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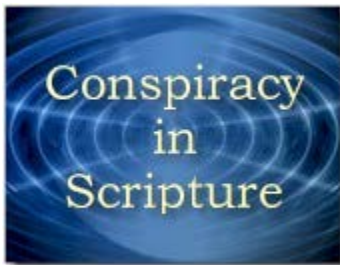
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Conspiracy in Scripture

by David Sielaff, November 2016

Read the accompanying [Newsletter for November 2016](#)



Conspiracy is a word that evokes emotions. Conspiracies and plots began soon after Adam and Eve began populating the world. There were conspiracies before the flood, soon after it, and conspiracies exist today. Conspiracies today involve every human endeavor — politics, government, trade, industry, science, medicine, communications, education, food, water, clothing, and housing. Some conspiracies are significant and they will continue until Christ subjects all creation to Himself. The apostle Paul told the Corinthians what is the goal of God for all His creatures:

“For he [Christ] must reign, till he has put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he has put all things under his feet. But when he says all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.”

• 1 Corinthians 15:25–28

I cite this passage so you understand not to despair as you read about the world as it was and is, with its large-scale plots, subversions, collusions, seditions, and treachery. Many of you could tell me of your personal knowledge of suffering from such illegalities. You are not alone. Scripture exposes the truth about humankind and reveals the depths of depravity of the children of Adam. This is the subject of “Conspiracy in Scripture.”

What Is a Conspiracy?

What does the word *conspiracy* mean? What does it mean to *conspire* with someone? Our verb *conspire* is a Middle English word, from an Old French term originally from a Latin construct *conspirare*, meaning “agree, plot.” The verb (from *con-* ‘together with’ + *spirare* ‘breathe’) has a sense to agree or plot with others, usually to **“make secret plans jointly to commit an unlawful or harmful act.”** The verb usually has an object, typically something wrong, evil or illegal. Therefore, the noun *conspiracy* (*conspiracies* plural) means **“a secret plan by a group to do something unlawful or harmful”** or **“the action of conspiring.”**¹ The word *plot* is often associated with the term *conspiracy*. The concepts of illegality and plurality are central to the word *conspiracy*. For example, Cain’s murder of Abel was not a conspiracy; Cain acted alone (Genesis 4:1–16).

¹ “Conspire” and “Conspiracy” in *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Of course, it is good to work with others toward a legitimate goal, and often only collective planning and effort can achieve desired results. When the means of achieving a goal, or the goal itself, involve illegality, then that fits the definition of conspiracy.

We read about a conspiracy in Psalm 2 and in many other episodes in the Bible, including the conspiracy to kill Jesus Christ — a conspiracy by Satan, Judas, the Jewish leaders, the Jewish people, and the Romans. It was a conspiracy that succeeded on a human level, yet it accomplished the exact purpose God desired.² Without Christ’s sacrifice (1 Corinthians 5:7), there could be no resurrection and glorification. From God’s perspective, that conspiracy failed. Read Psalm 2 below with the understanding that King David, the writer, was talking about an international conspiracy against God’s anointed King of His chosen people. It makes clear who is the ultimate enemy of the conspirators. In this Psalm, God is their ultimate enemy.

Psalm 2, a Psalm of David

- ¹ **“Why do the heathen [nations] rage, and the people[s] imagine a vain thing?**
² **The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against YHWH, and against his anointed, saying,**
³ **‘Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.’**
⁴ **He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: YHWH shall have them in derision.**
⁵ **Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.**
⁶ **‘Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. ⁷ I will declare the decree’**
⁸ **YHWH has said unto me [the decree],**
‘You are my Son; this day have I begotten you.
Ask of me, and I shall give you the heathen [nations] for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession.
⁹ **You shall break them with a rod of iron;**
You shall dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.’
¹⁰ **Be wise now therefore, O you kings: be instructed, you judges of the earth.**
¹¹ **Serve YHWH with fear, and rejoice with trembling.**
¹² **Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.**
Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.”

