

## Why Conspiracies Don't Last

### 2 Samuel 3:17-27

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on

## Introduction

The movie, *Conspiracy Theory*, was kind of a fun one to watch. And there were some rather hair-brained ideas expressed in that movie, that, through strange twists in plot, actually proved to be true (at least in movie land). And the forms that those conspiracy stories took are obviously references to theories on the fringes of the conservative movement. But there are alternative conspiracy theories from the old left, the new left, and the libertarian movement as well. I read one conspiracy theory that said that Christians were trying to take over the world. Imagine that. Great Commission? But that begs the question of what is a conspiracy.

And the reason I bring this up is that the very mention of the word will have a tendency to make some of your minds go toward the movie, or toward Abraham's book, *None Dare Call It Conspiracy*, or toward Murray Rothbard's book on the Federal Reserve, or perhaps some other conspiracy theory you've heard about. And whatever the merits or demerits of each of those theories, if you focus on them rather than the bigger picture, I think you are going to miss a lot of application this morning. And that is one reason why I have no intention of siding with any one of the American conspiracy theories. Sorry if you are disappointed about that. We can debate those afterwards. Instead, I want to look at the sinister underlying principles that can happen in politics, or even within a church, a business, or a family.

As far as background theology is concerned, you can't do much better than starting with Psalm 2. Go ahead and look at Psalm 2, which summarizes the multitude of conspiracies that have always been going on. And I'm going to read from the NIV, while you follow along in the NKJV.

**Psalms 2:1 Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain?**

**Psalms 2:2 The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One.**

**Psalms 2:3 "Let us break their chains," they say, "and throw off their fetters."**

**Psalms 2:4 The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them.**

**Psalms 2:5 Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying,**

**Psalms 2:6 "I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill."**

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Phillip G. Kayser • Dominion Covenant Church • 307.N 41st Ave. Omaha, NE 68131 • 402.934.3300

**Psalms 2:7 I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, “You are my Son; today I have become your Father.**

**Psalms 2:8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.**

**Psalms 2:9 You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery.”**

**Psalms 2:10 Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth.**

**Psalms 2:11 Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling.**

**Psalms 2:12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.**

That Psalm gives many principles relating to the concept of conspiracy within nations, but I am just going to mention five. First, the main conspiracy that God is concerned about is the conspiracy of rulers to throw off God’s law. Has there been conspiracy in America to do that? Absolutely, yes there has. God, not man, is the definer of what is conspiracy and what is liberation. In 2 Chronicles 23, Queen Athaliah believed that Joash and Jehoiada were engaged in conspiracy and treason, when the text says that she was the one who was treasonous and had conspired against God’s order. So these terms can get thrown around by anyone, but we are taking our cues from the Scripture.

Second, the conspiracies mentioned in Psalm 2 have been happening for thousands of years. This is nothing new. Don’t get depressed because you know there are conspiracies out there.

Third, they have never succeeded long term and never will. Gary North gives us a bit of a history of conspiracy, and shows thousands of years of failed conspiracies.

Fourth, God is governing even when conspiracies are successful for a time.

And fifth, this Psalm says that Jesus will ultimately win, and we need not be afraid of conspirators who are trying to get rid of the memory of Jesus from this nation. Fight against them yes, but fear them and be discouraged by them, no. Never.

Gary North begins his fascinating book on Conspiracy with these words:

A war is in progress. It is a war between light and darkness, truth and falsehood, ethics and power. It is also a war between two conflicting strategies: visible proclamation [that’s us] vs. secret organization, public

representation [that's us] vs. secret initiation. This war has been going on from the beginning (or at least one week after the beginning). It has been going on in human history since the serpent tempted Eve. (Introduction, p. 1)  
Well, this chapter gives us two snapshots of conspiracies that were coming to a head back in 1055 BC.

## I. The high level conspiracies in the North

### A. *The nature of the conspiracy (v. 6)*

#### 1. It was a conspiracy against God (v. 6a with verses 9-10; 17-18)

The first snapshot takes place in the North. We have already looked at some of these verses last week when I contrasted the two women, Rizpah and Michal, who were the victims of power politics. But now I want to look at these verses once again with an eye to conspiracy. Verse 6:

**2Samuel 3:6** Now it was so, while there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, that Abner was strengthening *his hold* on the house of Saul.

Because I talked about verses 6-16 last week, I won't spend a lot of time on these verses. But this verse is obviously showing a conspiracy against God and a conspiracy against man. Last week I pointed out that Abner had already known for 17 years that God had anointed David to be king. Jonathan made that clear back in 1070 BC. Verse 17 of this chapter shows that the elders approved of David being king, but weren't able to manage it. So Abner was clearly throwing off the bonds of Christ when he rejected God's revelation. Now, he may not have thought of it in those explicit terms, but that was the bottom line. His conspiracy against David, and later his conspiracy to gain control over Ishbosheth flowed ultimately from a conspiracy against the reign of God, and a rejection of the concept that He is King of kings and Lord of lords.

