satan wanted to assume God's identity as he said, *"I will be like the most High"* (Isaiah 14:14).
- In the Garden of Eden Satan masqueraded as a serpent. In his temptations of Eve he sought to cast doubt on God's identity. Between the lines you can hear him saying that he, Satan, could help Eve do a better job in running her life than God was doing. He told her that she could transcend her own flawed identity (a lie) evidenced by the restriction not to eat of the tree. Immense possibilities were before her; she did not need God for she could be god. (Genesis 3:5).
- In the wilderness temptations of Jesus identity theft was at the core of every temptation in the words *"if you are the Son of God..."* On the surface, Satan was not tempting Jesus to do something inherently bad, for it is really not a sin to eat when you are hungry, or to seek publicity for your work when you come from an obscure town like Nazareth. At the core of his deceptions, Satan was trying to get Jesus to doubt His own identity, an identity clearly evidenced when at His baptism He had heard these words from His heavenly Father, *"This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased"* (Luke 3:22). The enemy tempted Jesus to establish His identity by something He would do, rather than trusting in God's truth about himself.
- In the Sabbath service in the synagogue of Nazareth identity theft was again on the enemy's agenda. The worshipers there without a doubt knew Jesus as the "carpenter's son" (a term of contempt and derision). Jesus then made the announcement, based on Isaiah 61, of His identity as the Messiah. Moments later He challenged their own identity as God's chosen people by noting that God not only worked in but also worked outside Israel. This challenge was met by an outburst of fury and wrath as the worshipers in the synagogue attempted to kill Jesus.
- The identity of Jesus is crucial to His work and the work of His followers. The confession of the identity of Jesus as the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:16) is the rock on which He builds His church.
- As Jesus hung on Calvary's cross Satan again attempted to challenge His identity with the words *"if you are the King of the Jews, save Yourself"* (Luke 23:37).
- Our salvation rests on our confession of the identity of Jesus Christ for *"if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved"* (Romans 10:9)

It is of interest to note that in the demonic world no one questions the identity of Jesus Christ. In the synagogue in Capernaum the man with the spirit of an unclean demon cried out, *"Let us alone! What have to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are – the Holy One of God!"* Fallen angels tremble when believers invoke the name of Jesus, for in that name resides the authority to set people free from the bondage of Satan.

Satan's Attempt to Steal Jesus' Identity

Through some inspired caricatures, the Book of Revelation depicts Satan's counterfeit challenges to the identity of Jesus. Look for a moment at these comparisons of the Biblical material between the Lamb and the beast. The beast is truly an anti-Christ, a substitute or replacement for the Messiah.

The Lamb

- Receives authority from God
- Seven horns
- Seven eyes
- Accused of blasphemy
- Was, is, and is to come
- Ministers for 3 ½ years
- Sustains the saints
- Is slain
- And resurrected
- Gives freedom to followers
- Worshipers of the Lamb rest
- Sends Holy Spirit to lead people to worship the Lamb
- Reproduces 'image of Christ' in followers
- Seals followers in forehead
- Has a bride - Jerusalem

The Beast

- Receives authority from the dragon
- Seven heads and ten horns
- Ten crowns on head,
- Has names of blasphemy
- Was, is not, and yet is
- Continues for 42 months
- Persecutes the saints
- Receives a deadly wound
- Deadly wound is healed
- Leads to captivity
- Worshipers have no rest
- False prophet leads people to worship the beast
- Reproduces 'image to beast' in followers
- Marks followers in forehead or hand
- Has a harlot - Babylon

The enemy Satan is essentially an impostor who presents himself as someone who tries to substitute his own work for the saving work of Jesus Christ. The beast of Revelation is really part of Satan's pseudo-trinity consisting of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. This pseudo-trinity counterfeits the work of the true Trinity consisting of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. To worship the beast is like engaging a law-school graduate, who has failed the State Bar examination, to represent you in court. To trust in the beast is like asking an unlicensed physician to perform surgery on you. To worship the beast is to trust in anyone or anything other than in the person of Jesus Christ to save you. All such saviors operate without heaven's authority.

These inspired cartoons highlight through Biblical symbolism not only Satan's deceptions, but they are also caricatures of your own life when you try to do Christ's work for Him, that is to save yourself.

Sin as Identity Theft

The primary purpose of Satan is not just to get you to sin, but it is to do it in such a manner that sin masquerades as goodness, and wrong appears as right. The enemy knows your identity can be the key to access and destroy your life from the inside out.

- Your personal identity is like the operating system of a computer. A computer operating system can crash through a hidden virus is implanted in its operating system. Satan wants your life to crash, but he wants to do it in a way that makes you believe that everything in your life is running smoothly when in actuality his hidden virus is doing its imperceptible and destructive work without your knowledge.
- Your personal identity is also like the immune system of your body. A weakened immune system opens the door to the intrusions of all kinds of viruses and infections. The ability of overcome sin rests not so much on your alertness to overcome individual sins, one here and one there, but it is more dependent on the health of your spiritual immune system. The health of your spiritual immune system resides primarily in your identity. Only the gospel of Jesus Christ truly enhances your spiritual immune system.

We may strengthen our spiritual immune system by God's truths, letting them replace the lies of Satan.

God's truth is – that who you are [identity] determines what you do.
Satan's lie is – that what you do determines who you are [identity].

Your identity resides in those traits about you by which you are personally known. Birthdays are celebrations of that special uniqueness which resides in each one of us. It is a primary task of each parent to transmit to their children a genuine sense of identity and worth, a worth that rests securely on the estimate God has placed on every person.

God's truth is that a genuine sense of self-worth and identity equals what God says about you.

Satan's lie is that your sense of self-worth and identity equals your performance + other people's opinions about you.

In all of us there is a desire for approval, acceptance and significance placed there by our Creator. He wants us to know that a secure sense of personal significance is found only in a relationship with Him. He wants us to know who we are. But have you ever heard of certain people, not just youth, who say, "I need to discover who I really am," only to embark on a journey of possible disappointment and disillusion as if their personal uniqueness rests on having "been there and done that." God's purpose is for us to discover not just who we are, but whose we are. Our origin and destiny resides in the One who had us in His heart before the world began.

The Mark of the Beast – Satan's Identity Theft

The Book of Revelation describes the victory over the beast as a victory over "his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name" (Revelation 15:2 NKJV). These words – *image*, *name*, and *number* – hint at a similar sequence of words found in the first table of the Ten Commandments, which speak about worship that acknowledges God's identity as expressed through His *image* (the 2nd commandment), His *name* (the 3rd commandment) and His *number* (the 4th commandment). Could these words, the *image*, *name*, and *number* of the beast, possibly be an inspired literary pun used by the Apostle John to describe the devil's agenda to steal your identity? And is it not also possible that in the first four of the Ten Commandments, God has placed a built-in anti-virus protection system against the attempts of the enemy to destroy your identity, your personal operating system?

Whether you serve the Creator God or substitutes for Him, who or what you worship will imprint your life with their own identity – their own image, name, and number. Those who have won the victory over the beast have overcome the enemy's seductions of identity theft by basing their identity on the image, name, and number of their God. You will find the signs of their God-given identity in the first four of the Ten Commandments.

