

Chapter 12

Protection Against Satan's Identity Theft

How to overcome the image, name, and number of the beast

“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).

Modern-day criminals no longer need to resort to violence, robbery or burglary to gain access to your money. By obtaining your Social Security number, drivers' license, or bank account number, these thieves can easily and without your knowledge siphon off your monies through identity theft. Our enemy, Satan, works in a similar manner, and has been stealing identities – often undetected – since the beginning of time. While his ultimate goal is to kill and destroy, his initial approach is to destroy you from the inside out by the subtle siphoning off of your internal self-worth residing in your God-given identity. Basically, your God-given identity is found by the fact that you indisputably know who you are because you know who God is. Our first parents, Adam and Eve, knew their identity because in the beginning God had created them in His image, called them by *name*, and in the seventhness (His *number*) of the Sabbath He called them to a relational celebration of His perfect work.

Our God-given identity can be compared to the operating system of computer. When the operating system crashes, the entire computer crashes. Satan deceitfully masquerades many of his temptations as perfectly legitimate quests for an improved personal identity because he wants our lives to crash. Youth are not the only ones to declare, “I am trying to discover who I really am!” Let us not think for a moment that the answer to this quest is found in some self-generated activity. When we question our God-given identity, we immediately open our lives for an invasion of Satan's computer virus, lies designed to cause our eternal crash. It is God's desire to protect this operating system residing in our personal identity. The good news of the gospel is that God not only forgives our sins, but also gives us a new personal identity residing inside of us, and based on *who* He is. Your internalized God-given identity provides an impenetrable firewall to protect against the virus of Satan's subtle scheme of identity theft.

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Many Christians are on high alert about the more obvious last-day historical and prophetic fulfillments of the deceptions of the historical beast power, but is it possible that the enemy right now may be engaged in a most subtle fraud of stealing your identity – and you were the last one to know? He wants to set you up for spiritual bankruptcy – so that your God-given identity will be so compromised that you will be unable to detect and resist the final end-time deceptions. For illustrative purposes may I suggest that Satan wants to create in us an identity crisis to set us up for his theft of our God-given identity. And the end result is that we could find ourselves with an identity disorder – a condition where doubts about our true personal identity will cause us to live in fear and confusion.

May I here remind you, again, that the Bible truths discovered in this study are not intended as replacements for any last-day historical applications to the beast, but they are intended as additional truths, discovered primarily by letting Scripture interpret Scripture, in order to amplify all possible experiential applications for our own lives. We can be alert to the operations historical beast, while we are blind to the possible experiential operations of the beast *principle* in our own lives. Is it possible that we may be unable to detect our own internal susceptibility to the *principles* of the beast, already residing in their identity?

We can be alert to the operations of the historical beast, while we are blind to the possible experiential operations of the beast *principle* in our own lives.

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). The words – *image*, *name*, and *number* – mirror a similar sequence of concepts 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 – *image*, *name*, and *number* of the beast – possibly be a conceptual, thematic pun used by the Apostle John to describe the devil’s agenda to steal your identity? To correctly decode the meaning of these words, let us *not* just rely on historical events or newspaper headlines, but let Scripture interpreting Scripture be the primary source of our conclusions.

Identity Theft – Not a New Crime

The originator of identity theft is Satan who in heaven attempted to steal God’s identity as he said, “*I will be like the Most High*” (Isaiah 14:14). In the Garden of Eden he suggested to Eve that she could transcend her allegedly defective and restrictive [do not touch, do no eat] God-given identity by his offer of a new and improved identity – “...*you will be like God*” (Genesis 3:5). “Just think, Eve, of the possibilities before you when you no longer have to look, outside of yourself, to God, but you can look within yourself and there find the source of your identity!”

