

graceWORKS ! GOING DEEPER! **The Papou Study Bible** is a daily study provided by me to help



folks explore the depth and joy of the “conneXion” life of God. It’s my personal study, and is not intended as a doctrinal statement or statement of any church or denomination or congregation. It’s also my belief that “grace” works, and the servant of God should always want to go deeper. Multi-tasking as usual, I’m also calling this the “Papou Study Bible.” I’m writing it as if I were speaking to my girls Paige, Stephanie, and Ashley, and any descendant they have (particularly Nicole, Joey, Matthew, Dylan, Julianne, and Lizzie, who know me as “Papou”). And to anyone who wants to consider me a spiritual Dad or “Papou.” I want them to be able to study the Bible with Papou (grandpa in Greek) after I’m gone---and if they don’t, I’ll haunt them. The Scriptures say it’s noble to “search the Scriptures daily” to verify truth like the ancient Bereans did (Acts 17:11). My folks came from Berea. My incredible Dad (and your grandfather and great grandfather, guys), Vasil Charles Valekis taught me to do this like he did---every day until I die. He taught me and everyone I know to go to church no matter what and to put God first. While Mama (Maria Pagona Stratakis Valekis)

never really did this, she made sure we listened to Daddy on this one. She would have hit us with a spatula or frying pan or worse if we didn’t. This is a simple sharing my “daily search.” And I’d like to think it is a continuation of God’s life through my Dad through me. Both my “Dads” by the way. And a way to honor him, mama and our loving “Dad”---God. And for all of us to be together, in Spirit, even when we I join them in heaven. I like to use the Blue Letter literal, very “visual,” Greek translation a lot to help “visualize” these truths the beautiful way Greek enables you to view. And I like to share this with folks serving in an elder capacity, or any capacity, to grow them, challenge them, and stretch them. But especially share it with my girls. And when you study these, I’ll make sure to connect with you from heaven. *Ever an orthodox Greek, Jim Valekis*



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Colossians 1:27 (King James Version)

²⁷To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is

Christ in you, the hope of glory

graceWORKS! GOING DEEPER
Ezekiel 6²

In Chapter 5, God told Ezekiel to get a haircut! With a sword---and a shave! And he did. In Ezekiel 6 he’s going to pronounce “doom” for the mountains of Israel. After announcing judgment on Jerusalem, he is instructed to pronounce judgment on the whole land. David had written: **“He waters the mountains from his upper chambers; the land is satisfied by the fruit of his work. . . .”** **“He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for people to cultivate— bringing forth food from the earth (Psalm 104)** But Ezekiel knew they used them for pagan sanctuaries as well. Let’s read this and see what God says.

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² New International Version (NIV)

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(Author’s note: This translation, and the study notes that accompany it in The NIV Study Bible, Copyright 1985,1995, 2002, 2008, 2011 are also referenced throughout and paraphrased frequently in the notes.)

Ezekiel 6 New International Version (NIV)

Doom for the Mountains of Israel

6 The word of the LORD came to me: ²“Son of man, set your face against the mountains of Israel; prophesy against them ³ and say: ‘You mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Sovereign LORD. This is what the Sovereign LORD says to the mountains and hills, to the ravines and valleys:

Note: I like the way the Lord speaks to “mountains, hills, ravines and valleys.” Christ also “rebuked” wind and waves and fevers! Can these “inanimate” objects in some way hear?

Matthew 8:26	Luke 4:39	Greek for rebuke
He replied, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.	So he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them.	G2008 epitimao ep-ee-tee-mah'-oto tax upon, i.e. censure or admonish; by implication, forbid

So . . . can wind and waves “hear”?

I am about to bring a sword against you, and I will destroy your high places. ⁴Your altars will be demolished and your incense altars will be smashed; and I will slay your people in front of your idols.

These were open air sanctuaries of Canaanite origin, condemned through the Old Testament. As verse 4 shows, they included:

- **Altars**
- **Incense altars**
- **Idols**
- **And the High Places**

Apparently the number 4 stood for completeness, so this list is a list of 4. Or so says the NIV study bible.

What exactly was a high place? Here’s a little background³.

A **High Place**, (Hebrew *bamot* or *bamah*) was a raised altar or hilltop shrine in ancient **Israelite** and **Canaanite** times described as existing from the patriarchs period

³https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/High_place#:~:text=The%20bamah%20%28high%20place%29%20of%20Megiddo.%20A%20High,at%20least%20the%20sixth%20century%20B.C.E.%20and%20beyond.

through at least the sixth century B.C.E. and beyond. High places consisted of a stone or earthen altar, often accompanied by a stone or wooden pillar symbolizing the presence of a deity, and sometimes a sacred tree. High places near major settlements sometimes evolved into formal temples.