- The preamble to the Ten Commandments consists these words, “*I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt.*” (Exodus 20:1). In other words, our identity is based on who God is and His redemptive action. The God who delivered us, so loves us that He wants us to find our identity in Him. For this reason He gave us to Ten Commandments to protect us against a false make-believe identity found in our own pursuits of the lusts of our own hearts.

Unless we see the Ten Commandments in their covenant context, we may look upon the keeping of these commandments as behaviors to obtain merit with God as we hope to impress both Him and others with our own goodness and sincerity. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Ten Commandments were rather given as precious principles from our Creator designed to preserve inside of us a secure identity in our God. Look at each of the first four commandments from that perspective:

- 1st commandment: You shall have no other gods before me [Exclusive worship]. Your identity is found in the worship of **one God**, the One who acted to save you. The pursuits of other gods will divide your affections and damage your life.
- 2nd commandment: You shall not make a graven **image**. Obviously this commandment has a far deeper meaning than the adoration of images and idols. The problem with idols (substitutes for the living and true God) is that we always make such in our own image. All substitutes for God leads to a lowering of ourselves from our exalted position of having already been created in the image of God. To learn more about the origin of “beast worship” read Romans 1:20-32. Your identity is never found in anything you do or make (image-making), but it is found in letting God express His image through your life.
- 3rd commandment: You shall not take the **name** of the Lord your God in vain. This commandment is about far more than the utterance of profanity. It is about guarding the name/s of God from abuse by our own attempts to play god. It is also about protecting others from our attempts to control them through the use (or abuse) of God’s names. To worship God’s name is to rely on sufficiency of His many glorious names as the source of our identity, security, and protection.
- 4th commandment: the **number** ‘7.’ “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy; six days you shall labor and do all your work but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall not do any work...” (see Exodus 20:8-11). To worship Him as Creator is far more than the ceasing to work on the 7th day. To worship God as Creator is to let go of fear (Isaiah 43:1,2) because we believe that our identity in Him is secure because HE created us. In His number “7,” God expresses His rating and grading of us in Creation as “very good” (Genesis 1:31). In His number “7” He also expresses His redemptive rating of you as deeply loved, fully forgiven, and absolutely complete in Jesus Christ. Question: Do you agree with God’s rating of you as expressed in His number “7”? What rating would you give God for having thus rated you in Jesus Christ? A six or a seven?

The Work of God – Covenant Salvation The Work of the Beast – Contract Salvation

The preamble to the Ten Commandments expresses that our salvation is based on God's covenant. He saved us because He wanted to. He loved us, not because we were lovable, but because He is love. What is the everlasting gospel? It is the good news about the everlasting covenant, the intention of God's heart before the world began, to save all who would come to Him by trusting in Christ's death as sufficient atonement for their sins. The everlasting covenant is the good news about God's saving intention, initiative, and invitation to do us good. Even before you were born, He had you in mind. He has always wanted to save you. The covenant tells us that long before the cross was erected on Calvary's hill, a cross was already erected in the heart of God. "So surely as there never was a time when God was not, so surely there never was a moment when it was not the delight of the eternal mind to manifest His grace to humanity" (E.G. White, The Faith I Live By, p. 76).

You have no doubt heard the saying, 'God helps those who help themselves!' This makes it sound as if your salvation is a do-it-yourself project in which God only comes to your help when you have first done your part, very much like your fulfilling of the terms of a contract. Salvation as a contract has the appearance of being an utterly fair arrangement. There is only one problem: it doesn't work because God does not save us according to a contract, but according to His covenant. When you understand the difference between 'contract salvation' and 'covenant salvation' – it can make a life-changing and positive difference in your life.

'Contract salvation' is legalism. Legalism is the attempt to base our salvation on something that is an illegal basis for salvation – trusting in our own works as being sufficient to earn us salvation. In 'covenant salvation' we make no appeals based on our own conduct, but we base all our appeals on the ground of God's covenant faithfulness. Notice the use of the words 'according' or 'for your sake' in the following prayers:

- *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin (Psalm 51:1).*
- *O Lord, according to all Your righteousness, I pray, let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain (Daniel 9:16).*
- *Vindicate me, O LORD my God, according to Your righteousness (Psalm 35:24).*
- *He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us (Psalm 103:10-12).*
- *"Do not abhor us, for Your name's sake; do not disgrace the throne of Your glory. Remember, do not break Your covenant with us" (Jeremiah 14:21).*

The work of the beast is essentially to break God's covenant by causing us to believe that salvation is like a 'let's make a deal.' The beast attacks God's covenant, because he blasphemes God's name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven (Revelation 13:6). The attack of the beast on God's tabernacle is centered on the Ark of the Covenant where God saves us in a just way – a salvation based on the spilt blood of the Lamb. The blasphemy of the beast consists in suggesting to believers that the right-

eousness of Christ at the right hand of the Father and their position there as seated with Him in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6) is merely legal fiction.

- Contract salvation says, God helps those who help themselves. Covenant salvation says, God helps those who cannot help themselves. Contract salvation can be like a 50/50 arrangement, or even a 90/10 proposition.
- Contract salvation always appears as reasonable and logical, but it is actually an illegal way of obtaining salvation because it bypasses the death and resurrection of Christ, His substitutionary work in dying for our sins.
- In contract salvation the focus is on ourselves and our works. In covenant salvation the focus is on the Lamb, Jesus Christ. In covenant salvation, God's people give Him these seven things, "*Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory and blessing*" (Revelation 5:12).
- Covenant salvation causes us to sing with joy as we join with the witnesses in heaven's courtroom in giving our testimony about our identity as residing in Christ. "*You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals, for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God*" (Revelation 5:9,10).
- In contract salvation we will always wonder if we have done enough and if we are good enough. In covenant salvation we will celebrate the completeness of our salvation, not as based on our own accomplishments, but on the accomplishments of God in Christ.

The Ten Commandments Protect God's Covenant and Our Identity in Him

Because the worship of any idol (beast) is essentially idolatry, such worship does not have the security of the features of the covenant designed by God to protect us. Look for a moment at the consequences of living life without the security of God's covenant.

Contract salvation...

[no redemptive action by God]

Worship the beast

Worship the image of the beast

Receive his mark and name

Receive the number of his name

takes away the blessings of the covenant

Rejection of the sufficiency of God's salvation as provided and proclaimed in His covenant

leads to the worship of other gods by which we try to fill our needs because we do not trust that one God is enough. We, therefore, create other gods (substitutes) to do a better job than we believe He is doing.

All such substitutes are made in our own image.

Without trusting in God's name, we cannot experience a secure identity and His protection for our lives

and this leads us to a life of bondage and perpetual unrest.

By our acceptance of the terms of God's covenant we also thereby also protect the covenant "signs" of one God, His image, His name, and His number as expressed in the

Ten Commandments. This is how God writes His law in our minds and hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-33).

To overcome the image, name, and number of the beast is to receive the image, name, and number of our covenant-keeping Creator-Redeemer God. In Revelation the wicked receiving the “mark of the beast” are contrasted with righteous, who receive “the seal of God.” Either you receive your identity from God, or you will work on building your own identity. A God-given identity is called the “seal of God,” whereas a self-generated and idol-based identity is called the “mark of the beast.”

