

Hope Amidst Destruction | Ezra 1:1-4

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[0 : 0 0] Welcome to Ontario Community Church, where we're dedicated to encouraging, equipping, and engaging lives for Christ. Located in Ontario, Oregon, Pastor Patrick Daley preaches insightful sermons from the Word of God, offering practical applications for modern living.

We're delighted to share this sermon with you. Well, good morning, everyone. I want to apologize in advance. I did lose my voice this week, and I'm still recovering from basically my voice going two octaves down.

So I may not be as shouty as I normally am, but really I am on the road to recovery. So just bear with me as I have my cup here and I have a little bit of the sniffles, but don't worry, I'm much better.

So I hope to I don't get anyone sick in the process here. Well, today we are beginning our biblical exposition of the Book of Ezra.

You know, this last week, we as the church, we participated in the public reading of Scripture. This practice is something that is not only historical, but it is biblical.

[1 : 1 5] Can you imagine in the time of the Old and the New Testament, how often it was to open a scroll and to read it?

Now, we don't have scrolls today. I mean, at least I don't think you can get scrolls, but maybe you can. But we read from the Word of God together as a way for us to become familiarized with Scripture and to let the Word of God speak to us.

Have you heard God speak to you through His Word? Perhaps there's been new insight and new wisdom that's come from His Word.

As we grow in the faith, the Word of God will continue to feed us. And so today, we're breaking it down with our biblical exposition.

We're going deeper into the text, discovering truth and connections within Scripture. And then what in the world can we do with these verses?

[2 : 2 0] How does it apply to us today? So what are the lessons, the insights, the connections, and how can we apply that today? In the first chapter of Ezra, there are specific prophecies that were fulfilled regarding the time, the people, and the place.

And you'll see in here that you'll have double-sided notes here. And it is, I got to admit, you guys, it is pretty comprehensive.

There's a lot in here because there's a lot of connections with other books of the Bible, other verses within Scripture.

And you'll see in here that have your Bible, have your notes with you, we're going to go through all of this because Ezra fits into the overall narrative of Scripture.

You know something that's incredible that we find in Scripture is that God works through saints and sinners for His divine purpose.

[3 : 31] We're going to learn about how important it is. Just like God's people responded to God's call, we too should respond to the call that God has for us, whether that is to build or even to rebuild.

We're also going to go into, look, as Christians, we need to trust in the Lord because He fulfills His promises.

We can see in the pages of Scripture how God has worked in so many lives, so many generations. And still God will work in our lives today.

This is so much how, look, in the same way that God fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament, God will fulfill the prophecies of the Second Coming, right?

Much like how God fulfilled the promises of the First Coming. So let us turn to the Lord and I want us to pray before we go any further. That's our little bit of our opener, our teaser of what we're going to go over.

[4 : 43] So let's pray together. Gracious Father, we thank you for giving us this time and this opportunity for us to come together, united in Christ. I pray that we, as we are looking towards the Old Testament, that we may still find truth in wisdom and insight in it.

I pray that we may learn not only the history of how you've worked in and through so many people, but how you God continue to work in and through us today.

You God are, as that song says, the God of wonders. You are the promise keeper, you are the God of miracles. You are everlasting to everlasting.

And we pray that we may come to believe in you through faith, grow in, grow in this faith and be moved to do good in the name of your son, Jesus, the Christ.

Teach us, let us be hungry for your word. Open our eyes so that we can see. Let our mind and our heart be ready.

[5 : 52] It is in the name of Jesus Christ that we all say together, amen. So in order to understand the beginning of Ezra, we have to understand where Ezra is in Scripture, right?

What's so fascinating about this book is that Ezra begins where Second Chronicles ends.

And this helps us set the scene for where we are in Ezra. We're going to read together, so let me explain here. In fact, you guys can turn to the Second Chronicles one.

Let's go ahead and turn there. You know, let's do that. It's going to be page 456 in here. So I want to make it abundantly clear.

The ending of Second Chronicles is the beginning of Ezra. So we're going to see here how Second Chronicles and Ezra, right? They're directly connected with each other.

[6 : 54] Second Chronicles is ending with destruction and decline that is happening. That doesn't sound familiar at all, does it?

Declined, moral decline and destruction that's happening? Not at all. We have no relation to that. We have no idea what that's like. With destruction and decline, though, there is hope.

