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The Divine Conspiracy Teaching Series
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Session 1 Outline: Jesus & Culture

"Today we live in a situation where the culture has more or less taken Jesus and put Him aside. You don't think of Jesus as being particularly intellectual or intelligent. You think he is nice but not smart. If you ask a group of unsuspecting people who is the smartest person in the world, they won't think of Christ."

Seeing Jesus Christ in a different way:

Paul was the one who really came to understand the place of Christ in history.

Colossians 1:13 ff - *He delivered us from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of his beloved son. In Him, we have redemption the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For in him all things were created...by him and for him. He is before all things and in Him all things hold together. That he might have first place in everything.*

That is the picture that impressed the 1st Century. This is how the 1st Century body thought about Jesus. This is how we must think about Him today if we are to think about REALITY. It's all about "REALITY"!

Philippians 2:5-11

[7:07]

This mind that was in Christ Jesus was one that arose out of a community which we call the Trinity. The absolute stunning quality of love and trust in that community was that One who had it all could turn it all loose in confidence that He lost nothing.

He emptied himself. Took the form of a slave. Took the shape of human beings. The meaning of *the Cross* is the ultimate point of emptying out of one who was equal with God. Laying that down. Turning it loose in death on the cross.

That Cross became the center point of the Divine Conspiracy.

The reality of Christ and the Cross in human history is what brings us into the flow of the single greatest force in human life.

When we think of *The Divine Conspiracy*, we are thinking of the action of God in history. Jesus Christ is the central personality of God in history.

The Kingdom

The Kingdom was what Jesus mainly spoke about. That was His gospel. The Kingdom of God is a kind of life.

Matthew 13 - Parables of the Kingdom of the Heavens

[12:22]

* v. 31 - Like a mustard seed - small, insignificant, meaningless, tiny, insignificant. That's the way the Kingdom is. The Kingdom from the human point of view looks like nothing. Small and insignificant.

* v. 33 - Yeast - like a virus. Hidden in a bushel.
Leaven works quietly and keeps growing just like the mustard seed.

The Divine Conspiracy is God's plan and process of overcoming evil with good in human history.

That is why the CROSS, and that is why the RESURRECTION.

Knowledge

[16:15]

We need to understand what knowledge is, because that is the battle we are in when we bring the message of *the divine conspiracy*. If you don't understand what knowledge is, you won't know how you stand in the battle. The constant problem for human life is to find an adequate basis for life in knowledge. We need to know what we're doing.

By and large we suffer from a lack of knowledge. Most of all from a lack of knowledge of God. What is God and what is God doing?

Knowledge is absolutely central. What we bring when we talk about Jesus Christ is the knowledge of reality.

Knowledge Defined: ***"We know something when we are able to represent it as it is on an adequate basis of thought and experience."***

In the case of the teachings we bring as followers of Christ to the world, it involves the Bible, the Church, Church history and the community. Knowledge is a communal kind of thing.

Knowledge involves Truth

You can believe but not know.
You can guess and be right.
We need knowledge not just truth.

John 3:16 -

Is there another religion where God gave His only son?

This is a watershed issue

Does God really love the world and did He act in the world that way?

Is God really like that? If that is true, everything has changed.

If that's true, I can trust God with everything.

I can release my life into God's hands & trust Him.

I can do what He says in confidence.

Why do people perish for lack of knowledge?

If you lack knowledge, reality will run over you.

If we act with knowledge *and* truth, our actions harmonize with reality.

Three Background Stories in Our Culture Today

[24:57]

1. Naturalism - Matter is all there is; the visible world is the only world.
In no area of competence is knowledge of God required. This is a guiding philosophy of a major segment of our culture, mostly universities.
2. Nirvana - New Age; the world we see is an illusion.
The real world is non differentiation where you & I are not distinct.
3. Theism - The ultimate reality is the all-powerful and all-loving God.
Whether we are right or wrong is the great question.
Christians talk as if there is an ultimate difference in where you will wind up:
If you believe certain things, you will *not* be OK.

REALITY is totally unyielding to false belief. TRUTH is unforgiving. It does not change if you have certain opinions. No one has ever made a belief true by believing it. If we get it wrong, we're in trouble. REALITY is what you run into when you are wrong.

Truth frees you from bondage to reality you disagree with. If you are true in your reality, you will experience wonderful freedom.

The primary issue in The Divine Conspiracy is Truth - ...Is it truth or falsehood?

* Tower of Babel - human efforts to succeed by human abilities

Today's Babel: Secular knowledge system of the Universities & Professions

Separation of Church & State

If it was assumed that the church had essential knowledge of life, without which human beings could live well or live at all, there would be no question of the separation of church and state. Separation of religion from political processes is predicated on the idea that religion has nothing to say about reality.

The greatest challenge facing the church today: Does the church have KNOWLEDGE that is essential to human life?

Suppose the Bible contains the most important information about the most important issues in human life:

The knowledge that is central to human life is, "What am I gonna do?" What can I trust in my actions to make basic moral and vocational choices?

The Bible offers this kind of information and introduces you to a God who just might speak to you and give you guidance in your life by walking with you, talking with you and guiding you and helping you. And that's a different source of knowledge.

Knowledge & Self-Will

[37:27]

It's a good thing we are limited in our knowledge because our **Self Will** is unlimited.

"Evil comes from will beyond knowledge" (Descartes)

God allows knowledge to grow slowly so that we have an opportunity to grow morally as our knowledge increases.

Knowledge brings power; power brings responsibility.