The Worship of the Beast at Mt. Sinai

How could the Israelites so shortly after personally witnessing God’s mighty deliverance at the Red Sea turn to the worship of another god (the golden calf – a beast)? The prolonged absence of Moses gave them a make-believe justification for making a god they could see, touch, and handle. We wonder in amazement how the people could turn to the worship of another god after all God had done for them. Idolatry is not just a sin among primitive people in third-world countries, but is it is still the major sin of Christians in civilized nations.

Consider for a moment these observations on the pervasiveness of idolatry.

- Idolatry is when anyone or anything receives more glory, honor and praise than God and His Son, Jesus Christ.
- An idol is a picture of a god as we fashion Him to be. It is man making a god in man’s image.
- Idols are our man-made replacements for the living Creator-God, created in our minds when we do not believe that our God is doing His work.
- Idolatry is the attempt to control our lives by a god, custom-designed in our own image, to do the work in our lives, which we think God is not doing.
- Idolatry occurs when we stop trusting that our God is BIG enough to handle anything.
- Covetousness is idolatry (Colossians 3:6; Ephesians 5:5).
- Idolatry is trusting people, possessions, position, and power to do for us what only God can do.

Here is how idolatry works in our lives. This is also the sequence of how idolatry worked in the lives of the Israelites at the foot of Mt. Sinai.

1. Discontent with what God is doing in your life; it may be motivated by anger and hurt fueled by “*if only...*” thoughts!
2. Covetousness toward what others have or are and which you think you deserve.
3. You design a god in the thoughts of your mind who will do a better job than the Creator-God.
4. You give the idol power and authority to do its work.
5. You sacrifice others to your idol.
6. The idol you created to control and improve your life now controls you, and you become just like your idol (beast).

Idolatry is always based on lies about God. The lies of idolatry are...

- God is not adequate for your life!
- The identity with which He created you is flawed and incomplete.
- There is something lacking in your life, and it is God's fault.
- You can improve your life by looking to yourself.
- You don't need God. You can be god.

The power of idolatry lies not so much in the idol itself, but more in the thoughts (lies) we tell ourselves about our idol. We are essentially investing our idols (beasts) with tasks they are unable to perform. For a complete description of the downward spiral of idolatry read Romans 1:18-32. Idolatry is the pursuit of the lusts of our hearts with no regard for how it may destroy us or damage the lives of others. The more we try to control our lives, the more we lose control because our idol now controls us.

Idolatry is a rejection of the identity with which God has created us. We reject Him as all-sufficient for our lives. We reject His image in us, and pursue a course of personal-image making to discover who we are. We reject His name by trying to make a name for ourselves, and thus we end up with God's rating of our lives as a "six" (the number of a man) rather than accepting the completeness of God's amazing grace, love and acceptance as expressed in the number "seven."

The Covenant Seal in the First Four Commandments

What is the seal of God? *"Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples"* (Isaiah 8:16). The seal of God is about receiving our identity from God, and not from our idols or our performance of good works. The seal of God is about the secure identity that is ours in God's covenant. What is the 'covenant seal' as found in the Ten Commandments? That seal is our identity as found in ONE God, His image, His name, and His number.

- Why does God command exclusive worship? It is not because He is afraid of the competition, but it is because we were designed for one God. Worshiping other gods will only damage us. As a matter of fact, there is no competition because there are no other gods anywhere in the universe. Such gods only exist in the thoughts and minds of those who are not satisfied in a relationship with the one and only God there is. God is jealous for us, because He knows that our pursuit of other gods will only damage our lives.
- Why does God command that we do not make substitutes or images? It is because He has already created us in His own image with the ability to think, reason, love, and have relationships with Him and others. The worship of such substitutes damages and eventually destroys His image in us, given to us at creation when we were created in His image. Those who worship worthless idols themselves become worthless. Winston Churchill once said, "We shape our buildings, and our buildings shape us." The same is true for our idols.
- Why does God command us not to take His name in vain? Is it because He is ego-centrally supersensitive to the use of His name by others? Or, is it because He has

already given us a name and an identity, and He does not want us to damage and diminish our God-given identity as found in His covenant. We are His people who are called by His name (2 Chronicles 7:14). In the 3rd commandment God appeals for us to rely on the power, protection, access, and identity found in His many glorious names. When we abuse His name/s we also thereby damage His glory. His glory He will not share with another. Thus God is more glorified when we are most satisfied in Him.

- Why does God command us to rest on the 7th day Sabbath? Is it because He wants to interrupt our schedules with an arbitrary demand that we worship Him on this particular day or else He will have a bad day? Or, is it because He designed us to experience freedom from the rat race of work, emancipation from having to do all the things we think we have to do? Think of the Sabbath commandment, not as a negative command, but as a positive injunction that sets us free to experience the joys of our highest calling as sons and daughters of the Heavenly King. Our highest calling is not work, but a relationship with our Maker. Let the abstaining from work be a celebration of the fact that we are not saved by our works, but we are saved by His work. The Sabbath commandment is really not a hard commandment. After all, which is easier – to work or to rest?

The Blessings of Covenant Salvation

When we see the commandments of God, not as demands for behaviors to earn our salvation, but as commandments to protect the blessings of the secure identity He has already given us in His covenant, will we not be able to say, “*Your testimonies are wonderful; therefore my soul keeps them,*” and “*O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day* (Psalm 119:129, 97)? When we meditate on His commandments, will we not learn to detect the lies of the enemy as we embrace the truths of our great and gracious God?

The Ten Commandments contain God’s gracious provisions to guard us from the foolishness of pursuing a false and make-believe identity based on our own works.

The Covenant in the Commandments	God’s truth	Satan’s lies	Sealed or marked?
<i>I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt</i>	Salvation is a gift	Earn your salvation	
<i>1. You shall have no other gods before me</i>	God is enough!	God is <u>not</u> enough! You need more than one god.	

The Covenant in the Commandments	God's truth	Satan's lies	Sealed or marked?
<i>2. You shall not make a graven <u>image</u>... you shall not bow down and serve them...</i>	You are enough! Let your life be an expression of His image in you. (right image)	You are <u>not</u> enough! Reject the identity (image) in which you were created and seek to establish an identity based on your own works. (wrong image)	Whose <u>image</u> ?
<i>3. You shall not take the <u>name</u> of the Lord your God in vain.</i>	Find in God's name your security, protection and identity (secure identity)	Use God's name to bolster your insecure identity and to control others (damaged identity)	Whose <u>name</u> ?
<i>4. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy... The <u>seventh</u> day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God.</i>	Completeness Discover your identity in your Creator and Redeemer. Rest	Incompleteness Discover your identity in yourself and your own works No rest	Whose <u>number</u> ?

To win the victory over the beast, his image, name and number is to be sealed with the identity that comes from God's special election of us as His very own covenant people, bearing His image, name, and number. To overcome the image, name and number of the beast is to reject all of Satan's attempts to steal our secure identity in Christ. If you build your identity on what you do, you will always live with doubts and lack of assurance, because you can never be sure that what you have done is good enough. Build your identity on what God has done, both in Creation and Redemption, and you will experience solid assurance and immense joy as you delight yourself in being His very own and special child.