In the wilderness temptations Satan challenged Jesus’ identity: ‘If *you* are the Son of God...’ then perform some miracles to demonstrate your identity to yourself and others.” Between the lines you can hear Satan’s taunts: “*If you are the Son of God...then turn stones into bread...jump off the pinnacle of the temple...and bypass the cross, for no genuine son of God should have to suffer in order to save others.*”

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While hanging on the cross Jesus again heard through the Roman soldiers a final assault on His identity, “*If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself*” (Luke 23:37). Satan knows a great deal about how personal identity has the power to shape human conduct. He is not too troubled should we focus on overcoming a whole list of outwardly sinful behaviors, but he trembles when we discover our true identity in Christ. Why? Because the internalization of our God-given identity through genuine worship provides the programming that breaks the power of Satan over us.

The Origin of ‘Beast’ Worship – Nothing New Under the Sun

The beast is not just an end-time impostor. The Scriptures hint that the beast virus or principle has been working throughout human history. People who disregard the truth of God about their identity, and replace it with lies become beasts-like in their behaviors. (Romans 1:23,25). The proud Babylonian monarch, Nebuchadnezzar, experienced a seven-year exile as a beast (Daniel 4:28-37) when God judged him for his self-centered and abusive conduct. Remember how he gloated, “Is this not great Babylon that I have built?” His own accomplishments became the source of His identity.

At the foot of Mt. Sinai the Israelites custom-designed a beast, a golden calf in the image of, and in honor of, their covetous longings for the security of Egypt. So, in addition to the last-day appearance of the beast, the beast principle can also be any replacement or substitute [idol] for God and His Son, Jesus Christ in which we trust, because we do not believe that God is big enough to handle our lives. Take a moment to discover what is your personal beast, golden calf, sacred cow through which you try find your source of significance and self-worth because you don’t believe you can find it in your Creator God?

The beast principle is the idolatry of any replacement or substitute for God and His Son, Jesus Christ, in which we trust, because we do not believe that God is big enough to handle our lives.

The work of the antichrist, operational since the beginning of Christianity, also appears to be the business of identity theft, where the redemptive work of the Lamb is replaced with the non-redemptive work of the beast. Just examine for a moment the many literary Scriptural parallels between the beast and the Lamb. Ask yourself this question: Is it possible that the early Christian believers in these symbols saw more than historical/prophetic applications? Let us explore the many contrasts between the Lamb and the beast with a view to discover any possible experiential concerns.

The Lamb	The Beast
Receives authority from God	Receives authority from the dragon
Has seven horns	Has seven heads and ten horn
Seven eyes	Ten crowns on head
Accused of blasphemy	Has names of blasphemy
Was, is, and is to come	Was, is not, and yet is
Ministers for 3 ½ years	Continues for 42 months
Sustains the saints	Persecutes the saints
Is slain	Receives a deadly wound
Resurrected	Deadly wound is healed
Gives freedom to followers	Leads to captivity
Worshippers of the Lamb rest	Worshippers of the beast have no rest
Reproduces ‘image of Christ’ in followers	Reproduces ‘image to beast’ in followers
Seals followers in the forehead	Marks followers in forehead or hand
Has a bride – Jerusalem	Has a harlot - Babylon

The Commandments – Protection against Identity Theft

In the first four of the Ten Commandments God, including also the prologue, certain key words speak about acknowledging only *one* God, not damaging His *image*, respecting His *name*, and acknowledging His *number*. These key words contain God's very own encoding for the protection of your identity. This code guards you against trying to discover an identity in something or someone other than God.

- **Accept God's identity.** *"I am the Lord..."*
- **Accept your own identity in God.** *"...your God."*
- **Accept the origins of your identity.** *"...who brought you out of Egypt."* The deliverance from Egypt was based on God's covenant promises. And behind the deliverance from Egyptian bondage stands the everlasting covenant initiated by God and His Son, who before the foundation of the world clasped hands in holy covenant and took the initiative to save you.
- **Find your identity in ONE God only.** *"You shall have no other gods before me."* One God is all you need. Don't weaken His power by worshiping other gods. He is BIG enough to handle anything.
- **Protect your identity.** *"You shall not make unto you any graven **image**...you shall not bow down yourself to them or serve them."* Do not invent and worship substitutes for God, custom-designed in the image of your own unmet covetous expectations.
- **Know the security of your identity:** *"You shall not take the **name** of the Lord your God in vain."* Do not play God by trying to make a name for yourself, but rather, avail yourself of the security and sufficiency of your great God as revealed in His many glorious names.
- **Celebrate your identity.** *"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy...the seventh day [the **number**] is the Sabbath of the Lord your God."* Celebrate on this day His rating of the completeness of your identity in Him as a perfect '7.' Because of the sufficiency and fullness of Christ's redemptive work you are a new creation of infinite worth, deeply loved, completely forgiven, fully pleasing and totally accepted by Christ. In Him you are complete (Colossians 2:10).

