

DESIRE a book written by **John Eldridge**
The journey we must take to find the life that God offers us.

In the next three chapters we want your heart to be stunned and surprised at how the life you've always longed for really is the life that God has promised you.

Not only had the sea lion lost his beloved sea, but now the things he treasured most, his substitutes, had been taken from him. He looked at his tree, it seemed to be dead and his waterhole was now reduced to a parched dry cracked mud hole. How could life be so cruel he thought. It was as if some unseen force was set against him, just to make his life miserable. Now that the winds had abated, winter set in. The temperatures dropped to below zero and he had no shelter at all. Many nights his flippers shook with the cold and his eyelids froze together. Strangely, there was no rain at all that winter. There was just enough water melted from the frost to provide him with water to drink.

Then one morning when he awoke he noticed he was not frozen and that the sun had a slight warmth to it. His spirit was warmed as well by this small reprieve. A few days later he noticed to his great surprise, tiny green shoots on the branches of his tree. Could his tree really, really still be alive. And then to his joy the gentle spring rains began to fall and once again his mud hole became a waterhole for him to lie in. The cracks in his flippers began to heal and as he pondered the restoration of his tree and waterhole, he wondered if ever he would return to his beloved sea. He had not thought about his sea for years and it surprised him that he would have such a thought. During that long and harsh time of drought and bitter winter, his heart had begun to let go of the things he treasured most, his tree and waterhole. Something deep within him had shifted. He had begun to lift his eyes above the horizon and wonder if he would return to the sea. He had no idea when, where or how this might happen...but it seemed vaguely possible.

7. The Great Restoration’.

“See! The winter is past; the rains are over and gone.

The flowers appear on the earth; the season of singing has come.”

Song of Songs 2:11-12

John tells us that where he lives high in the Rocky Mountains winter tarries long and he has come to accept that spring is really a wrestling match between winter and summer, and that winter will only let go when it absolutely has to do so. As life can often be harsh for many of us, we come to accept that we also live in a life of winter; spring never comes and summer is not even around the corner. Tragedies and continual disappointments can numb us to becoming cold and sorry souls. We can become like the sea lion who had accepted the fact that his harsh climate was the only reality.

God gives us the seasons as an example to show us that he has a *spring* planned for us too. We don't have to accept that the winter of this world is the final word and we are to exist without the hope of spring. If we paid close attention to nature, we would see that God is playing out the restoration of the world each spring before our very eyes, and summer is precisely what God is promising for each of us. Jesus came to announce ‘the Kingdom of God’. He said in Rev 21:5 ‘I am making all things new.’ By this he means that he will restore everything to new. He will do it! He demonstrated much of this for us by healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, and setting the captives free. Can you imagine the joy and excitement of those who have never heard, seen or walked in this life being suddenly healed! How beautiful indeed. It

is going to happen, their spring and summer will come. Perhaps the reason there is silence in heaven for half an hour is because all of heaven is speechless when these restorations occur.

What will it be like when we are restored? Many think we will just be spirits, but this is not what Jesus demonstrated for us. After his resurrection he appeared to many. He showed them his new resurrected body. He allowed them to touch and feel him. He ate food with them. He walked through walls and sometimes just vanished before their eyes. We are to have a glorified body as he has. What we see in Jesus is our own personal destiny. Will we be able to recognise each other? Well, they recognised Jesus. How young will we be? Will we be thin or fat? I believe we may get a surprise. While our minds will be renewed and be vastly more efficient, we will continue to learn as we do now. We will be working with those left behind, after Armageddon, in the 1000 year reign of Christ. After that the universe. The father has much for us to do in his kingdom.

Strangely, many Christians have made nothing of 'Eternity', it is at the most for them an unending church service in the sky. Whatever is coming, they don't, and cannot imagine is worth getting excited about. But God says he has set eternity in our hearts! Eccl. 3:11 Where in our hearts? In our desires! And so, we are back to 'no desire then no hope'.

It is time to start imagining your future. Start thinking about how you will continue your work with the king in the next phase of the kingdom in its restoration. There is going to be a lot to do. Much rebuilding of cities, infrastructure and reorganisation of governments needing to come under godly rule. It is not going to be one long holiday.

We know creation waits eagerly for the sons of God to be revealed. Why? Because only then will creation be released from its bondage of decay and brought forth into its own glory. How wondrous will this be? We can only imagine. But have a go. When Meriwether Lewis (an early American explorer) caught sight of the immense herds of buffalo, antelope, elk, deer feeding in boundless pasture, he commented "the country is beautiful in the extreme". And it will be so in our paradise again. We seem to have forgotten, or have we not been told, that we get the earth back again as well. So there is nothing wrong in loving the earth because Jesus loves it and is committed to its restoration.

Dallas Willard assures us "The life we now have as the persons we now are will continue in the universe in which we now exist." The earth has been our home and will be our home in eternity. At the end of the Chronicles of Narnia, Aslan seems to have brought the delightful kingdom to an end, and the children left to mourn its loss. But as the children venture farther into Aslan's country, they begin to recognise every tree, rock and stream. They have been there before. And then they discover, to their own wonder and joy, that Narnia exists forever in Aslan's country, that the world they loved has been preserved, though more rich and more real than ever. The unicorn stamped his foot and cried out "I have come home at last! This is my real country! I belong here. This is the land I've been looking for all my life.

And so, like the unicorn, we do not know exactly when or how God will do it, but we do know this: the kingdom of God brings restoration. We have just got our timing wrong.

For Reflection

Revelation 21:5 'Look, I am making all things new.' Note: not all new things!

Q1. What does the thought of being vulnerable to the loss of people and things that are close to your heart stir in you? What emotions do you feel? Where do they take you?

Q2. What winters of life have you journeyed through already?

Q3. Has spring come for you? Perhaps you are still in a time of winter - what would you hope for spring to bring for you?

Q4. What are some of your richest and memorable life experiences? How do they compare with your current view of eternity? At this point of your journey does heaven excite you?

Q.5 Describe the Kingdom of God. Does it change your view of your future – to the better?

Q.6 What would you love your glorified body to be like?

Q.7 In your own words what will the restoration of the earth involve?

Q.8 What would you love to do in a fully restored kingdom of God, as a fully restored man or woman?

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