• *Psalm 2:1–12*

Verse 1. The word “nations” is *goin* in Hebrew indicating any group that is not Israelite (often translated *Gentiles*), while “people” is *amim* and it is plural in Hebrew. The sentence should be rendered **“Why do the nations rage, and the peoples imagine a vain thing?”** indicating that many peoples within the nations want to act in a way the author thinks is vain, empty, and foolish — to go against YHWH and His anointed.

Verses 1–2. The word *conspiracy* is not used in this Psalm, but four groups were involved in a conspiracy against YHWH. They were [1] the heathen or nations, [2] the people, [3] kings of the earth, and [4] rulers. They rebelled against God’s anointed who was King David of Israel, who had dominion over the nations of the region.

A similar situation is presented in Psalm 83³ when the nations surrounding Israel conspired to utterly destroy David’s kingship, the government of Israel, and even kill them off as a people:

“For, lo, your enemies make a tumult: and they that hate you have lifted up the head. They have taken crafty counsel against your people, and consulted against your hidden ones. They have

² Dr. Martin’s article, [“The Strange Ending to Sotah”](#) shows that later Jewish leaders feared Christ may have been the Messiah.

³ I discuss the past and future fulfillment of Psalm 83 in [“Israel and Judah: 7. Conspiracy and War.”](#)

said, 'Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.' For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against you."

• *Psalm 83:2–5*

This desire on the part of the nations was partially successful after the time of David, when the Kingdom of Israel split in two parts, the northern Kingdom of Israel (later called Samaria) and the southern Kingdom of Judah. Centuries later, Assyria destroyed Samaria and took most of its people captive to Assyrian dominated lands (2 Kings chapter 17).

Psalm 2:1 and 2 are quoted by the apostle Peter just after he and John were taken captive by the Sanhedrin, a few days after receiving the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. They were released and went to a gathering of disciples:

"And [Peter and John] being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said,

'Lord, you are God, which have made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: Who by the mouth of your servant David have said [quoting Psalm 2:1–2],

"Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ [Anointed, Messiah]."

For of a truth against your holy child Jesus, whom you have anointed, both [1] Herod, and [2] Pontius Pilate, with [3] the Gentiles, and [4] the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever your hand and your counsel determined before to be done."

• *Acts 4:23–28*

Again, God the Father (YHWH) turned the conspiracy of Herod, Pilate, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel (all of whom were responsible for Jesus' death) to God's glory by virtue of Christ's resurrection.

Verses 7–8. The New Testament quotes Psalm 2:7–8 in Matthew 3:17, 17:5; Acts 13:33; Romans 1:4; Hebrews 1:5–6, 5:5. These show that the verses in Psalm 2 clearly refer to Jesus Christ as God's ideal anointed.

Verse 8. Note the correspondence between these portions of two texts. Focus on key words:

Psalm 2:8	Psalm 82:8
<p>"You are my Son ... Ask of me, and I shall give you the [1] heathen [nations] <u>for your</u> [2] <u>inheritance, and the uttermost parts of</u> [3] <u>the earth</u> for your possession."</p>	<p>"Arise, O God [Elohim], judge [3] the earth: <u>for you</u> [2] <u>shall inherit all</u> [1] <u>nations.</u>"</p>

Nations, inheritance, earth. All three are to be given to the Son (Psalm 2:8) who is an Elohim (Psalm 82). Psalm 2 is David applying the blessing to himself. It will be secondarily fulfilled in Christ, the antitype, in a way far beyond what David ever imagined. No one else but Christ will inherit the earth. Psalm 82:8 adds the element of judgment. It will be fulfilled in Revelation 11:15. We know that ultimately all judgment will be from Christ as He says in John 5:22–23:

"For the Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honors not the Son honors not the Father which has sent him."

We are told in Revelation 11:15 this will take place in the future:

"And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever ["eons of the eons," meaning the superlative eons]."

Verse 9. This verse will be fulfilled in our future as it is cited in Revelation 2:9, 27, 12:5, and 19:15.

Verse 12. There is some controversy about the first three words in this verse, **“Kiss the Son.”** The word “Son” is not *ben*, the Hebrew word for son, it is *bar*, an Aramaic term for son. This may be an idiom phrase meaning “to do homage” or “kiss the ground.” In other words, give proper honor and obedience to the Son.

