

DOCTRINE OF CONSPIRACY

- I. Introduction.
- A. The belief exists that the human race has an inherent predisposition to believe in conspiracies based on its evolutionary past.
 - B. Since humans had to be watching for potential dangers, this led to a deeply-rooted paranoia, which has resulted in what many call **Conspiracy Theory**.
 - C. Anyone that believes that there is some corrupt and evil organization that is behind the scenes (political, social, economic, or religious scenes), manipulating people and events for its own benefit, and to the detriment of others, is considered to be a conspiracy theorist.
 - D. Therefore, those that advocate a belief in a malevolent being, opposed to God and man, who heads an organized force of unseen, fallen angels would fall into the category of conspiracy theorists.
 - E. However, even those that believe that conspiracies are largely non-existent, freely admit that conspiracies have existed, and can continue to exist.¹
 - F. In spite of the agreement that conspiracies do exist, they suggest that belief in conspiracies is simply a more satisfying way to live; the alternative, as they see it, is to admit that the world is a place of random chance.
 - G. They go on to assert that if one believes in conspiracies, it provides that person with an enemy to work against, as well as with friends to help; thus, belief in conspiracies creates meaning and purpose in life.
 - H. While some people have taken the reality of conspiracies to extremes (thus, bringing the valid concept into some disrepute), the Bible makes it plain that conspiracies are real, do occur, and have been successful.
- II. Vocabulary.
- A. Hebrew vocabulary.
 1. קָשַׁר (qashar), verb, 44X, this verb denotes the act of tying or binding something to something else; it is used of humans being bound together; it is used of joining together with others to conspire against another. The participle is used to denote those involved in a conspiracy. IISam. 15:31; IIChron. 33:25
 2. קֶשֶׁר (qeshar), m. noun, 16X, six times it is used as the cognate accusative with the above verb. In a good sense, which is not found in the Old Testament, it means an alliance or treaty; in a bad sense, an act of treason or conspiracy.
 3. מַחְשָׁבָה (mach^ashabhah), fem.noun, in a neutral sense, the word means a thought, device, or plan; in a negative sense it means the thoughts about how to harm someone, the plots or schemes used. Jer. 11:19; Lam. 3:60-61
 4. זָמַם (zamam), verb, primarily used of God carrying out His plans against the wicked; when it is used of men, it is often used of evil plans and schemes which are directed toward others. Ps. 31:13 The cognate noun מְזִמָּה (m^ezimmah) is used in Psalm 10:2.

¹ http://atheism.about.com/library/glossary/paranormal/bldef_conspiracytheory.htm

5. נָכַל (nakhal), verb, 4X, this verb focuses on the slick, deceptive, deceitful, and cunning actions involved in plotting against another. Gen. 37:18
 6. יָעַץ (ya'ats), verb, 80X, in a good sense, the verb means to give counsel, offer advice, deliberate, purpose or determine. In a bad sense, the verb is used of advising in a conspiracy. Ps. 83:3,5
 7. סוֹד (sodh), m.noun, 21X, the primary meaning of the noun is a gathering for confidential speech; it is sometimes translated as secret, or secret counsel when an evil end is in view. Ps. 64:2, 83:3 **“crafty, cunning, or secret plans”**
 8. רֶכֶס (rokhesh), m.noun, 1X, although the meaning is uncertain, the term has been translated as plottings, conspiracies, intrigues, and schemes. Ps. 31:20
 9. רָגַשׁ (raghash), 1X, to conspire or plot against someone. Ps. 2:1
 10. David employs a number of terms that refer to those that conspired against him, and the nature of their conspiratorial actions. Ps. 64:1-6
 - a. Secret counsel of evildoers; Heb. סוֹד (sodh). Vs. 2
 - b. The throng that works iniquity. Heb. רִגְשָׁה (righshah—a group of conspirators). Vs. 2
 - c. Their vicious verbal assaults. Vs. 3
 - d. An evil purpose/an evil endeavor. Vs. 5
 - e. Laying snares secretly. Vs. 5
 - f. They devise injustices; they carefully research their plot against the object of their conspiracy. Vs. 6
 - g. A well conceived plot; the literal Hebrew is a **searched out search, a thoroughly planned plot**. Vs. 6
- B. Greek vocabulary.
1. συστροφή (sustrophe), fem. noun, 2X in the New Testament, but used in the LXX to translate the first four terms above. A tumultuous gathering of people, a seditious or disorderly gathering; the product of a clandestine gathering, a plot, a conspiracy. Acts 19:40, 23:12
 2. συνωμοσία (sunomosia), fem. noun, 1X, lit. taking an oath together, swearing together, a plot, a conspiracy. Acts 23:13
 3. ἐνεδρεύω (enedreuo), verb, 2X, to conceal oneself in order to attack someone by surprise, to use intrigue, to plot against someone. Lk. 11:54; Acts 23:21
 4. ἐπιβουλή (epiboule), fem. noun, 4X, a secret plan to do evil to someone, a plot to cause them harm.
 5. συμβουλεύω (sumbouleuo), verb, 4X, in a positive sense, this verb means to carefully consider something, to meditate upon and advise a course of action; in a negative sense it means to be involved in a conspiratorial plot against someone.