And in that last passage, that's where it leads us to the beginning of Ezra. And so Ezra is written as the continuation to show that, and hear me out here, in the midst of decline, in the midst of darkness and sin, in the midst of disobedience, there was hope for the future.

That's God's timing, you guys. There's no way I could have planned this with things that are going on in our country and it's going on around the world even things that are happening in our community.

The Lord time for this to happen. And so that's something that's remarkable, right? You'll see in here in Ezra, like I said, the ending of Second Chronicles, the beginning of this book.

[8 : 13] God uses this man by the name of Cyrus to fulfill his plan. So how many of you have your Bibles open to page 456?

It's going to be Second Chronicles chapter 36 verses 14 through 23.

Let's read it together. Verse 14, all the officers of the priests and the people likewise were what? Exceedingly unfaithful, following all the abominations of the nations.

Say that abominations of the nations, it's like it rolls off your tongue, right? And they polluted the house of the Lord and that he had made holy in Jerusalem.

What does it mean to pollute the house of the Lord? Does it mean to be smoking in the temple? Or does it mean something else? Right? They had polluted, right?

[9 : 12] The house of the Lord he had made. So verse 15, the Lord, let's read it together. The God of their fathers sent persistently to them by his messengers because what?

He had compassion on his people on his dwelling place. But what did they do? They kept on mocking the messengers of God, despising his words.

And were they welcoming? No, they were scoffing scoffing at his prophets until the wrath of the Lord rose against his people and tell there was no remedy.

So God gave him a chance. God sent messengers. I want to make that clear, right? because a lot of us, even as Christians, were like, oh, you know, God can be wrathful and God gave these people a chance here.

So that's something to keep in mind. So verse 17 here, therefore he brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans who killed their young men with the sword and the house of their sanctuary and had no compassion on young man or virgin or old man or aged.

[10 : 20] He gave them all into his hand and all the vessels of the house of God, great and small and the treasures of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the king of, there's a lot of treasures, right?

And the treasures of his princess, he brought to Babylon, verse 19, and they what? They burned the house of God and broke down the wall of Jerusalem and burned all its palaces with fires and destroyed its precious vessels.

He took them where? Into exile. Those who had escaped from the sword and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of, this is important here, the establishment of the kingdom of Persia for what purpose?

To fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days that it laid desolate, it kept Sabbath to fulfill how many years?

70 years. So there's a lot in here, right? Now let's stop right there. That's a horrible ending of a book, right? The destruction happens, book ends, right?

[11 : 30] But does it end there? It doesn't, right? Then you have the proclamation of Cyrus, right? Let's read this together, verse 22. Now in the first year of Cyrus, King of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord did what?

Stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, King of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing. Thus says Cyrus, King of Persia, the Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of earth and has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

Whoever is among you of all his people, may the Lord, his God be with him. Let him go up. Go to the next page. Ezra chapter one, what does it say?

In the first year of Cyrus, King of Persia, this sounds a little repetitive, right? But it's right there. Let's read it together. The word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled.

The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, King of Persia, so that he made a what? A proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing.

[12 : 46] So just think about this for a second. You see how it's connected. It's directly connected with each other. This idea of a second chronicles, right?

And you're going to see here that there's a reason why we need to understand that ending of second chronicles to set the scene. So we have an understanding of what is going on with Ezra, right?

And so where are we on verse verse two? Thus says Cyrus, King of Persia, the Lord, the God of heaven has given me all the kingdoms, right?

It's the same thing. He has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

And what rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel. He is the God who is in Jerusalem. You see the ending of second chronicles is showing.

[13 : 45] I cannot emphasize this enough. Even in decline, right? Moral decline, darkness that's happening. There is still hope. There's hope for God's people, despite sin and despite disobedience to the Lord.

But I want you to think for a moment, 70 years in exile is a long time. That's an entire, how many generations is that? That's a long time.

That period, that 70 year period of exile is a fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy. I want to go to this next slide. I'm going to put on here first Jeremiah chapter 25 verse 12.

This is the prophecy. It says then after how many years, 70 years are complete. I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans for their iniquity declares the Lord, making the land and ever waste.

So it's talking about here the end of the 70 year exile. Let us go to that next verse, Jeremiah 29, 10. Thus says the Lord when how many years?

[14 : 57] 70 years are completed for Babylon because remember Babylon had taken over, right? I will visit you and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place, bringing them back to Jerusalem, back to Judah.

And I'm showing you all of this to understand again the significance of what is happening here, leading up to the book of Ezra, this, these first four verses.

