

## **Identity Wars Series**

### **No2 – Identity Reclaimed**

Well, I guess just to bring us up to speed on what we looked at last night, we looked at the concept of 'Identity Lost.' How we lost our identity, and what the two kingdoms are, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. Today we're going to look at identity reclaimed, and how Jesus purchased for us our identity once again. And if you were here last night you would recognise, that if you have come to listen to me, Adrian Ebens, the Pastor, well then you're going to be sorely disappointed, because as we discovered last night, that there is nothing that we as human beings have to say. There is nothing that we can say of any good or of any use to anybody. But if God happens to take hold of me and speak through me and blesses you today, then you know that it is God Himself that has blessed you.

And that's my prayer today. That He will bless you. If you prayed and you've asked God to speak through this person, then you will be blessed. If you've come hoping that something might happen, you may or may not be blessed. Now's the time to start praying. Why don't we bow our heads right now and we'll pray before we begin.

Our Father in heaven, it's a privilege to come into Your house. Lord we recognise that without You we can do nothing and so I pray for a freedom of speech, to express the things that You've laid on my heart. And that a picture of Jesus will be given that will draw us closer and closer to Him, so that our desire to be ready for Christ's coming will not be motivated so much by fear of the things that are coming upon the world, but what Jesus has done for us, and how much we mean to Him. And we thank You in Jesus' name, amen.

'Identity Reclaimed.' Last night we gave our distinction on the two kingdoms. God's kingdom and Satan's kingdom. We looked at the fact that in God's kingdom—that His kingdom is a family-based kingdom. It's based on relationships. Satan's kingdom is a kingdom that is based on geography. Because we don't have any direct parental connection to Satan, the only way that he can gain people or make people follow him is to draw a circle around all of us and say, "You are in my territory, you do as I tell you to do." All of you here live in the state of New South Wales and so you must do what the state of New South Wales tells you to do. And there's this bigger circle around Australia, telling us what we must do as Australians. And we must follow that because we live in that territory, as opposed to a parental influence.

The currency. We talked about the fact that in heaven the currency, that which makes us rich, that which develops, that encourages, that which we invest in—is character. Speaking words of love and joy and peace, and encouragement, we invest in one another. This is the currency of heaven. Because when we get to heaven, there'll be no money. Hallelujah! Meaning that there will be no tax! Even better. No money. We won't need money any more. It'll be wonderful because everything will be on God. He'll be providing everything for us. But in Satan's kingdom, everything is based on assets. We talked about Genesis chapter 3, verses 4 & 5, how Satan said, "You shall not surely die, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." And he was basically telling Eve, that "If you want to live in his kingdom, you need to be a material girl. You need assets. You need things to help you to be more powerful. The more you have the better it is. He who has the most toys wins."

You might have heard that statement before. And that's how Satan's kingdom operates.

Citizenship in God's kingdom is simply being a son or daughter of God. If you accept the fact that you are a son or daughter of God and you accept Him as your Father, then you are a part of His kingdom. Of course, at the fall of mankind, its not simply accepting God as our Father, we had to be purchased and brought back through Christ, and that's what we're going to look at today.

In Satan's kingdom, citizenship is based on performance and achievements, or, on non-performance and non-achievement. It doesn't matter. If you make a name for yourself by being lazy then he's happy for that. If you want to make a name for yourself by doing good things and achieving good things, he's happy. As long as you get value out of performance and achievement, that's how you become part of his kingdom.

And notice the distinction. There's nothing wrong with performing and achieving. The problem is getting value out of that. That's where the problem is.

And of course value in God's kingdom comes from your relationship with God. If you obtain value from anything else, other than from your relationship with God, you are being influenced by Satan's kingdom. Are we being influenced by Satan's kingdom? I think so.

Of course, value in Satan's kingdom is based on personal achievement. And the difficulty comes when you base yourself on personal achievement. If your value comes from these things, then a relationship system cannot operate very well. We looked at the fact that last night, that once Adam and Eve had eaten the fruit and embraced the lie that they had power source within themselves, that they could live independently from God, they could choose whether or not they wanted a relationship with God, it was up to them, it didn't matter because they didn't need Him. This is the lie that Satan gave to Adam and Eve. And once they embraced that lie, they lost their value as children of God. Up until that point when Adam and Eve were asked, "Who are you?" They could say, "We are a son and a daughter of God. He is our Father. We love Him. He loves us." The rest is irrelevant. But after they fell into sin, the relationship with the Father was broken.