The Number of the Beast and the Number of God

The number 'six' is the number of man, because it never seems to refer to God's work, but it rather points to man's work. Here are some of the ways in which the numbers 'six' and 'seven' are used in the Bible:

- Man was created on the sixth day.
- Man crucified the Creator on the sixth day.
- The dimensions of Nebuchadnezzar's golden image were sixty by six cubits (Daniel 3:1).
- The Samaritan woman had been in six relationships (five of them marriages and the sixth was not even a marriage) when she met man number '7' – Jesus Christ, who totally transformed her life.
- The rich man in the bosom of Abraham (Luke 16:19-31) mentioned that he had five brothers he wanted to warn. So there were actually a total of six brothers.
- At the wedding feast in Cana there were six waterpots, representing man's work to make that wedding feast a special event, but it was the presence of Jesus that brought genuine joy to this event.

The number 'seven' never seems to refer symbolically to our accomplishments and works but rather points to the perfection of Christ's work for us as symbolized in the 7thness of the Sabbath.

- The 7thness of the Sabbath reminds us that at our creation God expressed His joyful satisfaction in saying about us, It is very good!
- Jesus Christ rested in the seventh-day in the tomb following the completion of His atoning work on Calvary's cross.
- The 7thness of the Sabbath symbolizes that just as God rested from His works in creation, so we can rest from our futile work in trying to find peace of mind and rest for our souls (Matthew 11:28-30).
- The 7thness of the Sabbath expresses our contentment and gratitude for God's perfect gift. However, to believe that our Sabbath keeping in any way adds merit to salvation is to make an idol of our Sabbathkeeping. Through such idolatry we make Sabbath-keeping drudgery and a chore. When the Sabbath becomes an idol, rather than rejoicing in the special identity God has given us, we will like focus on where others are wrong in not keeping the Sabbath in the right way and on the right day. While the license plate frame, which says, 'The 7th day is the Sabbath,' contains truth, it is not very likely to attract others to the joys of relationship with Jesus Christ.
- The 7thness of the Sabbath is a celebration of the covenant blessings given to us both at creation and through redemption: His image, name, and number. On the Sabbath we celebrate the source of our identity because we were created in **His image**. We remember **His name** – the Lord your God, and that name is the source of our identity, our protection, and a promise of His sufficiency for our every need expressed in His many glorious names, and we enter into the completeness of **His number**, the 7thness of His perfect creation. Only in Him we can experience perfect peace, rest, and contentment.

All our attempts to find the life we've always wanted become exercises in futility, because no matter how hard we work (666 – the number of a man), even though we are close to achieving a perfect "seven" we always come short of the assurance of joy of the perfection He offers us through a relationship with Him. When God rates us with His number "seven," that number always expresses His work for us, which is His gift to us. Thus in the song of Moses and the Lamb the redeemed also give God a rating of

'seven' in their worship: "*Great and marvelous are Your works. Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints*" (Revelation 15:3).

The Beast Principle as Exhibited in King Nebuchadnezzar's Life

The Book of Daniel provides a stunning exhibit of the "beast principle" at work in the life of King Nebuchadnezzar. There you see the infectious process of the "beast virus" in the entire life and personality of the proud monarch as he portrayed the traits of the beast.

- Though God through the prophet Daniel had designated him as the "head of gold" (Daniel 2), yet this proud monarch was unable to accept God's word as true about himself. He looked to his own performance plus the approval of others for a secure identity.
- Nebuchadnezzar erected a golden image whose dimensions were "sixty by six cubits" (Daniel 3:1). [the number of the beast]
- Nebuchadnezzar's low self-worth needed the boost of his demand that everyone must bow down and worship the golden image which he had created. [the image of the beast]. In his life Nebuchadnezzar manifested the number "6."
- The golden image became an exhibit of Nebuchadnezzar's own image – an insecure identity manifesting anger, force, and control of others – the traits of the beast. [the name of the beast.
- Nebuchadnezzar's need for the approbation and the strokes of others led to abusive and controlling behavior. He could have "no rest" until everyone complied. No exceptions were allowed. And yet he never found that rest.
- The conduct of the three Hebrews shows the "rest principle" at work: Calmly they replied, "Our God is able to deliver us...but if not, let it be known to you that we will not worship the gold image" (Daniel 3:18).
- Nebuchadnezzar exhibited his pride and self-sufficiency in his adoration and worship of his own works, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built...by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty" (Daniel 4:30).
- The "beast principle" at work within the proud monarch led to the king becoming a "beast of the field" for seven years (Daniel 4:28-37).

The "beast principle" consisted in the self-worship and self-sufficiency of trusting in his own works. The "beast principle" in the end-time will also lead to a trusting in our own works, self-salvation, as the basis for salvation. It is this internal working of the beast virus, which will thus open our lives to the final deception of the appearance of the anti-christ.

Idolatry As Identity Theft

Idolatry is the attempt to discover our identity in anyone or anything other than our Creator God. Genuine worship is the adoration of the One who saves us according to His goodness and righteousness. Consider for a moment these definitions of worship:

- "Idolatry: trusting people, possessions or positions to do for me what only God can do." - Bill Gothard.

- “Worship is pulling our affections off our idols and putting them on God.” - Tim Keller.
- “Worship is to serve God with our praises and the needs of people with His sufficiency” - Jack Hayford.

All idolatry has its source in covetousness, the breaking of the 10th commandment. Covetousness arises because we are not content with our God – He is not enough! Through such covetousness Satan attempts to steal our identity. His purpose is for us to discover our personal identity apart from God by our own attempts to fulfill all our own desires. The worship of idols is a statement that we are not fully satisfied in the Creator God who made heaven and earth.

Our Creator’s greatest desire for us is that we find our greatest satisfaction in Him, for God is most glorified when we are most satisfied in Him. God wants to express His identity through His own people. He wants to express His image, His name, and His number through those redeemed by His grace, so that if the nations of the world want to discover what God is like, they can just have a look at His people. It is in His people that He will display something of the fullness of His glory, which is His glorious character and His sufficiency for our every need. *“To Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen”* (Ephesians 3:21).

All covetousness is based on a lie, which says: Since God is not who He says He is, and because He is not at this time coming through for you in ways to satisfy the lusts of your heart, you are, therefore, justified in seeking other sources to satisfy your deepest needs.

Our Creator wants us to discover a secure identity. The truth of that identity is that it is who we are which determines what we do. Your search for a secure identity through any of these will never bring you the lasting joy and fulfillment that God desires for you.

Here are some common sources of identity and personal significance:

- What you buy. Where you buy.
- What you drive.
- What you wear – designer labels are preferable to non-name brands.
- Who you hob-nob with.
- Where you vacation.
- Your financial portfolio.
- What church you are a member of.
- What church standards you uphold.
- What position you hold in your church
- What you earn.
- Where you work.
- How much education you obtained.
- What degrees you hold.
- What good works you do in your church, designed to make you look good rather than bringing glory to God.

Isn’t it tragic that we should become so dependent on comparisons with others and what they think of us to find our worth and identity? Rather than becoming engaged in

pursuits to discover “who we are,” discover instead that Your Creator Redeemer God has already told us “whose we are.” So often we try to remake or improve our personal image so that it reflects the “real me,” but we forget that the “real me” is found in a relationship with Him who created us for His own pleasure and who redeemed us at Calvary’s cross at such infinite cost. Why not let the Creator-God be in charge of your image management? Instead of trying to discover ways whereby we can make a name for ourselves, trust rather in all God’s glorious names as the source of our sufficiency and identity.