Why is it important to realize that? Because most conspiracy books (whether Marxist, Austrian, Liberal or Conservative) exclude God's reign from the picture. They focus only on history, and because they do that, they misinterpret history. Some of the Evangelical books on conspiracy are just as deterministic (and depressing) as the Marxist books are. Here's what Gary North said:

"Most historians have substituted some variation of cosmic impersonalism — the rule of impersonal forces — for the biblical concept of cosmic personalism: the rule of God. [Marxists would fit into what he is talking about there. He goes on...] Conspiracy historians

have usually substituted a rival version of cosmic personalism: the rule of secret societies. The thesis is the same, from the IBC (international bankers' conspiracy) to the IJBC (international Jewish bankers conspiracy) to the Illuminati: the insiders have taken control of the key resource, whether money, the media, or whatever. This places the key to history inside history. It divinizes the relative.” (Conspiracy, Preface, p. 6)

And it does more than that. It makes people feel helpless. People think, “What can we do against the proverbial “them”?” But Scripture says that all conspiracies to control America are ultimately conspiracies against God. And when we see this bigger picture, it inspires us with hope to resist it and plan for the long term.

## **2. It was simultaneously a conspiracy against man (v. 6a,b)**

Of course, that does not mean that there aren't real conspiracies at work to take control of banking, the presidency, or whatever. Abner conspired against David, hoping to squash any resistance from David in the first part of verse 6 (and earlier in this book), and he conspired against Ishbosheth, trying to make himself king. And we saw that last week. This realization that there really are conspiracies to control populations and kings keeps us from being naïve. It keeps us from putting too much trust in men. If you have this perspective, you are not going to say, as so many people tend to do, “Don't worry about the Indefinite Detention Act. Obama won't use that power. He has promised *not* to use that power.” Even if he hadn't planned to use it before, offering it on a platter is an incredible temptation. It is naïve to ignore the fact that there are six thousands years of conspiracy and grasping for power. Why in the world would we offer such power to the presidency. It is crazy.

However, to give balance, we insult God's reign when we ascribe too much power to any conspiracy, whether that be the Illuminati, the Trilateral Commission, the Bilderbergers, or other organizations. They are not God. Take a look at point B and some of the ways that this chapter shows that God can frustrate a conspiracy.

### ***B. How God frustrates the conspiracy***

#### **1. Though successful against Ishbosheth (6:b) it was ultimately frustrated by an overstretched military (v. 6a; see previous maps)**

The verse I just read shows one way: though Abner was successful in completely gaining control of the house of Saul, he was ultimately frustrated

because of an overstretched army. If David had been Abner's only enemy, Abner might have won. The odds were definitely in his favor. But we have already seen that God raised up opposition to Abner from many sources - from the Philistines who occupied most of Israel's former land. The Philistines were an incredible threat. Then there were the Phoenicians in the northwest, the Arameans to the Northeast, the Ammonites to the east, the Moabites to the Southeast, and the Edomites to the south. And protecting his land from all of these enemies stretched his armies so thinly that he wasn't able to win his war of northern aggression against Judah. And to make matters worse, some of his own countrymen and soldiers had defected to David. And today, God can use external enemies, an overstretched military, an overstretched budget, the constant bailouts of new disasters, and other problems to frustrate the modern attempts of Abners to be able to completely do what they want in our nation.

## 2. Co-conspirators can squabble (vv. 7-11)

A second thing that we saw last week is that co-conspirators can squabble and end up fighting each other. Imagine that! Abner and Ishbosheth started off on the same team, trying to rob the country from David. That's a conspiracy. They were both in on it seven and a half years ago. But look at the squabble in verse 7-11:

**2Samuel 3:7 And Saul had a concubine, whose name *was* Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah. So *Ishbosheth* said to Abner, "Why have you gone in to my father's concubine?"**

**2Samuel 3:8 Then Abner became very angry at the words of Ishbosheth, and said, "*Am* I a dog's head that belongs to Judah? Today I show loyalty to the house of Saul your father, to his brothers, and to his friends, and have not delivered you into the hand of David; and you charge me today with a fault concerning this woman?"**

**2Samuel 3:9 May God do so to Abner, and more also, if I do not do for David as the LORD has sworn to him—**

**2Samuel 3:10 to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul, and set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan to Beersheba."**

**2Samuel 3:11 And he could not answer Abner another word, because he feared him.**

Conspirators who have thrown off the bonds of Christ suddenly experience that ethics among thieves disappears pretty fast when the payback is slim. By throwing out God's laws, they undercut their own success. That's the point. And we can pray that the modern conspiracies that involve the United States, the United Nations, the International Banking System, and other international corporate conglomerates would fail for the

same reasons. We can pray that God would make them jealous of each other, get angry with each other, have a falling out, and in other ways undercut the foundations of their conspiracy. Lack of ethics is certainly going to do that.

It's interesting that though Abner does not have a genuine faith in God, he is finally forced by the providence of God to insist on implementing God's desires. That's exactly what verses 9-10 say. And God has done this over and over again in history. He has used a pagan Nebuchadnezzar to protect Daniels, Shadracks, Meshecks, and Abednegos, and not only protect them, but to promote their religion. He has used Cyruses to protect the church. He has used Artaxerxes to threaten lower magistrates who were conspiring against Ezra, and to tell those lower magistrates to smarten up or he will squash them. He has used Ahasueruses to protect His people from annihilation in the book of Esther. God can make Satan's kingdom to be divided against itself. In fact, that is an essential plank of a Biblical philosophy of conspiracy. The proverbial "they" are not invincibly united. Every conspiracy known to man has weaknesses that God can capitalize upon and He can cause them to eventually blow apart.

