

I was walking along the road during a hot summer day and was suddenly stopped by an amazing sight. In a nearby field I saw a disturbance and had to walk closer to get a better a look¹. It was a pair of butterflies swirling around each other in some kind of exotic dance. As I watched this very interesting performance, I considered how the complete life of a butterfly was also a very amazing thing in general. Who would think that when seeing a caterpillar build its enveloping (and generally ugly) cocoon, from that same cocoon would emerge a beautiful butterfly?²

It was the only such transformation that I knew of in Creation. Reflecting on this, I suddenly sensed the voice of God calling me³ to see the comparison between this physical phenomenon and the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Actually, this is a parallel between the physical world and the spiritual world. Indeed, the word that the Greeks use for spirit (soul, breath, etc.) is the same one used for the butterfly.

I considered that the purpose of the butterfly was to give us this lesson. And it is interesting to note that it must pass through a crisis to emerge in such beauty⁴. The caterpillar would think this the end of his world, but it was actually the beginning of a better one, where he could fly and dance with others of his kind⁵. In a similar way we will one day be free to soar home to God⁶

We are urged, in a sense, to go through the cocoon process so that we can be "born again", or re-formed into this new life⁷. But we cannot stay there even if it protects us - we have to emerge or die. I thought of the cocoon as hiding our ugliness (our sin)⁸ until we become beautiful in the sight of the Creator, who cleans up our mess. The old is put off and the new is put on⁹. But the initial form has to "die"¹⁰. So, though the physical butterfly dies, our spirit will live forever.

In thinking about our mission to lead people into their own transformation, I realized that there are perhaps those who try to form a different type of cocoon, one that does not produce butterflies, but moths. These are annoying creatures that spend their lives hovering around the artificial light of an oil lamp rather than the True Light. And then there were others who try to put those who had been transformed into a cocoon again¹¹.

But the beautifully iridescent coloring patterns of butterflies indicated to me that though there is a basic structure that is common to our faith, there are unique markings as well that characterize our inner self and the events of our lives here on earth as we pursue our mission. Each of us is still distinctive even though we become one with the Creator.

The entangled butterflies eventually sailed away from me, and I stood there until I could not see them anymore. I suddenly had an awareness that I was standing in the presence of God, and that I was standing on Holy Ground¹². One day I would meet Him in the air¹³.

1. consider how Moses was arrested by the burning bush, Exodus 3:1-3
2. "If we had not seen it happen, who could have believed, watching a caterpillar build its enveloping cocoon, that from that same cocoon would emerge a butterfly? God According to God, Gerald Schroeder, p. 147.
3. Exodus 3:4
4. "The ugly larva in its cocoon spends much time in almost unnoticeable growth and change. But no matter how slow that growth may be, the moment comes when it passes through a crisis and emerges a beautiful butterfly." Peace with God, Billy Graham, p. 154.
5. "What the caterpillar calls the end of the world, the Master calls the butterfly." Richard Bach
6. "When we have done all the work we were sent to do, we are allowed to shed our bodies, which imprisons our soul like a cocoon encloses the butterfly and when the time is right we can let go of it. Then we will be free of pain, free of fears and free of worries -- free as a beautiful butterfly returning home to God..." Elisabeth Kübler-Ross
7. Jesus told Nicodemus that he had to be born again, John 3:3
8. Romans 4:7, "Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.
9. see Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10
10. see the parallel between the physical body and a seed: 1 Corinthians 15:36
11. consider how Peter wanted to make physical shelters for Christ (soon to be resurrected) and the spirits of Samuel and Elijah, Luke 9:33

12. Exodus 3:5
13. 1 Thessalonians 4:17

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Similar to Moses seeing the burning bush;
Seeing butterflies swirling around each other; awesome!

Mating ritual?

Exodus 3:3-6

When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush,
“Moses! Moses!”

And Moses said, “Here I am.”

“Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” 6 Then he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

Butterfly: Physical and Spiritual

Psyche is the ancient Greek word for Spirit (soul, breath) and Butterfly.

Differences: we see the world in our cocoon

Developing our identity; even when immersed in God

Pattern: do we have a poem, song, picture, or other distinctive creative mark?

The purpose of the butterfly is to show the transformation / transition from 2D to 3D; from the physical to the spiritual; ultimately to show the soul

Butterfly bush or house

Can you go back to the cocoon? Nicodemus, you must be born again (not the same cocoon);
This is what Jesus asks – for us to go back and be reformed in the cocoon; physical / spiritual

We can't stay in the womb; we must emerge or die – we must change!

Some are satisfied with their lot and would like to stay in the cocoon.

butterflies don't have to worry about further changes after emerging; possibly relate to
transfiguration of Jesus – we will all be changed;

Hidden

Ugly Duckling – hide our ugliness until we become beautiful in God's sight

What we are becoming is hidden; sometimes even to ourselves; the cocoon is opaque

Is it a mercy that the cocoon hides during the transformation? It could be an ugly mess!

God manages our cocoon; hiding or sin (the mess); the shell is left to rot away; put off old, put on
new

Final product

some cocoons do not produce butterflies – some produce annoying moths that spend their lives
hovering around an artificial light and produce nothing; some rot within and die; but some
produce the beautiful butterfly; some butterflies lay eggs to reproduce and continue the works

Death

The seed has to “die”; similar to the caterpillar; see 1 Cor

awestruck (what about the butterfly being awestruck as well?); Pharisees want to stop at the
cocoon stage, but the kingdom must burst forth [create segment]

Have you ever seen an insect “ball” and wondered if there was life within?

Another stage for us, spiritually, after the butterfly (new body); the butterfly eventually dies, but the resurrected spirit lives forever

I had watched butterflies before, flitting about the bushes, and had always wondered about the process of transition.

SS: watching a cocoon; what is it? What is happening? Something is trying to emerge; it looked like a lump of dirt; then it began to shudder... (story)

Transfiguration

think of the other cocoons who might have wanted to build a home for the beautiful butterfly that emerged, the like of which they had never seen before and could not have imagined;

Transfiguration – not understanding the higher level of being; Jesus shows the butterfly nature at the Transfiguration – otherwise he became like the cocoon; if the caterpillars could have seen the butterfly they would have wanted to build a cocoon for it

Mission

The pattern of our life is imprinted on the wings; there is a basic structure that is common to our faith, but there are unique markings as well that indicate our inner self and the events of our lives