

PARADOX:

Finding Clarity in Life's Contradictions

Our lives are filled with apparent contradictions. We often say illogical things like, "Less is more," and "The only constant is change." Literally speaking, such statements can't be true, but deep down, we know they are right. And so it is with God sometimes.

In the Old Testament, the prophet Isaiah found God in life's paradoxes. He saw God as a garden flourishing in the desert, as a slave who is more powerful than his masters, and as a healer who is mortally wounded. Through his prophecies, Isaiah revealed a deeper reality about God that cuts through our apparent contradictions and points directly to our crucified savior, Jesus Christ. At The Story, we'll explore these deeper truths beginning Sunday, March 2, through Easter Sunday.

March 2, 2025 - Part 1 - The Desert Blossom

What is the difference between a contradiction and a paradox?

Par-a-dox (*noun*)

A seemingly absurd or contradictory statement or proposition which, when investigated, may prove to be well founded or true.

How is God's perspective different from ours? How does this help explain the apparent "contradictions" in the Bible?

In Isaiah 34 and 35, we find an example of a supposed contradiction that, when investigated, is found to be true:

Isaiah 34:2-3 The LORD is angry with all nations; his wrath is on all their armies. He will totally destroy them, he will give them over to slaughter. Their slain will be thrown out, their dead bodies will stink; the mountains will be soaked with their blood.

What is the gist of Isaiah's 34th chapter?

Isaiah 35 takes a turn that appears to contradict the preceding chapter:

Isaiah 35:1-2 The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy...they will see the glory of the LORD, the splendor of our God.

The themes of judgment and hellfire continue throughout chapter 34, while in chapter 35, God promises that a garden will bloom in the parched land and that water will spring forth in the desert. **So which will it be? How can we reconcile these two seemingly contradictory promises?**

If God's ultimate plan is to save us from sin and condemnation, why is there so much "doom and gloom" throughout the Bible? What does our Heavenly Father want us to know about the future, and why?

What evidence do we have that the world today is fallen, and that sin is still increasing?

Are conservative Christians the only people who believe that the world as we know it is unsustainable and can't continue?

In the New Testament, Jesus had much to say about this world's grim, dark future:

Matthew 24:9-14, 19-21 - "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come... How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again."

Why would Jesus go out of his way to let us know about the coming Tribulation?

In the next chapter, Jesus also promised not to abandon this world and his people:

Matt. 25:31-32 - "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates sheep from goats."

Which is it: does God hate the sins of this world and promise judgment and destruction, or does God love this world and promise to save and restore it?

With God's warnings about the future in mind, and given that a certain deadline is looming, what changes and choices do you need to make today?

Your notes:



Overflow for Students TONIGHT

All middle & high school students are invited to Overflow, happening TONIGHT (3/2) from 6:30-8pm. Students will worship together, learn from one of our teachers, and participate in fun activities in the gym.



Ash Wednesday Worship This Week

Join us this Wednesday (3/5) at 7pm for a special worship opportunity to mark the beginning of the 40 day season of Lent. This service will feature music, teaching and marking with ashes. Nursery open for 6 months to 4 years.



Donation Drive for Houston Welcomes Refugees

This month we're supporting our Strategic Partner organization by putting together necessary kits for their homes here in Houston! Visit our website to learn more about the drive details and items needed: thestory.church/events