

Purpose-Driven Churches (Part 6)

Conspiracies: Ancient and Modern

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It has been a month since the last time I spoke on this subject, so I believe that a bit of a rehearsal is in order. The main part of the previous sermon involved the devious and interesting twist that the purpose-driven churches have put on the word "tolerance." They have changed it from "respecting" and "bearing with" to "accept without question regarding a person's religious beliefs." That is, in actual every-day practice, they make no attempt to correct an error in the beliefs of another. This concept is held because the outcome they desire is a solid, strong unity. This is very interesting because of what it precipitates within both organizations.

I want you to turn to Deuteronomy 32: This is the renowned Song of Moses.

Deuteronomy 32:1-4 Give ear, O you heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: Because I will publish [or proclaim] the name of the LORD; ascribe you greatness unto our GOD. He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.

In verse 2 is where Moses begins what we would call today his specific purpose statement. He is telling you what the whole rest of it is going to be about. The second word "doctrine" in that verse—"My doctrine"—is to be understood as his speech or his teaching. The specific purpose is going to give you Moses' teaching about something that is fairly specific and what the speech is going to be about because in verse 3 he says "I will proclaim [It says "publish" in the KJV] the name of the LORD." He is going to be speaking it, and "name" is to be understood here to mean the attributes, the qualities of God.

After the statement, "ascribe you greatness unto our GOD," the very first thing he mentions about God is that He is a Rock. "Rock" is a Hebrew symbol for something that is stable, unchanging, whose patterns never vary. He can always be relied upon. He is a faithful God. That is the first of His attributes. He is great, and He is great in faithfulness.

Verse 4 continues, saying "His work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment [or justice]." Everything about God is fair. And then he says that God is a "God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." So we have a stable, faithful God who is truthful and honest in everything that He does.

Now I want to go back to Acts 18:25-26. This verse is about Apollos.

Acts 18:25-26 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and

being fervent in the spirit, he spoke and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.

I just want you to connect the thought between what Moses said about God being a God of truth; therefore we can rightly conclude that His way is going to be all about the truth of that God. Let us swing this around to the purpose-driven churches. I mentioned, in relation to "tolerance," that these churches hold the position that "all truth is equal." I want you to think about this in its practical application. They hold the concept that all truth is equal. I hope that I did not mislead you into thinking that Hinduism has any truth to it; that Islam has any truth to it; I mean, of the same quality as God's truth; or that Confucianism, or whatever, has any truth that even begins to compare to what God would be saying and teaching to His people.

When I said "all truth," I meant what these people whom the purpose-driven churches are attracting to their organization say what *they* believe is truth. The purpose-driven churches make no attempt to clarify these things. They accept these people on *their* terms, and so to them all truth is equal. But the way you and I would look at it is that these people do not *have* the truth of God, and yet are accepted by the purpose-driven churches. Why? Because they want unity in their organization, and they know that the truth of God divides.

The truth of God makes people think about their position, and if the truth of God is accepted as part of a person's life, it is going to begin to divide that person away from what is considered to be normal. The end result of what the purpose-driven churches are doing is a very subtle impulse, inclination, to idolatry and polytheism. I will tell you, that takes an awful lot of brash for those people to say that they accept all truth as being equal. It most certainly is not equal.

I think that it is really interesting that these people have aligned themselves with Christianity and claim to be representing the God of heaven, and accepting as equal to the Bible the Koran, any of the writings of the people of the Buddhist religion, and any of the writings of the people of the Hindu religion. They are all accepted on the same level.

As I mentioned in my previous sermon, the Catholic Church has been doing this for 1500 years, but these people in their services are a great deal more entertaining than any Catholic mass by far, and they are outdrawing the Catholic Church by leaps and bounds.

We found in that previous sermon that our God is a jealous God, and He demands of His people that they accept things on His terms. He says in His Word, "To whom then will you liken Me, nor I be equal?" He demands this because the outcome He desires—the hope that the Bible presents to us—is the hope that when we are resurrected we will be prepared for living in the Kingdom of God. This will not be accomplished unless we are one with Him.

Those people who are coming into the purpose-driven churches, without any demands upon them that they accept the truth of the Bible, are they going to be one with God—the God of truth? Not at all.