The Ten Commandments are not just seemingly arbitrary 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. There can be no boundary-crossing between the Creator God and His created beings.

Commandment-breaking Destroys our Identity

The Scriptures state that *"whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, is guilty of all"* (James 2:10). Obviously, these commandments contain such a fine-tuning of coherence and unity that to break one commandment is to break them all. That is why the enemy by attacking just *one* commandment can significantly damage your God-given identity through his subtle appeals to your self-sufficiency and pride. The enemy will suggest that you...

- **Reject your identity.** How can you trust in a God you cannot see? Look out for yourself and build your identity on your own accomplishments.
- **Reject what God says about the origins of your identity.** You are essentially on your own. There is no divine purpose for your existence. It is up to you to make life work the best you can.
- **Find your identity in many gods.** *One* god is not enough, because you believe that the current God you serve is semi-competent and limited. Notice how the beast employs the ‘Babylon’ principle, which is spiritual adultery, by looking for love, self-worth and significance in all the wrong places.
- **Enhance your make-believe identity** by custom-designing gods made in your own image. [the *image* of the beast – your substitute for God]. Replace the worship of the Creator with the worship of something you have made and, which therefore, is more trustworthy, you believe, than God.
- **Take advantage of your make-believe identity:** Make a *name* for yourself by playing god. Use God’s name to exercise control of your god-playing pursuits. Never mind that you will damage others and eventually destroy yourself.
- **Use your make-believe identity to search for security and rest.** The *number* of the beast, ‘666.’ Throughout Scripture the number ‘6’ seems to signify incompleteness and unrest. As the ‘number of a man,’ this number, ‘six,’ is often used to describe man’s work: Man was created on the sixth day; the creature crucified the Creator on the sixth day; when Jesus added His miraculous power to insufficiency the six containers of wine at the wedding feast in Cana, the result was an overflowing of joy; the dimensions of Nebuchadnezzar’s golden image were sixty by six cubits; the woman at the well had been in six relationships – five failed marriages and one relationship which was not a marriage – when she met man number *seven*, Jesus Christ, who totally changed her life. When Jesus revealed to this woman *His* identity (“I am the promised Messiah”), her identity through worship was securely changed. The power the identity of the Messiah enabled her to rise above the shame of her past identity, her past conduct and the resulting gossip by the townsfolk in her village.

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In genuine worship our self-worth and identity becomes so securely embedded and programmed into our hearts through the first four commandments (*one* God, His *image*, His *name*, and His *number*) that we develop an impenetrable immunity to all the lies of the enemy. Temptations lose their power as we securely rest in the identity with which we were created and redeemed. The “new covenant” promises of the Old Testament speak of this identity: “But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and [I] *will be their God, and they shall be my people.* And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jeremiah 31:33,34 KJV). Our new identity is as much a gift of grace as is the forgiveness of sins.

Idolatry as Beast Worship and Identity Theft

Idolatry is still Satan's primary scheme for practicing His ancient fraud of identity theft through substitutes (idols) for God. It is the basis for all sins. First, idols steal *God's identity* when you believe their lies that they will do a better job than God is doing. Next, idols steal *your God-given identity* through their deceitful offers of an improved personal identity and a more abundant life if you will but trust them. Beast worship results in beast-like behaviors. Beast worship can even be legalism – the attempt to legitimize our own righteousness by adherence to religious standards for the purpose of exalting self. Notice how the previous parallels between the Lamb and the beast shows the unmistakable intent of the beast to make his work appear legal, when in reality it is utterly illegal.