- III. Definition and description.
- A. The legal definition of a conspiracy is “a combination or confederacy between two or more persons formed for the purpose of committing, by their joint efforts, some unlawful or criminal act, or some act which is lawful in itself, but becomes unlawful when done by the concerted action of the conspirators.”
 - B. A conspiracy may be of an ongoing nature; participants may drop out, and others join in.
 - C. The details of the operation may change from time to time; those involved do not need to know each other, or the part played by others.
 - D. A member does not need to know all the details of the plan or the operations; however, he must know the purpose of the conspiracy and agree to become a party to the plan in order to be part of the actual conspiracy.
 - E. Further, there is an agreement, a partnership in which each member becomes the agent or partner of every other member.²
 - F. It is not necessary to prove that the criminal plan actually was accomplished, that the conspirator was involved in all stages of the planning, or knew all the details involved.
 - G. Since people may be involved in advancing an agenda that is subversive and/or dangerous, it is important for all believers to exercise discernment when approached by someone advancing a questionable agenda.
 - H. Since each participant fundamentally becomes a partner or agent with those devising plans against any other person, government, or institution, each person involved in the conspiracy (no matter how little they know about it) shares in the guilt of those plotting it.
 - I. In that regard, there is a distinction between an actual conspirator, who is acting with premeditation, and one that may be inadvertently caught up in a conspiracy.
 - J. We refer to the uninformed participants as dupes.
 - K. A civil conspiracy is defined as two or more people acting in concert to defraud or cause other injury to another person or property, which results in damage to the person or property of the object of the conspiracy.
 - L. When conspiracy is directed toward the government it is referred to as sedition.
 - 1. Sedition involves the advocacy of uprising against the government, overthrow of the government, or support for an enemy of the government during time of war.
 - 2. This may involve speeches, publications, and organization of others so inclined.
 - 3. Sedition usually involves actually conspiring to disrupt the legal operation of the government; in that regard, it goes beyond simply expressing an opinion or protesting government policy.
 - 4. Sedition is distinguished from treason, which requires actual betrayal of the government, or espionage (spying, or transferring secrets to a known enemy).
 - M. Conspiracies are also conducted by those that are in positions of religious or political power and authority; these are generally known as **cabals**.

