

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 20 Part 2²**

So . . . God revealed Himself to Israel in Egypt. And in this chapter, things about Israel are revealed---embedded tendencies that moderated her behavior all her history. There’s a lot of talk going on these days about embedded racism, etc. Can people struggle with embedded sinful tendencies? I think they can! And they impact their behavior all their existence. Until they finally give up on what “they” do and let God be their Sovereign tree of life God! Let’s see what we can learn from God’s word. Enjoy!

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.)

Ezekiel 20 New International Version (NIV)

20 ⁵ . . . say to them:

‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: On the day I chose Israel, I swore with uplifted hand to the descendants of Jacob and **revealed myself to them in Egypt.**

We studied about how God “revealed” Himself historically. First through the prophets, and finally, and most perfectly, through His Son.

But look at what points God wanted to get across to His people.

With uplifted hand I said to them, “I am the LORD your God.” ⁶ On that day I swore to them that I would bring them out of Egypt into a land I had searched out for them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most beautiful of all lands. ⁷ And I said to them, “Each of you, get rid of the vile images you have set your eyes on, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.”

So notice what He brings up as key things at this revelation.

1. “I am the LORD your God.”

The Literal Translation says “I am Yahweh your Elohim.”

Did a little search on this---didn’t want to get into to it too much, but here is something that I feel is quote worthy. God is identifying Himself as the God, superior to anything else that is called “god.”

Variations of this declaration is found at least 70 times throughout the Bible. This supports the 164 instances of “I am Jehovah.” It gives a clear understanding that Jehovah wants everyone to know his name.³

God wants us to know His name! Ultimately, Jesus will reveal the name that He wants us to know through Him----Father!

2. I would bring them out of Egypt into a land I had searched out for them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most beautiful of all lands.

John 17:25-26 Young's Literal Translation (YLT)

²⁵ `Righteous Father, also the world did not know Thee, and I knew Thee, and these have known that Thou didst send me, ²⁶ and **I made known to them Thy name**, and will make known, that the love with which Thou lovedst me in them may be, and I in them.'

³ <https://www.quora.com/Why-does-it-constantly-say-I-am-the-Lord-or-I-am-the-Lord-your-God-and-other-variations-so-many-times-in-the-Bible-even-in-the-same-passages?share=1>

In his **commentary on Exodus**, Doug Stuart explains idolatry's attraction with nine points. You'll likely want to save this list and file it for future sermons or Bible studies. **From:** <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevindeyoung/why-idolatry-was-and-is-attractive/>

- 1. Idolatry was guaranteed.** The formula was simple. Carve a god out of wood or stone and the god would enter the icon. Now that you have a god in your midst, you can get his (or her) attention quickly. Your incantations, oaths, and offerings will always be noticed.
- 2. Idolatry was selfish.** Scratch the gods backs and they'll scratch yours. They need food and sacrifices; you need blessings. Do your stuff and they'll be obliged to get you stuff.
- 3. Idolatry was easy.** Ancient idolatry encouraged vain religious activity. Do what you like with your life. So long as you show up consistently with your sacrifices, you'll be in good shape.
- 4. Idolatry was convenient.** Gods in the ancient world were not hard to come by. Access was almost everywhere. Statues can be used in the home or on the go.
- 5. Idolatry was normal.** Everyone did it. It's how woman got pregnant, how crops grew, how armies conquered. Idolatry was like oil: nothing ran in the ancient world without it.
- 6. Idolatry was logical.** Nations are different. People are different. Their needs and desires are different. Obviously, there must be different deities for different strokes. How could one god cover all of life? You don't eat at one restaurant do you? The more options the better. They can all be right some of the time.
- 7. Idolatry was pleasing to the senses.** If you are going to be especially religious, it helps to be able to see your god. It's harder to impress people with an invisible deity.
- 8. Idolatry was indulgent.** Sacrificing to the gods did not often require sacrifice for the worshiper. Leftover food could be eaten. Drink could be drunk. Generosity to the gods leads to feasting for you.
- 9. Idolatry was sensual.** The whole system was marked by eroticism. Rituals could turn into orgies. Sex on earth often meant sex in heaven, and sex in heaven meant big rain, big harvests and multiplying herds.

Can you see the attraction of idolatry? "Let's see I want a spirituality that gets me lots, costs me little, is easy to see, easy to do, has few ethical or doctrinal boundaries, guarantees me success, feels good, and doesn't offend those around me." That'll preach.

God constantly identifies Himself as "I am the Lord your God who has brought you out of the Land of Egypt, out of the Land of slavery."

That's what God does for us all! God brings us out of the land of slavery to "pleasures and treasures." God brings us into a journey with Him, a sojourn, into the Kingdom of Heaven.

That would be a great book title. "Sin's Pleasure" and Egypt's Treasures: Are You Still Living in the Land of Slavery?