It was funny the other day, I was walking with my son. We went for a walk and we were talking. My son said to me, Dad, I'd like to go for a walk and have a talk. I want to talk about a few things with you. Okay. We go for a walk. Sounds serious. We're talking about responsibility, appreciation. I was talking with him about the importance of him appreciating the work that his mother does at home. She goes through all this effort to cook his food. She puts it up on the table. The first thing he says is, "Oh, yuck! Not that again!" I said, "Son, we've got a problem here. We need to discuss this." So we discussed some of these things. And as we discussed my son said to me, "Dad sometimes I do things for you not because I like it but because I don't want our relationship to be broken." And I'm like, "How old are you? You've been listening to what I've been preaching." I thought, "Wow... Out of the mouth of babes." "Dad, sometimes I do things for you not because I enjoy it but because I don't want to break our relationship." I said, son, "That's a good thing to remember. You keep doing that because that's what I'm trying to do with God." There are some things that God asks me to do that I don't fully understand, nor sometimes fully appreciate. But I do them because I don't want to break my relationship with Him. His relationship to me is more important than anything else. I would like to say it was that way 24 hours a day, seven days a week, but sometimes I find that, well, other things seem more enjoyable at times. I have amnesia. I go back into my false identity, into Satan's kingdom.

But when we believe that this lie that we have a power within ourselves, that whether or not we have God in our lives, it doesn't really matter—we get caught in this performance-based system, where when we do well, if you get your value out of what you achieve—and in Australia that is something that is very much true. I remember I think Nathan said something to me about how John Howard that the Australian work ethic, the value of an individual within Australian society, is his ability to work and to perform and to achieve. That's interesting. Very interesting. Your value as an individual is determined upon those things.

So, if your value is determined on those things, if you perform well, then you should be satisfied, shouldn't you? You should be satisfied with yourself, which produces pride. And this is something that I found difficult when I first began to preach and share. The better I preached, the more smug and self-sufficient I became. "I'm doing a good job, I preached very, very well." And then this became a

difficulty, where I said, "Well, I don't want to be proud, so should I preach worse? No, that doesn't make sense. It's obvious that I've got a problem here and I need to understand what's going on.

Then if we make a few mistakes, we start to go on a downward trek. We looked at this last night. Failure - when we produce failure, if your value is based on your ability to perform when you fail then you are worth nothing. We looked at the fact that 38 times a minute across this planet people come to the realisation, life's not worth living. It's time to end it all. We need to finish. Because your value is based on your performance—a very, very bad system to live in, yet that's where most of us live. We live in that system.

And then we just struggle. We get to get improvement. We're going to try harder. Which means that if you need to improve yourself, that means that your need to spend time with your family and your friends may become secondary to your need to perform and achieve, more over time, doing that extra work on your PhD, doing all of these sorts of thing to gain that sense of worth again. How many of us are caught in this cycle? A hand up? I certainly have been, certainly got sucked back into the vortex of this system. There's something wrong about living a life where you oscillate between pride and depression, pride and depression. Up, down. Up, down. Can anyone relate to that experience?

It's not much fun. And we look to the fact in Genesis 3:10 that once you move into a performance-based system, that God—Adam had broken his relationship with God, God then had to come up and tell Adam, "You have a problem. You have the problem. I am your life source. If you cut yourself off from Me, you are dead!"

And I would like to take time to go into the whole story of how Adam and Eve were able to maintain a life source. We don't have time to explore all that today, but of course they continued to live. Suffice to say that many people say that when you read the Bible that when they ate the fruit, it says, "Dying you shall die." Not so. Not so. God is the source of life and when Adam and Eve ate the fruit they immediately flipped from a direct life source from God to a life source through the Promised Lamb. Through the Promised Lamb. They died that day, as God said they would. Their heart only continued to beat because of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

And we are alive because of that same reason. Because of that same reason.

And so Adam—God comes to Adam and He says, "Adam, you have a problem. What is the problem when you comes to someone who gets value out of performance? When you come to someone who needs to get value from their performance and you tell them they've got a problem, then that's a problem, because they're not listening." And we talked about this again last night, how that how many times in a work environment you come to someone who has done something incorrectly and you try to explain to them they did it incorrectly. It's interesting the reactions you get. "You're just picking on me. No, no. You're wrong. I'm right, you're wrong." They're in denial. A good way to get jobs done, isn't it? How many businesses have lost millions of dollars through denial? People say, "No I didn't do anything wrong. It wasn't me. I didn't do anything. No, not me."

