

“Conspiracies do exist.”

Umberto Eco, the Italian novelist, called it right. Despite their bad name and frequent misuse, conspiracies do exist.

Take for example The Newburgh Conspiracy. Evan Andrews, writing for the History Channel, describes it.

“The little-known Newburgh Conspiracy unfolded in March 1783 as General George Washington’s battle-weary Continental Army wintered in a camp at Newburgh, New York.

“Despite having the upper hand in the Revolutionary War, Washington’s troops had grown frustrated with the fledgling Confederation Congress’ inability to compensate them with back pay and pensions. As the discontent spread, several high-ranking officers began circulating a letter written by an anonymous author calling himself “Brutus” (later revealed to be Major John Armstrong).

“The missive included a chilling suggestion: if Congress and the states would not pay up, the military might abandon the war effort and force their way into government coffers at gunpoint. Though he was sympathetic to his soldiers’ plight, Washington knew that any uprising could have potentially disastrous consequences for the revolution.

“When the rabble-rousing officers met in an unsanctioned meeting on March 15, 1783, he made a surprise appearance and asked to address the crowd. After condemning the letter as unpatriotic and foolhardy, Washington urged the men to remain patient with Congress.

“Straining to read a letter near the end of his talk, he produced a small pair of spectacles and apologized, saying, “I have not only grown gray but almost blind in service to my country...” The impassioned speech paid off.

“Struck by Washington’s devotion to the war, the officers voted to put their “unshaken confidence” in Congress. Washington would go on to negotiate a ceasefire with the British only a month later.” (1)

Biblical Conspiracies

The Bible describes another famous conspiracy. King David’s infamous son, Absalom, devised it. Because of his father’s failure to punish David’s son Amnon for the rape of Absalom’s sister Tamar, Absalom set in motion a plot to overthrow his father.

He schemed with his fellow Israelites to follow him instead of King David. He even included his father’s counselor Ahithophel in his mob. Absalom’s conspiracy succeeded in driving David from Jerusalem. But it ended with Absalom’s death in the ensuing battle for supremacy. (2)

Soon after their exodus from Egypt, false prophets arose among the Israelites and split them into factions and conspired against Moses and Aaron. In Israel’s history, this pattern emerged on repeated occasions.

Since the beginning of mankind, conspiracies arose behind false prophets who beguiled the unwary and mobilized rebels to follow their plots. All false prophets gather followers whom they influence with their falsehoods.

Again, the Bible describes another occasion of an unGodly conspiracy. During the time of Jeremiah and Daniel, God sent Ezekiel to prophesy to Israel to tell them of God’s judgment against them for their sins.

At that time, Ezekiel lived in Babylon after taken captive by the Babylonians in their battle against Israel and Judah. False prophets had led the Israelites to reject God, separate from Him, and conspire against God’s rule over them.

Ezekiel 22 describes why God judged Israel and the punishment He would send upon them for their sins.

False prophets developed a conspiracy with the priests and the princes of Israel.

In his God-given message to Israel, Ezekiel identified the source of their sin.

“And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, say unto her, Thou art the land that is not cleansed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation. There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof...” (Ezekiel 22.25)

Several false prophets joined together and led Israel into sin. These fraudulent leaders formed a conspiracy against God. In their treason, they agreed and performed together evil acts and led Israel to follow their wicked designs.

Because of their sin, God withheld rain from them in judgment, the beginning of God's wrath against them.

False prophets' conspiracy devoured souls.

Ezekiel said in 22:25, 27,

“There is a conspiracy of the prophets in the midst thereof like a roaring lion ravening the prey.”

“Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain.”

No doubt you have observed videos of lions pursuing their prey. Once they capture their prey, the pride of lions ravages the victim. That describes the action of the false prophets in Ezekiel's time. The history of Israel reveals several ways that they devoured souls.

In the most obvious way, they destroyed true prophets. False prophets often killed true prophets who contradicted them with God's messages. Hebrews 11 recounts some of the ways they destroyed them with cruel mutilations:

- they cut off their heads;
- drove swords through their bodies; or
- sawed them in half.