By creating you in His image, and by redeeming you through Christ, God has already given you a secure identity in Himself, and He wants to express His glory through His identity in you. Instead of trying to express *you* are or trying to find *yourself*, let the Creator God instead express who *He* is through your life. The search for your own real identity through your own attainments and experiences will not enhance your identity, but it will severely damage the glory of your God-given identity as it changes the glory of the incorruptible God into the image of beasts, thus worshipping the “creature rather than the Creator” (Romans 1:23,25).

“*Idols are worthless; they are lies!*” thundered Jeremiah. “*Can people make their own gods? The gods they make are not real gods at all!*” (Jeremiah 16:19; 10:15 NLT). Idols are not real gods. They exist only in the minds of those who create them. They have no power over us except us we place on them our expectations (lies) to deliver what only God can deliver. Idols are the visible expressions of the covetousness of the human heart. Idolatry is the attempt to satisfy the deepest longings of our hearts from fountains that can hold no water (Jeremiah 2:13). Idols are not just objects, but they can be any ideology, pursuit or drive that is a substitute for a relationship with God. Listen to the cry of God's heart, “*But My people have changed their Glory for what does not profit*” (Jeremiah 2:11). Why is God so jealous about idols? It He is an insecure deity threatened by the competition? No, of course not. God's jealousy is that of a loving Father, who knows all about idolatry's destructive power in the lives of His children. All idols are lesser gods, and those who pursue them become children of lesser gods. Such lesser gods will always mark and imprint their identity – image, name and number – on the lives of those who worship them.

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Genuine Worship – Protection Against Satan's Identity Theft

What is genuine worship? It is our responses to the covenant acts of God in creation and at Calvary's cross. As we participate in such worship, originating in heaven's open courtroom as led by the witnesses from both heaven (the four living creatures) and earth (the twenty-four elders) God will continually strengthen and protect our identity in Him. Listen to their testimonies, judicial declarations, about the sufficiency and the *worth* of God, our creator, and Jesus, our redeemer. And remember, God only allows witnesses in heaven's courtroom who will declare the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

- “You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things” (Revelation 4:11).
- “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessings” (Revelation 5:12).

Do you believe the testimonies of these witnesses in heaven’s courtroom? Then let your own self-worth be solidly based on Christ-worth, that is, how Christ is esteemed in the heavenly courts. What are you worth? Let self-generated self-worth be replaced by Christ-worth. Let self-esteem be replaced by Christ-esteem. Because of Calvary’s cross your heavenly Father esteems you as He esteems His Son. In genuine worship God does not reduce us to size, but raises us up to the worth of the original identity with which we were created, and which Satan has tried to destroy. When we in worship give God what He is worth, we will also discover our own worth. “Christ paid an infinite price for us, and according to the price paid He desires us to value ourselves.” (Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, p. 291).

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Learn to detect truth from lies, for it is a battle of truth vs. lies.

Satan’s lie about your identity: What you do determines *who* you are.
God’s truth about your identity: *Who* you are determines what you do.

Satan’s lie about your worth:
 Your self-worth = your performance + the opinions of others about that performance.

God’s truth about your worth:
 Your self-worth is based on what God says about you (which is ‘Christ-worth.’)

How does God esteem His Son, and thus also you? Ellen G. White summed it up like this:

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...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 embraced His Son, and in this included all who receive Him” (Ellen G. White, *Bible Echo*, March 22, 1899).

To worship is to serve God with our praises and to lay hold of His sufficiency for our every need. This takes away our need to pursue all idols and our own custom-designed ‘beasts,’ as being able to fill our deepest needs. “*The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want*” (Psalm 23:1). “*You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy: at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore*” (Psalm 16:11) “*Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of*

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your heart” (Psalm 37:11). “*O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man who trusts in Him*” (Psalm 34:8). “*For me to live is Christ*” (Philippians 1:21). The best protection against the beast is the genuine worship of the Lamb, for in such worship we express through praise and adoration our contentment with our all-sufficient God.