Performance-based system, rather than acknowledging. So when God says to Adam, "Did you eat from the tree?" Simple question. Adam understands the consequences. It means that his performance was bad. He has not done that which is correct and so he goes into denial. "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the fruit and I did eat." Good answer, Adam. Very good. Denial. "God, this is a conspiracy, God. You made this woman to get me! It's Your fault." That's what happens when you get caught in the system. Relationships get fractured. Could you imagine Eve standing there, and there's Adam, the knight in shining armour, who promises to give his life for her, and he's just dumping it all on her, saying, "It's her fault, not me. Leave me out of this." How nice! Not nice at all.

And so we see that because of the fact that we've broken our relationship with God, we have a sense of guilt. Whenever we think of God, as human beings, we are often reminded that in a performance

sense, we're not good. We're bad. And human nature as a result tends to resent that. Tends to resent that. Human nature actually really hates God because in a performance system we can never be as good as God. God's always better than us, smarter than us, lives longer than us, everything better than us. We'll never be as good as Him. And as something subconsciously, we don't necessarily think about it but subconsciously, as the Bible says, "The carnal mind is enmity against God." Enmity meaning hatred. Enemy. That's the situation.

And so this is what happens. Adam and Eve have now embraced the mindset where they actually don't like God. They actually like this system. There's some kind of strange mystical attraction to this lifestyle of pride and depression. This poison of belief that you have freedom in doing whatever you want, being responsible to no one, caring for no one, do whatever you please. There is an intoxicating influence in believing that. And all of us have been seduced by it to some degree. So much so, that God speaks to us as the sons and daughters of Adam. In Psalms 4:2 where He says,

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"How long, O you sons of men, will you turn my glory to shame?"

And we'll talk about this glory this afternoon in our presentation, 'The Glory of Children.'

"How long will you love worthlessness and seek falsehood?"

As human beings, we love worthlessness, because it is worthless to gain your value from what you think you can perform and achieve. Because we can't do anything without God. It's a lie. It's a misunderstanding of who we are. It's an incorrect sense of identity, to think that we can do anything other than to choose life from God or death from Satan. It's all we can do, and develop a character along the way as we make those choices.

"Why do you love worthlessness and seek falsehood?" The falsehood of believing that you are something, that you have some kind of power or life in yourself. Why do you love these things? You're sick, you're intoxicated with the wine of Babylon.

It says, "I will ascend into heaven, I will be like the Most High, I will be like God." This is what Satan said.

And of course this verse that I mentioned before,

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"The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can it be."

And so we need to understand that with the end of Chapter 3, 'Identity Lost,' the human race is in massive trouble. This cycle of pride and depression cannot be broken. Once you're in a performance-based system, you have to be told that there is a problem. The only problem with that is that you will not be told that there is a problem and on that basis alone you can't get out. You're stuck. Pride will not acknowledge anybody else, that they are right. And so just recapping where we finished off last night, this is what God had to do with the human race. We need to understand that at this point, Adam and Eve actually really enjoyed Satan's way of life. They were intoxicated by it. They were cut off from the life source which gives wisdom and knowledge and logic to be able to work their way out of that system. They couldn't do that any more because all wisdom and knowledge comes from God. Good knowledge.

So first of all God had to help Adam and Eve recognise their desperate situation as He has to with us. To influence the human race in the right direction without force. It couldn't be an issue of force. A relationship can never be maintained with force. It doesn't work.

Take out the choice factor just to make us a robot if you want force.

Show them that they had a wrong perception of His character and kingdom and to show them that He really loved them. How did He do this? Performance-based people, you love them right. Why don't you tell them that they're doing the wrong thing all the time? Is that love? How is He going to get that across to us?

A way to remove their guilt and insecurity and to restore their true identity and value as children of God. That our value comes alone from Him and not from anywhere else.

A way to reclaim their sense of purpose and destiny. What we were created for is something very different from what most of us are engaged in today. What it means to be a son and a daughter of God.

And we talked about this a little bit earlier. He needed to give them a life support system to give them time to choose and decide. Since God is life. And as soon as you choose the wrong way, you're dead. No time to choose. Instant heart attack. Gone. No second chance.

But God provided a way to give us time to think, to reconsider. Maybe this kingdom is not so good after all. When the intoxication of the wine of Babylon wears off and the hangover begins to set in and we feel the guilt of the worthlessness of living in Satan's kingdom, we start to yearn to go back to our Father's house where He has the fattened calf prepared for us. We think maybe it's time to go home and to be with our Father.