### **3. Those being manipulated (v. 12) often have their own agendas that don't square with the conspirator's (v. 13)**

Verses 12 and 13 show that when his first conspiracy looked like it was coming to an end, Abner immediately tried another one. He tried to manipulate himself into David's graces, even though he had already told Ishbosheth that he thinks David is a dog's head. He exposed his *real* heart.

**2Samuel 3:12** Then Abner sent messengers on his behalf to David, saying, "Whose *is* the land?" saying *also*, "Make your covenant with me, and indeed my hand *shall be* with you to bring all Israel to you."

**2Samuel 3:13** And David said, "Good, I will make a covenant with you. But one thing I require of you: you shall not see my face unless you first bring Michal, Saul's daughter, when you come to see my face."

I've already commented on these verses last week, so I don't need to say a lot, but I think you can see the obvious application to conspiracy. This was the beginnings of a conspiracy, and it does look like David is being somewhat duped. But David has his own agendas, doesn't he? And as we saw last week, he temporarily began to play the game of power politics himself. There were at least two, if not three conspiracies going on in this chapter, with each player having his own agendas. Joab wanted to have more control over David because he didn't agree with everything David did. And we will be seeing in a few minutes that he was very successful. But David kept Joab in the dark because he had an agenda to replace Joab with Abner.

He couldn't control Joab. Little did David realize that Abner was worse and that Abner was probably more than a match for him. It was only God's mercies that spared David from a worse situation than he was experiencing with Joab. At least Joab was a believer and was somewhat loyal.

But the point is that there isn't usually one overarching conspiracy in world history (like the John Birch Society sometimes paints it). Rather, there are many conspiracies, each of them with competing agendas. And God uses that situation to frustrate those conspirators. Don't buy into the idea that there is a global conspiracy that is so united that we are hopelessly at their mercy. Instead, realize that it is more like the situation with Herod and Pilate where they were initially at each other's throats, and they became friends only because they now had a common enemy - Jesus. But Herods and Pilates will have their falling out with each other eventually too.

And in the same way, while the GLBT community might join hands with other liberal groups to squash Christian culture, they each have their own competing agendas, and when one group goes to far, another group will squawk, just like the ACLU recently squawked at the idea of mayors having the power to keep Chick-fil-A out of their cities. The ACLU knows that if you grant mayors that power, the same power can be used by any mayor against any of their liberal organizations. The point is that each of those subgroups have their own agendas that keeps them from ever being able to nail the lid definitively down on the coffin of Christian America. They can't do it.

#### **4. People like to go around a conspirator's backs (v. 14)**

Another frustration to conspirators is that people often like to go behind a conspirator's back. Verse 14:

**2Samuel 3:14 So David sent messengers to Ishbosheth, Saul's son, saying, "Give *me* my wife Michal, whom I betrothed to myself for a hundred foreskins of the Philistines."**

We saw last week that verse 14 undermined everything that Abner had tried to assert in verse 12. David played their game, and went around Abner's back. He went directly to Ishbosheth.

In the same way we have found numerous people going behind conspirator's backs via the Internet. Whether it's a conservative blog, a wikileaks story, or a frustrated Monica exposing her relationship to the world, God can use this tendency for people to enjoy going around a conspirator's back to frustrate that conspirator's purposes. And you will

have to look at last week's sermon to see some of the ways that Abner was frustrated.

### **5. Conspirators can be frustrated by lower governments (v. 17)**

Fifth, higher-level conspirators can be frustrated by lower governments or even lower-level conspirators. Verse 17:

**2Samuel 3:17** Now Abner had communicated with the elders of Israel, saying, "In time past you were seeking for David *to be king over you*."

The whole time that Abner had been trying to use Ishbosheth to gain his own power, these elders of Israel had been seeking to replace Ishbosheth with David. It was lower level interposition. Now Abner managed to stave off that interposition via emergency powers and other manipulative means, but for seven and a half years, their opinion was a thorn in his side.

Well, in the same way, while states and counties don't have much power, they can certainly slow down the nonsense in DC and they can be a thorn in the flesh to conspirators. I think it is as a direct result of this principle that we saw so many Congressmen sign on to the audit-the-fed bill. And we need to keep putting on that pressure. Don't be discouraged. There are many ways in which conspirators can be frustrated. We've only looked at five so far.

### **6. God's revelation has a stubborn way of making things complicated for conspirators (v. 18 with verses 9-10)**

Number 6 – God's revelation has a stubborn way of making life complicated for conspirators. It's a constant reminder to them that there is a law above them by which they will be judged. In verse 18 he tells the elders,

**2Samuel 3:18** Now then, do *it!* For the LORD has spoken of David, saying, "By the hand of My servant David, I will save My people Israel from the hand of the Philistines and the hand of all their enemies."