The conclusion to that part of the sermon was that we need to be very careful that we understand what *they* mean by the terminology that they are using. The reason we have to be careful is that in many cases the purpose-driven churches are using the same terminology that the true Church of God uses, but they do not mean the same thing. It is really deceptive.

When we reached that point we shifted gears in order to lay a foundation of where I believe the mushrooming growth of this emerging church is headed, and so I asked the question, "Do I, John Ritenbaugh, believe in conspiracy theories." I told you that I absolutely did, and I began to show why I believe in them.

The Bible provides very many recordings of conspiracies taking place in Israelitish government. Numerous kings of Israel, and a few of Judah, were assassinated while in office. Even David's son Absalom attempted to usurp the throne from a man God called "a man after My own heart." In one stretch of four generations during Israel's government, three of the kings were assassinated. The Jews of Jesus' day conspired to kill Jesus, and they eventually succeeded. Paul was conspired against, and God warns that the people of the world are going to conspire against the church in general, and the Psalms show very clearly that the God of heaven is conspired against.

With that record why should we not believe that conspiracies are taking place in *our* day? Has the nature of man changed in any way? Man is not only a planning being, he is a conspiring being. The only major difference between our time and former times is because we now have the resources of rapid transportation and very rapid communications, and conspiracies are now worldwide, are international in scope.

I then began to show why mankind is a conspiring being. God created us able to gather information from our experiences, to formulate it into a plan, and then bring that plan's purpose about. But in many plans an evil intent becomes part of the operation.

Ephesians 2:2-3 Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all [church members] had our conduct in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

All of mankind, including us until God converted us, walked—that is, we lived our lives according to, in agreement with, and thus followed the pattern—the course, the way having its source in and established by and kept going by the prince of the power of the air. That is exactly what those two verses say.

Brethren, people conspire because they are being influenced to conspire through the communication coming from the conspiring prince of the power of the air.

Let us get further explanation of this in John 8: 44. Jesus is the speaker, and He said to those people assembled before Him:

John 8:44 You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own for he is a liar, and the father of it.

There is no truth in him. What an all-encompassing statement! Anything that comes out of him will be twisted. Satan is a liar. It is his very nature to lie. It is like he cannot help himself. Liars are hypocritical, conspiring beings using lies to manipulate and cover their true intent while achieving their goals. Lying is used to conceal the truth of the motivation and the intent of one's plans, and those elements—lies, evil motivations, and self-serving intent—are the very heart and core of conspiracies. Jesus clearly designates Satan as the father—meaning the generator, the source—of lying. Pay attention to Jesus' accusation right in this chapter. He accuses them.

John 8:40-41 But now you seek to kill me, a man that has told you the truth which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. You do the deeds of your father.

Their spiritual father is Satan. When Jesus said that "they *do* the deeds," it means that they actively participate *with* Satan in what *he* is attempting to accomplish.

John 8:44 You are of your father the devil, and the lusts [or desires] of your father you will do.

Jesus repeats it for emphasis. Who is the god of this world? Satan is. Who is the god of the unconverted? Satan is. He is the generator of lies. It is his nature to lie. He is lying to people all the time. He has done it so much he cannot help himself. Everything that he thinks to accomplish has at its very nucleus lies, and even if he gives a word of truth it is for the purpose of getting across murder and to trick somebody into something.

This nature is in Satan to such an extent that he will enter into conspiracies with anybody. And I mean *anybody*! Well, as soon as I say this next verse you are going to know what I mean. I mean this guy has got a lot of gall, as we would say.

Job 1:6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.

I am not going to go any further, because you are so familiar with it. But Satan was going to enter into a conspiracy with God to do away with Job. Now God challenged him, and immediately Satan saw, "Aha! He has opened a door. Now I can kill this guy."

I want you to think of Job, in this case, as being typical, in one sense, of all of mankind—typical of you and me. Was not Job God's servant? Yes he was. Are not *you* God's servant? Yes. How many times do you think something like this—this little scene that we have portrayed before us in Job the first 2 chapters—has taken place where *you* have been the object of his desire to trip

you up? Well, I can guarantee you, if it was not Satan himself, who knows how many demons there are who are working on his side and are well-schooled with the same kind of thinking? He is so determined to destroy he will enter into a conspiracy with anybody.