We talked about the fact that God's kingdom is based on relationships. But how do you define relationships? And many people will say that a relationship means that you love one another. But what is love? How do we define love? Well if we look in God's kingdom, God's kingdom, His relationships are defined by the 10 commandments.

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The 10 Commandments are something very different from what many of us understand and we're going to talk about this a bit later as well. You see because the 10 Commandments are very important in Satan's kingdom as well because they're a good tool to perform. If you do all of these things, then you're a good person. But in God's kingdom they're not designed that way. They're designed to protect relationships. And the first four commandments it says in Matt 22:37,38—"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your mind, and all your soul and with all your strength."

And that's the relationship that we have with God. Humanity to God, the angels, the unfallen worlds, everyone of us is governed by those first four commandments. It's a protection mechanism, to protect us from going down the path that our parents went down. We follow—the last six commandments are about loving our neighbour, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself."

I wish I had time and maybe this afternoon if we have time, we might have a look at this to show how that our identity and the identity of our God is defined by the 10 Commandments. If you destroy or change or break the 10 Commandments, you've destroyed, broken who we are and who God is.

You take the creative aspect out of the fourth commandment, you destroy who God is.

If you remove elements of the second commandment, you destroy who we are. Or any of the commandments. If you change then, we don't know who we are any more. And when you don't know

who you are any more, its impossible to communicate and understand what you're actually trying to say. I wish I could get more into that but we won't.

So this is what God's kingdom is based on. The fact that God is omnipresent. Because God is omnipresent, meaning He is everywhere all the time, means that He is the only one in the universe that can guarantee a relationship-based kingdom. Because He can have a relationship with every one of us at the same time. Nobody else can do that. Only Him. Satan can't do that. He has to have a hierarchy, with the top dogs up the top kicking the people underneath. The plebs at the bottom of the pyramid. That's his system.

But God can have a direct connection. He works through authority structures, but He also has a direct system with every individual which means He is the only one that can guarantee relationships as the basis of His kingdom. And I think that's something that, at least for me—hmm, I think that's a good option. I like relationships. I like that way of doing a kingdom rather than Satan's way of doing a kingdom.

But of course, humanity, when we were created, when Adam and Eve were created, they were in this kingdom. They loved God supremely. They loved one another. But then, when Satan came along they broke the commandments. Satan's kingdom, which is domination, force, control, mistrust, doubt, performance-based kingdom. Adam and Eve broke the commandments, lost their identities, and shifted into this kingdom and became enslaved in that cycle. Performance, pride, depression, around, and around, and around.

Just trying to give a chart or an illustration of what we've been talking about. And I just want to spend a bit of time now looking at some of the effects of this kingdom. Lets put some practical aspects to this. Living in Satan's kingdom.

Nationality. Do people get value out of their nationality? Yes? When I grew up, I knew I didn't believe. I knew that Dutchmen were smarter, more intelligent, more good looking—than any other people on the face of the planet. It was obvious. Did I get value from that? Absolutely.

And I know it's the same for every other race. They have all the reasons to tell you why their nationality, their customs, their way of living is superior to anybody else's. It's a fun game to play, isn't it? Nationality. Nationality. These things sometimes get a bit heated, and then we go to war, and then we kill each other—because we make—"Why is it different to you? We make (...27:14...). It escalates into war. And nationality, that's one of the effects of Satan's kingdom. Getting value out of your nationality. The only nationality I want to get value out of is that I'm a child of God, from the kingdom of heaven. That's the nationality that I want.

In terms of where I was born, the geography issue – who cares? It doesn't matter. It has no relevance.

Education. Do people get value out of their education? Knowledge is power. So often we see people will get up to speak and they'll list off, "This is Mr. Such-and-such, and he has a PhD in this, and he's done extensive research here and he's travelled here, and he's done this—as if that is the reason why we should listen to him. And I find that the more educated people become more narrow-minded. They become less able to understand what real life is about.

(Audience comment: Absolutely)

Oh, you've found that too? The old question, how many angels can fit on the head of a needle? This sort of thing. That is where we sort of go. I mean, I'm not knocking education, but when you get value out of it and you start to do strange things, like when you graduate you wear these funny caps and gowns, and handed pieces of paper and all these strange rituals, just to prove that you're superior to the rest of society. And they actually pay you more for doing that. You get—you've got this—"Oh, okay.

I'll pay you more now." But that doesn't guarantee that that person knows more than someone else who's been out in the field working in that industry for many years. They probably know heaps more. But he's got the certificate—"Oh, we'll pay him more." It's no wonder the country's in such a mess.