Abner has been able to ignore God's Word for a long, long time – seventeen years to be specific, and certainly for the seven and a half years that he had put Ishbosheth on the throne as a puppet king. And when you are a Christian who has been preaching God's Word in society, that can be discouraging. Seventeen years in which God's Word seems to have had no effect! But obviously it *did* have some effect. It has been gnawing at Abner's consciousness this whole time. It has been referenced by the elders of Israel this whole time. And it finally gets implemented with a recognition that this is indeed God's will. Never give up speaking God's Word into society. It might take seventeen years or more before it grows into full bloom, but

God's Word never returns to Him void, and it is a tool that God can use to frustrate the conspirators. For one thing, rulers don't like the fact that they are constantly being reminded that they aren't the highest authority. They stand under God's law. If you don't like conspirators, frustrate them with the law of God.

**7. Even a conspirator's closest allies (v. 19a) can become a righteous resistance (1 Sam. 22:6-9; 1 Chron. 12:1-3)**

Seventh, even a conspirator's closest allies can become a righteous resistance given the right circumstances. The resistance had started with the elders of Israel in verses 17-18. And they got their way. In verse 17 he tells that they had been seeking for David to be king, and in verse 18 he says, "Now then, do it!"

But look at the first part of verse 19: "**And Abner also spoke in the hearing of Benjamin.**" The implication is that he said much the same thing to Benjamin. Why is that significant? It is significant because Saul came from the tribe of Benjamin. Abner was a Benjamite. Ishbosheth was a Benjamite. In chapter 2:25 we find that the army of Abner was largely composed of Benjamites. He seems not to have been able to trust the other tribes as much as he trusted Benjamin. So if even the Benjamites were wanting David, that is huge. Why don't you turn back to 1 Samuel 22, and I want to read verses 6-9. These verses show that the discontent had been going on for a long time.

**1Samuel 22:6** When Saul heard that David and the men who *were* with him had been discovered—now Saul was staying in Gibeah under a tamarisk tree in Ramah, with his spear in his hand, and all his servants standing about him—

**1Samuel 22:7** then Saul said to his servants who stood about him, "Hear now, you Benjamites! Will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, *and* make you all captains of thousands and captains of hundreds?"

**1Samuel 22:8** All of you have conspired against me, and *there is* no one who reveals to me that my son has made a covenant with the son of Jesse; and *there is* not one of you who is sorry for me or reveals to me that my son has stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as *it is* this day."

**1Samuel 22:9** Then answered Doeg the Edomite, who was set over the servants of Saul, and said, "I saw the son of Jesse going to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub.

And of course, because even the Benjamites were beginning to be sympathetic to David, Saul couldn't trust *them* completely. In fact, because conspirators aren't trustworthy, they can't trust anybody. That's why Stalin and other dictators lived in constant fear of assassination. They had

numerous bedrooms so that no one knew where they were sleeping on any given night. Saul couldn't fully trust the Benjamites, his own kinsman. We now know why he didn't fully trust Abner. Instead, in the rest of that chapter he gave the responsibility to kill the priests of Nob to Doeg the Edomite – a foreigner.

Well, the same has been true all down through history in many of the ancient empires. If American conspirators ever felt like they had to fire on Americans or to imprison Americans, it would not at all surprise me if they used the United Nations to do the dirty work rather than using our own military. Even those who are closest to the conspirators can feel badly about doing stuff like that.

OK, with that as a background, take a look at 1 Chronicles 12, and we will read verses 1-3.

**1Chronicles 12:1** Now these *were* the men who came to David at Ziklag while he was still a fugitive from Saul the son of Kish; and they *were* among the mighty men, helpers in the war,

**1Chronicles 12:2** armed with bows, using both the right hand and the left in *hurling* stones and *shooting* arrows with the bow. *They were* of Benjamin, Saul's brethren.

**1Chronicles 12:3** The chief *was* Ahiezer, then Joash, the sons of Shemaah the Gibeathite; Jeziel and Pelet the sons of Azmaveth; Berachah, and Jehu the Anathothite;

So quite a few of David's mighty men were Benjamites commanding their own troops. They were even relatives of Saul. Even those who were closest to Abner eventually came to realize that they didn't like working for him. They switched sides. And the history of conspiracies shows that at least some conspiracies have been frustrated because people switched sides and exposed the conspiracy. God knows how to make them do that.

**8. Though Abner fools David (cf. v. 8), negotiates an even more powerful position for himself (vv. 19-21), and intends to do with David as he did with Ishbosheth, God used Joab to frustrate his purposes (point II).**

However, when you are in the forest, all you can see is the trees around you. You can't see the big picture that is being painted in this chapter. And so it is very easy to get discouraged and to want to give up trying to influence America. Don't give in to those discouragements. God has at least *told you that there is a big picture* so that you will live by faith, and not by sight.