Through the course of this event that begins in Job 1, two different intents are clearly seen: God's, and Satan's. God's purpose in proposing this was to test Job, to correct him in a positive way, and to improve Job's understanding and his character. But Satan's intent from the very beginning was to destroy, as is easily seen by God setting limits on what Satan could do in his subsequent action. A second interesting factor showing Satan's incredible desire to destroy is that he knew in advance God's supreme power, but he discounted it entirely, and conspired to destroy Job anyway. What hubris that guy had! He cannot help himself.

Do you understand what I am getting at? Satan has deceived the whole world. He has the whole world following him—a liar who is conspiring with anybody who will enter into a deal with him to kill, to destroy. Where do you think he is taking all of mankind at this time, in *his* mind?

Before we move on, I think it is important that we understand God's involvement in what was going on in this situation, and also what is going on in the Israelitish nations as *they* continue in their degeneracy into abject immorality.

As a nation we seem to be losing almost every shred of common sense religiously, politically, academically, economically, and militarily. I think that this is evidence that even as God removed a major portion of the wall of protection, the hedge that He placed around Job, so He has done the same with the Israelitish nations. Satan could never accomplish what he was doing, or is doing, without God's cooperation.

Just as surely as God cooperated with Satan in the matter with Job, so God is cooperating with Satan right now. But God's cooperation, you understand, is limited. He says to Satan, "This far, and no farther," and God has the power to back up what He says. But Satan is still anxious to destroy.

Satan could never do what he is doing without God's cooperation. In other words, both God and Satan are involved in what is going on in the world today, but we see two different intents, even as there was with Job. God's intent again is to correct. God's punishment is always corrective. He does not punish merely to destroy. He punishes in order to correct, just as Hebrews 12 explains that "every father chastens his son." That is what God is doing to the Israelitish people.

God punishes in order to bring about repentance. He knows how far He needs to go, and He goes that far and no farther lest He destroy the people and their will. But Satan's intent, from the very get-go, is to destroy. We know, with what God has given us in the book of Job, who is going to prevail. He did bring Job to repentance, as Job 42 very clearly says. We know from prophecies that what God is doing with the Israelitish nations is going to bring them to repentance, but brethren, it is going to be painful. I kid you not.

What is important to us is that we never lose sight of God's involvement in what is going on. It may seem as though it is out of control. It is *not* out of control. As Abraham said, "God is the God who is there!" when he was about seemingly to slay Isaac. That is the Rock of our faith. He

really is in control of what is going on, and our faith had better be in that, because God has set a line for the Israelitish nations too—this far, and no farther.

With a being such as Satan, who is wickedly intelligent far beyond human ability and seemingly lives forever, it is absolutely essential to conspiracy—as to what is occurring—because conspiracies involve not only many people of many nations, but also centuries of time and many generations for them to unfold.

So, is it possible that Satan and his demons, working and communicating their plans through men, can conspire through centuries of time to bring their desires to pass? Absolutely! His plans, his operations do not end simply because a man dies, because he is the one generating the conspiracies, and so he just leaps from one man to another. You can be sure that as one man lives, he is already preparing somebody to take his place when that man does die. Satan is not dumb.

It might interest you to begin thinking about something, and that is that it does not take a great deal of mankind to carry out what he is doing if his manpower is distributed in the right places having the greatest influence on the culture. If you want a vivid idea of how important a leader can be in a situation like this, I want you to think of James Jones and what the people did in Jonestown following his lead. He induced 900 people at one fell swoop to commit suicide. Was he demon-inspired? I am sure he was. Were many of those people who were following him demon-inspired to take their own lives? Yes they were.

The leadership of a nation, the leadership of a state, of a community, of a church, is so important to its well-being, because all too often, as the leader goes, so will the people, following as well. So it really does not take all that many people to pull off a conspiracy—even a worldwide conspiracy—especially if you have a powerful nation like the United States, Great Britain, France, or Germany. Believe it or not, these conspiracies reach out to the enemies of those nations, and leadership in our enemies' nations are cooperating with the leadership of the Western powers. Very, very interesting things are coming to light.

I do not know how much you have looked into these things, but have you ever noticed that most of those interested in globalization (that is, in the New World Order), in the elimination of national sovereignty, in a tolerance for other religions and other cultures, are all or have been members of the same organizations and institutions that in turn usually have existed for a long time, in some cases even centuries? I am talking about organizations like the United Nations, the Bilderbergers, the Club of Rome, Skull and Bones, the Masons, Knights of Columbus, the Illuminati, the Fabian Society, the Tri-Lateral Commission, the Council on Foreign Relations.