Protection Against Satan’s Identity Theft: The Gospel

Through the everlasting gospel God announces that in Christ He has already reconciled us to Himself. Not only has He totally justified us by treating us as though we have never sinned, but He has with that acquittal also given us a new identity as His very own children. “*Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!*” (1 John 3:1). He even wants you to call Him “Daddy” (Romans 8:14-16). Even before the foundation of the world He had you in mind. Tony Campolo says that God has carried your picture in His wallet for a long time. Our identity is not derived from our own works and accomplishments of trying to make a good impressions on God or others. Our heavenly Father loves us, not because of what we *do*, but just because we *are* His very own children. In the gospel resides the basis for all secure self-worth – self-worth based on what God says about us, and not on our performance *plus* the opinions of others.

What does God say about you? The same words He said about His Son at His baptism in the river Jordan. Believe those words! Then your identity will be securely anchored in Jesus Christ, and you will know that you are also God’s “*beloved child in whom He is well pleased!*”

The Great Controversy – It Is All About Worship

The great controversy between Christ and Satan is all about worship, and, it is, therefore, also about whose identity will program your life. How do you overcome the identity – image, name, and number – of the beast, the antichrist? The answer is to avoid all idolatry or the expectation that gods which are not gods will deliver what only God can. Idolatry is essentially covetousness (Ephesians 5:5) that has run amuck.

It is noteworthy that the same book, the First Letter of John, which describes the work of the antichrist, closes with these words, “*Little children, keep yourselves from idols*” (1 John 5:21). The key to overcoming the devil’s program of identity theft is our genuine and heartfelt worship of the Lamb. In true worship we discover that your self-worth does not ultimately reside in our performance, but it is based on God’s covenant acts of creation and redemption.

Have you perhaps up to this point believed that your personal vigilance about last-day events constituted your primary and adequate preparation to overcome the enemy’s end-time deceptions? Maybe you have tried to keep yourself updated on information about impending legislation about worship, church-state issues, or bio-chip implants in the forehead or hand, the avoidance of the number 666 in all personal documents, and you may even have stored up caches of food and oil for kerosene lamps. But the preparation for last-day events is primarily *internal* and *spiritual*. 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). Through the power of the gospel God now wants to enhance the health and resistance of your spiritual immune system, so that when the final tests come you will be able to say, *“For the prince of this world comes, and has nothing in me”* (John 14:30).

Life Applications

Questions to Ponder:

Definition of idolatry: “When anyone or anything receive more glory than Jesus Christ.” Do you agree with this definition? Please write out your own personal definition of idolatry.

What are the areas in your life where, because of discontent with God, you have replaced Him or His Son Jesus Christ? Name some of those replacements.

Why is knowledge of the operations of the historical beast not sufficient to protect you?

What some areas on your life where the enemy has already initiated his work of identity theft?

Truth vs. Lies:

Replace the lies of the enemy with these truths that will set you free.

“You desire truth in the inward parts”

Psalm 51:6

Satan’s Lies of half-truths	God’s truths
It is what I do which determines who I am	It is who I am which determines what I do.
You must try your very best to impress God and others.	There is no need to try to impress God, because He already knows all about you and He loves you in Jesus Christ.
Put on a good front!	Put on the Lord Jesus Christ!
Live your life to discover “ <u>who</u> you are”	Live your life to express who God is and <u>whose</u> you are.

Footnote:

The Covenant in the first four 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>	One God is enough!	One God is <u>not</u> enough!	One God or many gods?
<i>2. You shall not make a graven <u>image</u>, you shall not bow down and serve them...</i>	Secure identity: You are created in God's image. Do not damage that image (See Psalm 115) (right image)	Flawed identity: Custom design a substitute god in your own image to compensate for your personal alleged deficiencies (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 the sufficiency of God's names 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 Rest	Incompleteness No rest	Whose <u>number</u> ? Six or seven

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