

## **Hebrews 4:12**

### **The Big Story of the Bible Continues ....Joseph - Deuteronomy**

When we ended the last week, God had blessed Abraham and Sarah with a son, Isaac, even though Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90.

Isaac has twins, and God chooses to keep His promise to Abraham through the younger twin, Jacob.

God changes Jacob's name to Israel, and Israel has 12 sons.

God's promise to give Abraham many descendants is coming true.

The descendants of these Jacobs 12 sons eventually become the 12 tribes of Israel.

### **Genesis 37-50: The Life of Joseph**

One of Jacob's sons is Joseph.

You may have heard of Joseph's "coat of many colors." It was a special gift that his father, Jacob, gave him.

Jacob shows favoritism to Joseph, and Joseph seems to be pretty arrogant toward his brothers, so they despise him and end up selling Joseph into slavery, and they lie to their father and tell him that Joseph was killed by a wild animal.

Joseph winds up in Egypt, working for a man named Potiphar. Potiphar likes Joseph, but one day, Potiphar's wife tries to seduce Joseph. Joseph refuses and flees the house.

Embarrassed and angry, Potiphar's wife lies and says Joseph tried to take advantage of her.

Joseph is thrown in prison.

While he's in prison, he meets Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker. God gives Joseph the ability to interpret their dreams for them, and his interpretations come true.

Two years later, Pharaoh has dreams that no one can interpret, and the cupbearer remembers Joseph.

Joseph is able to interpret Pharaoh's dreams.

The dreams are a message from God that Egypt will experience 7 years of abundance, followed by 7 years of famine.

Joseph suggests a plan for Egypt to store food during the time of abundance, so they will still have food during the famine. Pharaoh likes the plan so much that he makes Joseph second-in-command in Egypt.

When the famine comes, Joseph's family has to come to Egypt to get food. Joseph recognizes them and eventually reveals to them that he is still alive.

Pharaoh invites Joseph's entire family to come live in Egypt.

Joseph's brothers are afraid that he will take revenge on them, but in Genesis 50:19-20, he makes one of the great statements in the Bible: "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."

Joseph realized that God was at work in everything that had happened in his life (Romans 8:28), and God was using all of that to fulfill His promises.

Again, the entire story of the Bible (and the entire history of this world) is about God being a sovereign God who is working out His purposes and fulfilling His promises.

## **Exodus 1: The Growth and Enslavement of Israel**

Over the next several generations, the 70 people in Joseph's family who went to Egypt grow into about 2 million Israelites.

A new Pharaoh who did not know Joseph comes to power. He is afraid that the Israelites are so numerous that they could overthrow the Egyptians, so he makes them slaves.

Then, he commands the Egyptian midwives to kill every Israelite boy who is born.

The midwives refuse, so Pharaoh orders that all Israelite boys be drowned in the Nile (Exodus 1:22).

### **Exodus 2: The birth of Moses**

A baby named Moses is born. His parents hide him for three months, so he won't be killed.

When he gets too big to hide, they put him in a basket and hide him on the bank of the Nile.

Pharaoh's daughter comes to bathe and finds Moses.

She takes him back to the palace and raises him as her own.

Again, God is at work and in control of everything.

God uses the same Pharaoh who was trying to kill the Israelites to raise the man who will lead the Israelites out of Egypt!

When Moses is grown up, he witnesses an Egyptian beating an Israelite. He kills the Egyptian, and then has to flee to Midian, where he lives as a shepherd for 40 years, until...

### **Exodus 3-11: The Burning Bush, Plagues, and Passover**

God appears to Moses in a burning bush and tells Moses that He's going to use him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt.

God reveals His Name to Moses as "I AM WHO I AM" (Hebrew=Yahweh). This reminds us of God's eternal self-existence. "I AM defined by myself – by WHO I AM. I AM the ever-present, self-existent, all-sufficient one."

Compare this to Jesus' "I AM" statements in John (6:35 – I am the Bread of Life; 8:12 – I am the light of the world; 10:9 – I am the gate; 10:11 – I am the good shepherd; 11:25-26 – I am the resurrection and the life; 14:6 – I am the way and the truth and the life; 15:5 - I am the vine; and the biggest one – 8:58, Jesus says, "I tell you the truth, before Abraham was born, I am!")

The religious leaders try to kill Him for saying this, because they know He is claiming to be God!)

Moses tells Pharaoh to let the Israelites go, but Pharaoh refuses, so God sends ten plagues so "the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD" (Exodus 7:5).

This brings us back to the recurring theme in the Old Testament: Judgment and Grace.

**Judgment:** God sends 10 plagues. The last plague kills all the firstborn sons in Egypt.

**Grace:** God tells the Israelites to sacrifice a lamb and put its blood on the doorframe of their houses.

When God sees blood on the doorframe, He will "pass over" that house and spare the firstborn son (Exodus 12:12-13).

**This is a HUGE event in the biblical story.**

First, it reminds us of the theme of "substitutionary sacrifice."

God accepts the blood sacrifice of the lamb in place of the son.

Second, this event leads to the establishment of Passover as an annual, week-long Israelite feast.

Third, everything in the Passover points forward to Jesus.

He is called the "Lamb of God" in the New Testament (John 1:29), because He is sacrificed in our place.

He is sacrificed during Passover Week (Luke 22:7; John 13:1).

