

“They [we] got it wrong!” Isaiah 45:1-7.

“Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed: “I will go before you and level the exalted places, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron, I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the Lord, the God of Israel, who call you by your name. For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I name you, though you do not know me. I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the Lord, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity; I am the Lord, who does all these things.”

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

This is one of those things that has been so misunderstood. So, so misunderstood. The world has gotten it totally wrong, and that is not surprising. But also, we as Christians too often get it wrong. What is this?

Are you worried about what is happening with this country? Are you concerned about what is happening with the Western civilization? Are you disturbed about political changes? About demographic changes?

What about changes in the religious landscape? About changes in climate? Does it sometimes make you feel a bit desperate? Like losing something precious that you held dear and that now is being ruined or taken away?

Have you heard comments that what is happening in the world today points to the fact that the end times are near? Have you wondered about the same yourself watching how the world is changing in so many ways?

This is what we get wrong. The Church, God's chosen people shouldn't be worried that much about what is happening in this world. The world should be worried, and worried greatly about what is happening in the Church. How so?

The Church of Christ is not here just as a part of humanity and of God's creation. No! The Triune God keeps His creation and this world going for the sake of His Church. Yes! That's right. The history of the world is properly speaking - the history of the Church.

Everything that is happening in this world serves God's purposes for His Church. And today's reading from Isaiah helps us to reflect on that. This is how the Old Testament is particularly helpful for us teaching how God of the Bible uses everything, empires with different religious commitment, forces of nature, plagues, etc. to advance His purposes.

Today's Word of God from Isaiah the prophet is amazing. Already centuries before Isaiah's time, through His servant Moses God Yahweh had repeatedly warned Israel that eventually their unfaithfulness will result in their exile. We can read about it in Leviticus 26; we can read about it in Deuteronomy 28.

October 18th, 2026

But then He also immediately gave the last word to His grace, promising to care for the faithful remnant. That's 15th century BC. Came 11th century BC. The Kingdom of Israel was formed. The 10th century came and after the death of king Solomon it was divided in two parts, Northern Kingdom and Southern Kingdom.

Both struggled to remain faithful to their God. The 8th century came and God's warning about the exile came true for the Northern Kingdom. God Yahweh used the Assyrian Empire to punish Israelites and to scatter them across the continent of Asia.

A few years later God Yahweh speaks through Isaiah. He warns the Southern Kingdom that their unfaithfulness will lead them to the same outcome as their Northern sister. This time it will be Babylonian Empire that the Lord will use as His stick. This message is delivered almost two centuries before the Babylonian exile takes place.

But then at the same time God Yahweh also sent a message of grace and hope. Israelites still inhabit their land, the exile is still centuries away, but God Yahweh already rushes to disclose what will happen next.

He will use Babylon to punish idolatrous Israel, to conquer Jerusalem and to destroy the Temple. But then He will use another empire to punish Babylon for their iniquities. What's amazing, two centuries before those events took place, the all-wise God revealed the name of the one whom He will use both to humiliate Babylon and to liberate His people.

“[Cyrus] is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose”; saying of Jerusalem, “She shall be built,” and of the temple, “Your foundation shall be laid.”” [Is 44:28] Two centuries before the clash of two empires takes place, God Yahweh names Cyrus, the military and political genius emperor of the Medo-Persian empire, as His chosen tool.

He, this pagan emperor, is God's shepherd and he shall fulfill all God's purposes! Then through Jeremiah the prophet God Yahweh reveals something else: **“After seventy years are completed [since destruction of Jerusalem], I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity.”** [Jer 25:12]

God gives an exact timeline for how He will deal with the mightiest empires of that day! 70 years, and the exiles will be sent home, and the Temple will be rebuilt. And then He just does it. **“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 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 the earth, and he 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.””** [2 Chr 36:22-23]

We have a historical artifact, the Cyrus cylinder, written about the deeds of same emperor Cyrus, now stored in the British Museum in London, to testify to these events. The cylinder contains records of how Cyrus permitted displaced populations to return to their native homelands and rebuild their places of worship.

October 18th, 2026

God Yahweh is amazing with His prophecies. This is what He speaks through Isaiah at the dawn or 7th century BC. That He will **“subdue nations before [Cyrus] and open doors before him that gates may not be closed.”** Now, listen to the testimony from Herodotus, who is considered the father of all historians. This is what he has recorded, among other things, about the fall of Babylon in 539 BC. This is so interesting.