Their murderous plots created many widows among the Israelites. (3)

False prophets' conspiracy divested people's property.

The false prophets of Ezekiel's era made a practice of divesting the people of their goods and property. Ezekiel said they had *“...taken the treasure and precious things.”* (Ezekiel 22.25)

Because of their lies and positions, they stole from the people. They extorted money and property from them, especially widows. By their deceits, they pillaged the land and people of their possessions and valuables.

False prophets' conspiracy disregarded God's law.

Ezekiel described the priests as led by false prophets:

“Her priests have violated my law.” (Ezekiel 22.26)

They disregarded Jesus's law and His word. They viewed God's word as a history book. They did not regard its demands upon life as important. They nullified certain passages of Scripture involving the commandments. They set aside parts of God's word, because it did not fit into their current culture and desire.

Their misconduct resulted in their defiance against God and the disobedience of Israel.

False prophets' conspiracy disowned the distinction between the holy and the profane.

God established restrictions that prevented the unclean people from entering certain sections of the Temple.

The priests of Ezekiel's day took no notice of those distinctions. Anybody, holy, clean, or unclean, could go anywhere in the Temple that they desired.

In addition, God established a series of animal sacrifices for the people to atone for their sins and to worship Him. This distinction separated clean sacrifices from the unclean. He demanded only the clean and the best of their animals. The false priests set aside God's rules so that the people could bring the sacrifices that they wanted to bring, sickly, lame, or malformed at birth.

The priests of Ezekiel's day rejected God's requirements, which distinguished between the holy and the profane, and clean from unclean sacrifices.

False prophets' conspiracy deserted true worship of God.

The priests of Ezekiel's day not only desecrated God's holy things. They failed to worship God truly.

"[They] have hid their eyes from my Sabbaths." (Ezekiel 22.26)

This sin developed because the priests rejected God's law regarding the Sabbaths. God instituted several Sabbaths, not just the one that occurred every seventh day. He did set aside that day as a day of rest and worship.

He also established special Sabbaths associated with feasts and ceremonies, which called for the people of God to worship and celebrate His goodness to them at various times and seasons. At these times, the people honored, worshiped, and glorified God.

But, the false prophets together with the priests set aside the Sabbaths that God instituted for His people to honor, glorify, and worship Him. Therefore, true worship of God disappeared. Because of the influence of false prophets, the Children of Israel in the day of Ezekiel violated God's requirements.

They ignored God's requirements for His people and designed methods and requirements of their own.

False prophets' conspiracy dishonored God.

The priests in Ezekiel's day set aside the distinctions between the holy and the profane, clean and unclean, and the true worship of God. In the end, their disobedience profaned Him.

The word *profaned* describes a painful process. A person drilled a hole in an object with a bow drill: a drill wrapped around with the bow string and twisted around by moving the bow back and forth while simultaneously pressing the drill down into the object thus spinning the drill to create the hole in the object. (4)

The sins of the false prophets and the priests drilled a hole in God's heart with their wickedness. (5)

False prophets' conspiracy defended each other's evil practices and iniquity.

The false prophets of Ezekiel's day defended evil for personal gain. Ezekiel described it this way:

"And her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar." (Ezekiel 22.28)

These fraudulent prophets daubed the executors of wicked acts with untempered mortar, whitewash. In that day when they made plaster for walls or structures, they used straw as a binding agent to help hold the material together and provide strength to it. Untempered mortar did not contain the substances that strengthen the mortar, so it would not work. Their plaster became nothing more than whitewash.

That helps us understand Ezekiel's picture. When he said that the prophets "daubed them with untempered mortar," he meant that the false prophets propped up, supported, and defended the priests, princes, and each other and covered their evil actions with whitewash. They did it for their own advancement.

