

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.

April 6, 2025 - Part 6 - Victorious Warrior or Fallen Soldier?

Answer this question as honestly as possible in 10 words or less: **Who is Jesus?**

Why does this question matter so much?

Why is it so common and acceptable to see diverse images of Jesus, as opposed to other influential religious leaders (Muhammad, Buddha, etc.)?

What two historical facts about Jesus are undisputed by virtually all historians, from modern secular historians like Bart Ehrman to ancient historians like Josephus?

700 years before Jesus' birth, the prophet Isaiah foretold his life, death, and resurrection. His most detailed predictions are found in chapters 50-53, which we will explore today.

Isaiah 50:5-6 - The Sovereign Lord has opened my ears; I have not been rebellious, I have not turned away. I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting.

How does this prophecy relate to what happened to Jesus? (See Matthew 27:27-30)

Isaiah 50:7-8 Because the Sovereign Lord helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame. He who vindicates me is near. Who then will bring charges against me? Let us face each other! Who is my accuser? Let him confront me!

While he slowly died on the cross, Jesus said the famous phrase: *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* **Where did this line come from? What do we know about the way that devout Jews in Jesus' day recited the Psalms?**

- **Psalm 22** (selected verses) - *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? But I am ...scorned by everyone, despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads. "He trusts in the Lord," they say, "let the Lord rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him." Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; they pierce my hands and my feet. All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment. You who fear the Lord, praise him! For he has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help.*

Given what follows "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me" in Psalms 22, how might Jesus' words from the cross have been a subtle way of confronting his accusers?

Isaiah 52:13-53:3 - See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted. Just as there were many who were appalled at him— his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being and his form marred beyond

human likeness— so he will sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand. Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

How often is this passage referenced in the New Testament, and why?

For several centuries, the latter half of Isaiah 52 and all of chapter 53 have been omitted from liturgical readings in most synagogues around the world, as a Jewish-Israeli historian wrote:

“The 17th-century Jewish historian, Raphael Levi, admitted that long ago the rabbis used to read Isaiah 53 in synagogues, but after the chapter caused ‘arguments and great confusion’ the rabbis decided that the simplest thing would be to just take that prophecy out of the Haftarah readings in synagogues. That’s why today when we read Isaiah 52, we stop in the middle of the chapter, and the week after, we jump straight to Isaiah 54.” - Eitan Bar

Why might this passage have caused arguments and confusion among many Jews?

What’s the significance of Jesus being average-looking (as opposed to extremely handsome) and a man of suffering held in low esteem (as opposed to a royal elite held in high esteem)?

Why did Jesus have to suffer and die in order to fulfill His Father’s plan to save us?

The difference that Jesus’ resurrection makes is pretty clear, but what about his suffering and death? **What difference does that make to you?**

Your Notes:



Overflow TONIGHT!

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



Upcoming Partnership Course

Come learn more about The Story's history, beliefs, and more,, and become an official Partner (our version of membership) at our next three-week Partnership Course, starting Wednesday, April 30 at 6:30-m. Register: thestory.church/events



Save the Dates: Easter at The Story

We're a month away from celebrating Easter at The Story and we'd love for you to join us! Visit thestory.church/easter to save the dates, complete registrations where necessary, and share important information with your friends.