These people have attended institutions like Yale, Harvard, and Georgetown University in Washington, Oxford and Cambridge in England. They all belong to the same clubs. They have all gone to the same institutions. They are all involved now in the same kind of governments as well. These elite people are highly positioned in politics, academia, the economy, and religion. They are all, what would be determined even by the world, Liberals, Leftists, Socialists, Moderates, and even out-right Communists. These are people who are in positions to influence the spirit of an organization, then move in the general direction of its efforts.

The combining of their efforts is clearly seen now as heading toward one-world government, one

religion, one economy, one military, and thus the loss of national sovereignty leading to the destruction of the Israelitish people as nations, and ultimately the destruction of the Israel of God, and therefore the plan and purpose of God.

Everywhere you turn individuality in every discipline is being quashed by these people in favor of group-thinking. *Their* group-thinking, not God's group-thinking. There is nothing wrong with group-thinking if that group-thinking is based in truth, but it is not, and that is the problem.

Men on their own could not keep what is happening going because they do not live long enough, and because self-interest and national interest, and qualities such as jealousy, hatred, and envy are so strong that the conspiracies that are taking place would dissolve in mass confusion brought about by infighting within a generation or so. The natural enmities still indeed do take place, because Satan does not have everybody involved in a conspiracy walking in lock-step with a single focus in mind, and thus a great number of misleading red herrings become involved, clouding the issue, and these have to be sorted out to get a clearer picture.

But Satan's presumptuous arrogance, and yet appealing deceptions, keep the conspiracies going through the lure of personal gain for the leaders. I will give you a simple illustration. Did Satan offer Judas the personal gain of money to help lure him to betray Jesus? Did Satan deceive Judas into believing that he was doing Jesus a service by betraying Him into the hands of the Jews and the Romans? He most certainly did.

We are going to turn to Proverbs 1:10. What Solomon describes here is the heart and core of a conspiracy. As we go through these verses I want you to see that this teaching of God through Solomon is showing the individual's responsibility to reject the offers that are made to do something that is unlawful, illegal, and sin. So do not consent.

Proverbs 1:10-19 My son, if sinners entice you, consent you not. If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause: Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit: We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil: Cast in your lot among us; let us all have one purse: My son, walk not you in the way with them, refrain your foot from their path: [He is saying, "Do not enter into conspiracies."] For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood. Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird. And they lay wait for their own blood; they lurk privily for their own lives. [God is telling us that it is not going to work out.] So are the ways of everyone that is greedy of gain; which takes away the life of the owners thereof.

Have you listened to any of the things that those who are conspiring for a new world order are hoping to accomplish? Do you know that they have already set out ways in which they can eliminate huge numbers of any given population?

Mikhail Gorbachev was addressing a group of these people who are involved in the very things I am talking about here, and he said that we need to reduce the population of the earth by 90

percent. Do you know what those people did? They applauded. Americans applauded. Why did they do this? Because they believe they are going to be spared, and that they are going to be the beneficiaries of this. The lure of personal gain and power and security and the renown as being recognized as one of the movers and shakers is held out to these people at this time in history, and we are the ones whose blood they are waiting for.

Incidentally, do you know where Mikhail Gorbachev is now residing, where the base of his operations is? He is residing at the Presidio in San Francisco, California. The United States is taking care of him. Does that not look like the payoff on a deal? Do you think that there was not a deal made for Gorbachev to give up Russia, as it were, and the Cold War ends? This is just another step in the direction Satan is headed.

I mentioned earlier that this has all been done before. This is not Satan's first try at this. It has been done on a smaller scale to be sure, but God has left us with enough of a foundation in His word, plus information from the secular world, so that we can gradually see an ever sharpening outline of what is taking shape happen before our very eyes.

Genesis 10:8-10 And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD, And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.

There is a translation in here that is kind of interesting, because the word "before" in verse 9, where it says "Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD," can also be translated "against." Within the context, the Hebrew can be understood either way; either "before" or "against" would be correct, so in one sense there is nothing wrong with the word "before." What Nimrod was doing was certainly not *for* God; not in God's behalf. It was not done to advance God's cause in any way. It was most certainly *against* God, but it was all done within God's view; thus it was *before* Him, thus showing His concern.