God wants to express Himself through your life. When you are busy expressing yourself, then you are not revealing God. Idol worship is expressing your own identity, your own ego, making room for “ME”. Whatever forms self-worship may take, it will eventually result in the image, name, and number of your idol (beast) being imprinted in your life.

This means that...

- you will reflect the image of your idol or idols.
- you will make a name for yourself through your idol/s.
- you will seek for satisfaction and contentment (a rating of a ‘seven’ through your idol/s, but you’ll never find it, and God’s rating of you will be the number ‘6.’ The most idols can deliver is a ‘6’ or even a ‘666.’

The Hiding Places of the Beast

When we allow the Bible to be its own interpreter in decoding the Book of Revelation, we will be amazed at all the places where the “beast” is hiding. The symbol of the beast also has applications to personal living that go far beyond its application to last-day historical-prophetic fulfillments of prophecy. How tragic it would be if we were only alert to the beast in history, but we failed to see its inner workings in our own lives. If we want to develop immunity to ALL of the enemy’s last-day deceptions, it is not enough to just gather information about the historical/prophetic beast. We must, above all, discover the “beast principle” wherever it is found – often inside of us, and often without our knowledge or consent.

The ‘beast’ is also a caricature or cartoon of the futility of believing in a false gospel, trusting a replacement savior or an anti-christ, and trusting such an idol (a lesser God) to do the work that only our Creator God can do. An idol is anything, which gets more glory than God.

- Paul describes the results of people’s departure from the worship of the true and living Creator God as reducing God’s glory in their lives into an image of beasts. *“Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things”* (see Romans 1:21-24).

- Peter describes rebellious people as being beasts. *“But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like beasts they too will perish”* (2 Peter 2:11,12).
- When the Israelites quit worshiping Jehovah as their all-sufficient God, they made for themselves a replacement god, an idol, the beast of a golden calf (Exodus 32).
- The results of not accepting the gospel of Jesus Christ, Paul says, caused destructive beastlike behaviors in the churches of Galatia. *“But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that you be not consumed one of another”* (Gal. 5:15).
- Paul described the enemies of the gospel as “dogs” (Philippians 3:1,2).
- People not under God’s control are described as horses and mules. *“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye. Do not be like the horse or like the mule, which have no understanding, which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, else they will not come near you”* (Psalm 32:8,9). The Psalmist instructs us not to trust in the strength of horses, *“A horse is a vain hope for safety; neither shall it deliver any by its great strength”* (Psalm 33:17).
- The beast ‘principle’ is that attitude of mind, which thinks, “I can do it in my own strength, and I don’t need god.” Remember how Nebuchadnezzar’s pride transformed the proud monarch into a beast for seven years (Daniel 4:27,28).

Notice how even in our language we use “beast-language” to describe our hobby-horses, our sacred cows, and our dog-eat-dog attitudes of wanting to be top-dog.

Here’s how you can detect the beast virus in your own life. Ask yourself these questions:

- What kind of person do I become when things do not go my way?
- What is the idol (replacement god) in my life that I try to defend and protect?
- In what ways do I try to control the lives of others in order to accomplish my own purposes?
- Under what circumstances do the traits of the beast (anger, force, threat, coercion, control, pride, intimidation, manipulation etc.) come out of concealment in my life?
- Are there any beast-like traits in my life, which have damaged the lives of others?
- Do I ever try to do the work of the Lamb by using the methods of the beast? or, are there ever times when I work for God like the devil?

There is only one cure for the beast virus. It is the genuine worship of the Lamb, worship that willingly and lovingly joins with the jury in heaven’s courtroom in exclaiming, *“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing”* (Revelation 5:12). Worship is such adoration and dependence on our God and His Son Jesus Christ that there is no way we will ever trust any lesser gods. The pursuit of such idols can change us into beasts. The worship of the Lamb will produce in us the traits of the Lamb.

In His day Jesus warned His own people about the most deceptive and dangerous idolatry of all, religious idols, as He declared, *“Someone greater than Solomon is here...Someone greater than Jonah is here...and Someone greater than the temple is here”* (Matthew 12:41,42).

Protection Against Satan's Identity Theft: The Gospel

Through the gospel God announces that in Christ He has already reconciled you to Himself. Not only has He totally justified you by treating you as though you had never sinned, but He has with that acquittal also given you a new identity as His very own child. *"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!"* (1 John 3:1). Your identity is not derived from your own works and accomplishments of trying to make a good impression on God and others. Your heavenly Father loves you, not because of what you do, but just because you are.

The gospel is the good news of God's total identification with us, and in this identification we find our identity as His very own children.

- He identified Himself with us in our humanity by taking our nature and by calling Himself the "son of man."
- He identified Himself with us by dying for our sins. *"But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities"* (Isaiah 53:5).
- Jesus Christ took upon Himself the judgment that we deserved in order that we might receive a just and unassailable justification and righteousness, unassailable to all the accusations of Satan.
- He identified Himself with us in our infirmities and sufferings (Hebrews 2:17; 4:14,15).
- Through the gospel He gave us an altogether new identity as His very own, forgiven and fully adopted children. It is this new identity, which gives us the right to come to Him calling Him, Abba (Daddy)! (Romans 8:15).

The key to overcome all the hidden deceptions of the beast (the anti-christ who steals Christ's identity) is for us to totally identify ourselves with His work for us.

- Through our identification with Christ our old identity of sin is abolished. *"For as by one's man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous."* (Romans 5:18).
- *"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him"* (2 Corinthians 5:21). We are saved through a death we did not die, and through a life we did not live.
- We identify totally with Christ's work for us – His life, death, resurrection, and ascension. *"Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Romans 6:11). It is this new identity, which leads us out of the slavery to sin to a live of freedom in Christ (Romans 6:18-20).
- Look upon baptism, the Lord's Supper and the Sabbath as occasions for affirming and celebrating the new identity He has already placed upon us.

In the gospel we accept God's estimate of us when we belong to Christ.

The Father gave all honour to His Son, seating Him at His right hand, far above all principalities and powers. He expressed His great joy and delight in receiving the Crucified One, and crowning Him with glory and honour. And all the favours He has shown to His Son in His acceptance of the great atonement are shown to His people... God loves them as He loves His Son... The seal of Heaven has been affixed to Christ's atonement. His sacrifice is in every way satisfactory. In Him mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. The Father em-

braced His Son, and in this included all who receive Him. (E.G. White, Bible Echo, May 22, 1899 par. 10).

Protection Against Satan's Identity Theft: The Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments are not just commandments chipped in stone, but they are truly the tender commandments designed by your Creator to protect His identity and thus also to safeguard your own identity.

The First Commandment: *"You shall have no other gods before Me."* You were designed to worship only one god. Pursue other gods and you will be guilty of spiritual adultery (the core sin of Babylon). Worship only one God, and you open your life to live out all the possibilities that comes to those whose heart is perfect toward Him. To divide the affections of your heart between God and what is not god causes a double-mindedness that saps all genuine and lasting joy from your life.