OK, back to the passage in 2 Samuel 3. Abner's conspiracy was going along swimmingly, and it might have made some people nervous. Look at verses 19-21:

**2Samuel 3:19 And Abner also spoke in the hearing of Benjamin. Then Abner also went to speak in the hearing of David in Hebron all that seemed good to Israel and the whole house of Benjamin.**

**2Samuel 3:20 So Abner and twenty men with him came to David at Hebron. And David made a feast for Abner and the men who *were* with him.**

**2Samuel 3:21 Then Abner said to David, "I will arise and go, and gather all Israel to my lord the king, that they may make a covenant with you, and that you may reign over all that your heart desires." So David sent Abner away, and he went in peace.**

Sometimes conspiracies are camouflaged. They don't look like conspiracies. They actually look like a conservative backward movement. But we saw last week that Abner was stepping down from being king of hill just so that he could regain moment to climb back onto it again. It's sort of like the Marxist analogy of the hammer. The Marxists spoke of concessions as a hammer pulling back just so that it could strike again in the future. And so it is with conspiracies. What looked good to David on the surface here, was really a new conspiracy to take over all of Israel, what Abner had intended all along. This was just another way of doing it. This is a perfect picture of the Marxist dialectic. But don't despair. Even the Marxist dialectic is not omnipotent. The high level conspiracies of Abner were frustrated by the low level conspiracies of Joab. And that's Roman numeral II.

## **II. The low level conspiracies in the South**

### ***A. The nature of the conspiracies by Joab and Abner***

Let me first of all demonstrate that Joab really was engaged in a conspiracy and what that looked like. This was probably a much more innocent kind of conspiracy like Bruce Willis played in the movie *The Siege*. This book has already shown David's frustration with the approaches of Joab and Abishai. David wanted to enter power in God's ways and in God's timing, no matter how slowly that took. Joab and Abishai wanted to seize power quickly, manipulate toward power, and maintain it in humanistic ways. They were believers, but they had thoroughly bought into the need to follow principles similar to Machiavelli's. And we have already looked at that. Because David constantly overrode Joab and frustrated Joab, Joab sought to gain more power behind David's back. It doesn't look like he was totally self-serving. It looks like he was for the most part doing it for the good of David and doing it for the good of the country, much like (in the

movie, *The Siege*) Devereaux (played by Bruce Willis) thought that his actions were for the good of the country. So conspiracies can be very, very sincerely entered into. In fact, I think Bruce Willis in that movie is almost a perfect parallel to what Joab was doing here. Joab was probably sincere. But it was still an unconstitutional conspiracy.

**1. Notice the power that Joab has gained (v. 22a with v. 39a)**

Verse 22 shows the degree to which he had already gained power. It says, “**At that moment the servants of David and Joab came from a raid and brought much spoil with them**” Two things to notice: Joab has been fighting *without* David in chapters 2 and chapter 3 of this book. That’s something new. And as a result of the crisis we are going to be looking at, David makes sure that doesn’t happen again. It was a big mistake. But it shows a degree of independence on the part of Joab. He can command the armies with or without David’s permission. That’s not a good thing.

Secondly, the phrase, “**the servants of David and Joab**” is very revealing. Everywhere else the soldiers are said to be servants of the king. Even when David is not present and only Joab is mentioned, the soldiers are everywhere else still called “servants of David.” This too shows that Joab has gained a great deal of power, and at least in some measure he parallels Abner. We saw last week that the literary contrast was between two women: Rizpah and Michal, and this week the literary contrast is between two schemers Abner and Joab. That phraseology is very deliberate.

**2. Notice that the meeting with Abner deliberately excluded Joab (v. 22b; cf David’s fear of Joab in 3:29,39; 5:8; 1 Kings 2:5; etc)**

The second hint that we have of this low level conspiracy on the part of Joab is the fact that Joab was deliberately kept out of this meeting between David and Abner. Why? Two reasons: because David feared Joab and because he planned to replace Joab with Abner. And I won’t bore you with all the details, such as David’s curse of Joab in verses 28-30, but do take a look at verse 39. David confides in his men,

**2Samuel 3:39** And I *am* weak today, though anointed king; [He is saying, “I may be a king in name, but I don’t have the power.”] **and these men, the sons of Zeruiah, are too harsh for me. The LORD shall repay the evildoer according to his wickedness.**”

Why does David not repay Joab right then and there according to his wickedness? Why does he not execute Joab? 1 Kings 2:5 says that Joab deserved the death penalty for murdering Abner under safe conduct. That

was a clear-cut crime. But David didn't do it. Why not? Here he says he is too weak. In 1 Kings 2 he says that he couldn't do it. I believe that he no longer had the power to be able to do it. Back in 1 Samuel 30 there was the real threat of David being stoned to death. We weren't told that Joab was the instigator, but this passage implies that David had the same fear if he tried to execute Joab now. In any case, he knew that Joab had too much power and too loyal of a following for him to be able to execute him. He was a very popular general. But we will be seeing in two weeks that David goes to the people in order to undermine Joab's power, and he does it very effectively. And he returns to leading the armies, and as a result regains the affections of his army. But he doesn't trust Joab in this chapter, and he deliberately excludes Joab from the meeting.

### 3. Joab has informers that undermine David (v. 23)

What are some other hints of conspiracy in this passage? Well, verse 23 shows that Joab had informers that tattled on David and undermined David. These appear to be secret informers. Verse 23:

**2Samuel 3:23** When Joab and all the troops that *were* with him had come, they told Joab [There's the proverbial "they" – it wasn't members of the army, because they didn't know. They had just come back. The proverbial "they" was some informers who were with David. "...they told Joab"], saying, "Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he sent him away, and he has gone in peace."

