

Jerusalem to be Inhabited

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[0 : 0 0] so we're reading from isaiah chapter 44 verse 24 to 45 verse 7 and it's on page 732 in the church bibles this is what the lord says your redeemer who formed you in the womb i am the lord the maker of all things who stretches out the heavens who spreads out the earth by myself who foils the signs of false prophets and makes fools of diviners who overthrows the learning of the wise and turns it into nonsense who carries out the words of his servants and fulfills the predictions of his messengers who says of jerusalem it shall be inhabited of the towns of judah they shall be rebuilt and of their ruins i will restore them who says to the watery deep be dry and i will dry up your streams who says of cyrus he is my shepherd and will accomplish all that i please he will say of jerusalem let it be rebuilt and of the temple let its foundations be laid this is what the lord says to his anointed to cyrus whose right hand i take hold of to subdue the nations before him and to strip kings of their armor to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut i will go before you and will level the mountains i will break down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron i will give you hidden treasures riches stored in secret places so that you may know that i am the lord the god of israel who summons you by name for the sake of jacob my servant of israel my chosen i summon you by name and bestow on you a title of honor though you do not acknowledge me i am the lord and there is no other apart from me there is no god i will strengthen you though you do not though you have not acknowledged me so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting people may know there is none besides me i am the lord and there is no other i form the light and create darkness i bring prosperity and create disaster i the lord do all these things good evening it's great to see you all uh tonight my name is ron and i'm a member of of the church here um and we've been going through this series in in isaiah so we just kind of carry on on with that this evening but let me pray and then we'll jump into things father god we thank you so much uh for your word the bible we thank you that you speak through it to us we thank you that there is an abundance of you speaking uh to us we pray that you would speak to us tonight we pray that your spirit would be at work in our hearts to transform us to help us to live for you help us to listen carefully and clearly and we just we pray that you would be with us now we pray that you'd be transforming us and helping us to live for you through the week and through every day glorifying you in everything that we do for your praise and glory in jesus name amen i just want to keep um the page open because i'm going to be uh diving into the passage uh at different points um but uh to begin with uh i want you to imagine a ridiculous uh situation happening i want you to imagine that uh during the during the week uh you're doing one thing or another you may be playing sport or something and unfortunately you end up getting a terrible knee injury it's a really bad one so much so that you start getting pain every time you walk each day it seems to be uh getting worse and by wednesday it's unbearable and so you hobble down uh to you to your gp they have a look at it they they manage to get some scans booked quickly um but they but by the end of work the diagnosis comes through pretty quickly and they confirm that something's massively wrong with your knee and you've got to have surgery and it's probably going to be a knee replacement but they hit you with bad news it's going to be a minimum of six months on the waiting list before anything can be done a minimum of six months with knee pain now that's not uh the ridiculous part uh but this is it uh you get you manage to come along to church on somebody somebody evening uh someone gives you a list lift and i come waltzing over to you and i say what's happened to you and so you fill me in with all the drama of of what's going on and i say do you know what that's an amazing providence of god because i've just started doing a bit of open knee surgery on the side i do it in my spare time i've set up a theater table in our back bedroom and i'm getting right into it i've bought a good scalpel on ebay and i'll do it for you in fact because i know you i'll probably be able to do it tomorrow morning just come around eyes don't remember what they say in hospital don't eat anything overnight and i'll give you a new

