

The Unstoppable Plan of God

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[0 : 00] What plans do you have for the week ahead? Everybody's got some plans. What do you hope to achieve? What kind of things are in your mind that you hope that you're going to achieve this week?

Maybe this month, maybe you've got some plans this month. Maybe you are hosting or attending a dinner or a special event and you're looking forward to that. Maybe you've got plans in the coming year, right?

Something you're looking forward to. Maybe a holiday, you're going away. What plans do you have? Think of one. Everybody's got plans. Everybody's planning something.

Even if you don't know you are, you've got plans. I want you to think of one of your plans. Now let me ask you, are you thinking of that? Is that in your head? One plan that you have in the next week or month or year.

Now let me ask you, is that plan going to succeed? Will that plan succeed? Well, you can't say, can you?

[1 : 09] I mean, you hope it will. You hope that the plan you have will succeed, but you can't be sure. Nobody can be sure because there are always things that might get in the way of your plans.

You know, maybe you're planning on going on a holiday, but then you pack your bags and everything, and then the day before you're about to leave, your car breaks down, and you have to scrap your plans.

Or maybe you're planning to attend a sports event, and you've been looking forward to this, and you've registered, and you've got your go bag and everything, but then the day before you fall sick. You get this virus or something, and you can't do it. You see, such is the case with any plans we make, isn't it? Any plans we make are subject to cancellation because of things, unforeseen events that might happen to scupper our plans.

And so we tend to hold our plans loosely. We learn to hold our plans loosely to avoid disappointment and have, you know, plan B, have alternate plans if plan A doesn't work out.

[2 : 11] That's how it is in this life. Well, this morning we're going to discover that God's plans are not like that. God's plans are not like that.

You see, God also has plans for the week ahead. God also has plans for the month ahead. God has plans for the coming year. The difference, though, between your plans and God's plans is that nothing will get in the way of God achieving His plans.

As Job, after discovering who God really is, as he puts it in Job 42 verse 2, speaking to God, he says, I know that you can do anything, and no plan of yours can be thwarted.

No plan of God's can be thwarted. That is something that Job came to discover in his life, that nothing will stop, nothing will get in the way of God carrying out His plans.

And we see that principle playing out in our passage this morning in Matthew chapter 2. Jesus is still an infant, and things aren't going smoothly.

[3 : 23] We see Herod, who you'll remember we met last week, the rather unsavory character, this pretend puppet king that the Romans put in charge of Israel.

And Herod is not happy about God's plans, which seem to be coming to fruition, which the pagan philosophers had to wake him up to the fact that God's plans would be, they could see it before he could.

The coming of the Messiah into the world. Now, He's not happy about that, but that's where we left it off last week. This week, we're going to see what he did to try to stop God's plans, how that ended up, and what it teaches us about how God works in our world and what that means for our lives.

And the first thing we learn as we look at this passage in Matthew 2 is that God will fulfill His plans despite those who oppose Him. So let's pick it up from verse 13.

After they were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream saying, Get up, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt and stay there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child to kill him.

[4 : 43] And so he got up, took the child and his mother during the night, and escaped to Egypt. So this was sudden.

They had to depart by night. And people don't normally travel by night in those days, so it tells us that they went with some urgency. And it would have been a really stressful situation for Mary and Joseph, just all of a sudden, to have to pack their bags and leave with a little baby as well.

I mean, anybody who's had a baby and you go on a trip, you know how much stuff you have to pack for them, right? Well, imagine Mary and Joseph, and they didn't have the resources we have today to help them.

And they had to leave, go to another country. It would have taken a few weeks of a journey. It must have been a really stressful situation for a young mother, newly married, and they've got this new baby.

And it came upon them as a big surprise. You know, it's certainly not what Mary and Joseph were planning. And yet, as we read on, what we discover fairly soon is that none of this was a surprise to God.

[5 : 56] Not only did He know about what was going to happen, and therefore warned them about it through His messenger, the angel, but as we read on, we realize that it turns out it was all part of God's plan.

It was all part of His plan already. Look at verse 15. He stayed there until Herod's death, so that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled.

Out of Egypt I called my son. You see, God had always planned, and it had been prophesied that this is what would happen. It was all part of God's plan. Okay.

So does that mean that the next thing that happens was also part of God's plan? Let's read on.