The prophecy was fulfilled for the people being in exile for 70 years. And I got to tell you, that's got to be some really bad sin to be exiled out of your land for 70 years.

And Ezra 11. We see here in the verse, right? Let's read that together in the first year. Who Cyrus, the king of Persia, right?

That is the fulfillment of the prophecy, right? It says that the word of the Lord, right? I put it in bold, it's somewhat in bold, right?

[16 : 01] So Cyrus, the king of Persia is coming to power for what purpose? That the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, right?

Something about that 70 year reign, the ending of that. Now I want to talk for a moment specifically about Cyrus. Did you know that Cyrus was actually prophesized that that specific name, that specific king?

So the rising of this kingdom of Persia, so to speak, the specific individual was prophesized in scripture. So we have the timing where there's going to be the rebuilding of the temple, the Jewish people returning from their 70 year exile, and the person specifically Cyrus who's going to fulfill the Lord's prophecy.

Let me show you, okay? We're going to go to Isaiah. It's going to be on the screen here. It's a lot of verses to go through. Okay, you'll also find it in your notes here. What does it say?

Who says of Cyrus? He is my shepherd and he shall fulfill all my purpose saying of where saying of Jerusalem, she shall be built and of the temple.

[17 : 17] Your foundation shall be laid. Look at that. That's incredible, right? Let's go to Isaiah chapter 45 verse one.

And in fact, in scripture, if you go to pretty much, it's chapter 45 verses one through 13, there's a lot about Cyrus.

We can have an entire sermon just about how Cyrus is a prefiguration of Christ, right? Cyrus isn't Christ, but he's showing an example of who Christ is going to be later on in scripture.

So just read this. God's instrument thus says the Lord to his anointed, right? You always got to pay attention in the Old Testament when you see an anointed one, right? Because anointed means what?

It means Messiah. So Messiah in nature, right? So he is a type of Messiah, so to speak, not the Messiah, not Christ, but a type of Messiah.

[18 : 19] So thus says the Lord to his anointed to Cyrus whose right hand I have grasped to subdue the nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed.

It goes on and on. When you get home, your homework, go to Isaiah 45, go through verses one through 13. It's incredible passage that's talking about Cyrus who's going to help rebuild the temple, right?

Then Daniel recognized the 70 year timeframe from the Prophet Jeremiah and you'll see in your notes, there's what four verses in that I put here in the notes.

The Prophet Daniel, he prays a prayer to the Lord. He is confessing. He realizes the 70 year prophecy of Jeremiah and he goes to the Lord and he prays for restoration of God's people.

So do you see how it's all connected here? It's truly remarkable. He confesses the sin and he acknowledges God's power.

[19 : 32] Now for many of you, if you like the book of Daniel, you'll know that there's a lot of end time prophecies in there, right? So here's the fun fact.

So Daniel realizes that there is, oh I do have it, okay, just a second here. It's right before Daniel receives the 70 week prophecy.

So for those of you who know about Daniel's 70 weeks, some of us may know, some of us may not have any idea what I'm talking about, this is right before that revelation. So what's happening is Daniel, he's, I imagine, okay, that he's studying scripture, maybe he has a scroll or whatever, right?

And he's looking, he's like, that's the prophecy. I need to confess and pray for God's people. And he does that. And what happens is, well, God's like, or excuse me, the angel comes to him and reveals the 70 week prophecy for the end times.

So it's like Daniel doesn't really have the answer specifically for the 70 year exile, that you have the 70 week prophecy that is the end times.

[20 : 42] Don't want to get too off track there, but for those of you who understand what I mean, that's a really cool connection here. Let's go to Daniel chapter nine, verses two through three.

This is what's happening here in the first year of his reign, I Daniel perceived in the books the number of years. He realized how many years according to the word of the Lord of Jeremiah, the prophet must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem.

How many years? 70 years, right? Then it goes into the next part, the next slide here. That's verse three. It's saying, then I turned my face to God, seeking him by prayer and please for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.

Prayer is powerful. Fasting is powerful. Many of you have ever fasted before when it's coming to your prayer life. There's a spiritual, there's something that's really special and spiritual about that.

Daniel chapter nine, verse 16 through 17. This is important one. Oh, that's an old slide. Well I'll read it anyways.

[21 : 58] Says, Oh Lord, according to your righteous acts, let your anger and your wrath turn away from your city, Jerusalem, your holy hill, because for our sins and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and your people have become a byword among those around us.