Education. There is value in education. The Bible tells us that we should get knowledge. We should get understanding. But don't get value out of it. Just because you know something doesn't make you smart. It doesn't make you more important than anybody else. That's an important thing that we need to remember.

What about job status? Is there value in job status? My background is in the white collar industry. Notice 'white collar.' 'White collar' is a distinction from 'blue collar.' That's a bit further down. White collar – but in the white collar industry we're no different from chickens. We have a hierarchy. The people at the top are the hierarchy, like the boss, the top boss. He has his own room with the high-backed chair and the arm rests. He has the fastest computer with the best view out the window. Okay? Yes. You know what I'm talking about. Then the vice-president, his view is not quite as good, computer is not quite as fast, big mahogany desk is not quite as good—maybe it's just chip board. No, not quite. It'd be a bit better. But it's less quality. And then you go all the way down to the office worker who doesn't even have partition. He's got a lousy computer, no arm rests, no high-backed chair. You just have to sit there at the bottom of the pile just to remind you that you're at the bottom, son. You're at the bottom. Is there value in job status?

You go to parties. "I earn \$90,000 a year." Well, who cares? "I'm on Centrelink." So what? Doesn't mean anything.

Job status.

(Text from slide)

Wealth. Is there money and wealth? Money and wealth. There's also value in wealth. You know, we come out with these lists. Why do we come out with these lists of the world's top 100, you know, top 100 wealthy individuals. Well, who cares? Where would you see a list of the world's poorest individuals? Top 100 poorest individuals? Where do we see that? We don't see that. There's value in money. People who have money think that they're powerful. And we all think they're powerful, too. And because we buy into this system where money has power, we all get sucked into this system. Wealth.

What about possessions? Is there value in possessions? I was talking about this last night, you know, he who has the most toys wins. Possessions. We are all busy paying off debts and paying off all the technology. I must admit I'm a bit of a sucker for technology. Possessions. Houses, boats—whatever you're into. I've got all these things. "And how big is your house." "Oh, mine's 40 squares." Well, who cares? As long as God provides for you. Doesn't Jesus say, "God provides for the sparrows. He provides for the birds. They don't have to worry about paying off a mortgage. Just go and set up shop up in the tree. "This is a good place. Let's set up shop here. It's okay." But we worry about all these things.

The thing is that when we come into the church—see all of us have been schooled in this system of gaining value from nationality, education, job status, wealth, possessions—we haven't mentioned beauty and good looks. Do people get value out of that? Oh, dear! Cosmetic surgery is really big at the moment. All these crazy things. We're getting value out of these.

When we come into the church, we give our life to Jesus, all of this value from power, position, performance, it all disappears right? It just goes. We come in to church, everyone's happy, we're all the same. Nobody higher than anybody else, we all love one another. Is that right?

Interesting isn't it?

We are all still trying to overcome the hangover of living in the world. And when someone's hung over, sometimes they can be pretty irritable. And that's why probably in the church, we sometimes lash out at each other. Because we're overcome with this hangover of living in the world and being affected by this value system.

So what about in the church? Do we have parallels in the church? You know, the image to the beast. All right.

Nationality. Conservative or Liberal, what are you? Nationality. What nationality are you? We have the same thing in church.

Education. Bible knowledge. "How many books of the Bible have you memorised?" You know? "Well, I've memorised lots, that makes me better than you. Bible knowledge. The more knowledge you have of the Bible, the better it is.

I remember when I first went to Bible study, half of me was listening to what the person was saying and just enjoying it. But the other half of me was still intoxicated, and was going, "Boy, how does he know so many Bible texts? I don't know that stuff? How am I going to learn all that? He makes me look bad!" So, this constant oscillation between being half-drunk and half-sober, it's not really good. No wonder we have so many problems in the church.

What about job status? Do we ever have a problem with church positions? Anyone here ever been to a nominating committee? It's fun isn't it? Church positions. Well, for most of you here I'm better than all of you anyway because I'm a pastor. You've got nothing on me. Church positions. There's no conference presidents here, is there? Phew! I'm at the top of the pile.

Do we get value out of these things? You bet. You bet. Our church is just as drunk on these issues as any other church. Church positions. Position is power.

Wealth. He who pays says, "Look if you want to get valuable in this church, you're saving up money for an air conditioner, someone here just put up the money, and let everybody know you're putting up the money. That'd make you popular." And when they want to do something else, they'd go, "I paid for the air conditioning, remember. I could get them taken out. I paid for them. See?" Does that ever happen in the church?