Verse 16. Then Herod, when he realized that he had been outwitted by the wise men, flew into a rage.

He gave orders to massacre all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under, in keeping with the time he had learned from the wise men. Then what was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled.

[7 : 03] A voice was heard in Ramah weeping in great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children. And she refused to be consoled because there were no more. And so this is another fulfillment of prophecy, apparently.

And yet it was one of the most reprehensible acts that we can read, probably in all of Scripture. Herod sending a death squad into this little peaceful Judean village with orders to go house by house.

Find all the baby boys that were two years and under, rip them from their mother's arms, take them outside into the street, and slit their throats, slaughter them.

It was terrible. Was that also part of God's plan? Is that what God wanted? Well, no.

No, that's not what God wanted. But this is what we need to understand about God and how He works in a broken world. God is never the author of evil. That goes completely against His very nature.

[8 : 26] God never is the originator or the author of evil. This act that we're reading about here was totally the result of Herod's free choice.

As is every other evil act that happens in the world. It happens because of the free agency of human beings. It doesn't originate with God.

God is never the author of evil. And yet this is what God does. And we see it throughout the Bible. This is how God works. God takes even the most evil actions that people do out of their free choice. And somehow, in His unfathomable sovereignty, He weaves them into achieving His plans. It's amazing.

And it's beyond what we can understand how God can do this. He takes the free choices of evil people and evil, heinous acts in the world. Bad things that happen.

[9 : 27] And somehow, in His sovereignty, He weaves those into Him always achieving His plans. So that His plan is always the one that is fulfilled.

That's how God, God is. Right? That's how amazing He is. That's God mode.

I grew up playing computer games. And often, on these computer games, you'd get a cheat code called God mode. And you put this cheat code in and it allows you to do anything in the game.

All the restrictions that were in the game previously are now often you can do anything you want in the game. There's no limits that apply once you put in the cheat code for God mode.

Well, you know what? God, God literally has God mode all the time in this world. As Psalm 135 verse 6 puts it so well, The Lord does whatever He wants.

[10 : 30] The Lord does whatever He wants. And not even our free choices inhibit God from doing what He has decided to do.

And even when, this is the crazy thing about how God works. Even when people realize what God is doing and actively try to thwart it, He uses those actions that are trying to thwart His plans, and He makes His plans fulfilled through them, just to show off how God He is.

And we see this throughout the Bible. God using the actions of His enemies to fulfill His plans. Now, think of it. If that is what God does, then it is absolutely foolish to try oppose what God is doing in the coming week, in the coming month, in the coming year.

Or to think that you can change God's plans. Or ignore God's plans. Or get away with doing something different to what God wants. It is absolutely foolish to think that.

If this is who God is. If this is God, and He has plans, and He will achieve those plans, well then the only wise way to live in this world is to find out what those plans are in the Bible, and get your life in line with them.

[12 : 03] That's the only way to live. The only wise way to live. And that's why Christians come to church every Sunday. That's why Christians come to church every Sunday. Not to get God to help us with our plans, but to make sure we're fitting in with His.

Because that's why we come and sit under His Word. That's why we come every Sunday. Every time we have the opportunity to sit under His Word, we come to make sure we're fitting in with the plans of God, which will be achieved.

You know, if you're a person who comes to church every second Sunday maybe, maybe once a month, when it suits you, well then you're still wanting God to fit into your plans.

You'll come when it's convenient. And it shows, it shows that your plans are still above God's plans. And you want God to fit in with your life.

And it's indicated by your view of church, your attitude to church. Whether it's something you just do when it fits in. Well that means, well, you're still wanting God to follow your plans.

[13 : 14] But if, if you come on the other hand to church whenever you can and you're involved even when it doesn't suit you, even when it's inconvenient, well that shows that you're growing and it shows that you actually want to fit in with God's plans.

Because it's not always going to be convenient to fit in with God's plans. But that is one of the attributes of a true disciple of Christ. The Bible shows us.

Not someone who wants God to fit in with their plans. But someone who, even when it doesn't work for them, fits in with God's plans.

And they abandon their own plans in favor of God's. That's one of the definitions of a true disciple.

But we also learn, in this story, in Matthew 2, that even when you're doing that, even when you have come to that point of saying, you know God, I'm going to fit in with your plans.

I'm going to sit under your word whenever it's preached. I'm going to come and get involved in your church. I'm going to fit in with your plans over my own plans.

