

JOHN ELDREDGE

ALL THINGS NEW



HEAVEN, EARTH,
AND THE RESTORATION OF
EVERYTHING YOU LOVE

STUDY GUIDE | FIVE SESSIONS

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

Though we are trying to put a bold face on things, the human race is not doing well at all.

We appear to be suffering a great crisis of hope. It's taking place loudly in politics and economies; it's taking place quietly in the hearts of millions at this moment.

When you consider the pain, suffering, and heartbreak contained in one children's hospital, one refugee camp, one abusive home or war-torn village over the course of a single day, it's almost too much to bear. But then consider that multiplied out across the planet, over all the days in a year, then down through history. It would take a pretty wild, astonishing, and breathtaking hope to overcome the agony and trauma of this world.

How is God going to make it all right? How is he going to redeem all the suffering and loss of this world . . . and in your own life?

Escapism isn't going to do it, no matter what religious version you choose. What about all your hopes and dreams? What about all your special places and memories, the things most dear to your heart? Is there no hope for any of that? What we ache for is redemption. What our heart cries out for is *restoration*.

And I have some stunning, breathtaking news for you: *restoration is exactly what Jesus promised*. Despite what you may have been told, he didn't focus your hopes on the great airlift to heaven. He promised "the renewal of all things," including the earth you love, every precious part of it, and your own story (Matthew 19:28). The climax of the entire Bible takes place with these words: "I am making everything new!" (Revelation 21:5). A day of Great Restoration is coming. Not annihilation—*restoration*. That is the only hope powerful enough to be for us what God calls "the anchor for the soul" (Hebrews 6:19).

This study guide is a companion to go along with the book *All Things New* and the five sessions you'll be watching in the video series. (You'll want to have a copy of the book and the video. If you are leading a group, a leader's guide has been provided for you in the back of this study.) I have combined two chapters of the book into each session in this guide, making this a five-part study. So, you will be covering two chapters in the book each time you do the videos or use this study.

Each session in this guide will have three parts:

1. **Personal Preparation:** Before your group meets (I'm assuming you are doing this in a group—though you could also do this study on your own), you'll want to read the corresponding chapters in the book and answer a few questions in this guide.
2. **Group Discussion:** Watch the session video as a group, take some notes, and then talk about it. In this section, I've suggested a few questions to help guide your group's conversation time. (Again, if you are a leader, there's more guidance for you in the leader's guide at the back of the study.)
3. **Group Exercise:** Each week, I provide a "group project" to help stimulate discussion around the concepts you've learned during the session.

I'll be frank: if everything is going wonderfully for you right now, and you have every reason to believe it's going to stay that way, this study probably isn't for you. But if you are wondering why your soul feels so unsettled and what there really is to look forward to, and if you are longing for a wild, astonishing hope that could be an anchor for your life, read on. You're going to be very glad you did.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the top.

THE HOPE OF RENEWAL



Picture a treasure chest.

Not a small box that might hold jewelry on a girl's nightstand—a large treasure chest, larger than any suitcase you own, larger than any suitcase you've ever seen.

Picture a massive oak treasure chest, like pirates might have used, with large iron hinges and a huge clasp. The size and age and strength of this strongbox say it was made for the most valuable things.

Inside this chest are all of the things you wish could somehow be restored to you. Everything you have lost, everything you know you will lose.

What fills your treasure chest?

—JOHN ELDREDGE, *All Things New*

PERSONAL PREPARATION

This week, read chapters 1 and 2 in *All Things New*: “Is There a Hope That Really Overcomes All This?” and “The Renewal of All Things.” Let’s begin simply and honestly with your reaction to these first two chapters. Our first reaction is often a telling one, revealing places and assumptions in us God wants to speak to. So, without any pressure to get the “answer right,” what did this stir in you?

Before we dive into the first chapter, perhaps it will be helpful to give voice to the beliefs, thoughts, and emotions you have surrounding the topic of heaven.