The Second Commandment (about God's image): *"You shall not make unto yourself a graven image...you shall not bow down and worship it."* Because you want your idol/beast to work and to work effectively, you will obviously custom-design it in your very own image. You will engage in personal image-management as the solution to discover the "real you." But you will never discover the "real you" by looking within yourself, nor by taking pride in your own accomplishments, but only by looking outside yourself to the One who has already created you in His very own image, down to the very DNA of every cell in your body. By creating you in His image, God created you with the capacity to think, reason, love and experience fulfilling relationships with Himself and with others. The problem with idols/beasts is that *"those who make them are like unto them; so is everyone who trusts in them"* (Psalm 115:8). Every idol will eventually turn upon its maker in making him just like a beast. Remember King Nebuchadnezzar!

The Third Commandment (about God's name): *"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain."* God wants His name to be the secure foundation of your personal identity, the guarantee of His protection and the source His adequacy for your every need as expressed in His many glorious names. God's prescription for a secure personal identity is found in Isaiah 43:1 - *"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name, You are mine."* Live under the secure identity of His name, and you will be strong to detect and resist Satan's identity theft and his temptation to you to make a name for yourself.

God's wants us to worship Him according to His names because...

1. He reveals His character through His names.
2. He reveals our needs of Him through His names.
3. The nature of our redemption is revealed through His names.
4. We can know what to expect of life through His names.
5. We can come to know God better through His names.
6. We can come to know the riches of our true identity in Him through His names.
7. Praising the names of God brings to light and releases that particular characteristic into our lives.

The Fourth Commandment (about God's number). *"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy...the seventh-day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God."* You will find God's number in the seventh-ness of both creation and redemption. After finishing creation's work, God declared it to be "very good" and entered into rest on the Sabbath of the 7th day. Having completed redemption's work, God invites you to enter His rest on the 7th day from our own attempts to earn salvation. God gave you the Sabbath, not so you can earn merits toward salvation, but to experience in its seventhness your true identity as being His special possession (Ezekiel 20:12,20). This is a day to celebrate your identity and God's rating of you as a perfect '7', for in Jesus Christ "you are complete" (Colossians 2:10). Try to work to establish your own identity through anyone or anything other than God, and you will only achieve a 6, a 66, or at best a 666 – no matter how hard you try.

Question: How do you rate God's work for you, both in creation and at Calvary's cross? Will you give Him a 'seven' by singing *"Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints"* (Revelation 15:2). The Sabbath is truly a TGIF day, "thank God I am free" – free from the need to work to earn salvation or to depend on your own works (idols, beasts, and images-making and name-making) as the source of your identity.

In the keeping of the Sabbath commandment as a remembrance of God's work in creation we also receive His release of the covenant benefits that flow to us from God's work as our Creator.

- Strength Beyond Measure. *"Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint"* (Isaiah 40:28-31).
- The Overcoming of Fear through God's Presence. *"But now, thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name, You are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you. Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honored, and I have loved you; therefore I will give men for you, and people for your life; fear not, for I am with you"* (Isaiah 43:1-5).
- As an Appeal In Prayer: When the apostles were persecuted *"they raised their voice to God with one accord and said, 'Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them....'"* (Acts 4:24). *"Ah, Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too difficult for You"* (Jeremiah 32:17).

- The Promise of an Abundant Life: *“Yet hear now, O Jacob My servant, and Israel whom I have chosen. Thus says the Lord who made you and formed you from the womb, who will help you: Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and you, Jeshurun, who I have chosen. For I will our water on him who is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, and My blessing on your offspring”* (Isaiah 44:1-3).

Protection Against Satan’s Identity Theft: Worship

Genuine worship is not a chore, but a most delightful privilege. In such worship we live out our true identity and God’s highest destiny for us. As we in worship receive the covenant benefits of Christ’s redemptive worship, we hereby discover our fullest personal worth as we declare what God is worth and we give Him what He is worth. To worship is to serve Him with our praises and enter into His sufficiency for our deepest needs.

Worship is the God-ordained path to experience the fullness of the blessings of your God-given identity. As you in worship comprehend something about what God is worth, and then give Him what He is worth, you will also discover what you are worth. *“You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created”* (Revelation 4:11) is the testimony of witnesses from earth as they cast their crowns before the throne – lost in wonder, love and praise of the God who was, and is, and is to come. In worship they display their highest destiny and their true identity. Do not build your identity and self-worth on others’ estimate of you, but build it instead on Christ-esteem – that is, How does Christ esteem you? What are you really worth? Just look to Calvary’s cross and the wounded Lamb who took your place and died for your sins. *“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength, and honor and glory and blessing!”* (Revelation 5:12).

To worship is to serve God with your praises and to lay hold of His sufficiency for your every need. This takes away your need to pursue all idols, your own custom-designed ‘beasts,’ as being able to fill your deepest needs. *“The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want”* (Psalm 23:1).

Perhaps you have thought that your personal vigilance about last-day events constituted your primary adequate preparation to overcome the enemy’s deceptions: legislation about days of worship, or bio-chip implants in the forehead or hand, the avoidance of the number 666 in all personal documents, caches of food, and oil for kerosene lamps. The warnings against the worship of the beast (Revelation 14:9-12) is really God’s challenge for you to build your entire life and personal identity on the worship of the Lamb as fully sufficient for both redemption as well as daily living. *“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain!”* (Revelation 5:9).

It is noteworthy that the same book, the First Letter of John, which describes the work of the anti-Christ, closes with these words, *“Little children, keep yourselves from idols”* (1 John 5:21). Your genuine and heartfelt worship of the Lamb is the key to overcome the entrapment of the devil’s program of identity theft. In true worship you will discover not only *who* you are, but also *whose* you are. Such worship expels Satan’s lie that

what you do determines who you are as you replace it with God's truth that who you are determines what you do.

Your sense of personal identity (image, name, and number) will not come from yourself or your own attempts to build for yourself a life that satisfies. Instead you will build your life on your the secure God-given identity, which is yours through these truths:

- *"For in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).*
- *"For me to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21).*
- *"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live I live by the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).*
- *"Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart" (Psalm 37:4)*
- *"O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man who trusts in Him" (Psalm 34:8)*
- *"You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasure forevermore" (Psalm 16:11)*

The Victory over the Beast

"And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God" (Revelation 15:1,2).

To win the victory over the beast is ...

- to discard our make-believe identity of trying to make a name for ourselves. It is to deprogram us from the lie of the enemy which say that what you do determines who you are.
- to discover and embrace our true identity in Christ. "I am His and He is mine."
- to let our lives be programmed by our new identity - it is who we are which determines what we do.
- Let go of all our attempts to trust in our own works for salvation (the anti-Christ principle).

Beast worship is anything that is substituted for the Lord Jesus Christ. Beast worship can also be legalism in disguise. Legalism is the most dangerous and deceptive of all heresies, because it promises to deliver what only Christ can provide, justification through His blood (Romans 3:25). Legalism is able to make good impressions by its purported desire to uphold God's law and the standards of the church. The problem with legalism is its pretense to be a perfectly legal way to be saved, but it is an illegal way of salvation because it bypasses the blood of the slain Lamb.