[14 : 27] Well, even when we're doing that, it doesn't mean things are going to be easy all of a sudden. It wasn't easy for Mary and Joseph to be part of God's plans, was it?

In fact, it was because they were part of God's plans that life got harder for them, not easier. And God's people aren't immune to hard times.

God's people aren't immune to suffering. Like a lot of false teaching out there, prosperity gospel will tell you, will try to tell you, that, you know, when you become a Christian, things are going to get better and you'll have health and wealth and prosperity.

No. There's so many examples in the Bible of that not happening, of course, because God's people, there's no promise in the Bible that says God's people are immune to suffering.

Especially in a world that is opposed to Him. All the more so in a world that is opposed to God, in a world where people by their free agency are pushing against what God wants, that's going to cause trouble for those who line up with what God wants.

[15:32] not even Jesus was immune to suffering. So, how can we think we'll be if we're following Him? You see, because Jesus' enemies eventually did catch up with Him and killed Him.

And yet, Jesus let that play out and He didn't run away from it. but He only did that because He knew His Father would be able to take every bit of suffering that He endured and use it to achieve His good plans.

Which, of course, He did at the cross, didn't He? I mean, the cross was a demonstration of ultimate God mode. Because, think of what happened at the cross, right?

God took the very conspiracy that was planned by Satan himself when He inspired Judas and caused the Sanhedrin to turn against Jesus and call for His death and caused the Roman governor to side with them all so that Jesus would be arrested and taken and crucified and Satan was rubbing his hands in glee.

His plan had worked out and yet God in His unfathomable amazing sovereignty used Satan's plans to break Satan's very power over mankind by saving us from our sin.

[17:16] That's how God is. And that is, you know, that's the ultimate plot twist in the Bible. When we get to the cross, which seems like the greatest defeat and it turns out to be the biggest, greatest victory in the history of mankind in the whole Bible.

You know, you see those movies with the plot twist at the end? You know, some of the movies we watch, they've got this plot twist and some of them are quite well known for that. Where you think, you think the story is one thing for pretty much the whole movie but then right at the end, like the second last scene or the last scene, there's this big reveal and there's this big plot twist and you realize everything you watched was something different.

It's not what you thought it was. Well, it's the same with the Bible. It's the same with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. It looks like this defeat but it turns out to be this greatest victory.

But you know, the Bible tells us that God does the same with all of the darkness that His people face in their lives.

All of the effects of this broken world. All of the suffering and the difficulties they go through if they are His people. God uses that same unfathomable sovereignty that He turns events around to make them come out good even when they're bad.

[18:38] He uses that in the lives of His people as well. This sovereignty that we see playing out in Mary and Joseph's story. The sovereignty that we see playing out in the cross where God takes something that is evil and bad and uses it and it turns out for good.

God promises to use that same sovereignty in the individual stories and the lives of His own people. We see that in the famous verse Romans 8.28.

Do you know that one? In all things God works for the good of those who love Him and have been called according to His purpose.

In all things not in some things not in the good things only in all things in the lives of His people including the worst things that can happen to you God will use His sovereignty and weave those bad things into His plan and it will come out for the good and come out for the victory of His people over sin and death.

If you are one of His people if you are truly one of His people you can have that assurance too that no matter what happens to you no matter the worst times you go through the darkest times the worst things that might happen to you which you're not immune from you can still be assured that there will be a plot twist in the end that right at the end it's going to turn out because God assures us and fit in perfectly with God's plans that God can and will use every bit of suffering every bit of evil that touches your life and somehow even when you don't know and you can't see how He will use that to achieve what is ultimately good but what about your own evil because there's evil out there sure and that will touch our lives and it will affect us in some way or other that's unavoidable in this broken world but there's also there's evil in here isn't there you know it

[21:03] I know it what about that many Christians wonder whether their own failures to be a good Christian are going to somehow disqualify them from God's plans maybe that's you maybe you are wracked with guilt for sin that you just can't get rid of maybe this last week it's just you've been really disappointed in yourself and you just struggle to be the person you know you should be and maybe you're wondering whether that is going to eventually disqualify you from from these

promises and God's plans well is it well the answer to that is something else this passage reveals this story if we read it closely in Matthew 2 reveals to us and it reveals that not only will God fulfill his plans despite his enemies opposition but secondly that God will fulfill his plans despite his his own people's failure we see that in this passage but we only see it when we dig into the actual prophecies themselves which we must do before we end this morning so let's have a look again at verse 18 one of the prophecies that was fulfilled a voice was heard in Ramah weeping in great mourning