⁸ "But they rebelled against me and would not listen to me; they did not get rid of the vile images they had set their eyes on, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt. So I said I would pour out my wrath on them and spend my anger against them in Egypt.

Even at the very beginning of their existence, the Israelite had embedded tendencies to sin. Notice what Joshua had to tell them, even 40 years after their sojourn in Egypt.

Joshua 24:14 Young's Literal Translation (YLT)

¹⁴ And now, fear ye Jehovah, and serve Him, in perfection and in truth, and turn aside the gods which your fathers served beyond the River, and in Egypt, and serve ye Jehovah;

They'd learned about "gods" in the land of Egypt, and served them. They simply couldn't get them out of their system. This is interesting to me, because the God of the Bible, who is a loving, kind and God and invisible and brilliant, seems to be a God no one ever really "wants" to serve! The Bible reveals a God that people consistently rejected. Why would someone "make that up?" Why wouldn't they try to "sell" an easier version of God? I submit it's because the God revealed in the Scripture is the one and only and "real" God who is Reality! See the sidebar for one man's take on that.

Hebrews 11

²⁴ by faith Moses, having become great, did refuse to be called a son of the daughter of Pharaoh,

²⁵ having chosen rather to be afflicted with the people of God, than to have sin's **pleasure** for a season,

²⁶ greater wealth having reckoned the reproach of the Christ than the **treasures** in Egypt, for he did look to the recompense of reward;

²⁷ by faith he left Egypt behind,

Paul on spiritual immaturity and elemental religion.

Galatians 4 (NIV)

4 What I am saying is that as long as an heir is underage, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. ² The heir is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. ³ So also, when we (humanity is what he means) were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces ^[or under the basic principles, elementary religious training] of the world. ⁴ But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. ⁶ Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir. ⁸ Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. ⁹ But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable forces? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? You are observing special days and months and seasons and years!

But notice this aspect of God’s self-revelation. He not only revealed Himself to the Israelites directly. He did it in plain view of others. He was introducing Himself to the nations through His revelation to Israel! He sometimes moderated their punishments accordingly too! He didn’t want to profane His name in the eyes of these nations. He wanted to show that He was loyal, even if they weren’t!

⁹ But for the sake of my name, I brought them out of Egypt. I did it to keep my name from being profaned in the eyes of the nations among whom they lived and in whose sight I had revealed myself to the Israelites. ¹⁰ Therefore I led them out of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness. ¹¹ I gave them my decrees and made known to them my laws, by which the person who obeys them will live. ¹² Also I gave them my Sabbaths as a sign between us, so they would know that I the LORD made them holy.

These are all beautiful things. The law is just, and holy and good! It describes how God’s life translates into a culture at any given time of their development. When the Israelites (mankind) were “children” spiritually, they were under an elemental form of religion. Now that humanity has supposedly matured, we all should seek something more!

¹³ “Yet the people of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness. They did not follow my decrees but rejected my laws—by which the person who obeys them will live—and they utterly desecrated my Sabbaths. So I said I would pour out my wrath on them and destroy them in the wilderness. ¹⁴ But for the sake of my name I did what would keep it from being profaned in the eyes of the nations in whose sight I had brought them out. ¹⁵ Also with uplifted hand I swore to them in the wilderness that I would not bring them into the land I had given them—a land flowing with milk and honey, the most beautiful of all lands—¹⁶ because they rejected my laws and did not follow my decrees and desecrated my Sabbaths. For their hearts were devoted to their idols. ¹⁷ Yet I looked on them with pity and did not destroy them or put an end to them in the wilderness. ¹⁸ I said to their children in the wilderness, “Do not follow the statutes of your parents or keep their laws or defile yourselves with their idols. ¹⁹ I am the LORD your God; follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. ²⁰ Keep my Sabbaths holy, that they may be a sign between us. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.”

²¹ “But the children rebelled against me: They did not follow my decrees, they were not careful to keep my laws, of which I said, “The person who obeys them will live by them,” and they desecrated my

Sabbaths. So I said I would pour out my wrath on them and spend my anger against them in the wilderness. ²² But I withheld my hand, and for the sake of my name I did what would keep it from being profaned in the eyes of the nations in whose sight I had brought them out. ²³ Also with uplifted hand I swore to them in the wilderness that I would disperse them among the nations and scatter them through the countries, ²⁴ because they had not obeyed my laws but had rejected my decrees and desecrated my Sabbaths, and their eyes lusted after their parents' idols. ²⁵ So I gave them other statutes that were not good and laws through which they could not live; ²⁶ I defiled them through their gifts—the sacrifice of every firstborn—that I might fill them with horror so they would know that I am the LORD.'

Embedded sin played itself out over and over. They continually failed. God gave them over to what they wanted so they'd get sick of it.

We'll see what happens next time, as we conclude this chapter.