

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*



**ChristIN
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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

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Ezekiel 22 Part 2²

So we’re going to read a passage I thought deserved a stand-alone focus. It talks about Israel being like metal that is purified. It made me think of the Scripture that says that the trail of our faith: the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire (1 Peter 1:7). **God cleanses and purifies his people. And it may “ouch” for a while! But He does so because He loves us. He cleanses us even though we may not be aware of Him or it. God is the God of all, and you are still His, even if you don’t know it.**

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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.)

The Story of Three Young Men Who Refused to Worship Foreign Gods

3 King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold . . . **6** Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.” . . . **14** and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? . . . if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace.

Their faith was truly being tested! They were willing to enter the trial and testing of it, a fiery furnace. And at the end, they were refined!

17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. **18** But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods . . . **19** Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual **20** and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. **21** So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. **22** The king’s command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, **23** and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace. . . **24** Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, “Weren’t there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?”

They replied, “Certainly, Your Majesty.”

25 He said, “Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.”

I think this was Jesus, or a pre-incarnation vision of Him. Or an angel. DON'T RUN FROM YOUR TRIAL. RUN INTO IT. You will be met by Jesus there! And be refined yourself.

Ezekiel 22 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁷ Then the word of the LORD came to me:

Here’s what the NIV says about this section: “Jerusalem will become God’s “furnace” in which he melts down all those remaining in and around the city in order to cleanse away the “dross.”

Again, I see an analogy here, and I can’t help but wonder if the apostle Peter got this concept from that Scripture and that situation.

1 Peter 1:6-7 New International Version (NIV)

⁶ In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

At the very least, and analogy is being drawn here---of gold (something very precious) being “refined” by fire. Now in honestly reading the above Scripture, I see that “fiery” trials are more valuable than even gold. But the analogy seems to fit! Look at these Scriptures that to me speak of fiery trials, a fiery God, and at least a concept of spiritual purification that takes place in the lives of those who love Him. And notice the sidebar, when the faith of three servants of God are proven in a very fiery trial. Look who shows up among them!

Matthew 3:11	Psalm 12:6	Hebrews 12:29	Dt 4:24
¹¹ “I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I . . . (Jesus) He will baptize you in the	And the words of the LORD are flawless, like silver purified in a crucible, like gold[or “earth”]	²⁹ for our “God is a consuming fire.”	²⁴ For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

Holy Spirit and fire.	refined seven times.		
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The commentary on Psalm 12:6 adds this:

Crucible: In the metallurgy of the ancient Near East, heating in special furnaces was used to extract silver and gold from crushed ore and to remove the dross (base metals such as copper, tin, iron, bronze and lead). This process provided vivid metaphors for many of Israel’s poets.

Psalms 66:10	Proverbs 17:3	Proverbs 27:21	Isa 1:22a, 25	Isa 48:10	Jer 6:27-30	Zec 13:9	Mal 3:3
For you, God, tested us; you refined us like silver.	The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but the LORD tests the heart	The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but people are tested by their praise.	Your silver has become dross . . . 25 . . . I will thoroughly purge away your dross and remove all your impurities.	See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.	27 “I have made you a tester of metals and my people the ore, that you may observe and test their ways. 28 They are all hardened rebels, going about to slander. They are bronze and iron; they all act corruptly. 29 The bellows blow fiercely to burn away the lead with fire, but the	This third I will put into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, ‘They are my people,’ and they will say, ‘The LORD is	³ He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness,

					refining goes on in vain; the wicked are not purged out. 30 They are called rejected silver, because the LORD has rejected them.”	our God.””	
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So, in this context, read this section of Ezekiel 22.

¹⁸“Son of man, the people of Israel have become dross to me; all of them are the copper, tin, iron and lead left inside a furnace. They are but the dross of silver. ¹⁹Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: ‘Because you have all become dross, I will gather you into Jerusalem. ²⁰As silver, copper, iron, lead and tin are gathered into a furnace to be melted with a fiery blast, so will I gather you in my anger and my wrath and put you inside the city and melt you. ²¹I will gather you and I will blow on you with my fiery wrath, and you will be melted inside her. ²²As silver is melted in a furnace, so you will be melted inside her, and you will know that I the LORD have poured out my wrath on you.’”

God does refine us! But He does so to purify us, and save us. Let’s close with this Scripture about the judgment day.

1 Corinthians 3:10-17 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁰By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. ¹¹For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹²If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, ¹³their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person’s work. ¹⁴If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward.

Wow. This is speaking to church leaders. Wow. What kind of Christians are we creating?

¹⁵If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames. ¹⁶Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that

God's Spirit dwells in your midst? ¹⁷ If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.

Now read the closeout verses of Ezekiel 22. It makes sense that these "leaders" are being destroyed!

²³ Again the word of the LORD came to me: ²⁴ "Son of man, say to the land, 'You are a land that has not been cleansed or rained on in the day of wrath.' ²⁵ There is a conspiracy of her princes within her like a roaring lion tearing its prey; they devour people, take treasures and precious things and make many widows within her. ²⁶ **Her priests do violence to my law and profane my holy things; they do not distinguish between the holy and the common; they teach that there is no difference between the unclean and the clean;** and they shut their eyes to the keeping of my Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them. ²⁷ **Her officials within her are like wolves tearing their prey; they shed blood and kill people to make unjust gain. ²⁸ Her prophets whitewash these deeds for them by false visions and lying divinations.** They say, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says?'—when the LORD has not spoken. ²⁹ The people of the land practice extortion and commit robbery; they oppress the poor and needy and mistreat the foreigner, denying them justice.

³⁰ "I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found no one. ³¹ So I will pour out my wrath on them and consume them with my fiery anger, bringing down on their own heads all they have done, declares the Sovereign LORD."

Wow!

Footnotes:

1. **Ezekiel 22:16** Or *When I have allotted you your inheritance*
2. **Ezekiel 22:25** Septuagint; Hebrew *prophets*