

lr-ot-11
How Can I Do This Great Wickedness
(Genesis 34; 37-39)
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(This material shows that the experiences of Joseph of Egypt were prophetic of the ministry of Jesus the Christ. But it also shows how those experiences had profound meaning for Joseph Smith and Christ's Latter-day work)

I. The significance of Joseph's life is shown by the preponderance of Genesis which is devoted to him.

A. Thirteen chapters of Genesis are devoted to the story of Joseph of Egypt.

B. Considering Genesis covers so many great personages, Adam, Enoch, Noah, Melchizedek, Abraham, Jacob, etc., why does Joseph's story receive so much attention?

1. A major reason is that it tells how Israel went into Egypt.

2. Even more importantly, while a true story, it contains great prophecy, giving *many* details of the future.

a. **Joseph's story foreshadows, or prophesies, of Jesus the Christ.**

b. **It also contains prophecy of Joseph Smith and Christ's great latter-day work.**

(These latter parallels will be discussed in the next scriptural readings).

II. Parallels between Joseph and Christ have been pointed out from the earliest Christian writers until the modern days, including many Latter-day Saint writers.

A. Joseph's name bears both the concepts of "sorrow" and "servant." And his life portrays the essence of the ultimate "Suffering Servant," Jesus the Christ.

B. The basic cause of sorrows for both is that they are greatly envied.

III. Consider the following scriptures. Consider each as to its parallels in the life of Jesus. Note there will not be perfect matches due to the vast differences between any mortal and Jesus the Christ. However there are many significant witness of the future Savior *although they do not always come in the same order as in Joseph's life.*

Genesis 37:2. Joseph and Jesus loved goodness and were disturbed by unrighteousness.

Genesis 37:3. Both were more honored by their fathers because of that righteousness, and each was given multiple spiritual gifts.

Genesis 37:4. Both were envied by peers of their days because of these gifts, and were despised accordingly.

Genesis 37:5-11. Both were shown they would receive power and authority and eventually rule in the heavens. Thus both were hated.

Genesis 37: 13-14. Both were sent to see if those given responsibility over their Father's people [flocks] were faithful in their duties.

IV. **The following sets of events portray Jesus' atonement, crucifixion and visit into Spirit Prison.** Note: no parallel between any mortal and Christ can be exactly perfect.

A. **Genesis 37:18-36.** Joseph is sold by his brothers. Jesus' kinship of Israelites sold him --- for *thirty pieces of silver* (the price of a slave in His time) and crucified Him, causing Him to be put into a pit or grave. Thus they unwittingly made an offering of His flesh (a coat in Joseph's case) to their Father, covered in His own Lamb's blood.

B. **Genesis 39:1-19.** Joseph is made a ruler. Jesus was made ruler over the New Israel being established by God on the earth. But an evil one (Satan) tempted Jesus to submit to him rather than to His Father [Jesus was tempted 40 days in the wilderness. He was also tempted in Gethsemane to forsake the terrible path He was on for our sake]. But He submitted Himself to God's will in both cases and eventually forsook His own flesh in scourging/crucifixion (as foreshadowed by Joseph's abandoned garment) rather than to submit to Satan's temptations..

C. **Genesis 39: 20-23.** Joseph was falsely accused and imprisoned. In spite of all of Jesus' virtues and innocence, He was falsely accused, killed, and eventually went into the Spirit Prison.

Genesis 39:22. Joseph became ruler of the prison. "And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison." (Jesus became Lord and Master over all the deceased).

Genesis 40:1-23. Joseph blessed some in that prison. While Jesus was in the Spirit Prison, He taught them [His teachings were typified by Joseph's]. He taught them that He had been "hanged upon a tree" [crucified], His flesh having become food to sustain life. He taught them how He had made an offering of wine [his own blood] to the ultimate ruler --- His Father in Heaven.

While in the Spirit Prison, Jesus taught of His atoning sacrifice, His crucifixion, death, resurrection. Some in the Spirit Prison would be released at that time, others would not, being left to suffer the second, or spiritual death.

Read: D& C 138:18-19 or more, telling of Jesus' visiting the Spirit Prison.

III. While Joseph's life taught of Jesus Christ, he was also a real person, who overcame real temptations.

A. Read Genesis 39:11-12. [Being tempted by the wife of his lord, he "left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out."]

B. Elaine Dalton made the following points to help us similarly overcome temptation.

"The Latin root word for *virtue* is *virtus* which means "strength."

"...There is no strength that is greater than the strength of virtue or any confidence that is more sure than the confidence of a virtuous life."....

She suggested entering into a program of strict training to obtain virtue and said, "When in training for a marathon, one has to follow a strict training plan in order to be prepared to go the distance. In the run of our life, we must also follow a strict training plan. There are things we must do every single day, without fail, in order to invite the Spirit's companionship into our lives." (Such as daily prayer and scripture reading).

She also said to virtuous young Latter-day Saints, "You are [a] banner! Your lives of purity and virtue are the banner that will cause the nations of the earth to look up --- to

come to the temple....The temple will be a strength and a protection to you in an ever-darkening world, and it will become an ensign not only to you but to the nations.”
(From fireside address, Sept. 13, 2009 in Marriott Center. Full text available at speeches.byu.edu.)

C. Today, while temptations may be far more pervasive, even seeping into our homes if we are not always watchful, the Lord has also given us vast resources for resisting temptation: through the Holy Spirit; through his multiple layers of scriptures; through living prophets; through church leaders; through multiple church services; through patriarchal blessings; and through supportive, exemplary families.

D. Furthermore, He has done all He can to help those who do slip and succumb to temptation, to rise up, be cleansed, and move forward.

1. “If any of you has slipped along the way, there are those who will help you to once again become clean and worthy. Your bishop and branch president is anxious and willing to help and will, with understanding and compassion, do all within his power to assist you in the repentance process, that you may once again stand in righteousness before the Lord.” (Thomas S. Monson, *Ensign*, May 2008, pp. 65-66).

IV. One of the great and marvelous characteristics of the Lord is that He helps turn all things to the good for His servants through their faithfulness, or return to faithfulness.

A. “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purposes” (Romans 8:28).