Okay, so it is there. Okay, right? He's praying to the Lord for the sin that had happened. Now therefore, let's see is that let's go to that next verse, verse 17.

For Oh, our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and his pleas for mercy and for your own sake. Oh Lord, make your face shine upon your sanctuary, which is desolate.

All of this is tied up to the beginning of Ezra. That's incredible. We can see that it was prophesied that the Jewish people would be in exile for 70 years by the prophet Jeremiah.

It was prophesied that Cyrus would be the instrument of God. And finally we see that Daniel is recognizing that the exile would end and pray to the Lord.

[23 : 10] So all of these pieces are happening. All of these things are of great significance and importance. Learning about this should help us to realize that what God has prophesied, God's promises will be fulfilled.

Period. Let's remember that for God tells the truth. God is not a liar and it is great to see how God uses different people in different parts of scripture, right?

Different situations to accomplish his purpose. It's incredible to see that Jeremiah's prophecy about the 70 year exile for the Jewish people that it was foretold long ago.

This doesn't that help us with our understanding and our walk with the Lord that there's context and connections. This is much like how Isaiah foretells specifically about Cyrus the king, right?

You have Daniel, like I was saying, mentioning that 70 year prophecy, praying to the Lord and receiving yet an additional prophecy. It's wonderful.

[24 : 21] And like I said, in regards to Daniel, can you just imagine you're discovering that you need to pray, you're going to pray to God that the end of the exile will happen, that God will fulfill his promise and that yet you receive even further revelation.

That's incredible. That's a thought to really, it's a fun one to think of. And so everything at this point has been basically setting the scene, setting up the stage, so to speak, giving us this understanding of the first few verses of this book of Ezra.

So we go into verse one, right? It's talking about the first year that Cyrus being the king of Persia, that the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus.

And because of this, he made a proclamation. This is a wonderful thing. Cyrus the great was a Persian king. He was not Jewish. He was considered a Gentile.

But yet despite him being a Gentile, God used him for divine purpose. That's an incredible thing, especially in the Old Testament where you're seeing a Gentile do it playing such a significant role.

[25 : 48] God used this Gentile king to fulfill God's plans and promises much like it was foretold. I can't imagine reading Isaiah and says Cyrus is going to be this instrument as a Jew before it was ever fulfilled.

Well, who is Cyrus? Is that, is that a plant? Is that a person? Do I even understand that at all? But we, right, they say hindsight's 20/20, we can understand it and make such a connection here.

And this is just an example of how God can use even in the Old Testament, Gentile, a Jew, saints and sinners, as I said earlier, for God's purpose.

And in this case, Cyrus was used for great purpose. God had a great plan for the king. We go into verse two, right, the proclamation.

It's in line with the end of Second Chronicles that the God of heaven, right, has given Cyrus all the kingdoms in the earth and has charged him to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

[26 : 58] Can you imagine for a moment if a, I don't know, an atheist or an unbeliever, someone who you wouldn't imagine as Christian says, we're going to build a cathedral, we're going to build a church and they're not, they're not Christian.

That'd be kind of an incredible thing, wouldn't it? Think of it like that. I can't emphasize enough that Cyrus was not Jewish, but yet his heart was stirred.

He was moved to build. Just think about it. It's just kind of a crazy thought. You're like, well, who would do that? Like that's a very strange thing, but that is what happened. And that goes to show you that God can stir in the heart of people who aren't Christian.

God can stir in the heart of people who are outside of the Jewish faith in this context. Maybe a prayer for us is that God will stir in the lives of many, that they'll come to the Lord, that they'll have that faith.

Maybe that's something that you should be moved to do. And so in that verse two, he is declaring to have it put in writing and he is acknowledging Cyrus is acknowledging who God is.

[28 : 15] It is such a wonderful thing. God can work through you. We then go into verse three here. The Gentile King whoever is among you of all his people may his God be with him and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, right?

The Gentile King is calling upon God's people, the call for the Israelites to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. It is a call for action.

It is a call to act. And then finally in verse four, let each survivor in whatever place he sojourns be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts besides free will offerings for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.

So Cyrus is decreeing that every survivor, what survivor? What are we talking about here? Let's think about that.

Perhaps the people who are still alive, perhaps the people that are still in exile. Do you realize if you were kicked out for 70 years, that's not a convenience to say the least.