These secret informers may have been put in place by Joab with the security of the nation in mind (Bruce Willis in *The Siege*), but they aren't a good sign. They stand in stark contrast to the Biblical open sunshine policy.

### 4. Joab rebukes David and rightly points out the dangers of a covenant with Abner (vv. 24-25)

Fourth, Joab sharply rebukes David and amazingly, he gets away with it. Now, I think Joab was correct that Abner *was the* threat. In fact, he is astonished that David could so easily be deceived. I think David was blinded by his desperate desire to get rid of Joab. But look at verses 24-25

**2Samuel 3:24** Then Joab came to the king and said, "What have you done? Look, Abner came to you; why *is it that* you sent him away, and he has already gone?"

**2Samuel 3:25** Surely you realize that Abner the son of Ner came to deceive you, to know your going out and your coming in, and to know all that you are doing."

He's upset, and the language is utterly uncharacteristic of a person addressing a king. Brueggemann says, "Joab rebukes David, talking to him not as a king but as a fighting companion." (p. 228). Back in those days, that would have been unheard of. Baldwin says,

Full of indignation, he rushed into the king's presence and criticized the policy David had adopted, accusing him of naivety in trusting the motives of an erstwhile enemy. ... Joab was exceeding his office in taking it upon himself to counter the decisions of the king and frustrate his intentions. To do so was virtually to assume royal power... (p. 190)

Let me repeat those last words of the commentary: "To do so was virtually to assume royal power." So the author of this book is paralleling what Joab did with what Abner had done to Ishbosheth, and it helps to explain the drastic actions that David had to take in the rest of the chapter. If David did not speak so strongly, his position on the throne would have been no more sure than Ishbosheth's. And we will look at that in a couple of weeks, Lord willing. We will take a break from the series for our outreach next week.

### **5. Undermining David (v. 26)**

Of course, Joab's undermining of David in verse 26 has much the same effect.

**2Samuel 3:26 And when Joab had gone from David's presence, he sent messengers after Abner, who brought him back from the well of Sirah. But David did not know *it*.**

The first part of the verse shows that Joab is trying to stop the peace treaty from happening. He is directly stopping David's peace process.

### **6. It was secret rather than open (v. 26b)**

The last part of the verse shows that this was done secretly and without David's knowledge. And that of course, is at the heart of all conspiracies. They cannot succeed without some secrecy. And undermining of authority, whether it is done in the home, in the church, or in the state, is often done behind the backs of the leaders. Gary North talks a great deal about this secrecy of conspiracies. They don't have the truth, so they cannot compete in the free market of ideas, and that automatically causes them to trust in underhanded methods to get people to adopt their position. They might adopt intimidation, manipulation, yelling, force or other things. But they also frequently rely on being sneaky, going behind people's backs, or engaging in other forms of secrecy. This stands in total contrast to everything that Jesus stood for. He called the church to be a city set on a hill,

a light that the world could see, and warned that secrets would eventually be shouted from the housetops. North said,

This principle of "open covenants openly arrived at" is basic to the history of Western Civilization. It is basic to all constitutionalism. The idea that the way to gain influence is by secret manipulation and hidden agendas is foreign to the Bible. What men are to do is to bring other men openly and publicly under God's four covenants: personal, church, family, state. Not by secret initiation but by public baptism; not by hidden sacrifices but by Christ's public sacrifice on the cross and by our public communion (the Lord's Supper) are we to exercise dominion. (Introduction, p. 2)

There is always the temptation for even believers to engage in this pagan methodology. When I would go to the General Assembly of the PCA there were about a thousand elders present. And these were godly men. But even they were tempted by the lure of secrecy - especially during the tense times in the early 1990's. The power brokers of the progressive opposition in the denomination would hold secret caucuses of who they would like to push to get voted into office, what positions they wanted adopted, and what tactics they would use to achieve it. They anticipated opposition and tried to stack the microphones. (And by the way, you can do that effectively by asking people who are weak and would be an embarrassment to our cause to get to the microphones right away, and then they would have their own strong opponents to counter these weak arguments. And then they would have somebody else move the question to close off debate.) They would go through all the parliamentary procedures by which they could confuse our side of the debate. And I had friends who voted against something on day one who voted for it on day two, and didn't even realize that they had voted for it, because things had gotten so complicated. It was fascinating to watch. It was really pagan methodologies that were being planned at these by-invitation-only-secret-caucuses. It was a conspiracy to change our previous denomination, and it was successful. And the conservatives got frustrated with this and at least a couple of my friends wanted to have their own corresponding secret caucuses. And I told them that I wanted nothing to do with that. We should be prepared to argue the positions on their merits, and if we lost the debates, we deserved to lose the votes. And for the most part the conservatives agreed. They wanted much more lengthy debate of the issues (which unfortunately we couldn't get) and then to vote it up or down and and if we lost, we just move on. But I bring that up to point out that this issue of conspiracies can be a temptation for even godly people. Now, you might question whether they really were godly after what I told you, but they

were, and it is easy to fall into this. It can be a temptation for wives, children, and work associates in corporations. Wow! There's all kinds of secret intrigue that can go on in business corporations.