It has been long recognized that Psalms 1 and 2 are a single unit, a single expression of positive (Psalm 1) and negative (Psalm 2). Note that Psalm 1:1–2 begins with a blessing for those who do not follow evil, but are obedient to God. Psalm 2:12 ends with a blessing to those who are obedient to God.

At Sinai, Laws Against Conspiracy

At Mount Sinai, just after the Covenant was agreed to between YHWH and Israel, after the Commandments were written by the finger of God (Exodus 31:18; Deuteronomy 9:10), other laws were delivered by God for ritual operation of the sacrificial cult. Still other laws were given for social organization and operation of the legal system. One portion of those laws dealt with “justice for all” in Exodus 23:1–10.

Specific rules against conspiring with others to do evil were specified in the first two verses of Exodus chapter 23:

“You shall not raise a false report: put not your hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous [malicious] witness. You shall not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shall you speak in a cause to decline [turn aside] after many to wrest judgment.”

• ***Exodus 23:1–2***

These were not just verses about lying. That was prohibited by the Commandment against bearing false witness. These commands involve prohibition against collusion with others to lie as a witness involving a legal proceeding or court case. Satan’s lie to Eve in the garden was not a conspiracy because he acted alone.

A Post-Flood Conspiracy

The first conspiracy after the flood involved the attempted construction of the Tower of Babel. It was a collective act of rebellion against God. They wanted to prevent, without God’s help, another flood or some other catastrophe. They did not want to spread around the earth as God desired, but wanted to remain together, likely enforcing that togetherness with violence. They thought that unity without God was the means to power. God admitted they would do great (and evil) things if they remained unified:

“And YHWH said, ‘Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.’”

• ***Genesis 11:6***

Allen Ross explains further:

“Babylon was the prototype of all nations, cities, and empires that despise God’s instructions and raise themselves in pride. Babylon represented man’s megalomaniacal attempt to achieve world peace and unity by domestic exploitation and power. They would be brought down in confusion; herein was the warning to the new nation of Israel: any disobedient nation would be abased and brought low in spite of her pride, ingenuity, and strength.”

• ***Allen Ross, “Studies in the Book of Genesis,” 126⁴***

Of course, the people of Israel did not listen to that warning, any more than the people of Babel heeded God’s word to Noah in Genesis 9:1: **“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.”** They rejected what God wanted them to do, and collectively intended to do the opposite.

“And they said one to another, ‘Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly.’ And they

⁴ Allen P. Ross, “Studies in the Book of Genesis Part 4: The Dispersion of the Nations in Genesis 11:1–9,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 138 (1981): 126.

had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, **Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.**”

• **Genesis 11:3–4**

God is nowhere mentioned. The focus is all about what they shall do without God. Taking note of what they were doing, YHWH expressed Himself in terms similar to those of the people of Babel.

“**Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.’ So YHWH scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.**”

• **Genesis 11:7–8**

God decides to stop their work, separating them by language. He did this so the descendants of Adam would do what He wants: scatter and fill the earth. Since that time the people of the world have (grudgingly) done as God wanted (Genesis 9:19). Harold Stigers puts it concisely, “[I]t is the will of God, so long as sin is present in the world, to employ nationalism in the reduction of sin.”⁵

A unification of all people of the earth to one purpose will be allowed at the end of this present age. It will be accomplished briefly by the Antichrist and Satan. His and his cohorts’ actions will be a grand conspiracy directed against YHWH in rebellion (Daniel 7:23; Revelation 12:9, 16:14). After He returns, Christ will rule the nations as King, but people will continue to be separated into nations (Zechariah 14:9; Revelation 11:15).

God personally intervened to thwart the conspiracy at Babel. Today He allows many conspiracies to continue and have limited success until He chooses to intervene.

A List of Major Conspiracies in Scripture ⁶

Below is a list of conspiracies compiled in *New Nave’s Topical Bible*. Most involve rebellion, insurrection, or overthrow of a government or leader. As we noted from Genesis chapter 11 and from Psalm 22, God is the true object of many conspiracies. I examine some of these conspiracies in detail, the rest you can read about on your own. Read down the left column, then down the right column.