Now what were Nimrod and the others with him attempting to do? I think that they were conspiring to restore the religious and civil systems that existed before the flood, with Nimrod as the leader of all the people of the world.

Genesis 11:1-2 And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.

Genesis 11:6 And the LORD 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.

One of the things that this chapter shows is that men can accomplish great things whenever unity is achieved. This is one of the reasons the outcome-based religions are so insistent upon

unity. With unity they feel as though they can accomplish the very things they want to accomplish, but in this case here in Genesis 11, they were accomplishing great things, but great does not automatically synchronize with good. What they were doing was great in concept, in scope in accomplishment involved in leading these efforts. What they were producing was a brutal, self-serving grab to rule the world.

There is an interesting clue right at the beginning of chapter 11 as to the intent of what people in this chapter were doing. That clue is contained in verse 2: "And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east. . . ." The word "from" is mistranslated. Many modern translations will translate that correctly. It should be translated "to the east" or "eastward." Men were journeying eastward. Another way of putting it is that the migrations of men were moving in an easterly direction.

Genesis 3:24 So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubim, . . .

Why does it specifically say that God put the cherubim to guard Eden on the east side? Why not the north side, the south side, or the west side? Because eastward is the direction that Adam and Eve took whenever they left the Garden of Eden. It was to go to the east.

Genesis 4:16 And Cain [the murderer] went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.

Cain took the same direction after killing Abel. What all three of these things mean is that Eden—the Garden of God—was to the west of all of this that was taking place. The clue is this: Where did God, at least symbolically, live? He lived in Eden. Eden was the Garden of God. That is what it symbolically represented. In all of these instances the Bible is giving us a subtle indication that mankind, from the time of Adam and Eve on to Cain, and on to the descendants of Noah, were all moving *away* from God. Therefore, what is taking place in Genesis 10 and 11 is taking these people *away* from God.

Do you get it? It is just a little clue, but it is a big important clue when you tie that to what was going on in Genesis 11. What they were doing was anti-God. It was anti-Christ. Why do you think it specifically says in verse 6 that God came down and stopped what was going on short of what they imagined to do? What do you think He meant by "what they imagined to do?" Sometimes we jump on that and say well, He was thinking of stopping them from developing the atomic bomb, nuclear weapons, or whatever, so that all of mankind could be wiped out. At very best that is secondary, tertiary, or whatever. What was wrong was they were setting up a one-world government kingdom in defiance of God. They did not want His rule. They were going to do it themselves.

Here we have, right at the very beginning, the seeds of what is going on in our life right now. Satan is still moving in the same direction. This was the initial effort after the Flood, to organize man into a kingdom without God being involved, completely and apart from Him.

If you can recall what I said in the previous sermon on this, the purpose-driven churches are

attempting to do, on a religious level, exactly the same thing. They are playing their part in creating a worldwide kingdom as the religious element of that. They are attempting to set up the Kingdom of God on earth apart from God.

I want you to notice something. Reel back to Satan. He feels so confident that he can pull this thing off. He is telling the world what he is going to do, and defying us to stop it. It has gotten that far.

I mentioned to the people here of an announcement that was made this week that the United States government, through the FDA that they have given permission *arrogantly* telling Americans that they are now going to begin spraying delicatessen-type foods with live viruses that will eat other viruses. Such arrogance! They tell you what they are going to do, or they tell you right after they have done it, without ever telling you that it is going to come to pass. What is happening, brethren, to American liberties? What is happening to the government that just lays this stuff on you, like a dictatorial fascist government?

At any rate, with the principles that are expressed in Genesis 11, we are given an insight of what has been happening through millennia of time.

Daniel 2: 36-43 This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. You, O king, are a king of kings: for the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power; and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven has he given into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all. You are this head of gold. And after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to you, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and subdues all things: and as iron that breaks all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. And whereas you saw the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas you saw iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.

We are bringing this up to the end-time now.

Daniel 2: 44-45 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms and it shall stand forever. Forasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and

that it broke in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold: the great God has made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

What we are shown here in Daniel 2 in very broad strokes is the general pattern of periodic uprisings of Satan working through men, first to enslave, and then to destroy mankind, and God's purpose. Now God has permitted him the enslavement part, but not the destruction part of His plan.