Self will is set against truth and knowledge because truth and knowledge always limit what you can DESIRE. Our desires always exceed REALITY.

Romans 1 is the most important part of social analysis in the whole Bible
v. 18 - *They turn away from God and suppress the truth in unrighteousness.*

This comes out of the basic conflict between will & knowledge.

Acts 8:9-25 - Simon offered money to John & Peter to get the power.
He jumped to his death. His self will to fly was greater than his knowledge.

God looks at the human heart - the will.

God's intent for each of us is that we should become the kind of person whom He can empower to do whatever we want.

So the real issue is - what kind of person am I?

Philippians 2 - Jesus turned it all loose.

Suppose a significant percent of the human race had Jesus' character?

You can see life would be very different.

That is the intention of *the Divine Conspiracy*.

God is not obvious because He is interested in the development of the human will.

God doesn't overwhelm you.

God is so big that if He didn't hide from us, we couldn't hide from Him.

That is why there is a Divine Conspiracy. A conspiracy is something hidden.

He remains hidden and available to those who seek Him.

That's why Jesus taught in parables (**Matthew 13:13-17**)

"He who has ears, let him hear." Those who see, can *not* see, those who hear, can *not* hear. Many of us just have ears for sorting & arranging things; to adjust reality to suit our will.

God provides for the will that doesn't want Him.

This is fundamental to Jesus' way of teaching and to the Bible

A Provision for the Human will

[49:30]

"God can not ravish, only woo. The creatures are to be one with him but yet themselves." CS Lewis, *Screwtape Letters*, Letter 8

It is important for us to understand why God is not obvious.

He is not obvious because of the need to *allow human desire and will to go it's way because that is what defines human character*.

God's intent for each of us is to grow to the point to where He can empower us to do what we want, but you realize there is a lot of work to do on the "wanter."

People can choose to be in the presence of Jesus and deny him.

"If the rulers of this world had understood the Lord of glory, they would have not crucified Him." (Paul in I Corinthians 2:8)

Would the rulers of the world have crucified Jesus if they knew what Paul described in Colossians 1?

Jesus was silent before Pontius Pilate *in order* to get to the crucifixion. He was not a victim even though He looked like a victim. He was the one in control.

The conspiratorial nature of God in human history is there to allow human beings to make our choices, both individually and in groups. The choice will be a manifestation of the *character* and *will* of the people.

Col. 3:1-3 - *"If you then be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above not things on Earth. You are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God."*

This is the same lesson that Jesus was teaching Nicodemus in John 3. Those who are born of the Spirit are moved by something that is not visible. If you are set to interpret the hidden part in others ways, you have that choice. Including how you interpret the reality of Christ in the Church.

The Divine Conspiracy is God's plan to overcome evil with good in the grinding processes of human nature.

The Kingdom works that way. *You* are tied into that reality of the Kingdom of God that is going to bring to pass this condition where the earth shall be filled with the *knowledge* of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 6)

The knowledge of God is painfully absent. The future is where the Earth will be filled with the *knowledge* of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea.

The Crucifixion is the center point of the revelation of the hidden kingdom.

Colossians 1:20 - *"And through him we reckon to reconcile all things to himself."*

"If I be lifted up (the cross) I will draw all humankind to me."

Moses and the symbol of the serpent (Numbers 21:2-9) represents poisonous self will

If you don't know the Kingdom of God, the human self will is all that is left. The cross is designed to help people see what self will does. What living as one's own king does.

People of Christ bring in *truth* in a "Community of Crucifixion" [1:03:20]

Human beings can't really deal with truth on their own. "The truth will make you free" is more aptly the truth will make you flee.

The truth human beings get apart from God will nearly always be destructive and it will be used for our purposes. And those purposes, not subjugated to God, will be harmful.

I Timothy 3:1-7 – The church of the living God is the pillar and support of truth.
How does the church support the truth?

Truth can only be endured and promoted in the community of grace where self-will does not rule but where love rules. That's why you want to understand Jesus did not say, "The truth will make you free."

Jesus said, "If you continue in my word," and that means that you're living in it. "If you continue in my word, then you are my disciples indeed. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (**John 8:31-33**)

Confidence in Jesus and living with Him and being His disciple will enable you to know the truth *in a way* that sets you free.

The issue of social authority is the issue of who has knowledge. [1:06:47]

That is the issue underlying all the battles of our day.

The message of Christ through its institutions (church & schools) has been set aside as a basis of life, truth and knowledge.

The greatest terrible mistake in the last two centuries, has been the willingness of the Christian church to walk away from knowledge, and to try to something called "faith."

The result is determining policy for life is left to secular minds.

The greatest challenge of the people of Jesus Christ today is to stand in our world as representing knowledge of reality, and with love and intelligence to show that we have that knowledge by the lives that we lead.

That is the pressure point of the work that we do today.

Summary

[1:09:47]

The basic idea of this first session is this:

There is a Divine Conspiracy, and it will win. It is a "conspiracy" because God must be hidden in order that humanity may take the alternatives that present themselves to self-will, and *character* grows out of that.

Character only develops with freedom.

This is a profound spiritual truth about the meaning of human history and what God is doing in the cosmos. It is true of individual life, of corporate life, and of humanity as a whole.

When you look at the contemporary scene — business, military, music, pop culture — that's what's really going on. God is at work far beyond what we call the church; He is just as involved in business and in science and in the arts.

The kingdom of the church is *not* the Kingdom of God, but a peculiar manifestation of the Kingdom of God.

That's what we want to understand about what God is doing in the divine conspiracy.