- » In a few sentences, write down how you would explain heaven to a neighbor unfamiliar with Scripture. Include your thoughts on what heaven is, where it is, who will be there, and what we will do there.

- » How has the New Earth factored into your understanding of heaven?

- » Are these beliefs and understandings enough to fuel a deep longing in you for what is to come? If not, what would you say is lacking?

- » What questions do you have about heaven and the New Earth?

Is There a Hope That Really Overcomes All This?

Can we just be honest? Life is brutal.

There is just enough goodness to rouse our hearts with expectation, and plenty enough sadness to cut us back down. When the cutting down exceeds the rising up, you wonder if you shouldn't just stay down. "I wept when I was borne," wrote the Anglican poet George Herbert, "and every day shewes why."¹ Yes, life can also be beautiful. I am a lover of all the beautiful things in life. But may I point out that the movie by that name—*Life Is Beautiful*—takes place in a Nazi concentration camp. The story is precious in the way the father loves and protects his little boy from the ghoulish realities all around. But the father is killed at the end. Many, many people die horrible deaths at the end.

We need more than a silver-lining outlook on life. Much, much more. We need an unbreakable, unquenchable hope (*All Things New*, pages 3–4).

- » What is an example of a situation where you are currently losing hope?

- » What is the hardest aspect of holding on to hope in every situation?

Looking for a Stronger Hope

Scripture names hope as one of the Three Great Forces of human existence:

Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love
(1 Corinthians 13:13 NLT).

By saying they last forever, God names these three as immortal powers. A life without faith has no meaning; a life without love isn't worth living; a life without hope is a dark cavern from which you cannot escape. These things aren't simply "virtues." Faith, hope, and love are mighty *forces* meant to carry your life forward, upward; they are your wings and the strength to use them.

I believe hope plays the critical role. You'll find it pretty hard to love when you've lost hope; hopelessness collapses into *who cares?* And what does it matter that we have faith if we have no hope? Faith is just a rigid doctrine with nothing to look forward to. Hope is the wind in your sails, the spring in your step. Hope is so essential to your being that Scripture calls it "an anchor for the soul" (Hebrews 6:19).

In an untethered world, we need a hope that can anchor us (page 8).

- » It might be helpful here to pause and ask a few questions. What would you say is the great hope of your life these days?

- » How do you see the mighty forces of faith, hope, and love (see 1 Corinthians 13:13) working together?

» Do you agree that hope plays the critical role? Why or why not?

Eden Restored

Jesus Christ gave his life to give each of us a hope above and beyond all former hopes. Every action and teaching of his brilliant life were very intentionally directed at unveiling this hope to us. Late in the Gospel of Matthew he described it with breathtaking clarity:

“Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne . . . everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life” (19:28–29).

At the renewal of all things?! God’s intention for us is *the renewal of all things*? This is what the Son of God said; that is how he plainly described it. I can hardly speak. *Really?*

The Greek word used here for “renewal” is *palingenesia*, which is derived from two root words: *paling*, meaning “again,” and *genesia*, meaning “beginning,” which of course hearkens back to Genesis. Genesis again. Eden restored. Could it possibly be (pages 12–13)?

» In this passage from Matthew, what do you think Jesus means when he says those who have left houses or relatives or fields for his sake will “receive a hundred times as much”? Describe what

a hundred-fold increase in each of these three categories might look like.

- » Have you ever heard of the Greek word *palingenesia* before? How does the definition of that word—“Genesis again”—change your interpretation of what Jesus meant by the phrase “the renewal of all things”?

The thing you are made for is the renewal of all things. God has given you a heart for his kingdom—not the wispy vagaries of a cloudy heaven, but the sharp reality of the world made new. This is one of the most important things you can know about yourself. Did you know this about yourself? When was the last time you told yourself, as you looked in the mirror in the morning, *Good morning; you have a heart for the kingdom*. This explains so much; it will be such an enormous help to you. It explains your anger and all of your addictions. It explains your cry for justice, and it also explains the growing hopelessness, resignation, cynicism, and defeat.

