

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 8²

“The End Has Come.” That’s the way Ezekiel 7 began. And it ended attain with the phrase---“Then they will know that I am the Lord.” In Ezekiel 8, we’ll see things the Lord found so heartbreaking. There was idolatry in the Temple! Ezekiel has some fantastic visions and the Lord takes him to Jerusalem via the Spirit. It’s fascinating to see what the Lord does with His people, and how He is able to transport Ezekiel. In this chapter, He begins Ezekiel’s journey by lifting him up by the hair on his head. Would you allow God to do that to you? Would it be considered permissible today?

Let’s see what happens!

¹ NOT TO BE REPRODUCED OR UPLOADED TO WEB WITHOUT EXPRESS PERMISSION OF AUTHOR.

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.)

Jeremiah 29:1-5
New International Version (NIV)

Exiles Could Build Homes

29 This is the text of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to . . . exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. . . .⁴This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵"Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. ⁶Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. ⁷Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."

Ezekiel 8 New International Version (NIV)

Idolatry in the Temple

Note: There will be 4 different types of idolatry shown.

1. "The idol of jealousy"
2. "Crawling things and unclean animals"
3. "Mourning for the god Tammuz"
4. "bowing down to the sun"

8 In the sixth year, in the sixth month on the fifth day, while I was sitting in my house and the elders of Judah were sitting before me, the hand of the Sovereign LORD came on me there.

Note: As you can see in the side bar, they were to settle down and build houses and make a life.

²I looked, and I saw a figure like that of a man.^[a]

Note: The text note says a "fiery" figure.

From what appeared to be his waist down he was like fire, and from there up his appearance was as bright as glowing metal. ³He stretched out what looked like a hand and took me by the hair of my head.

Note: This just seems funny to me. They were a very demonstrative, physical, emotional people. God was too. Imagine Him lifting you by the hair of your head. Between heaven and earth, no less!

The Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and in visions of God he took me to Jerusalem,

Note: He was transported in visions. To all kinds of places. This happened to Paul once. He said:

²I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. ³And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows— ⁴was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, (2 Corinthians 12)

The vision was real and palpable and an amazing experience. How fun would it be if we could all have such visions!

to the entrance of the north gate of the inner court, where the idol that provokes to jealousy stood.

Note: The NIV bible feels this is an Asherah pole, on taken down 30 years earlier by King Josiah. ³

⁴And there before me was the glory of the God of Israel, as in the vision I had seen in the plain.

⁵Then he said to me, “Son of man, look toward the north.” So I looked, and in the entrance north of the gate of the altar I saw this idol of jealousy.

⁶And he said to me, “Son of man, do you see what they are doing—the utterly detestable things the Israelites are doing here, things that will drive me far from my sanctuary? But you will see things that are even more detestable.”

Note: God’s being has really hard time with sin. He would be driven away. Wow.

⁷Then he brought me to the entrance to the court. I looked, and I saw a hole in the wall. ⁸He said to me,

Exodus 20:5 New International Version (NIV)
⁵You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for **I, the LORD your God, am a jealous** God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me,

³ What Is an Asherah Pole? These poles, or sometimes stylized trees, stood as a sacred monument and tribute to the Canaanite goddess, Asherah. According to Canaanite myth, this mother goddess created several gods in the Canaanite pantheon with the other creator god, El. The Canaanites often worshipped her via trees (Asherah poles) because of her association with the tree of life. <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/bible/what-is-an-asherah-pole.html>

2 Kings 23:31-35 (NIV)

³¹Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. His mother's name was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah; she was from Libnah. ³²He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, just as his predecessors had done. ³³Pharaoh Necho put him in chains at Riblah in the land of Hamath so that he might not reign in Jerusalem, and he imposed on Judah a levy of a hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold. ³⁴Pharaoh Necho made Eliakim son of Josiah king in place of his father Josiah and changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim. But he took Jehoahaz and carried him off to Egypt, and there he died. ³⁵Jehoiakim paid Pharaoh Necho the silver and gold he demanded. In order to do so, he taxed the land and exacted the silver and gold from the people of the land according to their assessments.

"Son of man, now dig into the wall." So I dug into the wall and saw a doorway there.

⁹And he said to me, "Go in and see the wicked and detestable things they are doing here."

Note: A secret door way found when you "dug into the wall." My friend John says this:

The wall of Jerusalem is our own defense mechanisms. But we have Chinx in our wall, and if we look deeper inside ourselves, we can see things that are contrary to God's laws of love. If I keep trying to defend myself, I will never see my own faults. Or acknowledge that they are faults indeed. I will be a hard hearted, stiffnecked person, with whom God is not pleased.

Interesting. What walls are around you? When you dig in deep, what secret doorways to "sin" are there? God sees!

¹⁰So I went in and looked, and I saw portrayed all over the walls all kinds of crawling things and unclean animals and all the idols of Israel.

Note: The NIV study bible says this was probably reflecting Egyptian influence. They discern that from what happened when the King of Judah was a puppet installed by the Egyptians. That's interesting. They had many animal gods.



¹¹In front of them stood seventy elders of Israel, and Jaazaniah son of Shaphan was standing among them. Each had a censer in his hand, and a fragrant cloud of incense was rising.

Note: Incense represents smoke. Why do people want to worship what they see rather than the true God? Something to ponder.

¹²He said to me, "Son of man, have you seen what the elders of Israel are doing in the darkness, each at the shrine of his own idol? They say, 'The LORD does not see us; the LORD has forsaken the land.'" ¹³Again, he said, "You will see them doing things that are even more detestable."

Note: What do we do in the "darkness" in the secret rooms of our lives? Don't we know the Lord always sees us? Don't do anything you can't do in front of the Lord!

¹⁴Then he brought me to the entrance of the north gate of the house of the LORD, and I saw women sitting there, mourning the god Tammuz.

Note: This was the Babylonian fertility god, who apparently died at the end of summer and resurrected annually I guess in the spring. Some say he is the god "desired by women" in Daniel 11:37.

¹⁵He said to me, "Do you see this, son of man? You will see things that are even more detestable than this."

¹⁶He then brought me into the inner court of the house of the LORD, and there at the entrance to the temple, between the portico and the

altar, were about twenty-five men. With their backs toward the temple of the LORD and their faces toward the east, they were bowing down to the sun in the east.

⁷Where can I go from your Spirit?

Where can I flee from your presence?

⁸If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

⁹If I rise on the wings of the dawn,

if I settle on the far side of the sea,

¹⁰even there your hand will guide me,

your right hand will hold me fast.

¹¹If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,"

¹²even the darkness will not be dark to you;

the night will shine like the day,

for darkness is as light to you.

Psalm 138

¹⁷He said to me, "Have you seen this, son of man? Is it a trivial matter for the people of Judah to do the detestable things they are doing here? Must they also fill the land with violence and continually arouse my anger? Look at them putting the branch to their nose!

Note: This is a ceremonial gesture of worship not documented elsewhere in the Scripture. The literal Hebrew reads "putting a pruned slip (twig) to the nose."

¹⁸Therefore I will deal with them in anger; I will not look on them with pity or spare them. Although they shout in my ears, I will not listen to them."

Note: God is really angry at sin. And sometimes, He expresses His anger until its spent. Wow.

Footnotes:

- a. **Ezekiel 8:2** Or saw a fiery figure