² Black's Law Dictionary, Sixth Edition

- IV. The various aspects of a conspiracy and those involved in it.
- A. A conspiracy involves two or more people that have agreed to pursue a particular course of action against another person, institution, or government; most generally, their actions are treacherous or treasonous
 - B. Conspiracies often can and do involve a planned attack, an overthrow, or the destruction of some duly constituted, existing authority.
 - C. However, as mentioned above, those in positions of power can also engage in conspiracy against those those that are less powerful. Jn. 11:53, 12:10
 - D. The conspirators rely on the element of secrecy, so they often act in a furtive manner by attempting to keep the details of their plans concealed from as many people as possible.
 - E. In that regard, the fewer conspirators that actually are informed about the precise details of the plot, the greater the chance that they will avoid detection.
 - F. **The plot** is their carefully considered and complex scheme for accomplishing an evil or unlawful end; whether or not they employ legal or illegal actions is somewhat irrelevant, since their goals are illicit in the first place.
 - G. **The intrigue** aspect of a conspiracy involves the secret, underhanded maneuvering in an atmosphere of duplicity, deceit, or dissimulation.
 - H. **The machinations** involve the laborious contriving of annoyances, injuries, or evils which are directed toward the object of the conspiracy.
 1. The conspirators may employ direct or indirect means to accomplish their evil ends.
 2. This may involved overt propaganda, disinformation, or other subtle, covert attempts to achieve their goals.
 3. Conspirators have to become very good at discrediting those who expose their machinations as frauds, cranks, morons, or attributing the conspiracy to them. Amos 7:10-11
 4. Throughout history, the success of these types of activities have kept conspiracies hidden; therefore, many conspiracies are not often exposed until well after the fact.
 - I. In any conspiracy, the following groups of people may be observed, each with their own level of guilt and culpability.
 - A. **The brains**—the initial group of two or more conspirators, who formulate and agree to the plan, and who generally seek to remain unnoticed; therefore, they often do not take part in any of the public aspects of the conspiracy.
 - B. **The second level conspirators**—these are people that the conspirators recruit in order to accomplish their objectives. These people are sometimes referred to as the hit-men, or strong-arms, who are told only as many of the details of the conspiracy as the brains deem necessary. These people are willing to perform the overt things necessary to fulfill the wishes of the plotters.
 - C. **The dupes**—these are the masses that the conspirators use to further their agenda; they become involved in a conspiracy, sometimes without any knowledge that there is a scheme in progress. However, these gullible fools become guilty by association, in spite of their ignorance of the actual plot.
 - D. While the brains are by far the most culpable, the second level conspirators have to be willing to perform their wishes and become guilty by means of their participation.
 - E. The dupes may not be fully aware of what is happening, but they become guilty by association, in spite of their relative ignorance.

1. Mob mentality often lures the innocent and unassuming into sharing in the guilt of those that acted as the brains. Mk. 15:8-15
2. It is recognized by those that study human behavior that joining with a mob can place a person into danger for which he/she may be unprepared.
3. A mob often has no real leader (even when it does, the leader may be acting illegally or immorally), regularly exhibits a lack of logic and reason, and may rapidly lose sight of right and wrong.
4. An individual, who might not be inclined to engage in particular behaviors may be more tempted if he/she becomes part of a mob, where responsibility seems diluted.
5. However, responsibility is not diluted; anyone involved with a mob becomes a sharer in any crime committed by those in the mob.

V. Biblical examples of conspiracies.

- A. It should be noted that the Mosaic expressly forbids the types of actions involved in a conspiracy, as well as forbidding mob actions. Ex. 23:1-2
- B. Religious conspiracies.
 1. Religious conspiracies are among the worst types of conspiracies since they involve overt rejection of certain doctrines, and often are directed toward God's spokesman. Acts 23:12
 2. When people reject sound doctrine and engage in religious reversionism, it is viewed as a conspiracy against the Lord. Jer. 11:9-14
 3. The prophets were guilty of conspiring against God by oppressing and murdering the less fortunate and weak for the sake of illicit gain. Ezek. 22:25-29
 - a. One certain sign of religious reversionism is the rejection of the doctrine of separation, which the communicators were responsible to teach. Ezek. 22:26
 - b. This type of conspiracy involves the rejection of sound doctrine and substituting human viewpoint lies by those responsible to teach the truth. Ezek. 22:28
- C. Another reason religious conspiracies are especially heinous is that the conspirators are often reversionists that have deceived themselves into believing that they are doing the work of God and defending His plan. Jn. 5:18, 16:2
- D. The most notable religious conspiracy was directed toward Jesus Christ during the First Advent.
 1. The brains/plotters in this case were religious leaders of Israel, who were immersed in religious reversionism. Jn. 11:47-53
 2. Jesus exposed their religious apostasy before the masses, which brought their wrath upon Him and resulted in a conspiracy to commit murder. Matt. 21:45-46; Mk. 11:15-18
 3. In order to accomplish their plan, they enlisted some second level conspirators and pressured the Roman authorities to execute their wishes.
 - a. When Judas initiated contact with the religious leaders, he became part of the conspiracy to murder Jesus. Mk. 14:10-11
 - b. Others became part of the conspiracy when they fulfilled the wishes of the Jewish leaders to illegally arrest Jesus. Jn. 18:3
 - c. Pilate became the last part of the conspiracy when he capitulated to pressure from the Jewish leaders to pronounce a death sentence on an innocent man. Mat. 27:11-26