What about possessions? We have spiritual gifts. How many converts, how many people have you converted, eh? How many Bible studies do you have? Do you sing? Do you have any gifts or abilities? Well, if you don't then you're not worth much then. You're not worth much at all, you see? And Paul, speaking on this particular subject said, "I speak as a man. I can boast of many things. I was this, I was this, I was this. And I've done all this, and I persecuted the church and did all these things, but this is all rubbish." This is—you're in the church but you're still in Satan's kingdom. That's a problem. If you operate by these principles, if you get value out of these things, you know, I've seen some people in positions, and they may hold down a Sabbath school job, or they've been an elder for a couple of years, and then they're not an elder. And you'd think that someone had shot them in the head. "Oh, it's not fair! It's all a political scheme to get rid of me! I'm going to another church, and..." Get over it. Just get through the hangover and follow Christ. There's no need for all of this stuff. You'll be a lot happier.

Have you ever noticed that it's not much fun being angry and upset? It's really bad on your health, actually. Not much fun at all.

So we find that when we come out of Satan's kingdom, if we recognise the need to come out of Satan's kingdom—some of us just like to be drunk all the time. If we come across, we would hope that when



we transfer, it's a clean transfer. That we just leave all of the world behind, leave all of the value systems of Satan behind, and we get our value only from God. That would be optimal.

But what we often find is this. We start moving across. We start embracing some of the things of God, but we're still caught by some of the things of the world, and we end up in the hellish situation of believing this but living this.

A better definition of hell I could not describe. Caught between, caught in the middle. God gave us an illustration of this, through the children of Israel. It's called 'wandering in the desert.' Caught between. Not having the faith to go into the promised land, and yet not wanting to stay in Egypt, although some of them wanted to stay in Egypt. But they thought, "Oh well, we might as well follow along." That is a hellish situation to be in. And if you're having a difficult path in your Christian life, then you need to look at some of these issues. Where do you get your value? What makes you important? I have to pray every week, every day, "God, remind me that I'm Your child, that's where I get my value, because I'm going to go out there today. Someone's going to start punching my buttons and try and make me go back to my other identity, getting value out of what I do and achieve. And then I'm going to get upset, and then I'm going to get annoyed and have a bad day, and I don't want to do that. So, please help me to get out of this system."

The self-power cycle, as we said before, just reminding ourselves that we get success, we get pride, we get a few failures, we get desperate denial, resistance—all this stuff. Fear, despair, worthlessness, and a few successes. That cycle. We've just done the cycle.

And I might just point out. If you look at the comparison between the world and the church, this thing was played out on the grand scale in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, when the world came into the church. It simply changed the names of its gods. They just kept doing exactly the same thing. And before we start attacking other churches, namely, the Middle Age church, saying how bad it is, maybe we should look at the idols that we have. Maybe we should look at the log in our own eye before we pull the speck out of our brother's eye. And maybe once we do that, we might be able to see clearly to help our brother, that may be in this other church.

Maybe that's something to think about because you can get value out of pointing at another church like, "You believe in false doctrine. I'm better than you." There's a lot of value in that. A lot of people get value in that. But we need to break out of this cycle. It's a hard cycle to break and I want to give us an illustration of this. Matthew 18:1. Jesus had been working with the disciples for a number of years trying to teach them what His kingdom was about. He said it in Matthew 10, "I am not here to be served but to serve." He told them over and over again. Too many times they would say, "My brother is stealing my inheritance." God said, "Who made me a judge and a divider over you?" He said—and we looked at that verse last night—"Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins and yet not one of them is forgotten before God, but you are more valuable than many sparrows." This is what He's trying to teach them.

But the disciples, caught between two systems, it says in Matthew 18:1, "At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Why did the disciples want to know that? Who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Imagine Jesus saying, "Why do you want to know that?" "Oh, no reason. No. Nothing at all." Why do you think they wanted to know?" Which kingdom does this question represent? Satan's kingdom. It doesn't represent God's kingdom. Why would you want to know who's the greatest?

And this question, this is very important for us to understand in terms of intoxication issue. This issue here of wanting to know who is the greatest is what prevented the disciples from understanding what Christ was actually trying to do.

That's why Mary Magdalene had a better concept of what Jesus was trying to do than all the disciples. She understood. She anointed Him. She prepared Him for the burial.