The rulers became like ravening wolves, shedding blood, destroying souls, and profiting from dishonest gain as they proclaimed that God had given them directions to aid them in this manner. (6) They followed the examples and teachings of the fraudulent prophets and became oppressive leaders.

They developed into thieves, murderers, and deceivers who led the people into servitude, because of the sin and iniquity in their own lives.

Their degradation affected the people as well. (7) They followed the leadership of the land and became like them. They, too, became oppressors, thieves, and murderers who destroyed the poor and the needy by failing to

care for them.

Because of the evil leadership, God could not find anyone to stand in the gap before Him to Israel to prevent judgment against them.

God's Purpose For This Message To Israel

In Ezekiel 22.31, God gave this message to Ezekiel to give to Israel detailing the judgments that God planned for Israel and its causes.

“Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord God.”

God stated in great detail the sins of Israel that brought His judgment. This segment from Ezekiel declares the specific role of false prophets in their wickedness. These 8 sins led Israel from the glories of God's presence in their midst to rampant iniquity, led by the false prophets.

The vivid description of false prophets and their role in Israel's demise served as characteristics of false prophets. These markers would help Israel identify false leaders and to reject them, avoiding God's judgment and assuring God's blessings upon them.

This message from God to Israel also served as a reminder of God's nature. He hates sin. For many years He had treated Israel with mercy and a slowness to anger. However, God's mercy does not mean approval of the behavior for which He shows mercy.

This message shows God's wrath upon sin. He always punishes sin. He rebuked Israel for their sins which also warned future generations to obey God.

The lack of one to stand in the gap points to the One Who would come and stand in the gap on behalf of God's chosen people. God promised a Serpent Slayer as well as a Redeemer Who would atone for the sins of His people. This setting provided a reminder to Israel of God's promises to them.

Summary

As Ezekiel explained to Israel their sinfulness, he specifically identified the presence of a conspiracy of prophets and their sinful leadership.

He described the behavior of the false prophets, princes, leaders, and the ruling people. They

- killed many husbands, making many widows;
- violated God's Law;
- profaned God's holy things;
- failed to distinguish between holy and profane things;
- made no difference between clean and unclean things;
- hid their eyes from God's Sabbaths;
- profaned God among the people; and
- like ravening wolves, they shed blood and destroyed souls for dishonest gain. (8)

Correlation To Today

Christian's today can profit from this account in Ezekiel. In our present day, similarities exist in Christianity to these conditions from Ezekiel's era. As in that day, false prophets and teachers conspire with pastors' and Church leaders in sinful ways that foster spiritual decay. Like then, Christianity now sits on the brink of God's judgment.

False prophets and teachers develop a conspiracy with pastors and Church leaders.

Since Israel provides a vivid picture of the Church, we can learn by studying God's dealings with Israel. As

with Israel, the Church today suffers from the disastrous impact of false prophets who emulate those during Ezekiel's day.

The present condition of the Church mirrors the condition of Israel described in our study passage. Like Israel, we experience a famine of spiritual rain because of sinful leadership. We have fallen into the same patterns as Israel.

This modern-day conspiracy devours souls.

Although many believers throughout the earth suffer persecution for Christ's name, we do not experience physical attacks against us from our spiritual leaders. Therefore, we do suffer from spiritual lifelessness. False prophets and teachers lead us in a false pursuit of cultural acceptability and conformity.

This pursuit avoids the proclamation of the Biblical gospel and concentrates upon societal issues, e.g. today's hot button topics of social justice, critical race theory, and the normalizing of homosexuality. It eliminates Biblical commands as outdated and unimportant. It evades all mention of sin and shuns preaching on righteous living.

The Christian community lacks spiritual vibrancy...a sure sign of spiritual death. The faulty leadership from false prophets and teachers along with complicity pastors and leaders brings decline in the Church. Some praise the Christian community as a mile wide, but an inch deep. I find evidence of either option lacking. We are neither a mile wide nor an inch deep.

We suffer from spiritual decay that borders on spiritual death. Yes, this conspiracy devours souls.

This modern-day conspiracy divests people of their property.