The walls of Babylon were unbreachable, and their food and water reserves were sufficient to outlast any siege. How to conquer such a city-fortress? Babylon was located on the banks of the river Euphrates. Cyrus commanded part of his forces to go digging, and they redirected a part of Euphrates stream into an artificial lake.

As a result, the water level in the river dropped significantly and the rest of Cyrus forces were able to enter the city through the riverbed, right under the gates that remained closed. Surprising everyone in the midst of their religious festival, just as Daniel the prophet has recorded it for us. **“To open doors ... that gates may not be closed...”**

As Isaiah puts it, and as the entire Bible testifies about it, this Triune God **“confirms the word of His servant and fulfills the counsel of His messengers”**. [Is 44:26] Israelites were observing the epoch changing events of their day, as we are today, the rise and fall of empires, conquest of Jerusalem and Babylonian exile and probably were trying to make sense of it, wondering that perhaps gods of Assyria or Babylon were more powerful than God Yahweh. With the message that God delivers through Isaiah, He declared without a shade of doubt:

“I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God [...] I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity; I am the Lord, who does all these things.” [Is 45:5-7] Whatever happens, He is in charge and He uses everything in this world for His purposes, for His Church.

Steven Roy, a Biblical scholar, focused his research on God's foreknowledge, on God's power over the history of our world. He summarizes that there are “164 texts [in the Bible] that explicitly affirm God's foreknowledge, 1,893 texts that affirm what God will do through people, and 128 passages declaring what he will do through nature.” [Roy, Steven, *How Much Does God Foreknow? A Comprehensive Biblical Study*] He is truly an amazing God!

What do these amazing accounts about God's power and control teach us? That we should not care about politics or culture? Not at all! We need to be responsible citizens. That is one of our God-given callings.

We need to consider carefully who we elect, we need to be upset when foolish policies are introduced and when the laws are passed that are not good for the country, sure, and we need to use all the legitimate tools to work for the good of our neighbours. Those are our responsibilities as citizens.

But we are not only citizens in our country, and not even primarily citizens. Our primary identity, calling and responsibility is - Christians. And as Christians we need to pray for the Spirit to enlighten us through the Word so that we can discern what the Lord is doing among us and around us. Here is another story for you.

October 18th, 2026

This is a testimony from missionaries in Africa. They were well established in one of tribal territories. Preaching the Good News, distributing Bibles. They were hoping to do it in a neighbouring territory as well, but that was governed by a power thirsty dictator.

What do we do, when we can't do something on our own? We pray for God's guidance and help. So, they did exactly that. They prayed. And, guess, what happened? God changed the heart of that evil dictator? No! Instead, that dictator invaded and took over the territory where they were doing their mission work. How about that?

Remember the words of the Lord: **"I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity."** That's what happened. But now listen to this. Because that dictator had taken over that other territory, both those tribal territories had become one political entity. Which meant that the missionaries suddenly were able to travel across all those territories and share the Gospel where they couldn't before.

Just as they had prayed for. Thanks be to God! What is the lesson? We should ask the Spirit of God to enlighten us through the Word and help us to discern what the Lord of history is doing where we live. How is He using what may seem to us great geopolitical or religio-cultural changes to advance His purposes?

Whom He may be giving over to judgement for their idolatry? Whom He may be calling to repentance? Whom He may be bringing into our neighbourhoods and to our very doorsteps who may still be captives to futile idols and who need to hear the life-giving Gospel? How can He use us to advance His purposes and to bless others?

Good Lord, enlighten us, help us to see as you see!

So, yes, the history of the world – political, cultural and even the events of creation – they really are the history of the Church. And the Church is God's people. And He cares for you so much, so, so much, as Zachariah the prophet puts it: **"For he who touches you touches the apple of [God's] eye."** [Zah 2:8] That is how significant and close to Him you are.

One last thing to be reminded of. The Triune God is the Lord over the history of the world. But now, more specifically, to whom has all authority in heaven and on earth been given? Yes, to Jesus from Nazareth. All authority, over nations, over empires, over the ruling class and over the entire creation.

He is your God. He is your Lord. He has made you His own. He has written His name on your forehead, you are His, and He has written your name on the palms of His hands. To never forget you. He guides every bit of the world's events, and this is what He says to His own, to His own brothers and sisters, to you. Again, in words of Isaiah:

"Thus says the Lord, who created you [...]: **"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; [...] when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God [...]. I give [nations] in exchange for you. Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you [...] Fear not, for I am with you."** This is most certainly true. Amen.