knee by lunch don't bother with all those waiting lists i'll sort you right out now of course that's a crazy thing to say because you don't just let anyone do surgery on you i mean we'd get nervous going under the knife of a trained surgeon there is no way you would let me or anyone else go any near you anywhere near you with a scalpel i know it's a bit of a silly example but that's right you need to have the right credentials don't you you don't trust someone who doesn't have the qualifications they experience or credentials to back themselves up and that's not just true for surgeons but the same goes if you're getting a builder in or a solicitor or whatever to be trusted to be able to do a job you need to have the right credentials that you can back up your claim now where am i going with this the same logic applies to what we think of our lord god almighty it's no different but what i want us to see from today's passage is that he has the credentials he has the unique divine cv that we're looking for so that he can be trusted his words can be trusted and we're going to be looking at that in three points and the extraordinary things god will do the astounding way he will do it and the ultimate reasons why i'll just repeat that this extraordinary things god will do the astounding way he will do it and the ultimate reasons why before we jump into all that let's just have a quick reminder of where we're at the people of israel are exiled in babylon and the lord has been speaking to his people through the prophet isaiah he's been telling them who he is and what he's going to do and overwhelmingly we've seen this recurrent theme that has kept coming through is just how ridiculous it is uh to follow false gods rather than the true lord and then there's there's been this repeated almost barrage of god embarrassing false gods and all who follow follow them they're nothing and nothing can compare to who he is he's basically been showing to them i have the credentials there's none like me and it's with with this in mind uh we come to our first point the extraordinary things god will do the extraordinary things god will do and he continues very much in the same vein as he was before he presents his credentials before them we get reminders straight away of what he's what he's done just look with me in verse 24 this is what the lord says your redeemer who formed you in the in the womb i mean you can't mention the word redeemer without without the israelites thinking about their rescue from egypt he's reminding them of what he's done for them he's reminding them of his credentials and then we get it in verse 25 he says more i am the lord the maker of all things who stretches out the heavens who spreads out the earth by himself it's more this is the lord's credentials this is what's written on his divine cv and it's not bad is it the maker of all things there's a foundation here there's a basis we can and the reason he does this is because he's going to say something he's going to tell them his what he's going to do and he says this because he makes it he's making a case that we can believe his word we can believe what he's going to tell us through his prophet isaiah i hope we see the logic with how he's setting up um his argument and so what does he say what is this extraordinary thing that he's going to do well he tells us he tells us what he's going to do in verse 26 just just look down with me in verse 26 who says of jerusalem it shall be inhabited of the towns of judah they shall be rebuilt and of their ruins i will restore them now just remember jerusalem and judah had been completely flattened set on fire if you want to think of a picture you think of modern day syria when we see it on the news it's completely flattened with repeated bombings it's on that kind of scale of devastation and the lord says jerusalem shall be inhabited judah shall be rebuilt i will restore them it's a phenomenal thing to say an extraordinary thing to accomplish now when they were told this what do we think their reaction was bearing in mind they're stuck in a foreign country in in exile even though god has said remember i'm the one who redeemed you i created everything i formed you in the womb even though he's reminding them even though he's giving them his divine cv i mean i can't speak for them and there's nothing given to us in the text about what they thought but my guess is it probably would have been a little bit mixed some would have had great faith in what he said and others probably would have doubted can god really do this now we have the advantage of knowing that god was faithful to his word and he really did build rebuild the walls of ancient jerusalem you can read all about it in the books of ezra nehemiah but what does this have to do with us today now we're not waiting a historical jerusalem to be rebuilt but that doesn't mean that there isn't a building project god has promised to build his church he's promised that when jesus said it i will build my church and the gates of hades will not overcome it but on the face of things it doesn't feel like that does it the percentage of christians in the uk if stats are correct diminishes year on year churches are closing and of the churches that are left some don't even teach the bible anymore we even had that thing this week you i'm sure lots of you have seen those dear uh bigger posters that came out uh from the scottish government what's going on what's that all about how is god going to build his church where do we

look to in the face of adversity well i think the answer is we look to what what isaiah is telling the people to look to here he's telling them to go back he's trying to look at the credentials to god's divine cv he has redeemed them from um from egypt through the exodus and he's redeemed you and me through his son he formed you in the room he's the maker of all things and we see throughout history god is and will be faithful to his promises and so just like jerusalem was rebuilt the church the divine building project will not fail god will be faithful to his promises secondly the astounding way he will do it the astounding way he will do it now remember what i said at the beginning about having uh the right credentials now here we get a bit of a strange thing going on because the person that comes into the the isaiah mentions he doesn't have the right credentials at all he doesn't even have the right he doesn't have the right cv right cv god kind of throws the rule book out the window it's completely unexpected it's unexpected because the person that god chooses to use is a guy called cyrus it's astonishing just look with me in verse 28 this is he says of cyrus he is my shepherd and will accomplish all i please he will say of jerusalem let it be rebuilt and of the temple let its foundations be laid cyrus is the future king of persia he's not the future king of israel or judah he's not even descended from abraham in any way if we were looking for the right credentials the cv of a king of god's shepherd cyrus wouldn't even get an interview he probably wouldn't even apply for himself if you were an israelite hearing this what would you what would you have thought you're having a laugh what a stupid thing to say that is ridiculous that's never going to happen a future the future king who's going to rebuild jerusalem a pagan you'd either be in disbelief or you'd probably likely just be offended i mean just think about this when someone was given the title of god shepherd in the bible this was the title given to the king who god would use to lead his people wouldn't it be insulting to be told that the king who's going to rebuild jerusalem is a pagan king it would have been an outrage what do you mean a pagan king is going to lead us and rebuild our holy city and it just shows us doesn't it just shows us god can use whoever he wants to achieve his purposes he can use whoever he wants and this is what happened because he does raise up cyrus for this very purpose god can use whoever he wants and we need to remember that today even the most ardent atheist the strangest of world leaders is like putty in the hands of the lord we see a something a little bit like this in the new testament don't we think about uh paul we can read in the early chapters chapters of acts how he's authorizing the killing of christians can you imagine the reactions of the first christians when they heard that paul was now an apostle it can't be true that that's not possible how could god possibly use him i wonder if this changes how we think about world leaders today what do we think about trump or kim jongen or isis or maybe even nicola sturgeon they're putting it in the hands of the lord just the same the whole of history is being orchestrated in such a way who knows what the lord's plans are for those in power now now i'm not insinuating that donald trump or anyone else is going to be influential in rebuilding the church but when we see world events taking place when we look at the increasing way now which our world is changing yes it's right to feel sorrow but we don't need to be despondent we don't live in a hopeless world because the lord can use whoever he wants however he wants to achieve his purposes his ways are astonishing and astounding he is able to use the least likely person but then we move on we're going to move on to our final point uh the ultimate reason why the ultimate reason why now you do think as maybe you've thought as you've as we've gone through it maybe as you read this but why why did god do it this way why this way i mean sure it's very impressive it's astounding astonishing but why what purpose does it serve wouldn't it have just been a lot easier to do it just a different way use the israelite king but the answer comes repeatedly in the passage he gives the same reason to cyrus uh to israel and the rest of the world just look with me if you go to uh chapter 45 verse 3 his this is his explanation to cyrus so that so that you may know that i am the lord verse 5 this is talking to the israelites he's explaining i am the lord and there is no other and then verse 6 and probably the most uh conclusive so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting that's the whole world isn't it as people may know there is none besides me i am the lord and there is no other there is purpose behind it all he doesn't just do it arbitrarily it is so that everyone will know that this was by the lord's hand that there is none besides him and there is none like him i mean just let's just stop and think about this every other pagan king or the majority of them and ruler in the israelites history they'd been at war with other pagan kings had murdered their families pagan kings were hostile where they were the enemy it is inconceivable as we've said that a pagan king would be the one that would enable jerusalem to be rebuilt wasn't a secret in the ancient world this is how it played out between neighboring nations and yet this is how

