

01-31-01-The God of Our Inspirations

relationship with God, inspiration, dreams, creativity, free will

Gen 31:13a

God identifies Himself with our responses to His presence.

INTRODUCTION:

–God cares about how we live, but *especially* about how we respond to Him and to what He reveals to us. In fact, **HOM.idea**.

–What got me thinking about this is God’s words to Jacob in a dream—**Gen 31:13a**, *I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and where you made a vow to me*. This is **amazing**: Jacob did some things that God adopted as part of His own identification. The full story is in **Gen 28:10-22**, Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. There above it stood the LORD, and he said: “I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it.” He was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.” Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. He called that place Bethel, though the city used to be called Luz. Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father’s house, then the LORD will be my God and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God’s house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth.”

–In response to God’s presence, Jacob did three things that God later claimed as part of His own identity: 1) he *named a holy place*; 2) he *performed a creative ritual*; and 3) he *proclaimed vows of faith in God*. The first action of Jacob teaches us that...

I. God Can Identify Himself with the Things We Name

A. When God revealed Himself, Jacob named the location “*Bethel*.”

1. The place itself wasn’t important, or God might have said, “*I am the God of Luz*,” because that was the original name of the place.

2. But God valued Jacob’s response so much that He called Himself by the name Jacob created: “*I am the God of Bethel*” [house of God].

B. God is interested in what we call the things He created.

1. God created the animals, but Adam named them—**Gen 2:19**, Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name.
2. When God speaks of animals, He uses the names humans created. In two cases, He even identifies Himself with manmade names for animals: “**Lion** of the Tribe of Judah” & “the **Lamb** of God.”

TRANS: God sovereignly enables us to respond to Him with *free-will*. Jacob could have shrugged off his visionary dream, but didn’t. He gave a devotional name to the spot where he *encountered God*, a name that described the encounter. In turn, God immortalized Jacob’s creativity by adopting it for His own identity: *I am the God of Bethel*. What an awesome fact that **God chooses to identify Himself with our responses to Him!**

II. God Also Identifies Himself with Our Creative Rituals

- A. God didn’t tell Jacob to call the place where He showed up *Bethel*, nor did He tell Jacob to anoint a stone with oil there. It was the response from Jacob’s own heart to the presence of God.
- B. This applies to our own activities motivated by hearing God speak.
 1. **Artists sanctify canvases with oil paint, sculptors baptize stone carvings with holy sweat, poets anoint pages with creative ink**, whenever they do so under an inspiration from God the Creator.
 2. We were created in the Creator’s image to be creators ourselves. (God cares about what we do with our holy thoughts and dreams.
 - a. [**I’ve written** many poems inspired by meditating on *God’s Word*, or from the content of *dreams*, or in *holy contemplation*] (God can say, “*David, remember that poem—the one you wrote after that dream I gave you? I’m the God of that poem! Yes, I’m that God!*”)
 - b. [In a **figure drawing art class**, where we learned to draw the human body from nude models, our last assignment was to make self-portraits. I felt God leading me to do a pastel of myself kneeling naked before the Cross, where Christ hung naked. In my painting, I was staring up at Jesus, offering Him a tattered, fig-leaf outfit. My title was, “**Dress Me in Your Work Alone**.” When we shared our self-portraits on the last day of class, I told the message behind mine: how our own works can’t hide our sins, but how, by faith in

Christ's work on the Cross, we can be "*dressed in His righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne.*" That summer my art teacher accepted Christ and was baptized.] (If God came to me in a dream, as He did to Jacob, He might say, "*Remember that self-portrait, David, the one you made from that mental picture I inspired, the one you used for sharing my Gospel with those students? I'm the God of that pastel painting. I'm that God!*")

TRANS: God identifies Himself with our responses to Him. His presence should elicit our action [someone wrote a little verse about prayer and activity : "*You must use your hands while praying, though, / If an answer you would get; / For prayer-worn knees and a rusty hoe / Never raised a big crop yet.*"] God speaks, then watches for our response, as He did with Jacob...

III. He Also Identifies Himself with the Vows We Make to Him

A. God really listens to what His people talk about— Mal 3:16 (NKJV)

Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, And the LORD listened and heard them; So a book of remembrance was written before Him For those who fear the LORD And who meditate on His name.

1. God cares so much about our devotion to Him that *a heavenly history* is being recorded about our faith-talk in the Lord.
2. God could say to us, "*I'm the God of the conversation about Me you had last week in the dining room. I'm the God of the hopes you talked about, the dreams you shared, the vows you made.*"

B. God makes promises to us, and when we make them back to Him, He puts that down in His personal journal. (Jacob's vow became part of how God identified Himself, just as our vows in response to God's promises become how He now chooses to be known.

CONCLUSION:

—What a privilege and responsibility! **God uses our responses to His presence and His promises to identify Himself.** If we realize what this means, we can never trivialize our faith-talk and faith-walk. God wants to make our responses to divine inspiration into eternal testimonies by connecting them to His own Person. *What we do with His enlightening presence counts now and counts for eternity.*