If we will listen with kindness and compassion to our own souls, we will hear the echoes of a hope so precious we can barely put words to it, a wild hope we can hardly bear to embrace. God put it there. He also breathed the corresponding promise into the earth; it is the whisper that keeps coming to us in moments of golden goodness. But of course. “God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart” (Ecclesiastes 3:11 NLT). The secret to your unhappiness and the answer to the agony of the

earth are one and the same—we are longing for the kingdom of God. We are aching for the restoration of all things.

That is the only hope strong enough, brilliant enough, glorious enough to overcome the heartache of this world (pages 16–17).

- » God has “planted eternity in the human heart.” This is one of the most important things you can know about yourself, because it explains your anger, addictions, longing for justice, and so much more. Is this a new thought for you? How does seeing your heart in this way help you navigate the world?

- » What are some specific ways that your heart aches for the restoration of all things?

The Renewal of All Things

When Jesus used the phrase “at the renewal of all things,” he did it casually, almost breezily. You get the impression he assumed his listeners didn’t need an explanation or a long defense of the idea. Jesus spoke as though he were simply drawing upon a story and theology his disciples would know quite well. And indeed, these earnest Jews would have immediately found connection with many Old Testament passages stored in their hearts:

Those the LORD has rescued will return.
They will enter Zion with singing;
everlasting joy will crown their heads.

Gladness and joy will overtake them,
and sorrow and sighing will flee away (Isaiah 51:11).

“Then you will look and be radiant,
your heart will throb and swell with joy;
the wealth on the seas will be brought to you,
to you the riches of the nations will come. . . .

“I will make peace your governor
and well-being your ruler.
No longer will violence be heard in your land,
nor ruin or destruction within your borders,
but you will call your walls Salvation
and your gates Praise.
The sun will no more be your light by day,
nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you,
for the LORD will be your everlasting light,
and your God will be your glory.
Your sun will never set again,
and your moon will wane no more;
the LORD will be your everlasting light,
and your days of sorrow will end” (Isaiah 60:5, 17–20). . . .

“See, I will create
new heavens and a new earth.
The former things will not be remembered,
nor will they come to mind.
But be glad and rejoice forever
in what I will create,
for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight
and its people a joy.
I will rejoice over Jerusalem
and take delight in my people;
the sound of weeping and of crying
will be heard in it no more” (65:17–19) (pages 21–23).

- » What phrase or verse from the above passages in Isaiah resonates most with you? Why?

- » Imagine what it will be like when there is no more weeping and crying (see Isaiah 65:19). What does this promise hold for your life?

- » What does this promise mean within your circle of friends? In relation to current world events?

Jesus knew his listeners already embraced this hope; he knew they ached for it and prayed for it. This is the culmination of all the Old Testament promises of a Great Restoration. And of course this passage foreshadows the climax of the book of Revelation, where the entire biblical canon swells to a crescendo like a symphony reaching its glorious finish. Here is the final word of God on his promise to us:

Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his

people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true" (21:1-5). . . .

No matter what translation you prefer, the truth of Revelation 21:5 is quite clear:

"Behold, I make all things new" (KJV, NKJV, RSV).

"Behold, I am making all things new" (NASB).

"Look, I am making everything new" (NLT)!

"Look! I'm making everything new" (MSG) (pages 23-24, 26).

- » What do these passages say about the New Jerusalem and the renewed earth?

- » God states that he will make "all things new" rather than "all new things." Why is that good news?

Redemption, Not Destruction

Many people have the vague but ominous idea that God destroys the current reality and creates a new “heavenly” one. But that is not what Scripture actually says.

For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. Against its will, all creation was subjected to God’s curse. But with eager hope, the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God’s children in glorious freedom from death and decay. For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us (Romans 8:19–23 NLT).