By His sacrifice, He provides a way for us to be forgiven, so God can “pass over” our sins and not punish us (Hebrews 7:27; 10:14).

### **Exodus 12-14: Israel’s Deliverance and the Egyptians Defeat**

Later, Pharaoh changes his mind and chases them down with his army. They’re penned against the Red Sea (Sea of Reeds), but God parts the sea so they can pass through on dry land.

The Egyptians follow and the walls of water close in on them and they drown.

### **Exodus 19 - Numbers 10 – The Israelites are at Mount Sinai**

They are now a nation of people who need rules and regulations to deal with their problems (for example, “If my ox gores your ox, what do I owe you?” “If I accidentally injure you, what do I owe you?” “If someone steals, what should the punishment be?”)

God gives rules and regulations to govern them, including the Ten Commandments.

God also gives instructions about sacrifices, offerings, and feasts, as well as instructions concerning the “traveling temple” called the tabernacle, where a priest will offer sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins in the “Most Holy Place” (the inner part of the tabernacle – “Holy of Holies” – separated from the rest of the tabernacle by a curtain).

The laws could be divided into three parts.... Civil Law, Ceremonial Law, and God’s Moral law.

In the New Testament, Hebrews tells us that Jesus is the fulfillment of this sacrificial system.

He's our Great High Priest (Hebrews 4:14) who entered the Most Holy Place (Hebrews 9:12) and sacrificed Himself once and for all for our sins (Hebrews 9:26).

When Jesus died on the cross, the curtain separating the Holy of Holies was torn in two, symbolizing that because of Jesus we can enjoy direct access to God (Matthew 27:51).

## **Leviticus 16: Day of Atonement**

Part of God's rules for Israel include setting aside one day per year as the Day of Atonement.

On that day (and that day only), the High Priest (and only the High Priest) is allowed to enter the Holy of Holies to be in God's presence.

He offers a bull as a sacrifice for his own sins. Then, he offers a goat as a sacrifice for the people's sins.

Then, he takes a second goat and places his hands on its head, as a symbol of placing the sins of Israel on its head, and releases it into the desert to carry away the sins of the people (Leviticus 16:21).

This goat is called the "scapegoat" (Leviticus 16:8), which literally means "the goat of removal."

In the New Testament, the Day of Atonement is fulfilled in Jesus. "(Jesus) is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for our sins but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

"You were redeemed... with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" (1 Peter 1:18-19). "

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

"(Jesus) sacrificed for their sins once for all when He offered Himself" (Hebrews 7:27).

On the cross, Jesus became our scapegoat, and God put our sin on Jesus, so that it can be removed from us.

Jesus atones for our sin by offering Himself as the once-for-all perfect sacrifice.

Now, by faith in Jesus, any person (not just the high priest) can approach God at any time (not just once a year), because He has opened the way into the “Holy of Holies” by His perfect sacrifice.

**Numbers 13: Land of Canaan Explored** God is ready to lead the Israelites into the land of Canaan and give it to them.

This is the land He promised Abraham 500 years earlier.

The Canaanites still live there, and so God calls the Israelites to wipe them out and possess the land.

Is this wrong? No, this is another example of judgment and grace.

**Judgment:** All the way back in Genesis 15, God told Abraham that He would only give Abraham’s descendants the land after the “sin of the Amorites (a group of the Canaanites) reached its full measure.”

In other words, God is not arbitrarily destroying the Canaanites. He is punishing them for their sin.

**Grace:** God is making the Israelites into a nation so all the other nations can know Him.

Any time a non-Israelite trusts God, He accepts them as part of His people. (Rahab is an example of a Canaanite that God doesn’t destroy, because she responded to God in faith.)

A spy is sent from each of the 12 tribes to scout out the land.

They come back and report that the land is great, but 10 of the 12 are afraid of the people in the cities.

Only Joshua and Caleb trust God and say they can take the land.

The 10 spies scare the people and convince them not to go, so they disobey God and stay in the desert.

**Judgment:** God makes them wander in the desert for 40 years until the entire generation of adults, other than Joshua and Caleb, die.

**Grace:** God allows the next generation to enter the land.

### **Numbers 21: The Bronze Snake**

While the Israelites wander in the desert, they grumble and complain against God on several occasions.

**Judgment:** God sends snakes into the camp to punish them for their grumbling.

**Grace:** God tells Moses to make a bronze snake and put it on a pole. If anyone is bitten, if he will look at the bronze snake, he will live.

In John 3:14-15, Jesus teaches that this pointed forward to Him. He says, "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."

**The Book of Deuteronomy: Means "Second Law"** (deutero = second; nomos = law).

Moses is about to die, and the new generation of Israelites is about to get to enter into the Promised Land.

Deuteronomy is Moses' final sermon to the Israelites, reminding the new generation of God's laws for them and how they are supposed to live for God as a nation.

God is about to fulfill His promise to Abraham, to make His descendants into a great nation in the land of Canaan.

**This reminds us again that the whole story of the Bible is about God. It's about what God has done in history to fulfill His promises.**

**Deuteronomy 4:34-39** – God does everything He does in history so they will know who He is and will acknowledge Him as God. And it's all because of His love, not at all because any of us deserve it (4:37; 7:7-8; 9:4-6; especially 9:23-29). Why does God spare them? For His own Name's sake!  
God's grace is for God's glory.