[29 : 27] So the ones that are still there, that are still alive from that time period, come on back. We will take care of you. Cyrus is speaking to those who have remained faithful.

The ones who are still there, the remnant, as it were, to return. We have to remember because of the destruction of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple, I can't imagine something like that happening that not only you're having a destruction of a city, but you're having the destruction of a church, so to speak, right?

The destruction of the temple that can be disheartening, discouraging to say the least and then being exiled for 70 years.

That's very hard language. But despite what is happening, there were those who were survivors, those who are still remaining still alive and those who remain faithful to the Lord.

And here Cyrus is calling up upon the community of others to help these exiles to accomplish the work that God has set before him.

[30 : 44] And so then the question then comes, what let's put that on the screen. What can we learn from all of this? There's many things that we can learn from this.

And the first thing is that our God is faithful. The God keeps all of his promises. I cannot emphasize this enough.

The living God does not lie. He is not darkness. That's something that's remarkable, right?

God keeps all of his promises from the 70 year exile to the return to Cyrus playing such a significant part in the rebuilding of the temple.

It's all connected and God had his hand in how all of that would play out. Then we have the respond to God's call.

[31 : 42] Despite the decline of culture and the darkness of sin, right? That's a terrible thing to happen that we find in scripture that people were disobeying the Lord and there was consequence for that.

But yet remember God had compassion on the people sending sending messengers to turn away from your sin, stop being disobedient, listen to the word of the Lord.

And in the same way, despite decline of culture, things that happen in our country, things that happen in our community.

There's a lot of sinners out there. And I mean, quite frankly, we all are sinners, right? But there's still a lot of darkness that happens. God calls for us to listen to him, to hear the words of the gospel and to respond to him, listen to the words of the Lord.

That's why I always put and I always say this, I put at the bottom of every note here, what Christ says in John chapter six, verse 47, where Christ says, whoever believes has eternal life, put that in there as a reminder.

[32 : 55] Not about if you can give a \$10,000 donation, not about if you have 10,000 followers, not about if you have 10,000 houses, it goes on and on. It's about belief in Jesus Christ.

Have you responded to God's call for you life, your life? The next thing is that God can use anyone. God can use anyone for his purpose. He will do what he wishes from the Christian to our neighbor to the stranger.

God can work in anyone as he sees fit. How many times have you perhaps this has happened to you? You've talked to someone and there's a lesson that God wants to get through to you.

You don't hear it once. You hear it many times from different people and they're saying the same thing. And you're like, wait a minute, I hear it from, you know, the guy who made my coffee, the grocer and the grocery store and my mother who had no idea what's going on in my life.

The same thing. I am convinced that God will speak through people to get through to you, whether it's something basic, tell the truth, be appreciate what you have to turn to Christ.

[34 : 09] Some of the heavier things. That's what's remarkable about our God. He can use anyone. And then you see here, scripture is connected from second chronicles to the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah and even the prophet Daniel.

That's remarkable that he recognized that 70 year exile and prayed for the end of this to happen. That's why we look at the context of scripture, but also the connections in seeing how is scripture connected with itself.

Sometimes it's even going beyond scripture and finding where historical documents are pointing back to scripture. That's what's remarkable. It helps us with our understanding of the Lord, understanding of his word.

It gives us clarity for our life. And then finally, it is to trust in God. Let us trust in the God who keeps his promises, who calls all of us to have a relationship with him to believe in the Lord and to be saved upon that salvation, become baptized, become a student, become a disciple, right?

Just like the Great Commission go out and make disciples. There's an importance of baptism. There's an importance that we go from milk to solid food.

[35 : 32] There's an importance that the word being the seed is planted in us and it grows and it cultivates that we become more like Christ, that we become more wise that through all of this, we live it out.

We live out the faith for God calls us to go from darkness to light. And then finally, we have this question here. It's how can we apply this to our lives?

Well, first off, reflect on how God has worked in your life. As you pray, be mindful of how God answers prayers.

There's always prayer requests, but there's also praises, right? Prayers answered. How has God answered your prayers?

What are you praying for seeing how God works in your life? And sometimes it's even just looking at how you have another day here on this earth.

[36 : 39] Another moment to spend with your friends and your families. Life here on earth is short. That's why it is so important for us. Yes, to appreciate how God works in our life.

But every day is another moment to praise God or if you don't believe in the Lord to believe in him. It's another opportunity.