They do so in an insidious manner, making it seem like a spiritual transaction. Today, many false leaders practice a deceit that divests people's property as did the false prophets. In our day, they ask their audiences a series of questions.

For example:

- "Do you experience financial difficulty?"
- "Do you have debts that you cannot pay?"
- "Do your expenses exceed your income so that you do not have enough money to cover all of your expenses and your cost of living?"

Then they say, "If that describes you, I have wonderful news for you. If you will send me a gift in the amount of your debt, Jesus will bless you." Some include a promise that God will send them money equal to 100 times what they send to them.

In this way, these modern-day false prophets divest millions of people of their money and property.

The Lord Jesus specifically spoke woe in Matthew 2 about this very sinful practice. The Pharisees of His day devoured widows' houses. These false religious leaders went to those least able to defend themselves and extorted from them their goods, lands, and their property.

These things happened in the time of Ezekiel, in the time of Jesus, and they happen today as well. Do not follow such leaders.

Yes, God did promise to provide for the needs of His children. However, when you hear or read someone who makes this kind of offer that requires you send them money in expectation of "God's blessing," turn them off and destroy their publications. God will make a way for you, as you trust Him.

This modern-day conspiracy disregards God's law.

Many modern-day false prophets follow the same pattern as in Ezekiel's day. They, too, disregard Jesus's word and misrepresent its application. They relegate whole portions of Scripture as relevant for years past, but not for today in our "new era."

A theory of progressive revelation and conformity to culture writes off fundamental Biblical doctrines. They take a *part* of the complete doctrine and say, "that's the whole doctrine." However, denying part of the truth results in untruth.

Ezekiel's explanation of the priests in his time describes errant leaders of today. The Christian community once again faces a battle for the inspiration, infallibility, inerrancy and sufficiency of the Bible for all of life and practice. When they set aside the authority of Scripture, they violate God's word.

This modern-day conspiracy disowns the distinction between the holy and profane.

In our day, false prophets fail to separate the holy from the profane. Although we do not have the same set of rules for Temple worship and sacrifices, some leaders today fail to distinguish between the holy and the profane.

Specifically, they fail to identify and condemn sin. Preachers from the pulpits of our churches and from television programs, as well as popular authors, stay away from the whole issue of sin. We renamed sin and called it "a mistake or an error in judgment."

The desire for popularity controls the issues. Some popular preachers present the "gospel" solely as a free pass to heaven and never even mention the sinner's transgressions that need repentance and forgiveness. As a result, the failure to identify and condemn sin contributes to the spiritual decline and decay of the Church.

As in Ezekiel's day, we fail to distinguish between the holy and profane, the clean and the unclean. But God's demands for holiness of His people require that spiritual leaders preach on sin to lead believers to repent of their sins. We desperately need preachers who proclaim God's holy demands.

This modern-day conspiracy deserts from true worship of God.

Jesus commanded His followers to worship Him in spirit and truth. (9) Yet counterfeit pastors and teachers of our day set aside this command. Much of what passes as worship today has become nothing more than hyped emotionalism, manufactured by stirring orchestral accompaniments led by enthusiastic choral leaders.

It differs little from what occurs at rousing motivational seminars or exciting athletic events. Some have even recommended a return to the use of objects and ceremonies as part of worship of Jesus.

The contemporary Church has set aside the importance of worship. We trivialize the manner in which we acknowledge the holy, sovereign, creator God and His Son. By their dismissive attitudes, they diminish the sovereign God.

Just as in Ezekiel's day, true worship of God and Jesus has declined and virtually disappeared. We need a reformation of true worship of Jesus, giving Him the honor, glory, and praise that He deserves.

This modern-day conspiracy dishonors God.

This sin permeates the professing Church today. We call it pluralism, which means that each person worships his own God in his own way. We accept any form of worship. Some believe that people in other cultures may worship as they please, no matter whom they call "God." In another way, I have often heard the phrases, "The god I worship is,," or "I like to think of god as..."

