

Paradox

What is a Paradox? The actual word is composed to two different Greek words.

“Para” is a prefix from the Greek meaning “at or to one side of, beside, side by side.” Examples would be “paralegal” or “paramedic.” A paralegal serves beside an Attorney. A paramedic serves beside a Medical Doctor.

“Doxa” means “glory, glorious, dignity, honor, praise or worship,” all of which are used to describe qualities of God Himself.

Therefore, a paradox is one glory, one wonderful and magnificent thing, standing beside another wonderful and magnificent thing.

Now, what we have described above is far better than some of the dictionary definitions of paradox which go something like, “a seemingly absurd or self-contradictory statement or proposition that when investigated or explained may prove to be well founded or true.”

Or, worse yet, some of the synonyms such as, “contradiction, self-contradiction, inconsistency, incongruity, anomaly, conflict; absurdity, oddity, enigma, puzzle, mystery, conundrum, oxymoron (cringe!) or antinomy.”

There is an abundance of Paradoxes in Scripture. One of the oldest and biggest ones involves the concept of choice between God and humans. Consider these passages:

You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you... John 15:16a

And base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are. I Cor 1:28

Versus:

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.
Rev. 22:17

And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, whoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. Mark 8:34

If we carefully study and rule out the possibilities that context can qualify a phrase and rule it out, the two pairs of statements above seem contradictory. Did God choose you or did you choose God. The answer is “Yes.” It is a paradox. And both possibilities are Glorious.

It has been suggested that one quote from Abraham, the father of faith, could well end the issue. When Abraham was attempting to talk God down from destroying Sodom entirely, Abraham resorted to what must be the final argument.

Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: will you also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from you to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from you: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes. Genesis 18:24-26

“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” is often sufficient for most, as indeed it should be.

However, we can miss a lot by just settling for that. Seeing the two Glories side by side and accepting them both can open our hearts and minds to a greater appreciation and admiration of the nature of God Himself.

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