

God's Plans for You

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PREFACE

I hope the title of this book does not upset you. I can see that it might seem altogether too bold, as if I were laying claim to the sort of advance knowledge that astrologers and fortune-tellers offer and that Christians emphatically do not have. But, as the epigraph on the previous page shows, my title is no more than an echo of God's own words addressed to the deported Jews in Babylon and relayed to them in Jeremiah's letter; and my purpose in choosing it was simply to set before our minds the certainty that God, who is Lord of both his own future and ours, is taking his people somewhere wonderful.

The note on the text in the *New Living Translation* declares, rightly: "As long as God, who knows the future, provides our agenda and goes with us as we fulfill his mission, we can have boundless hope. This does not mean that we shall be spared pain, suffering, or hardship, but it does mean that God will see us through to a glorious conclusion."

So John Ryland's lyric is fully justified:

*Sov'reign Ruler of the skies,
Ever gracious, ever wise,*

*All my times are in thy hand,
All of events at thy command.*

*His decree who form'd the earth
Fix'd my first and second birth;
Parents, native place, and time,
All appointed were by him.*

*He that form'd me in the womb,
He shall guide me to the tomb;
All my times shall ever be
Order'd by his wise decree.*

*Times of sickness, times of health,
Times of penury and wealth;
Times of trial and of grief,
Times of triumph and relief;*

*Times the tempter's power to prove,
Times to test the Saviour's love;
All must come, and last, and end
As shall please my heavenly Friend.*

*Plagues and deaths around me fly;
Till he bids, I cannot die.
Not a single shaft can hit
Till the love of God sees fit.*

The chapters that follow seek to illuminate and apply all this in a variety of different connections. The aim throughout is to show how life looks and feels when lived by faith in the sovereign God of the Bible, and to help in forming attitudes, focusing values, and making decisions amid the perplexing cross-currents of decadence in the culture and the church. The plans of God in which we shall take soundings cover, first and fundamentally, his agenda for leading us from

where we are into fullness of fellowship and perfection of life with himself, and within this frame, second and specifically, his agenda for drawing out of us—which means, working in us—the cooperation with him of humble heart, helping hand, and holy hope that is integral to this process. My ideal reader, the “you” of my title, is someone who shares my certainty that in life, in death, and for eternity our relationship with God is what matters most, and therefore should be our main concern here and now. Are you with me? I hope so.

So let us together get down to business.