From these prophecies, as well as secular history, we know generally the ethnic participants, the major leaders, and the geographical location of each of these kingdoms. First was the Babylonian empire; second the Medo-Persian empire; third the Greco-Macedonian empire; and fourth, the Roman empire, including its many revivals through the centuries.

Each of these empires has bequeathed lasting impressions on many cultures around the face of the earth, and these impressions are found in these cultures: religious, academic, political, civil, and military theories and practices. As an example, consider how much lingering Babylonian thought exists to this very day in nominal Christianity.

In these chapters God illustrates the pattern used in *opposition* to God, in *opposition* to His purpose, and in *opposition* to His people. What we are seeing in these histories as they unfold is the pattern of the anti-Christ—the one that was first set up through Nimrod. Now what is happening on the world scene in our time is following the same basic pattern both in terms of civil government and religion. And the purpose-driven churches, despite having determined to align themselves with Christianity, and despite their phenomenal appeal and growth, are *anti-Christ*.

Much of the evidence for this exposure of their true position lies in the fact that they are not using Christ's sayings exclusively as the foundation of their way of life. You see, they have brought the sayings of Jesus Christ down to the same level as Islam, or Buddhism, or even present-day philosophers, or philosophers who lived a couple hundred years ago. [They say] All truths are equal. No, they are not! God is not going to accept people who have accepted the philosophies of the purpose-driven church. They are promoting idolatry and polytheism under the banner of Christianity. And so what we see in those churches is an appealing mixture of true Christianity, paganism, philosophies, entertainment, and informality.

You will recall that in Matthew 24, when Jesus was asked regarding the end-time by His apostles, the first warning He gave was that many would come *in His name*, selling themselves off, promoting themselves as being Christian and followers of Christ, and deceive many.

In practical application, what was He saying to His apostles, to His church? He was saying "You had better be careful, and mind your P's and Q's, and evaluate thoroughly what you are hearing from and of these people."

The apostle John provides us with a way to evaluate whether a deception is underway. I want you to turn to I John 4: 1-6.

I John 4:1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God.

What is he saying here? He is saying that there is a spirit that is motivating the voice, the teaching of the man. He is under their control.

I John 4:1-2 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try [test] the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know you the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:

What John is referring to specifically here is Gnosticism. The Gnostics, for the most part, accepted much of Christian teaching; however, one thing they could not accept was the idea that God, a spirit being, could become a man and live as men. To them, that was so far beneath God doing such a thing that it was unacceptable to them.

The truth is that God *did* become a man—flesh and blood—and He lived life on the same terms as a man, with one exception, and that is (1) He never gave up really being God, and (2) He had such a fantastically close relationship with God that He was always in tune with God. Men are not on that level. Our relationships need to be built and strengthened, but He had that right from the get-go.

So John is warning that the Gnostics would not accept this fact that Jesus did become a man, as Hebrews 2 makes very clear at the end of the chapter, that He lived life on our terms.

I John 4:3-5 And every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof you have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world hears them.

Boy! Is the world listening to the purpose-driven churches. It is almost like they can do no wrong, and they get away with it because the people they are speaking to are so ignorant of the truth that they cannot judge properly. Satan has really done his job well in confusing and blinding people to the truth.

I John 4:6 We are of God: he that knows God hears us; he that is not of God hears not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

One of the keys to understanding this section is to understand John's use of the term that is translated "confesses." As one says, in real life words are cheap. By "confesses," John does not

mean that if someone says that Jesus is his Lord, or that He indeed was and is God, that one must be Christian. Not at all. The word "confesses" is used in reference to what the person lives in terms of the source of one's belief and practices. In other words, "confesses" is the combination of *word and* deeds.

John is saying that in order for the words to be proved true, they must be backed by the person's manner of life. The person, or the organization, must exhibit doctrine *and* behavior that conform to Christ's instructions and examples. It is the quality of the words *combined* with the quality of the conduct that decides this "confesses" issue John is using here.

You know very well that the purpose-driven churches are a very successful continuation of what has been going on for centuries. For us, their words alone are a dead giveaway once we comprehend that their doctrines are nothing more than a synchronization of a bad spiritual mixture. However, once we look beyond that example of their lives, it gives powerful evidence that the membership *is not* coming out of the world, but simply continuing in it in a more religious way.

The circumstances that produced the times in which we are now living began a long time ago. In fact, centuries ago.