The Third Angel's Message in Verity

What is the primary focus of the third angel's message? Looking at the surface of the text you would no doubt correctly reply that it is a warning about the historical beast power of Revelation 13 and its resurgence in the last days. But is it possible that there is more to the third angel's message than this? *"Justification by faith,"* wrote Ellen White,

“is the third angel’s message in verity” (Review & Herald, April 1, 1890). Would it surprise you to discover that she was right? In the three angels messages you will find solid allusions to the justice, judgment, and justification. Just listen to the song of victory over the beast by the redeemed –

*Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty!
Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!
Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name?
For You alone are holy. For all nation shall come and
worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested*

The three angels’ messages are all about justice and judgment:

THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL is the good news about Jesus’ death for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:1-3) and how God declares us righteous on basis of faith in Christ’s substitutionary atonement (Romans 3:23-26). At Calvary’s cross God carried out four judgments, each one indispensable to secure for us a perfect salvation.

1. At the cross God judged sin as alien, intolerable, and utterly unacceptable to His rule of love and justice. Wherever sin is found, whether in the human heart or in the universe, it cannot co-exist with God’s holiness. In taking upon Himself the penalty of sin we deserved, God in Christ judged sin as totally non-justifiable and inexcusable. Do you agree with God’s assessment of sin and His judgment on sin as shown at the cross?
2. At the cross God judged Satan (John 16:11; 12:31). There He unmasked his true character. So successful is Christ’s victory that we can join with the heavenly beings in declaring - *“Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren...is cast down”* (Revelation 12:10). And until the 2nd coming we join with Christ in His warfare against the works of the Satan: *“And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly”* (Romans 16:20).
3. At the cross God judged us. As Christ bore the judgment of sin and its penalty of death that we rightfully deserved, God was able to declare us justified, acquitted, and to treat us as though we had never sinned. (Romans 3:25). At the cross He justly changed our legal status from “condemned” to a verdict of “acquitted.” This is not some kind of legal fiction. So secure is this verdict that the witnesses in heaven’s open courtroom declared, *“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain...”* (Revelation 5:12). (Do you believe they are telling the truth?) Through this saving judgment God has opened wide the gates of heaven for every repentant sinner who abandons all self-justification and places His faith in the spilt blood of the Lamb of God. The gospel is about how God through His judgments on Calvary’s cross justly justified us without justifying sin.
4. At the cross God judged Himself. When He gave us His judicial verdict of “justified” He did it in such a legally incontrovertible way that *“He might be just and the Justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus”* (Romans 3:26). So complete is the salvation through the atoning blood of the Lamb that all of Satan’s accusations before God are

now utterly groundless unwarranted. His accusations in our hearts are likewise baseless. (1 John 3:20,21).

The doctrine of justification by faith alone in Christ open up to the believer all the other benefits of Christ's atonement. These benefits start flowing into our lives when we by faith receive Christ. To fear God, to give glory to Him, to worship Him – this is how JUSTIFIED PEOPLE JUSTIFY GOD.

- **FEAR GOD.** When we fear God we declare His justice because we believe that without a Savior and without an Advocate *"it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"* (Hebrews 10:30,31). When we fear God, we readily confess the justice of God, that the wages of sin are death and we are, therefore, under God's wrath (Romans 6:23). The "fear of God" securely anchors us in His love so that there is no need for us to fear the judgment (1 John 4:17,18) because we have an Advocate with God (John 2:1,2). When we "fear God" we will fear nothing else. When we do not fear God we will fear everything else. The healthy "fear of God" takes away all fear of punishment, fear of condemnation, fear of the judgment, and fear of failure and rejection. The fear of God is not to be feared.
- **GIVE GLORY TO HIM FOR THE HOUR OF HIS JUDGMENT HAS COME.** There is no better way of giving Him glory than to engage the services of His Son, Jesus Christ, to serve as our personal Advocate in the end-time judgment. If we do not believe in the truthfulness of His legal verdict – "Acquitted!" for ourselves, we dishonor God by our lack of faith. Accept justification by faith alone, and we will justify God. The justification [just-as-if-we-had-never-sinned] of sinners is only for those who abandon all their own alibis of self-justification. Through self-justification we slander God's name and declare the sacrifice of Christ for sin as inconsequential and of no value. God is most glorified when we are most satisfied with His gift of salvation.
- **WORSHIP HIM.** When we as believers here on earth worship, we are at the same time joining with the witnesses in heaven's courtroom in their worship of the Lamb. *"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain"* (Revelation 5:11). To worship is to serve God with our praises and to trust Him to supply all our needs according to His sufficiency. Every covenant blessing (the benefits of Christ's last will and testament) flows to us from the cross. *"He that spared not His only Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things"* (Romans 8:31). The joy and enthusiasm with which we worship is about how we rate God. What rating do we give Him for having given us an advance rating of "justified" in the final judgment? To worship is to declare the righteousness of the One who has justified us. *"Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it!"*

The Sin of Self- Justification

In heaven's inspired cartoons of Babylon and the beast, God depicts the hopelessness of the sin of SELF-JUSTIFICATION.

Self-justification is the enemy's lie for trying to save our selves. As you take a closer look at these cartoons, look in them for experiential applications to your own life [and not just applications to false religious movements].

- “BABYLON IS FALLEN” is God’s judicial sentence on the lifestyle of Babylon – spiritual harlotry, looking for love in all the wrong places rather than accepting the covenant love of Jesus Christ realized in the atonement (Romans 5:1-11). An angel, in a pun, calls Babylon a city when in reality she is an adulterous and foolhardy woman riding a dangerous beast. Her appearance is designed to seduce others away from the security of God’s love to drink from a cup that will never satisfy. Instead of accepting God’s judgment on her as “fallen,” Babylon in rebellion continues her self-justifying lifestyle - *“I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow”* (Revelation 18:7). The self-justifying traits of Babylon are pride, unbelief, self-exaltation, rebellion and unfaithfulness to God.
- “DO NOT WORSHIP THE BEAST” is God’s warning about His judgments, which will fall on all who worship substitute and make-believe saviors – anti-christs. All such saviors will be judged, and so will those who worship them. The beast cartoon is God’s depiction of the dangers of self-justification. Just look at the multiple heads, horns, crowns et cetera of the beast. It is all about self-sufficiency. The beast not only proclaims a gospel of self-salvation, but it engages in the abuse of power toward anyone who stands in the ways of its programs.

(Questions for reflection: Have you ever worked for God like the devil? Have you ever used the methods of the beast to do the work of the Lamb? Have you ever looked with disdain on those who believe differently or sin differently than you do? This is salvation by comparison). To worship the beast is to base one’s life on the shaky foundation of self-justification through one’s own good works. Heaven’s estimate of such self-righteousness compares it to filthy rags and garbage (Isaiah 59:1,2; Philippians 3:8).

The Privilege of Declaring the Justice of the Judgments of God

We can do this through the following:

- To practice THE PATIENCE OF THE SAINTS is to declare God’s righteousness by trusting in His sovereignty and providences. To take matters into our own hands is the self-justification of our personal courses of action rather than depending on the wisdom of His timing when dealing with difficult situations and people.
- To keep THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD. Throughout the Scriptures the “commandments of God” are often equated with the “the judgment of God” (Deuteronomy 5:31; 6:1). When we keep the commandments we justify God by agreeing with His assessment (His judgments) on the seriousness of sin. It is deadly. When we keep His commandments, we justify God by giving Him our total allegiance and love. To keep His commandments is to declare both His love and His justice.
- To have THE FAITH OF JESUS (as used in this passage) is not about the quality of our faith, nor is it about the purity of the doctrinal content of our beliefs, but it is about basing our lives on the covenant faithfulness of Jesus. When we trust Him and His saving work, we receive His justification as a free gift. Unbelief is the refusal to let go of our strategies of self-justification by trusting in our own good works for salvation.