If you are tempted to engage in any of these principles with your family, I would urge you to repent of it. If you go behind your father's back or your husband's back, or have secret meetings in which you complain about the eldership of the church, I would call you to repent. If you can't get your way with one parent and you go to another parent, and you can't get your way with one elder and you go to another elder, I call you to repent. The Bible calls us to first of all, hold to positions that are true, so that you can win fair and square in the free market competition of ideas. And if you don't win, you don't fret about it, because ideas always have consequences built in, and when people suffer those consequences enough they will eventually come around to your ideas. You don't have to manipulate your husband; you don't have to manipulate others. God can open their eyes. You speak the truth and trust God with the results. Will you occasionally get crucified and lose? Yes. Jesus did. But you will eventually win the war, even if you lose individual battles, and you will do so with integrity and with clean hands. God calls us to have open sunshine policies, not manipulation.

#### **7. It was devious (v. 27a)**

Verse 27 says

**2Samuel 3:27 Now when Abner had returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him privately, and there stabbed him in the stomach, so that he died for the blood of Asahel his brother.**

His motive was self-serving (revenge); his method was devious, and his goal was murder. And all three are products of Satanic temptation. When you start messing with the methodologies of Satan, don't be surprised if you end up with the motives and goals of Satan. You might not physically stab someone in the back, but if you have this demonic spirit tempting you constantly, you may metaphorically stab them in the back or in the stomach. But where does deviousness and sneakiness come from? It comes from the pit of hell. It does not flow from the one who is the way, the truth, and the life.

#### **8. It ended in murder (v. 27b)**

Now, I have taken pains to show that Joab was indeed involved in conspiracy much like Abner was, because you might otherwise doubt it. Joab was a believer. In many ways David needed him. But this is one

passage that demonstrates that even a believer like Joab could get sucked into the Satanic conspiracy model of getting things done. This pragmatism flows from paganism, not from the Bible. And I urge you to reject the methodologies of Joab and Abner. I also hope that you will be encouraged that conspiracies will eventually fail. That's the good news. You may not be able to catch your children in lies and conspiracies right away, but you can certainly pray that God would expose them, and once they are exposed, deal with them harshly like David did. We may not be able to expose the lies of the conspiracies that have been destroying our nation, but we can pray that God would expose them and bring them to naught. Even this passage that we have read, shows further ways that God frustrated the conspiracy of Joab.

### ***B. How God frustrates the conspiracies***

#### **1. Joab's intentions frustrated by Abner (vv. 22ff)**

First, in verses 22 and following, Joab's attempts to gain power over David were temporarily frustrated by Abner. And I won't repeat that.

#### **2. Abner's intentions destroyed by Joab (v. 27)**

Second, Abner's intentions to gain power over David were certainly destroyed by Joab. God can cause sin to cancel out sin; conspiracy to cancel out conspiracy. He can use pagans in the tower of Babel to frustrate each other.

#### **3. Other frustrations**

##### **a) Conspirators aren't omnipresent (v. 22a)**

And there are other hints that conspirators in any of the three governments of life are not all powerful. The next hint that I list is in verse 22 – conspirators aren't omnipresent. Many of the books on conspiracy *treat* them as all powerful and everywhere present, but they are not. Joab could only be one place at a time, and while he was away, the mice came out to play. The conspirators in America are not omnipresent and consequently cannot possibly control every countermove that we make. It's a ridiculous concept to think that they can, but many Christians act as if the conspirators are omnipresent and unbeatable. That's blasphemy against God.

##### **b) Conspirators can have missed opportunities (v. 22b)**

The next hint is also in verse 22 – conspirators can have missed opportunities. Joab was kicking himself that he wasn't present to kill Abner.

He later does the deed, but there are any number of ways that God can keep conspirators from taking advantage of good opportunities. And if you want to see some examples, read the book of Esther. The whole book is an amazing book showing how God can easily overturn conspiracies and cause them to actually end up promoting God's kingdom when they get exposed. In Acts 23 forty men formed a conspiracy to capture Paul and kill him. In fact, they took a vow that they wouldn't eat until they killed him. I bet you they broke that vow when they missed their opportunity. Missed opportunities.

**c) Conspirators can make mistakes because of emotion (v. 27b)**

Another hint that I list is in verse 27, where Joab is so angry that he exposes his true heart of rebellion against David. Anger can easily make conspirators spill the beans and make others realize that there is something bad going on here.

**d) Conspirators can overstep propriety and alienate needed assets (v. 24-25)**

The next hint is in verses 24-25 where we see Joab totally overstepping what anyone in his right mind would consider propriety. In the process, Joab lost capital with some of his men and alienated them when he could have easily used them. David picked up on that overstep and milked it for all it was worth – and we will look at Lord willing in two weeks. When statisticians embarrass themselves and step in the steaming pile of their own dung, we need to milk that mistake for all its worth. We need to publicize their problems. It's not unbiblical to spread their treasonous ways on Facebook. That's not gossip. That's an open sunshine policy. And for the most part, I think people are pretty good at doing that, though some Christians are a bit shy, thinking it is mean. If you think so, hopefully you will be disabused of that when we look at the rest of the chapter in two weeks.