4. The undiscerning masses that were in Jerusalem for the Passover were caught up in the mob mentality, these dupes became participants in the plot to murder the Messiah by calling for His crucifixion. Mk. 15:8-15
- E. Political conspiracies, which often amount to treason, are recorded in the Old Testament.
1. King David became the object of a conspiracy, which was originated by his son Absalom. IISam. 15:1-12,31
 2. Adonijah conspired against his father David, in order to usurp the throne from Solomon. IKings 1:5-10
 3. Baasha conspired against Nadab. IKings 15:27
 4. Elah was the object of a conspiracy, which was instigated by Zimri. IKings 16:9-10
 - a. Zimri had been captain of half the chariots under Elah, and, as it appears, made use of his position to conspire against his master.
 - b. The occasion for his crime was furnished by the absence of the army; under the direction of Omri, the army was engaged in the siege of the Philistine town Gibbethon.
 - c. While Elah was engaging in a drunken party in the house of his steward Arza, who may have been an accomplice in the plot, he was murdered by Zimri.
 - d. Zimri ascended the throne and put the remnant of Elah's family to death; however, the conspiracy lacked the support of the people, and Zimri committed suicide.
 5. Jehu conspired against Joram. IIKings 9:14ff
 6. The servants of Joash conspired against him. IIKings 12:20
 7. Amaziah was the object of a conspiracy. IIKings 14:19
 8. Pekah conspired against Pekahiah. IIKings 15:25
 9. Hoshea, the last king of the 10 northern tribes, conspired against Shalmaneser, which resulted in the first captivity in 721 BC. IIKings 17:1-6
 10. Amon, who was an evil king, was the object of a conspiracy that originated within the palace. IIKings 21:23
 11. As was often the case, the conspirators suffered the same fate as the one they successfully conspired against and killed. IIKings 21:24
- F. Other conspiracies include:
1. The conspiracy against Joseph by his brothers, who not only resented the fact that Jacob favored Joseph (Gen. 37:4), but resented and rejected the content of Joseph's prophetic dream. Gen. 37:8,18-19
 2. Moses endured conspiracies from Miriam and Aaron (Num. 12:1-2), those that wanted to return to Egypt Num. 14:1-4), and Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Num. 16:1ff
 3. Abimelech conspired with his family and the inhabitants of Shechem against Gideon's sons. Judges 9:1ff
 4. Delilah conspired with the Philistines against Samson. Judges 16:4ff
 5. The negative Jews conspired against Zechariah after he delivered God's message of judgment to them. IICChron. 24:20-21
 6. Sanballat and Tobiah organized a conspiracy to undermine the rebuilding of the walls in Jerusalem. Neh. 4:1-8
 7. Many nations have conspired throughout history to attack the Jews, or eliminate the nation of Israel. Ps. 83:1-8; Esther 3:6
 8. These anti-Semitic attacks are part of the strategy of Satan since he is aware that the destruction of the Jews would invalidate the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants.