• Joseph’s brethren, against Joseph, Genesis 37:18–20	• People in Jerusalem, against Amaziah, 2 Kings 14:19
• Miriam and Aaron, against Moses, Numbers chapter 12, 14:4, 16:1–35	• Shallum, against Zachariah, 2 Kings 15:10
• Abimelech, against Gideon’s sons (his brothers), Judges 9:1–6	• Pekahiah, 2 Kings 15:23–25
• Gaal, against Abimelech, Judges 9:23–41	• Pekah, 2 Kings 15:30
• Delilah, against Samson, Judges 16:4–21	• Amon, 2 Kings 21:23–24
• Abner, against Ish-bosheth, 2 Samuel 3:7–21	• Sennacherib, 2 Kings 19:37
• Absalom against David, 2 Samuel 15:10–13, 31	• Amaziah, 2 Chronicles 25:27
• Jeroboam against Rehoboam, 1 Kings 14:2	• Against Ahasuerus, Esther 2:21–23
• Of Baasha, 1 Kings 15:27	• Against Jeremiah, Jeremiah 18:18
• Of Zimri, 1 Kings 16:9	• Against Daniel, Daniel 6:4–17
• Of Jezebel, against Naboth, 1 Kings 21:8–13	• Against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, Daniel 3:8–18
• Of Jehu, 2 Kings 9:14–26	• Against Jesus, Jeremiah 11:9, 19; Matthew 12:14, 21:38–41, 26:3–4, 27:1–2; Mark 3:6
• Of Jehoiada, 2 Kings 11:4–16	• Against Paul, Acts 18:12; 23:12–15
• Of servants, against Joash, 2 Kings 12:20	• Falsely accused of: Jonathan, 1 Samuel 22:8

⁵ Harold G. Stigers, *A Commentary on Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), p. 129.

⁶ James Swanson and Orville Nave, *New Nave’s Topical Bible* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1994).

Here are other conspiracies not in the above list:

- 1 Kings 16:9, 16, 20
- 2 Kings 10:9
- 2 Kings 15:10, 15, 25, 30
- 2 Kings 17:4
- 2 Kings 21:23–24
- 2 Chronicles 23:13
- 2 Chronicles 24:21, 25–27
- 2 Chronicles 33:24–25
- Nehemiah 4:8
- Esther 2:19–chapter 6
- Amos, falsely accused 7:10
- Ezekiel 22:25

As you can see from these lists, conspiracies play a large part in the Bible narratives.

Conspiracy Against Joseph, Genesis 37:18–20

Joseph's 10 brothers conspired against him to kill him. (The youngest brother Benjamin was with Jacob and not involved in the plot).

“And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him. And they said one to another,

‘Behold, this dreamer comes. Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast has devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams.’”

• Genesis 37:18–20

Their initial intent was to murder their brother Joseph, but Reuben, the eldest, would not allow that. Instead the brothers sold Joseph into slavery, which gave them a profit (verse 26), and somewhat separated them from immediate responsibility should Joseph die. In their minds it was better that Joseph die by someone else's actions, than by their hands.

Conspiracy Against Moses

Miriam and Aaron, Moses' sister and brother, conspired against Moses, and unthinking, against God:

“And Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman. And they said, ‘Has YHWH indeed spoken only by Moses? has he not spoken also by us?’ And YHWH heard it. (Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.)

And YHWH spoke suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, ‘Come out you three unto the tabernacle of the congregation.’ And they three came out. And YHWH came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came forth. And he [YHWH] said,

‘Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I YHWH will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.

My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of YHWH shall he behold: wherefore [why, or for what reason] then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?’

And the anger of YHWH was kindled against them; and he departed. And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, she was leprous.”

• Numbers 12:1–10

What to us may seem a minor matter, a difference over the suitability of a marriage partner, was actually an issue of lines of authority from God through Moses. Another conspiracy occurred later in the wilderness.

“Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men: And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly,

famous in the congregation, men of renown: And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them,

'You take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and YHWH is among them: wherefore then lift you up yourselves above the congregation of YHWH?'"

• *Numbers 16:1–3*

Did Korah and Dathan truly represent all the people of Israel? YHWH thought they did.

"Korah gathered all the congregation against them unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the glory of YHWH appeared unto all the congregation. And YHWH spoke unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,

'Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.'