**e) Conspirators can be completely exposed and humiliated in public opinion (vv. 28-39 – next week)**

And then finally, conspirators can be completely exposed and humiliated in public opinion. And if you quickly skim through verses 28-39 some time, you will see that David did not hesitate to hang out Joab's dirty laundry. There is a place for love to cover over a multitude of sins, but you

cannot cover over such actions as these and not be guilty of sinning against your nation. That would be like the cover up of Sandusky's crimes.

## Conclusion

But I want to conclude today by encouraging you to read Gary North's book, *Conspiracy: A Biblical View*. He covers a lot of material that I have not even remotely touched on. I can send you a free ebook version of it if you desire.

Second, I would encourage you to ask God to show you any signs of conspiracy that you might have in your own life. If you are engaged in any of these things, repent of them, and give yourself homework that will crucify the inward temptations to undermine, manipulate, rebel, take power that is not yours, or to do any of the other signs of conspiracy that we have looked. It is ugly, and must be put off.

And last, I would urge you to stop getting discouraged and helpless and backing away from culture when you read humanistic histories of conspiracy. Begin looking at history through the lens of Scripture. That's the whole purpose of the Providential History Festival. It's to teach you how to look at history through the lens of a Biblical worldview. Gary North made an interesting point in this regard. He said,

People are not agreed about the nature of God, man, law, sanctions, and time. Therefore, people are not agreed about the nature of history. [That by itself should tell us that history is not neutral, and that pagans are going to be inaccurate in their interpretations of history. He goes on...] We need to be clear about this: the war I spoke of is also a war over the proper interpretation of historical facts. The facts don't just 'speak for themselves.' Men speak in the name of the facts they have chosen to speak about.

He is saying that there is no such thing as neutrality, and Christians should see history through new eyes, not like the pagans do. He was saying that history will either be humanistic or it will reflect true Christian worldview. Unlike humanistic history, God's view of conspiracy produces wonderful fruit – it gives faith and hope for the future. It energizes us to activity. God's view of history always factors providence into the equation.

In contrast, even some of the books *written by Evangelicals* about how bad things are getting in America are designed to rob us of action and make us despair. A few years ago I read a book on the conspiracies happening in America, but it was written in a way that made me want to throw up my hands and give up. The situation felt hopeless. That's a bad way to write history. And so I say, make sure that you look at the history of conspiracy from a providential, Biblical perspective. And as more and more

of us do this, may the level of faith and hope in our nation grow. And to God be the glory. Amen.

# Why Conspiracies Don't Last

## 2 Samuel 3:17-27

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on

### Introduction

#### I. The high level conspiracies in the North

##### A. The nature of the conspiracy (v. 6)

1. It was a conspiracy against God (v. 6a with verses 9-10; 17-18)
2. It was simultaneously a conspiracy against man (v. 6a,b)

##### B. How God frustrates the conspiracy

1. Though successful against Ishbosheth (6:b) it was ultimately frustrated by an overstretched military (v. 6a; see previous maps)
2. Co-conspirators can squabble (vv. 7-11)
3. Those being manipulated (v. 12) often have their own agendas that don't square with the conspirator's (v. 13)
4. People like to go around a conspirator's backs (v. 14)
5. Conspirators can be frustrated by lower governments (v. 17)
6. God's revelation has a stubborn way of making things complicated for conspirators (v. 18 with verses 9-10)
7. Even a conspirator's closest allies (v. 19a) can become a righteous resistance (1 Sam. 22:6-9; 1 Chron. 12:1-3)
8. Though Abner fools David (cf. v. 8), negotiates an even more powerful position for himself (vv. 19-21), and intends to do with David as he did with Ishbosheth, God used Joab to frustrate his purposes (point II).

#### II. The low level conspiracies in the South

##### A. The nature of the conspiracies by Joab and Abner

1. Notice the power that Joab has gained (v. 22a with v. 39a)
2. Notice that the meeting with Abner deliberately excluded Joab (v. 22b; cf David's fear of Joab in 3:29,39; 5:8; 1 Kings 2:5; etc)
3. Joab has informers that undermine David (v. 23)
4. Joab rebukes David and rightly points out the dangers of a covenant with Abner (vv. 24-25)
5. Undermining David (v. 26)
6. It was secret rather than open (v. 26b)
7. It was devious (v. 27a)
8. It ended in murder (v. 27b)

##### B. How God frustrates the conspiracies

1. Joab's intentions frustrated by Abner (vv. 22ff)
2. Abner's intentions destroyed by Joab (v. 27)
3. Other frustrations
  - a) Conspirators aren't omnipresent (v. 22a)
  - b) Conspirators can have missed opportunities (v. 22b)
  - c) Conspirators can make mistakes because of emotion (v. 27b)
  - d) Conspirators can overstep propriety and alienate needed assets (v. 24-25)
  - e) Conspirators can be completely exposed and humiliated in public opinion (vv. 28-39 – next week)

### Conclusion