And it gets really, really serious. On the very night that Jesus was betrayed, you would hope the disciples would have come to an understanding of this issue. That it doesn't matter. Your possessions, your position, your wealth, your intelligence, your good looks—all those things. You don't get your value out of these things.

But on the very night that Jesus was betrayed, when He needed their support, He needed their help—let's remember that Jesus took upon Him our human nature. It would have been so much easier for Jesus if He had known that the disciples understood Him and what He was about. But they didn't because they were drunk with Satan's kingdom.

What did He say?

(Text from slide)

"Truly the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!" And He – watch carefully the performance system start to kick in.

Jesus said, "One of you is going to betray me." And immediately there's a performance issue. They're working out of their performance kingdom. And they're going, "Oh, no. Who's going to do this?"

It said, "Then they began to question among themselves, which of them, who it was that would do this.

"I wouldn't do it. I bet you'd do it. Not me."

They're getting caught in this cycle. And of course, once they've been threatened and they're starting to feel discouraged, they have to try and get themselves back up to the top.

So it naturally flows into this next discussion.

"Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest." "I wouldn't betray Him because I'm the greatest."

Muhammad Ali must have learned from these guys. "I am the greatest!"

On the very night that Jesus died, you've got the disciples having dispute about which of them is the greatest. They are still completely in Satan's kingdom. How much encouragement would that be for Jesus? It would be very discouraging. Very discouraging.

But the good news is that Jesus does break the cycle. And it comes from a simple statement in Scripture. When Jesus was in the wilderness—and this is the one statement that I can't highlight this enough. This is the one statement that provides the door out of that cycle. If you believe the statement, then you will find escape from this cycle. Believe it. Embrace it. Live it.

(Text from slide)

"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17)

That is the door to freedom. That is an understanding of what your true identity is. Jesus had to come to earth as a man. He had to demonstrate what it means to be a real human being, to have a real identity. And Satan is about to attack Christ in the wilderness. And God, instead of giving Him bombs

and guns and ammunition to go and blow Satan up in the wilderness, gives Him one statement: "This is my beloved Son." Identity. "In whom I'm well pleased." Value. Value comes from the Father.

This is what Jesus needed more than anything else. This is what you and I need more than anything else.

Let's have a look at Christ's victory and what Jesus did in the wilderness is to break this cycle for you and me.

Many of us think that what happened in the wilderness was that Jesus overcame the desire to eat chocolate and pizza. That's won He wants for us. The issue was a lot deeper than that. The issue is, "If you are the Son of God," the issue was, "Who are you and how do you support your claim? If you are the Son of God, turn these stones into bread." The medium was appetite. The medium was food. That's what Satan used to try and confuse you about who he was. Jesus had a choice. "I turn these stones into bread like before and show Satan that I am the Son of God. Or I believe the Word of God." That was said in the beginning. Forty days ago. "This is my Son."

When God has spoken, there is no second-guessing. You believe it or you don't believe it. And if Jesus had turned those stones into bread, he would have been saying to Satan, "I don't believe what my Father says. I'm going to show and choose for myself." Big thing. Very, very big. That's the issue.

"If you are God's Son, throw yourself down." The issue is attacking Christ's identity because that's what Adam and Eve lost. So that's what Christ had to reclaim. Let's try and get a grasp on what the real issues are in the plan of salvation.

The issue is—who are you? And how do you define your identity? And what makes you valuable? When you answer those questions, as the Bible highlights them, then you will find freedom.

(Text from slide)

Christ reclaims our true identity for us and breaks the cycle of Satan's kingdom.

Listen carefully to the couple of statements. 'Desire of Ages,' page 116. "Many look on this conflict between Christ and Satan [in the wilderness] as having no special bearing on their own life; and for them it has little interest. But within the domain of every human heart this controversy is repeated. 'Desire of Ages,' page 116.

You and I are facing those same questions. "Are you a child of God? Prove it." That's what Satan is saying to us everyday. "You claim to be a Christian. How many Bible studies do you do? How many people are you winning? What are you doing? You're not a Christian. What do you do at home? I've seen you and the way you treat your husband or your wife. I see how you treat your children. You're not a Christian. You're nothing!" And because we're all caught in this performance-based system, we get discouraged. We feel guilt. We go down. We do the penance. We whip ourselves. We beat ourselves. It doesn't work. It doesn't work.

The Bible says, "To agree with with your adversary quickly while you're in the way." But Satan tells me I'm wicked. "Oh, what took you so long to work that out. I've known that for a lot longer than you have." You're slow.