9. The conspiracy against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego was led by some prominent Chaldeans during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. Dan. 3:8-12
 - a. The term **Chaldean** here refers to Chaldeans in the racial sense, members of the supposed master race of Babylon, and men of importance.
 - b. There was, no doubt, a racial element in the attack since they viewed these Jews as a race that was inferior to theirs, and a captive race at that.
 - c. They appealed to the king in the customary fashion, paying all due respect to Nebuchadnezzar, while attempting to get him to do their will.
 - d. In verses 10-11 they quote his edict word for word, demonstrating their great enthusiasm for the king as well as their great zeal for his laws.
 - e. They present themselves as the defenders of the newly decreed faith, seemingly defending the honor of the king, but secretly hating these Jews and wanting to eliminate them.
 - f. They inform him that there are people in his kingdom that are not complying with the cult of the statue; betraying their racial bias, they tell Nebuchadnezzar that **There are men, Jews!**
 - g. Their apparent success is only momentary, as God delivers the three Jews from the hands of the conspirators. Dan. 3:29-30
10. Daniel was the object of a conspiracy during the reign of Darius the Mede. Dan. 6:1-9
 - a. Consistently throughout this chapter the **commissioners** are mentioned first, suggesting that this conspiracy began with them and later involved those lesser officials under their authority.
 - b. While envy and jealousy primarily motivated the attack, these dissemblers camouflaged their real character as concern for the kingdom.
 - c. The periphrastic construction at the beginning of verse 4, **they became looking**, indicates that this was an ongoing effort by all involved, and not an isolated incident.
 - d. Therefore, once the entire group is briefed on the plan to get rid of Daniel, the conspiracy moves ahead by seeking any occasion of wrongdoing that would give them a legitimate reason to attack Daniel politically before Darius.
 - e. His enemies are ostensibly investigating him for malfeasance in office; any impropriety in his governmental dealings that would cast legitimate doubt on his service.
 - f. After some time had elapsed, and they could find no grounds to discredit Daniel, they determined that they had to resort to some other tactic.
 - g. Therefore, they devised a new strategy that would seem merely political to Darius, but would impose a religious issue for Daniel.
 - h. They not only conspired against Daniel, they engaged in a conspiracy against Darius as well.
 - i. Their seemingly respectful greeting (**Live forever**), is simply a covering for souls full of mental attitude envy, hatred, and pretense.
 - j. In their hypocrisy, they begin with an outright lie that there was complete agreement among all levels of governmental officials.

- k. They grossly exaggerate their case to the king by including every category of official in the kingdom as part of their request, giving the misleading impression that this was something that every official in the empire wanted.
 - l. As with the three Jews, their apparent success in conspiring against Daniel and the king is short-lived; they ultimately suffer for their crime and meet an ignominious death. Dan. 6:24
11. The nations of the last days are engaging in a prophesied international conspiracy against the Lord and against His Messiah. Ps. 2:1ff

VI. Conclusions.

- A. Since we have an Old Testament imperative against conspiracies and mob actions, which has not been abrogated by any New Testament teaching, we should never involve ourselves in either type of activity. Ex. 23:1-2
- B. Based on the fact that conspiracies involve secretive, duplicitous activities that are designed to harm others, they certainly constitute a violation of the Golden Rule. Matt. 7:12
- C. The believer should avoid involving himself in intrigue and attempts to undermine or destroy any legitimate authority, since all authority comes from God and those that exist have been established by Him. Rom. 13:1
 - 1. This means that the believer is primarily to submit himself/herself to those that have been granted authority over him/her.
 - 2. This includes all authorities within the Establishment Chain of Command. Rom. 13:1; Tit. 3:1; IPet. 2:13
 - 3. It also includes those within the Royal Chain of Command. ICor. 16:16; Heb. 13:17
- D. A careful study of the Word of God reveals that those that have engaged in conspiracies have often been those that were lacking in doctrinal character and integrity. IKings 1:5-7; IISam. 13:22-29, 15:1-4
- E. When one considers the law of sowing and reaping, it should come as no surprise that those that engage in this reprehensible and underhanded activity may reap similar consequences for their actions. IIKings 12:20, 14:5, 21:23-24
- F. Further, even though one may believe his cause to be righteous and just, he may be involving himself with others that have arrayed themselves against one that God supports. Ps. 7:1; Matt. 26:4; Acts 9:23
- G. If one becomes the object of a conspiracy, it is wise to recognize that God is the only source of real protection. Ps. 31:13-20