

lr-ot-11
How Can I Do This Great Wickedness
(Genesis 34; 37-39)
By Lenet Hadley Read

(Here is inspirational background: Material showing the experiences of Joseph of Egypt were prophetic of Jesus the Christ; also showing 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 prophets, 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 considerable prophecy of Joseph Smith and Christ's great latter-day work.

(These latter parallels will be discussed largely 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. The following scriptures show how Joseph's life has parallels to the life of Jesus. 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.*

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

B. **Genesis 37:3.** Joseph and Jesus were more honored by their Father because of that righteousness, and each was given multiple spiritual gifts (signified by Joseph's coat of colors).

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

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

E. **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 events portray Jesus' atonement, crucifixion and visit to Spirit Prison.** Again, no parallel between any mortal and Christ can be exactly perfect.

A. **Genesis 37:18-36.** Joseph's brothers sold him to slave hood. **Jesus was sold for the price of a slave, and His kin crucified Him, to be put into a pit or grave.**

B. **Genesis 37:31-33.** Joseph's brothers gave his coat to their father, dipped in lamb's blood. Jesus' kin made an offering of Jesus' flesh to His Father, **covered in His own Lamb's blood.**

C. **Genesis 39:1-19.** Joseph was made ruler in Egypt. **Jesus was ruler over the Earth.**

D. **Genesis 34; 37-39.** Joseph rejected Potiphar's wife, abandoning his garment rather than submit. Jesus kept God's will, **forsaking His own flesh rather than yield to His own will.**

E. **Genesis 39:20-23.** Joseph was falsely accused and imprisoned. **Jesus was falsely accused, killed, and eventually went to Spirit Prison.**

F. **Genesis 39:22.** Joseph was made ruler of the prison. **Jesus was Lord and Master of all the deceased --- those in Spirit Prison.**

G. **Genesis 40:1-23.** Joseph taught and blessed some in prison. **While Jesus was in the Spirit Prison, He taught: His teachings were typified by Joseph's interpretation of dreams. Jesus taught that He had been "hanged upon a tree" [crucified], His flesh having become food to sustain life. He taught 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, and resurrection. Some in the Spirit Prison, who believed Him, would be released at that time. Unbelievers would not, being left to suffer the second, or spiritual death.

[Read: D& C 138:18-19 etc, telling of Jesus' visiting the Spirit Prison.]

V. While Joseph's life taught of Jesus Christ, **he was also a real person, who overcame real temptations** (Genesis 39:11-12).

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

B. "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).

VI. 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).