Paul teaches us that creation—meaning the earth and the animal kingdom—longs for the day of its redemption, when “it will join God’s children in glorious freedom from death and decay” (verse 21). Clearly that does not imply destruction; far from it. Paul anticipated a joyful day when creation shares in the eternity of the children of God:

The created world itself can hardly wait for what’s coming next. Everything in creation is being more or less held back. God reins it in until both creation and all the creatures are ready and can be released at the same moment into the glorious times ahead (Romans 8:19–21 MSG).

The glorious times ahead, when all things are made new
(pages 26–27).

- » What does the promise of the above passage stir in you when Paul references the “glorious freedom” from death and decay in our new bodies?

- » Annihilation is not nearly as impressive as *redemption*. What does the promise of a redeemed earth do for your heart?

I know, I know—it’s a lot to take in. This is a total reframing for most of us, even though it has been right there in the Scriptures for centuries. Take a moment; take a deep breath. Get a glass of water if you need to, or something stronger. You’ve just been told your future is “the restoration of all things,” real things, the restoration of everything *you* love.

No wonder it begins with a glorious feast of celebration! “Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!” (Revelation 19:9). This wedding reception is also foreshadowed in the Jewish expectation of the coming kingdom:

On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare
a feast of rich food for all peoples,
a banquet of aged wine—

the best of meats and the finest of wines.
On this mountain he will destroy
the shroud that enfolds all peoples,
the sheet that covers all nations;
he will swallow up death forever.
The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears
from all faces;
he will remove his people's disgrace
from all the earth (Isaiah 25:6–8). . . .

There is a wonderful, tangible depiction of this feast in the book and film *The Fellowship of the Ring*. Bilbo Baggins is celebrating his 111th birthday with an extravagant celebration he throws at his own generous expense. It takes place on a late-summer evening; the countryside is in full bloom. Lanterns are hanging in the trees. Fireworks are going off over an outdoor party—picnic tables, a dance floor, pavilion, live music, laughter, celebration. An entire community is having the time of their lives. When our eldest son, Sam, was getting married and planning the reception, he said, “I want Bilbo’s party.” Don’t you? The joy, ease, companionship, the lightheartedness of it; there is no clock ticking, no curfew, nobody’s going to call the police—it just gets to go on and on.

Jesus is personally looking forward to this celebration immensely: “Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God” (Mark 14:25). Jesus assumes a day is coming when very real things like drinking wine together will take place in the kingdom of God. When all things are made new (pages 31–33).

» It’s true. Your future is the restoration of all things. Not just *some* things, but *all* things. What would you love to see restored

but feel it is just too much to ask? Invite God into this specific desire now.

- » Have you considered how much Jesus is looking forward to the coming Wedding Feast? Does his passion for this gathering increase your anticipation for what this time will be like? Explain.

What Does Restoration Look Like?

Jesus Christ is the forerunner for the Great Renewal, “the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead” (Colossians 1:18). He died, as everyone has and will. But on the third day he was raised to life, leaving his grave clothes folded neatly in the tomb. (A very touching detail, I might add, as if to say, “And that’s that,” like a man putting away his flannel pajamas now that winter is past.) On Easter morning Jesus walked out of the grave radiantly alive, restored, and everyone recognized him. The “new” Jesus is not someone or something else now; he is the Jesus they loved and knew. He walked with them, had meals with them—just like before. The most striking thing about the post-resurrection activities of Jesus is that they were so remarkably *ordinary*:

Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

He called out to them, “Friends, haven’t you any fish?”

“No,” they answered.

He said, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. . . .

When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you have just caught.” So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish (John 21:4–6, 9–13).

This is such a homely scene, so commonplace, the sort of thing you’d expect to run into along the shore of Lake Michigan or the Mississippi. Just a group of guys hanging out at the beach, cooking breakfast for some friends. Jesus’ restored life is surprisingly like his “former” life. As will be drinking wine at the feast; as will be the feast itself (how many of you realize you eat in the life to come?!). (pages 33–35).