god accomplishes his purposes and his plans this could only be down to the god of the bible only the lord god almighty could be responsible for this because humanly speaking this just doesn't happen from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting people may know there is none besides me i am the lord and there is no other cyrus doesn't have the kingly cv he doesn't have the right credentials to us to everyone watching he's not the right man we might even be tempted to argue you've got the wrong man god and don't we see that echoed with the lord jesus who looked like he might not have the right credentials to everyone watching isn't that what some thought because don't we recall what people said about him nazareth can anyone good come from there from the outside it looked like he didn't have the right credentials it looked like he didn't have the divine cv and then dying on a cross so pathetic so weak how are you going to build a church on that people still think think that today what a pathetic message you have even some of god's people were disappointed we had hoped that he was going to be the one to redeem israel said the two disciples on the road to maus they expected so much more that he was going to conquer rome they didn't think that dying on a cross was included on the divine cv the response is the same only the lord only the sovereign almighty god could have done this this is not down to any human intervention it can't be attributed to any dumb idol that we've looked at before only the lord could save people from death it could only be the lord that has done it this way if we were ever tempted to think that salvation comes from anything else if we're ever tempted to seek salvation from the dumb idols that offer it we realize its stupidity when we look at the cross if this is what salvation requires it must only come from the lord's hand

[20 : 19] the center of the gospel is the lord he's the ultimate reason why he does it this way is for his glory for his name's sake now that might be all well and good but what does this mean for day-to-day life how does this affect us in the nitty-gritty now you might not think it changes very much at all but i think it i think it does and here's why often we think that we we tend to think that the gospel is about all about us don't we and don't mishear me when when we think about the building of the church that does include our salvation of course it does but that is not the central reason the gospel is not about you really yes the building as i say the building the church is important the salvation of people our salvation is included in that but i think this is a pretty big but right at the heart of the gospel is not you or me this is not for our sake god god does it this unexpected astounding way for himself he does it for his own name he is the center of all we're not at the center he he is it is for his praise and glory it's all for him there's no doubt about it this is a challenging concept to get our head around because our world is increasingly narcissistic and me centered even when we we talk about the gospel they're very often don't we all say it's all about how we get saved and there's there's a right way to say that don't get me wrong but it does shift our thinking we're not at the center it's not about us it's about him the ultimate reason he does it this way is for his glory the center is the lord it's for his glory and because he deserves all the praise it's for his name's sake and so as we come in for landing we've looked for looked at three things we looked at the extraordinary things that god will do that he promised to rebuild jerusalem and we can trust him to build the church we can trust him because he has the divine credentials the divine cv he made everything and he's redeemed us then we looked at the astounding way in which he promised to rebuild jerusalem through a pagan king which nobody would have expected just reminds us that god can use whoever he wants for his purposes so we don't need to be despondent but we can be full of hope for the world that we live in then we finished it by looking at why he did it this way that it was for his glory so that everyone would look and see that this could only happen by the lord the same is true for us when we look at the gospel our salvation is extraordinary and the way god did it is astounding and if god could use a pagan king to rebuild ancient jerusalem how much more can we trust in a resurrected king our lord and savior jesus christ to build his church how much more the lord jesus has the divine credentials he has the divine cv we can be assured no matter what the world looks like around us that god is achieving his purposes for his own name's sake let me pray father god we praise you and thank you for all that you have done for us we thank you that you do have the credentials that you've got that divine cv lord that you have redeemed us through your son that you're the creator and maker of all things and there is none like you you're the lord there is none like you you're the you you do things in an astounding and amazing way that points

to you so that we would know so that we would be able to say that only you could have done this only you could have achieved the salvation plan that looks like it does and we praise you lord we praise you that you're the center of the gospel we thank you that it's about you and that it's about it's

not about us we thank you that it's amazing that you have done this to save us and we thank you that you're going to build your church we thank you that you've promised to and we trust in your faithfulness to your promises and so we pray that you'd bless this message to our hearing and understanding shape us by it and transform us today and for the rest of this week to live and serve for your praise and glory we ask for this in the name of christ amen