It's another day. Be mindful of how God answers prayers and how God speaks to you. And in all of this, share in your testimony, share in how God works.

This in your life. People need to hear that. And quite honestly, with all the darkness and the sin and the disobedience of our own culture, we need God and we need people need to hear about how God continues to work, how God continues to speak to us today.

If we have the light of Christ, let us exhibit the love of Christ. If we have the truth of Christ, let us speak to others.

[37 : 51] And then finally, respond to God's call for your life. Consider your life. There are questions that you'll see on the back of your notes. Are you responding to God's call for your life?

I can't answer that for you. I wish I could. Maybe I don't. But in that, ask yourself that question. Have you received the gift of salvation?

Believe in the Lord, believe in the death, burial and resurrection. First Corinthians chapter one, verses 15, verses one through four is the simple gospel.

You need to believe in is the death, burial and resurrection and that Christ fulfilled the scriptures. I mean, even think about the thief on the cross. That's one of the greatest examples here where the thief is saying, Jesus, remember me.

That's pretty simple. It's remarkable and it's sometimes hard for us. Well, I can't imagine salvation is very simple.

[38 : 57] Have you received the gift of salvation? Have you been baptized? The public declaration of your faith? Have you been baptized?

Have you been ignoring God's specific plan or purpose for your life? For some of you, God may call you to not associate with a certain friend.

Maybe God's having asking you to associate with a certain friend. Maybe God's calling you for forgiveness or maybe God's calling you to pivots.

I don't know for that is something that you have to reflect upon in your own walk with the Lord. Pray to God for clarity, pray to God for direction and the courage for you to trust and to follow the Lord.

And a fun thing I want to have. There's one other thing here is not on your notes, but recognize that God works in everyday people, right?

[40 : 00] God works in many incredible ways. And as I said in that sermon before, God uses everyday people for extraordinary purpose.

That is a truth that is simply remarkable. And in all of this, let us realize that Ezra is a part of the bigger picture of the biblical narrative, the story that leads up to salvation in Jesus Christ.

We can see that the same God that fulfilled all of these prophecies is the same God that gave his son Jesus Christ for us to know the Lord is by far the greatest decision that you can make in your life here on the earth and your eternal life.

I pray that if you do not know the Lord, that you will have that relationship with Jesus Christ, that you will grow in discipleship with him and that you will be moved to do good in the name of Christ.

Before we pray, I have one final thing to show you. If you look on your notes here, it's in second chronicles and I found this to be remarkable.

[41 : 15] Some of you may have read Ezra before. Some of you might not have. Some of you may have read Nehemiah. Some of you may not have. Second chronicles, see how this is all connected.

Chapter 36, verse 19, what did they do? They burned the house of God, right? They burned the temple and they broke down what? The wall of Jerusalem.

They burned all its palaces. It's a big mess, right? With fire and destroyed all the precious vessels. Both the temple and the wall are destroyed, right?

That's the disaster. But with the book of Ezra, it is about rebuilding the temple, the house of God. What's even more incredible, it goes further with that.

Nehemiah is about rebuilding the wall. So just from that verse, that which was destroyed gets rebuilt. It takes two books to explain that.

[42 : 12] But that's incredible seeing the connection that we find within scripture. Isn't our God amazing? And I hope that go through these notes.

Find that if you find time, open your Bible and just see the connections. It's incredible. Jeremiah, Daniel, Isaiah, Ezra, Nehemiah, it is all connected together.

What an awesome God we serve. Let's pray together. Gracious Father, we thank you for giving us the time to be together today. We thank you for this incredible book of Ezra.

As we are going deeper in your word, we've just tapped into the first four verses of your book. We're grateful, God, that you are faithful, that you are everlasting to everlasting, that you are light, love and truth, that you keep your word and that you work in amazing ways through everyday people and in ways that we can't even fathom or understand.

Father, we pray that we respond to your call for our lives. And may we know that you love us. May we know that despite what happens in our world, despite destruction and decline, may we trust in you as the way, the truth and the life.

[43 : 33] We thank you for sending your Son, Jesus Christ, who paved the way for salvation for all who believe. Be with us as we go in this final song from this place.

May we sing this song together in thanksgiving for who you are. It is in Jesus Christ's name that we pray and we all say together, amen, amen.

Thank you for tuning in to the Ontario Community Church sermon podcast. For more about our church and how you can get involved or support our mission, please visit ontariocommunitychurch.org.

May God's blessings be with you.