- » John references that Jesus is not someone or something else after his resurrection but the same Jesus his disciples loved and knew. Does this insight bring more clarity to what your restored body and life might look like in the coming kingdom?

» Have you considered that we will eat and drink in the life to come? What do you imagine the food and drink will taste like in the coming kingdom?

The Great Renewal rescues us from all the vague, ethereal, unimaginable visions we've been given of an eternal life Somewhere Up Above. When Jesus speaks of the Restoration, he does so in very tangible terms, pointing to the recovery of normal things like houses and lands:

“Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne . . . everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life” (Matthew 19:28–29).

There is no bait and switch here. The renewal of all things simply means that the earth you love—all your special places and treasured memories—is restored and renewed and given back to you. Forever. Nobody seems to have heard this or paid much attention to it because, for one thing, nobody I know is fantasizing about it. When was the last time you eavesdropped on a conversation at Starbucks about the restoration of all things? And for another thing, everybody I talk to still has these anemic, wispy views of heaven, as a place up there somewhere, where we go to attend the eternal-worship-service-in-the-sky.

Meanwhile we fantasize about that boat we'd love to get or the trip to Italy, the chocolate éclair or the girl in the

cubicle next door. Of course we do—we are made for utter happiness.

But the restoration of all things—now that would change everything (pages 35–36).

- » What does the promise that all your special places and treasured memories will be restored and renewed stir in you?

- » List specific places you most look forward to seeing afresh in the New Earth. Explain why.

We have quite a stunning present to unpack, dear readers, and future sessions to do it some justice. But we must prepare our hearts to receive such a gift, or it will wash over us like rain on hard ground.

THE BIG IDEAS

- » We need an unbreakable, unquenchable hope.
- » Jesus gave his life to provide a hope above and beyond all former hopes—the renewal of all things (see Matthew 19:28–29).
- » Annihilation is not nearly as impressive as redemption. God chooses to redeem rather than destroy this earth.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Watch the video for session 1. If you find it helpful, use the following space to take a few notes on anything that stood out to you.

Teaching Notes

Discussion Questions

After the teaching session has ended, discuss as a group any or all of the following questions.

1. **Read Hebrews 6:19.** It is essential for you to have an unbreakable, unquenchable hope as the anchor of your soul. If your life has this anchor, how does it affect the way you react to hardships? If you are missing this anchor and feel adrift, can you name when you first lost the hope and confident anticipation that goodness was coming?
2. How you envision your future impacts your current experience more than anything else. If you knew God was going to restore your life and everything you love any day—not in a vague heaven but right here on this earth—what would that do for you?
3. **Read Matthew 19:28–29.** The word “renewal” comes from the Greek word *palingenesia*. It is derived from two root words: *palin*, meaning “again,” and *genesia*, meaning “beginning.” How does seeing the New Earth as “Eden restored” expand your anticipation of what awaits us?
4. The Greek word *apocatastasis* can be defined as “to put something back into its original condition; to restore something to its created glory.” How does this help your understanding of the way God plans to restore everything . . . including you?
5. For too long, Christians have misunderstood their destiny. We have thought we would leave the earth we love and go to an ethereal “heaven” somewhere as the earth was destroyed. Was this your view? If so, how did it make you feel?
6. **Read Revelation 19:9.** What are you most looking forward to at the actual Wedding Feast of the Lamb? Who would you

love to sit by? What would you say as you raise your glass and offer a toast?

7. In this first session, what stood out to you as the most surprising or new revelation about heaven, the New Earth, or the coming restoration? How would embracing this view change the way you face each day?

GROUP EXERCISE

As a group, close your eyes and spend several minutes thinking about the treasure chest described on first page of this session. Inside are all things that will be restored to you—the things you have lost or will lose. After a few minutes, share with one another the contents of your treasure chest.