And they fell upon their faces, and said, 'O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and will you be wrath [angry] with all the congregation?'"

• *Numbers 16:19–22*

Note that Moses and Aaron acted immediately! YHWH was threatening to destroy all the people of Israel at that moment, but Moses and Aaron intervened and appealed to YHWH not to do it. YHWH repented. That conspiracy ended when YHWH opened the ground underneath the leaders (Numbers 16:30–35).

Absalom's Conspiracy, with Ahithophel

When Absalom began his rebellion against his father David, he had wide support, even from the people. Ahithophel was an old and trusted friend of David. His betrayal hurt David deeply.

"And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom."

• *2 Samuel 15:12*

"And one told David, saying, 'Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom.' And David said, 'O YHWH, I pray you, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.'"

• *2 Samuel 15:31*

God supported David and crushed the rebellion by David's favorite son.

Hoshea, the Last King of Israel, Death from Conspiracy

"In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah began Hoshea the son of Elah to reign in Samaria [capital of the northern kingdom] over Israel nine years. And he did that which was evil in the sight of YHWH, but not as the kings of Israel that were before him.

Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria; and Hoshea became his servant [Shalmaneser's vassal], and gave him presents [tribute from Israel's wealth, showing subservience]. And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea: for

[1] he had sent messengers to So king of Egypt, and

[2] brought no present [tribute] to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year:

therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison. Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes."

• *2 Kings 17:1–6*

Hoshea conspired with So, the king of Egypt, for military support from Egyptian troops to combine armies

against Assyria. The Assyrians had an excellent intelligence system and somehow found out about the conspiracy. YHWH previously imposed corrective punishments upon the people of Israel, but to no avail. The last punishment was exile from the land God gave them. God used Assyria as His instrument to punish Israel.

Additional background to the story is that the Assyrian king Sargon himself soon usurped the throne (by conspiracy) from Shalmaneser two years into the siege. So, it was Sargon that displaced the Israelites and brought Babylonians and other Mesopotamian people to live in the area of the northern kingdom of Israel. These people became known as the Samaritans.⁷

Conspiracies (Several) Against Jesus Christ

There were many conspiracies against Jesus. Several times His enemies sought to kill Him.

“Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him. But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all.”

• ***Matthew 12:14–15***

Jesus warned His disciples He would be killed by His enemies:

“The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry.”

• ***Matthew 17:22–23***

“And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples, ‘You know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.’

Then assembled together [1] the chief priests, and [2] the scribes, and [3] the elders of the people, unto the palace of [4] the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, And [they] consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety, and kill him. But they said, ‘Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people.’”

• ***Matthew 26:1–5***

“When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death: And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.”

• ***Matthew 27:1–2***

In Galilee, after healing a man’s withered hand,

“And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.”

• ***Mark 3:6***

Days before Jesus is seized by the authorities Jesus a second time upsets things,

“And he went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought; Saying unto them, ‘It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but you have made it a den of thieves.’

And he taught daily in the temple. But [1] the chief priests and [2] the scribes and [3] the chief of the people sought to destroy him, And could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear him.”

• ***Luke 19:45–48***

Note all the conspirators in this passage of Luke chapter 22:

“Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover. And [1] the chief priests and [2] scribes sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people.

⁷ Dr. Martin’s book, [*The People That History Forgot*](#) explains what happened to these people up to through Medieval times.

Then entered [3] Satan into [4] Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. And he went his way, and communed with [1] the chief priests and [5] captains, how he [Judas] might betray him unto them. And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money. And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude.

• *Luke 22:1–6*

This was a busy place. Several actors were involved. Chief priests, scribes, Satan, Judas, captains (Jewish Temple guard leaders), were all present and conspiring to seize and “officially” kill Jesus.

Earlier in His ministry, Jesus healed a man with a 30-year infirmity that confined him to a pallet-bed. He was asked by the crowd, “Who healed you?” He did not know. Jesus encountered him later (John 5:5–14). Note the violent reaction of the Jews:

“The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole. And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things [good works!] on the sabbath day.

But Jesus answered them, ‘My Father works hitherto [up to now], and I work.’ [Their response?] Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.