But my value doesn't come from that. My value comes from being a child of God. And the more I keep believing that, the more my behaviour will start to change. It's not my behaviour that makes me a son of God. It's Jesus that makes me a son of God. And that will influenced my behaviour Let's get the horse and the cart in the right order. Not back to front.

Okay. Next quote. This statement for me completely revolutionised my thinking on what the plan of salvation is about.

(Text from slide)

"The scene of trial with Christ in the wilderness was the foundation of the plan of salvation." ['Confrontation,' page 63.]

The foundation of the plan of salvation was the work that Jesus—not the work He did on the cross—the work He did in the wilderness. Interesting. Because what use would it be for Jesus to pay the debt for our sins when we had no way of understanding who we are? He had to first reclaim our identity as children of God before He could offer us the cross. Or else it wouldn't mean anything to us. "Oh, just hang on the cross." That's not very good.

"And gives to fallen man the key whereby he, in Christ's name, may overcome." ['Confrontation,' page 63.]

The key to overcoming Satan is knowing that you are a child of God. That's the key. We could forget everything else. This is the central issue.

And so as we continue forward, this imprisoned cycle of false identity is broken by Christ with the statement, "You are my beloved Son, in whom I'm well pleased." When we value our relationship to God, He's the only one that matters to us. When we have success—who cares if you have success. You can be happy. You can enjoy the success. But you don't get value out of it. You don't become proud. You're just happy. And you enjoy it with everybody else. But it doesn't make you a better person.

If you have a few failures, your relationship is unchanged. God still loves you. You're still His son. You're still His daughter. Your value is unchanged. You make a few mistakes. It doesn't affect your value. Certainly, we want to rectify the situation but our value isn't based on it. What happens if we have total failure? God still loves me with the same light when I see the darkness. "The Lord shall be a light to me. I shall arise." It doesn't matter.

Paul says, "I have learned how to abound and how to be abased." It doesn't matter. Peter humbled himself. God says, "I will exalt." It doesn't matter. Failure is a good tool to test which kingdom you are in.

(...52:30...?????). You're completely set free of this system. You don't need to keep up with the Joneses or the Smiths, or whoever. You can just be you. You can just be a son of God as He designed you to be. A daughter of God as He designed you to be. You don't have to care about what other people are doing. And so your relationships can be maintained.

Now, here's a statement we need to remember:

(Text from slide)

"The voice which spoke to Jesus says to every believing soul, 'This is My beloved child, in whom I am well pleased.'" [Desire of Ages, page 113]

That is our ticket to freedom from that cycle. Do you believe that you're a child of God? Not by what you do, not by how much Bible study you do, not by how many hours of praying you do, not by any of those things are you considered a child of God. You are a child of God because God has said it. Will you believe His Word? Will you embrace His Word? Or will you continue to try and turn stones into bread? Coming to church each week, proving that you are what God has already proclaimed you to be.

That is the test.

And so in closing. This was the task that God had to achieve. To help them recognise their desperate situation. Jesus certainly did that on the cross. We behold Christ on the cross, we see this is what it cost for us to be reclaimed. To influence the human race in cooperation without force. We don't have time to go into all the details. The fact that Jesus became human like us and the Spirit was able to begin to enter and whisper into our minds the things of God. The things of God. So that we can hear that still, small voice. Not the thunder, not the lightning, not the earthquake. The still, small voice.

To show them that they had a wrong perception of His character and kingdom and to show them that He really loved them. When Jesus went through the villages and He healed the people and He embraced them and He loved them. And He taught them. He showed them. You have a wrong understanding of who God is.

A way to remove their guilt and insecurity and to restore their true identity and value as children of God. He did that in the wilderness.

A way to reclaim their sense of purpose and destiny. He did that in the wilderness.

A life support system to give them time to choose and decide. He did that from the foundation of the world.

He paid the penalty for their rebellion. He did that on the cross.

Christ has reclaimed our identity. And I really, really hope today that you will not allow this thought to be distracted. Some of you might already be tempted to think about what's for lunch. Don't do it. Keep your mind on the issue. Satan doesn't want you to know this. This issue is going to destroy his ability to control you. And he doesn't want that to happen.

So I pray that you'll hang on to this issue.

Just in closing, I want to play for you an audio-visual for you to just start thinking about what Jesus has actually done for us in setting us free, how lost we really were and how Jesus has reclaimed us. And so it's an audio-visual called, "You Raise Me Up."

(Video commences at 56:00 and ends at end of file – 60:16.)