Rachel weeping for her children and she refused to be consoled because there were no more now that comes from Jeremiah we read it earlier but you know the original passage in Jeremiah wasn't talking about the coming of the Messiah at all it was talking about the exile you know what the exile was in Israel's history when they broke covenant with God when they sinned against him despite all the warnings that he gave eventually he allowed the Babylonians Babylonian Empire to come and invade and take over Israel and take the Israelites away into captivity and that's what actually Jeremiah 31 was talking about and Rachel who was Rachel well she was Jacob's wife remember the patriarch Jacob Abraham Isaac Jacob Jacob's wife so she would have lived hundreds of years before the exile so what's she doing weeping about the exile well it's it's a poetic way of depicting a prophetic way of depicting that effectively

Rachel who's the mother of Israel looks at her descendants and is weeping over them because they are lost right they've fallen out of God's plans the nation of Israel God's people is no more they've been defeated and she's weeping but the prophecy goes on and God responds to her weeping listen to God's response to her Jeremiah 31 from verse 16 to 17 God's response to Rachel depicted as weeping over her descendants who are lost because they disobeyed God verse 16 Jeremiah 31 this is what the Lord says to her keep your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears for the reward for your work will come this is the Lord's declaration and your children will return from the enemy's land there is hope for your future this is the Lord's declaration and your children will return to their own territory you know what this teaches us it teaches us that despite the sin and failure of God's people who were Israel at the time despite all the ways they messed up

God will still fulfill his purposes to save his people their sin is not going to spoil that or mess that up or stop God from fulfilling his purposes but how how if they keep falling and keep failing we read through the Old Testament they just kept messing up we actually see ourselves in them when we read about them we see our own mess ups and our own persistence to struggle to shake off the sin that we keep messing up we keep falling into and it can so easily cause us to despair and think well I'm not a good Christian I'm no good I just keep doing this how can God keep his promise to save his people when they're like that well it turns out by sending Jesus that's how God kept his promise that's why he could say these things to to Rachel in Jeremiah and say despite everything that's gone wrong I'm still going to save my people and the way that is fulfilled is through Jesus coming that's what Matthew is trying to say to us yeah that is how God will keep saving his people despite their own failure by sending

Jesus to be the Israel that Israel couldn't be and that is what the other prophecy in this passage points to the one in verse 15 the first one out of Egypt I called my son that's a prophecy from Hosea and again the original is not about the coming of the Messiah when Hosea writes this down it's talking about the country the nation of Israel the Israelites coming out of Egypt in the Exodus remember that in Exodus when God rescued the Israelites from Egypt and took them through the Red Sea all of that and that's what Hosea is talking about when it says out of Egypt I called my son but that's not how Matthew sees it Matthew is now applying it to Jesus deliberately to show that remember God is inspiring

[27 : 05] Matthew to interpret and reread the prophecy in this new way to show that Jesus now coming out of Egypt is the new Israel he is reliving the story of Israel that they eventually failed he is coming to be the new Israel who came to be what they couldn't he came to be what we couldn't the people of God Jesus came to be what we failed to be for us so that as long as you trust in Christ even when you fail even when you fall again even when you sin not even that can stop God's promise to save you and to bring you home that's what these prophecies are here to to show us to reveal to us because God's plans for his people will never be thwarted

God's plans for you will never be thwarted if you are one of his people not by all the powers of evil in this world and not even by your own sin and in that you can rest secure let's pray the Lord we thank you for this revelation through Matthew who wrote this down but wrote it down in such a way that

you inspired him to reveal great truths about who you are and how you work in our world that your plans cannot be thwarted Lord we know that we're not immune to the suffering and evil in this world but we praise you and thank you that you somehow use every bit of that in our lives to and you turn it around to bring out what is ultimately good help us to trust that and help us Lord to cling to this assurance you also give us through these prophecies that even when we fail even when we fall that Jesus came to be what we couldn't so that as we cling to him you will fulfill your plans for us and we thank you Lord for that assurance and we pray that you would help us to go out in the coming week and to line up with your plans and to rest assured that that is the best thing for us in Jesus name we pray amen