• *John 5:15–18*

In John 11:38–44 Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead. Note the reactions when Lazarus comes forth.

“Then many of the Jews which came to Mary [to grieve and give condolences], and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him. But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done. Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said,

‘What do we [do]? for this man does many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.’

And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them,

‘You know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.’

And this spoke he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.

• *John 11:45–53*

Caiaphas unwittingly prophesied, and at the same time he fulfilled prophecy. This is a reflection, and a fulfillment, of Psalm 2:2:

“The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against YHWH, and against his anointed ...”

• *Psalm 2:2*

Conspiracy Against Lazarus, Recently Raised from Death

There was even a plot against the man Jesus raised from the dead. Lazarus was a wealthy, socially connected man in Jewish society:

“Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he [Jesus] was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead. But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.”

• *John 12:9–11*

Conspiracy Against the Apostles after Pentecost

First, reread the account in the indented quote of Acts 4:23–28 above on page 3. Later, in Acts 5:12–16 the apostles continue to heal all who came to them in Solomon’s Porch near the Temple. They are seized again by Jewish authorities, who accused them of being possessed:

“There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.”

Then [1] the high priest rose up, and all [2] they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation [anger], And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.

But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, ‘Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.’ And when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught.”

• Acts 5:16–21

The apostles were encouraged by their supernatural release from prison. The next day they did what the angel encouraged them to do. They rejoiced, they continued to heal people, and spoke at the Temple. Then note what happened when the Jewish leaders assembled, and there were more than ever before:

“But [1] the high priest came, and [2] they that were with him, and called [3] the council together, and [4] all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.”

• Acts 5:21

The word “council” in Greek is better rendered in English as “Sanhedrin,” the official body for religious matters of all Israel.⁸ Every synagogue had a *sanhedrin*, but the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, based at the Temple, was the highest ranking religious judicial body.

The prisoners were gone from the “locked” prison, but were found openly preaching again in the Temple.

“Then came one and told them, saying, ‘Behold, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people.’ Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned.”

• Acts 5:25–26

The apostles were arrested again but this time were treated carefully.

“Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said,

‘We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you slew and hanged on a tree. Him has God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God has given to them that obey him.’

When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them.”

• Acts 5:29–33

You would think if they were “**cut to the heart**” they would repent, but the phrase means something different. No, they were so enraged that they wanted the apostles dead, and sought ways to do that without getting into trouble with the Roman administration. This was all occurring a little less than 50 days since Jesus

⁸ “Sanhedrin,” *ISBE – The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1914, 1st Edition, from Dr. Stanley Morris, IBT, 1997.

“The Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem was formed (Mt 26:3,17,59; Mk 14:53; 15:1; Lk 22:66; Acts 4:5 f; 5:21; 22:30) of high priests (i.e. the acting high priest, those who had been high priests, and members of the privileged families from which the high priests were taken), elders (tribal and family heads of the people and priesthood), and scribes (i.e. legal assessors), Pharisees and Sadducees alike (compare Acts 4:1 ff; 5:17,34; 23:6). In Mk 15:43; Lk 23:50, Joseph of Arimathea is called Grk: *bouleutes*, ‘councillor,’ i.e. member of the Sanhedrin.”

was killed and resurrected at the Passover period. Those who killed Jesus now sought to kill His apostles.

The Murder of Stephen

A conspiracy for murder next focused on the deacon Stephen:

“And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.”

• Acts 6:7–8

The wonders and miracles that Stephen did came from God, so Stephen’s enemies lied in a court, a direct violation of Exodus 23:1–2 (quoted on page 4 above).

“Then they suborned [bribed] men, which said, ‘We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God.’ And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council, And set up false witnesses, which said,

‘This man ceases not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.’

And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel. Then said the high priest, ‘Are these things so?’”

• Acts 6:11–7:1

Stephen gave a defense that could not be refuted, and the crowd stoned him (Acts 7:2–54). A man named Saul (whose name was changed to Paul after becoming a believer) helped organize the extrajudicial conspiracy to persecute and murder Christians.

“And Saul was consenting unto his [Stephen’s] death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. ... As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and hauling men and women committed them to prison.”