Through unbelief we slander His name and work as untrustworthy and imperil our own salvation.

JOIN THE SINGING TO CELEBRATE HIS JUDGMENTS

Notice how the victorious people of God, in the song of Moses and the song of Lamb, make no references to their own experiences, their own works, or their own accomplishments. Their focus is entirely on God's judgments, ways, and works as a cause of worship, adoration, and praise. Because Jesus has redeemed, justified and loved you, you can start your singing lessons now!

*Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty!
Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!
Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name?
For You alone are holy. For all nation shall come and
worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested
(Revelation 15:3,4).*

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Website: <http://www.streamofhealing.org/>

**Here is a sample program of the seminars of
*Healing Stream Ministries***

The Victory over the Beast

Developing Immunity to Last-day Deceptions

Friday – Saturday, July 1 & 2, 2005

The Seventh-day Adventist Tabernacle

264 W. Michigan Ave., Battle Creek, Michigan

Friday Evening – 7:00 p.m.

There is Singing in the Courtroom

The Good News about the Judgment

- Living with joy in the judgment hour.
- Contract vs. covenant salvation.
- The transforming power of worship
- The blasphemy by the beast.

Sabbath Afternoon – 3:30 p.m.

Finding the Beast in Unknown Places

When the Beast Comes to Your Church

- Detecting the beast ‘virus’ in your own life.
- Seeing yourself in heaven’s cartoons.
- Using the methods of the beast to do the work of the Lamb.
- Overcoming the image, name, and number of the beast.

The Victory over the Beast -

The Power of Your Testimony of Jesus

- God’s formula for extreme internal make-over.
- The healing power of truth.
- The three angels messages as God’s medicine for your life today.
- The protection of the covenant and the cross of Christ.

To bring this seminar to your local church, contact
909.499.1049 or
info@streamofhealing.org

Sabbath Morning – 10:30 a.m.

The Mark of the Beast

How to Protect Yourself Against Satan’s Identity Theft

- The Lamb vs. the beast.
- The subtlety of sin as identity theft.
- Discover your true identity.
- The sufficiency of Jesus Christ for everything.



The speaker is Dr. Ervin K. Thomsen, a Seventh-day Adventist pastor for 36 years. Educated in Denmark and England, he is also a graduate Andrews University where he received the Doctor of Ministry degree. Serv-

ing as a pastor of churches in Michigan, Arizona and California, he has specialized in the study of the Book of Revelation and has preached and taught on the three angels messages (Revelation 14:6-12) in churches and campmeetings. You will be blessed and encouraged by this positive, practical and Christ-centered approach to the Book of Revelation. He is at the current time the Director of *Healing Stream Ministries* in Loma Linda, CA.

“...free to all a healing stream flows from Calvary’s mountain.”

Healing Stream Ministries

streamofhealing.org

For more information about these seminars go to the next page -

HEALING STREAM MINISTRIES

Dr. Ervin K. Thomsen, Speaker
 24414 University Ave. #16, Loma Linda, CA 92354
 909.499.1049 – streamofhealing.org

This letter is to acquaint you with *Healing Stream Ministries* and its seminars on the three angels messages which seeks to take the three angels messages as God's medicine for our own lives before we give the messages to others. The seminar is based on and motivated by the following quotes from the Spirit of Prophecy:

"The thought that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, not because of any merit on our part, but as a free gift from God, is a precious thought. The enemy of God and man is not willing that this truth should be clearly presented; for he knows that if the people receive it fully, his power will be broken." *The Faith I Live By*, p. 111.

"Several have written to me, inquiring if the message of justification by faith is the third angel's message, and I have answered, "It is the third angel's message in verity." (Review and Herald, April 1, 1890).

I would welcome the opportunity of presenting this seminar to your church. This approach is solidly Bible-based and thoroughly grace-oriented.

The purposes of the seminars are...

- to take the three angels' message as medicine for our own lives before giving the messages to others.
- to uplift Jesus Christ and the sufficiency of His cross.
- to bring solid assurance of salvation to SDAs.
- to enable church members to have a genuine, contagious and joyful testimony of Jesus.
- to detect the deceptions of the enemy especially designed for Adventists.
- to enhance genuine love and fellowship in the local church through the removal of bitterness and unforgiveness.
- to produce spiritually healthy congregations as the best preparation for evangelism and church growth.

If this seminar can be a blessing to you and your congregation, do not hesitate to call.

Sincerely,

Ervin K. Thomsen

The seminar has been presented at...

- Northern California Campmeeting
- Central California Campmeeting
- Arizona Campmeeting
- Campus Hill Church, Loma Linda
- Southern California Prayer Summit
- Stevensville SDA Church, MI
- LLBN – Loma Linda Broadcasting Network
- Mesa Palms SDA Church
- Andrews University, SEEDS 2005
- Adventist Media Center – Westpoint of Evangelism
- Tucson Desert Valley SDA Church, AZ
- McKinleyville SDA Church, CA
- Rolling Hills SDA Church, CA
- Battle Creek Tabernacle, MI
- The Quiet Hour
- Ukiah SDA Church

The Undiluted (full strength) Three Angels Messages with enough power to...

- cleanse from all sin
- set us free from all bondage
- break all the power of the enemy over us.
- restore us to total spiritual health
- develop immunity to last-day deceptions

What others have said...

“A most practical and Christ-centered approach to help one face the problems of daily living.”
- Edwin E. Reynolds, Ph.D., School of Religion, Southern Adventist University

“...practical answers to help you live a more joyful and productive Christian life. These original, Biblical and gospel-centered presentations will make a real difference in many lives.”
- Kenneth E. Richards, former Associate Speaker, Voice of Prophecy

“Covers the subject with creativity, yet faithful to the Scriptures...the best in-depth study on the three angels messages I have ever seen.”
- Lloyd Wyman, Ministerial Director, Pacific Union Conference

“Biblically sound, brings positive assurance of salvation, intensely practical.”
- Herman Bauman, retired President, Arizona Conference of SDA

“...provides helpful insights into the meaning of the three angels messages. Listeners to these presentations will be blessed and encouraged.”
- Robert W. Olson, former Director, E.G. White Estate

“The presentations were the most Christ-centered and practical topics I’ve heard of any evangelistic series”
- Pastor Bruce E. Nicola, Jr., Pastor, McKinleyville SDA Church

“A refreshing application of the three angels’ messages to our personal struggles...”
- Beatrice S. Neall, Ph.D., Professor Emerita of Religion, Union College

“...amazing, significant and helpful insights into Scripture.”
- Jim Ayars, Bass, The King’s Heralds

“I have more joy in Christ now!” - J.W., Oregon

“...felt led to the great love of Jesus.” - D.H., Oregon

“a wonderful program...we are hungry for the nourishment you brought.”
- J.C., Salinas, CA.

“I praise the Lord I was able to attend...my spirit feels lifted.”
- L.P., Santa Cruz, CA

“I discovered...Jesus is sufficient for all my needs.” - D.J., Arcata, CA

“Every Adventist must hear this...” - P.D., Ukiah, CA