Some prominent preachers and teachers even state that every religion has its own "Jesus." They proclaim that Jesus has other ways of salvation and will accept those of other religions based upon the sincerity of their beliefs, even if contrary to the truths of Scripture. They suggest that it is unnecessary to reach the followers of pagan gods with the gospel of Jesus.

In all of these instances, we dishonor the true and living God Who is no longer worshipped but profaned. He has revealed Himself to us in creation, our natures, and in His Son, Jesus. He disclosed Himself to us in His Word, which we can read and study to learn of Him. He reveals Himself to us and requires us to worship Him and Him alone.

This modern-day conspiracy defends false prophets and teachers, pastors, and leaders for their sinful acts.

The offenses Ezekiel described sound as current as today's television, radio, and print publications. Ungodly men and women, who proclaim themselves as God's messengers, support one another in robbing the Church of Godly leadership.

For example,

- Boards of Directors close their eyes to sin and corruption in the ministries they direct.

- These same Boards support figureheads who dangerously weaken the Church.
- Church boards defend pastors whose lives do not reflect the purity and grace of Jesus.
- False messages of peace and prosperity flood our nation and other countries as well.
- Religious television and radio broadcasts proclaim an untrue message of hope.
- Books and magazines publish these misleading messages.

Implications

The false prophets of Ezekiel’s day formed a conspiracy that resulted in the destruction of the land. Their actions give us insight into similar evil practices today. They serve as a warning to help us determine the true from the false.

If the Church fails to heed the warnings from Ezekiel, we will endure a similar judgment from God that Israel experienced. In fact, spiritual decline permeates the Church today. God has withdrawn His glorious, manifest presence from the Church.

We must heed the warnings from Ezekiel. Our time of danger demands the truth. I pray that the Spirit of God will open our eyes to discern and reject the presence of the conspiracy of false prophets in the Church today.

References

01. Evan Andrews: <https://www.history.com/news/6-infamous-political-conspiracies>
02. 2 Samuel 13-18
03. Ezekiel 22.25
04. *Bible Analyzer*, v. 5.4.1.17. 2019 Timothy Morton. “Ancient Hebrew Lexicon of the Bible;” “profane”.
05. *Ibid*. “Brown-Driver-Briggs;” “profane”.
06. Ezekiel 22.27
07. Ezekiel 22.29
08. Ezekiel 22.23-29
09. John 4.23

Questions For Review

01. What is a motive that bonds *false prophets* together?
02. In what ways do *false prophets* injure the ministries and the comforts of true prophets in our time?
03. What makes it easy for any Church or Bible Study Group to believe that their group is successful in their ministry for Christ, even when the evidence says the contrary?
04. Do you have spiritual guidelines which determine your method of giving to the work of the Lord? What prevents you from supporting *false prophets* erroneously?
05. What is the danger in determining that a *part* of holy Scripture is not relevant for this age? If it comes to that, who has been delegated by God to make such determinations?
06. List several areas in which Christ followers demonstrate a lack of distinction between the holy and the profane.
07. What are the requirements for worship? If you were the “worship leader” for an announced appearance of Jesus Christ, how would you design group worship of the King?
08. Those who support “pluralism” (each person worships his own God in his own way) are in danger for their souls. Why?

Dear heavenly Father, I want to thank You for this record that You have provided and preserved for us from Your dealings with the Children of Israel in the time of Ezekiel. You have preserved it so that it will warn us and encourage us to examine our lives to see many of these same things present in our day as well.

I ask you, heavenly Father, to send forth Your Holy Spirit to teach us the truth, to open our eyes to see what Your Word describes for us, and to enable us to discern the false in our day, so that we may pursue after the truth.

I pray that we will see how we need to conform our lives to the truth, to obey, follow, and to worship You.

May your Holy Spirit lead us to You, to an understanding and knowledge of You and the Lord Jesus. I pray, Father, that You will enable us to reject the conspiracy of false prophets to the honor and glory of Your name.

Amen.