• Acts 8:1–3

Saul was traveling to Damascus when confronted by the risen Christ. He believed and was renamed Paul.

Conspiracies Against the Apostle Paul

After his conversion Saul/Paul became the object of conspiracies ...

“And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he [Jesus] is the Son of God. But all that heard him were amazed, and said;

‘Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?’

But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ. And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him: But their laying await was known of Saul.

And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.”

• Acts 9:19–25

It should have been illegal for the Jews to kill Paul in Damascus without trial, but we learn from Second Corinthians that the Arab governor conspired with the Jews to seize Paul intending to kill him.

“In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous **to apprehend me**: And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.”

• 2 Corinthians 11:32–33

The apostle Paul was beaten by various authorities (Jew and Gentile), surviving many dangers, including attempts to kill him. In fact, Paul says he did not always survive, but in fact died. God brought him back to life each time, much to his own personal disappointment.⁹ He says he died several times:

“Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, **in deaths often**. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.”

• 2 Corinthians 16:23–24

The apostle Paul was resurrected to physical life each time he suffered “**deaths often**.” Suffering 39 stripes from whipping would often have been enough to kill a man, which Paul received five times. His back must have been a mass of scars. When Paul later went to Jerusalem, another conspiracy arose:

“And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. And **they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy**. And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said,

‘We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul. Now therefore you with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you tomorrow, as though you would enquire something more perfectly concerning him: and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him.’

And when Paul’s sister’s son [Paul’s nephew] heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul. ...”

• Acts 23:12–16

Paul told his nephew, go to the Roman *chiliarch*, a commander of 1,000 men, and tell him:

“And he said, ‘The Jews have agreed to desire you that you would bring down Paul tomorrow **into the council**, as though they would enquire somewhat of him more perfectly. But do not you yield unto them: for **there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath**, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from you.’”

• Acts 23:20–21

This action of 40 men to kill Paul would have been a major incident of rebellion by the Jews. This indicates how far “**the chief priests and elders**” were willing to go to stop Paul. The Roman commander took precautions and Paul was taken safely to the city of Caesarea with an escort of 70 cavalry and 200 light infantry (Acts 23:23). The conspiracy was thwarted. They **tried again 2 years later** to get at Paul through the new governor, Festus. (Acts 24:27–25:4). How long did the 40 conspirators go without food? We can only wonder.

The Last Conspiracy

In Revelation chapter 20, a strange conspiracy is predicted to take place against God, Christ, and many glorified saints, and faithful physical children of Adam within the land of Israel, Jerusalem, or within the Ezekiel Temple enclosure. The conspiracy will be instigated by Satan (who is identified 4 ways):

“And he laid hold on [1] the dragon, that [2] old serpent, which is [3] the Devil, and [4] Satan, **and bound him a thousand years**, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, **till the thousand years should be**

⁹ This is the background to Paul being torn between wanting to be with the Lord and remaining (2 Corinthians 5:8–10).

fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season ...

And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.”

• *Revelation 20:2–3, 7–9*

What a strange series of events! After a 1,000 year reign of Christ over Israel and the nations of the world as their King, Satan seems to find it easy to deceive and seduce many people of the nations on earth to rebel against Christ and His saints. Satan does so with God’s permission. The text does not tell us if they realize Satan’s influence. Will the Devil speak to them personally as he did to Adam and Eve, or work behind the scenes as he did with Judas before Jesus’ arrest in the Garden of Gethsemene? We cannot tell from the text.

From the description, it seems that perhaps millions of people will gather to attack the place from where Emmanuel (which means **“God with us,”** who is Christ Jesus) rules the earth. After all, people come from **“the four quarters of the earth.”** This conspiracy of Satan and children of Adam will be crushed in a dramatic way with fire from heaven, similar to how fire came down from heaven similar to when God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:24–25) and the judgment against the 250 “important” people of Israel who burnt incense with Korah and Dathan (Numbers 16:35).