According to the **Hebrew Bible**, the ancient Israelite **patriarchs** and early **prophets** established altars and sacred pillars at high places, such as **Bethel**, **Shechem**, and Gilgal. Both prophets and **Levite** priests attended altars at these and other high places until at least the period of the ministry of the **Elijah** and **Elisha**. A movement against the use of high places developed as the **Temple of Jerusalem** emerged as a central sanctuary and the exclusive place of sacrifice to the Hebrew God.

Some Israelite high places apparently combined the worship of the Hebrew God with Canaanite fertility rites, leading to increasingly harsh condemnations by prophetic and priestly writers. Scriptures such as the **Book of Deuteronomy** thus banned high places and the later **prophets** associated these local altars with **idolatry**, sexual immorality, and even human sacrifice.

In the late sixth century B.C.E., King **Josiah** of Judah initiated a religious reform that destroyed some of the high places and attempted to bring local **Levite** priests who served at these sites to Jerusalem. The **Books of Kings** characterizes rulers as righteous or evil, depending on their attitude first toward idolatry in general, and second toward the high places in particular. Eventually, the Jerusalem Temple, itself a highly institutionalized high place, would be the only authorized place of sacrifice in the Jewish tradition.

Incense altars were made of baked clay about two feet high usually inscribed with animal figures and idols of Canaanite gods. The Hebrew word of idols is apparently a derisive word. According to a footnote in the NIV study bible, the Hebrew word probably means “filthy” or “detestable idols.”

Leviticus 26:30	Hebrew word for idol
I will destroy your high places, cut down your incense altars, and pile your dead bodies on the lifeless forms of your idols, and I will abhor you.	Glulikm - it is translated idols, but it has the connotation of "ordure"---which is excrement. I wonder if the word means a pile of you-know-what. 😊

⁵ I will lay the dead bodies of the Israelites in front of their idols, and I will scatter your bones around your altars. ⁶ Wherever you live, the towns will be laid waste and the high places demolished, so that your altars will be laid waste and devastated, your idols smashed and ruined, your incense altars broken down, and what you have made wiped out. ⁷ Your people will fall

slain among you, and you will know that I am the LORD.

Note: We idolize so many things. Especially our personal freedom. I like what a friend of mine wrote about that in an email in response to the stubbornness of the Israelites spoken of by Ezekiel. He writes:

I fear we Americans could be compared to “stiffnecked Israelites”. We are behaving similarly to them, regarding social distancing etc.

Is it ironic, or is it understandable, that we the wealthiest people in the world, should feel so self entitled? We have made our personal freedoms an idol. We want to do what we want, when we want to do it. We really are spoiled as a nation.

I agree John. Let’s continue:

⁸“But I will spare some, for some of you will escape the sword when you are scattered among the lands and nations. ⁹ Then in the nations where they have been carried captive, those who escape will remember me—how I have been grieved by their adulterous hearts, which have turned away from me, and by their eyes, which have lusted after their idols.

Note: God speaks of His people’s relationship with Him in terms of adultery and lust. Israel had become God’s “wife.” He was her husband. Look at this verse in Exodus.

Exodus 34:20

¹⁵ “Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land; for when they prostitute themselves to their gods and sacrifice to them, they will invite you and you will eat their sacrifices

They will loathe themselves for the evil they have done and for all their detestable practices.

Note: This is an important place to get to---to loathe the sin side of your nature, the dark side. To loathe detestable practices.

¹⁰ And they will know that I am the LORD; I did not threaten in vain to bring this calamity on them.

¹¹“This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Strike your hands together and stamp your feet and cry out “Alas!” because of all the wicked and detestable practices of the people of Israel, for they will fall by the sword, famine and plague.

Note: Ezekiel is given a command to punctuate his words with dramatic gestures and symbolic acts. Are we too sophisticated for this kind of behavior? Probably.

¹² One who is far away will die of the plague, and one who is near will fall by the sword, and anyone who survives and is spared will die of famine. So will I pour out my wrath on them.

¹³ And they will know that I am the LORD, when their people lie slain among their idols around

their altars, on every high hill and on all the mountaintops, under every spreading tree and every leafy oak—places where they offered fragrant incense to all their idols.¹⁴ And I will stretch out my hand against them and make the land a desolate waste from the desert to Diblah^[a]—wherever they live. Then they will know that I am the LORD.”

Footnotes:

1. **Ezekiel 6:14** Most Hebrew manuscripts; a few Hebrew manuscripts *Riblah*

Note:

They will KNOW I am the Lord.

Do we know that God is the Lord?

Do we know that He’s the one in charge?

Do we care? At the end of all time, this will eventually happen:

Isaiah 45:23 New International Version (NIV)

²³ By myself I have sworn,
my mouth has uttered in all integrity
a word that will not be revoked:
Before me every knee will bow;

Romans 14:11 New International Version (NIV)

11 It is written:
“‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord,
‘every knee will bow before me;
every tongue will acknowledge God.’”

Philippians 2:10-11 New International Version (NIV)

10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Paul equates that with everyone knowing that Jesus Christ is Lord. Amen!