Then will be the melting away of the old heavens and earth (2 Peter 3:7–8), and a new heavens, and a new earth will be created (Isaiah 65:17, 66:22; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1–2). The new earth will accommodate billions of people resurrected to the flesh for judgment (and education) by Christ called in Scripture the **“great white throne”** judgment (Revelation 20:11–13). It will, in my opinion, also last 1,000 years.¹⁰

One wonders, why would God allow this conspiracy to occur? Perhaps it will be that many physical children of Adam will be skeptical of the rule by God and Christ, thinking they could not be deceived as were those who lived before Christ’s return to earth. Rest assured that we, as glorified saints, will know the true reason why God allows this “final conspiracy.”¹¹

Conclusion

We have come full circle back to 1 Corinthians 15:25–28 quoted at the beginning of this article. All human beings will have a full knowledge of the truth of God, and all human beings will be saved (1 Timothy 2:4–5, 4:10). This was God’s plan all along. Conspiracies of men (or even a cosmic conspiracy involving spirit beings¹²) are as nothing when God and Christ complete and fulfill their creative act of creating man in their image and likeness (Genesis 1:26, 5:3) decided upon before the foundation of the world (John 17:24; Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:20).

Our World Today

In Daniel chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon and ruler of what historians today call the Neo-Babylonian Empire, wrote a letter to all his subjects of all nations of the world in his time. He explained the period of 7-years madness that he endured. In his letter “to the world” at that time, Nebuchadnezzar explains how God’s subordinates work in the affairs of men and their rulers. We are given a “snapshot” of how God, **“the most High rules in the kingdom of men”**:

“This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know

¹⁰ See [“The Geography of Heaven,”](#) chapter 16 from Dr. Martin’s book *Essentials of New Testament Doctrine*: [“Resurrections from the Dead,”](#) and my Commentary, [“New Jerusalem and the Center of Creation.”](#)

¹¹ Those of us raised to spiritual life when Christ returns will likely already know the answer, but now it is a mystery.

¹² Revelation 12:4, 7–12. Before the return of Christ there will be other conspiracies against God, Christ, and men which will be attempted, and in some cases will seem to be successful. Many will involve the collusion of spirit beings with human beings.

- [1] **that the most High rules in the kingdom of men, and**
- [2] **gives it to whomsoever he will, and**
- [3] **sets up over it the basest of men.**

• *Daniel 4:17*

God rules among men. What is the “*it*”? “*It*” is the power and authority to govern over men. There is always someone “on top” of the pyramid of power, while many strive to get to the top. God gives the power to govern according to His will ... and we are told the men God usually chooses are “**the basest of men.**” This will be the case, even if those base men are constrained by laws, nobles, elites, public opinion, or the people.

This is how it has been through all history. This is the situation today, is it not? And in all nations of the world. As we approach the end times leading to Christ’s return, God still “**sets up**” over the nations “**the basest of men**” to rule or govern. We should not expect much more than “**the basest**” in our leaders. That being said, the purpose of government is to curb evil and evil doers:

“For he [the government official] is the minister of God to you for good. But if you do that which is evil, be afraid; for he bears not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that does evil. Wherefore you must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.”

• *Romans 13:4–5*

God reserves severe judgment upon evildoers, according to His own timetable and standards, through delegation of authority to government officials.

“[God] **Who will render to every man according to his deeds:**

To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal [eonian] life:

But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, [will be] indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that does evil,

of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;

But glory, honor, and peace, to every man that works good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:

For there is no respect of persons with God.”

• *Romans 2:6–11*

When we do have a good and honest leader, we should rejoice, understanding the great opposition, even violent opposition and conspiracies against him or her. This state of affairs will continue until Christ returns.

“What kind of government is the best? ... All of the different forms of government, from anarchy to absolute despotism, are according to the purpose of God. They are all bad insofar as they are not subject to God. It is not the form, but the relation of the government to God’s great underlying purpose that counts. All should be subject to Him. That is what we have in the consummation ...

God does not make all authority bad now. He gives good rulers once in a while by way of change, because we need the contrasts. ... It is their failure that fulfills God’s purpose.”

• *A.E. Knoch, Unsearchable Riches, Volume 36, 1945, pp 187–189*

Take comfort that God is in control even as conspiracies continue until all is put under Christ’s feet, and He gives all to the Father, “**that God may be all in all**” (1 Corinthians 15:25–28).