

## Metamorphosis — Transformations

This is the best time of the year to preach this lesson. Spring is the time when all that is dead and lifeless suddenly changes form and comes back to life. Multitudes of trees, shrubs, and bulbs have been created by God to bloom and leaf out during this time of the year.

If it wasn't so common we would be amazed, but God has the power to make amazing things look common place because they are done every year and there is no variation. He makes it look effortless, but if we were asked to do any single one of them, we would be helpless to do it.

Not only does vegetation have this ability, but so also do living things. Each year, as frogs lay their eggs, a polywog begins his life, looking more like a fish than a frog. But as we watch, tiny legs begin to form under the tail and the tail begins to shrink into the body. Not long after that two tiny legs form just above the lower legs and the tail disappears entirely. In a few short months, we have a bullfrog, croaking in the reeds.

Along with the frogs, insects like butterflies go through a similar journey. Most of the ugly caterpillars that we see crawling on the ground and up the stems of plants will form a cocoon and the process of metamorphosis begins. The old body dies and reforms itself into the beautiful butterflies we see each year.

I have wondered from time to time if God did this because He knew it would perfectly illustrate what happened to His Son when He came to earth and at His transfiguration (*metamorphosis*). Not only did Jesus do this, but after we leave the water of baptism, we have made the same transformation as the trees and flowers. Then as we study the gospel, we make the same transformation as the frog or butterfly. All of these things perfectly illustrate what our Lord did and what we are now doing.

Jesus lived His life in eternity in an entirely different form than the one He was seen in at the time of his earthly sojourn.

*Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 who, existing in the **form (morphe)** of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, taking the **form (morphe)** of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; Phil. 2:5-7*

While in heaven, He possessed the form of God.

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made. ... 14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth. Jn. 1:1-3, 14*

*And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. Jn. 17:5*

In this midst of His ministry, God allowed Him to begin to transform (*metamorphosis*), in the presence of Peter, James and John.

*And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John his brother, and brought them up into a high mountain apart: 2 and he was **transfigured – metamorphosis** before them; and his face did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as the light. Mt. 17:1-2*

*... and he was **transfigured – metamorphosis** before them; 3 and his garments became glistening, exceeding white, so as no fuller on earth can whiten them. Mk. 9:2b-3*

*And as he was praying, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment (became) white (and) dazzling. 30 And behold, here talked with him two men, who were Moses and Elijah; 31 who appeared in glory, Lk. 9:29-31*

It was such an amazing thing that Peter brought it up again many years later.

*For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there was borne such a voice to him by the Majestic Glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: 18 and this voice we (ourselves) heard borne out of heaven, when we were with him in the holy mount. 2Pet. 1:16-18*

In a similar way, we too have gone through a change of form. We began in the image and likeness of God. Similar to a butterfly, or to a fully bloomed tree.

*Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of*

God He created him; male and female He created them. Gen. 1:26-28

But when sin entered the world, our form changed. Cain killed Abel, and soon every imagination of the thoughts of men's heart were only evil continually. Paul summed it up to the Ephesians.

*And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. Eph. 2:1-3*

God did the hardest part of our transformation in the water of baptism.

*But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with Him, Eph. 2:4-6*

*buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. 13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, Col. 2:12-13*

But God did not do everything! He left it to us to complete this wonderful metamorphosis.

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Rom. 12:1-2*

This transformation is not passive. We must make it happen! *You* must present **your** body, because that is **your spiritual service**. **You** must not allow yourself to be *conformed*, and **you** must be *transformed*, and **you** must renew your mind. Not being conformed and being transformed are both in the imperative mode in the Greek which means they are commands. God has commanded us to refuse to be conformed to this world and He has commanded us to be transformed.

This means that being conformed or not being conformed is under our control. This is why Paul warned the Corinthians: "*Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."*" (1Cor. 15:33-34). If we remain around evil companions, their influence will corrupt our good morals and lead us to being conformed to them. This will stop the process of metamorphosis, which reveals the grave danger of peer pressure. Since being around evil friends, will lead to the temptation of conforming to them, we may have to limit or even avoid that contact.

First, we must "*put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.*" (Eph. 4:22-24). As we learn the will of God on every word, thought and deed, we will find those areas conforming to the world (the corrupt old man with deceitful lusts) and we will find those areas of the new man (created according to God in true righteousness and holiness). As we "*put off*" the old and "*put on*" the new, we are being transformed.

In another Scripture, we are told to "*Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.*" (Col. 3:2-3). This requires a complete change of priorities and focus. The caterpillar can only focus on living on the ground, while the butterfly leaves all that behind looking at things from the air. Because we are being transformed, "*we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*" (2Cor. 4:18). This verse reveals that part of our metamorphosis centers on rising above the mundane things of this life and looking instead to the eternal things of God.

We then "*put to death your members which are on the earth,*" "*put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.*" Like the passage in Romans, this passage requires we "*put to death,*" "*put off*" and "*put on.*" We "*put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language,*" and we put on all these, "*tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering.*" (Col. 3:5-13).

In this way, as we "*work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,*" we stop "*conforming ourselves to our former lusts we did in ignorance*" and "*as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.*" (Phil. 2:12-13; 1Pet. 1:14-15). As time passes, and we continue to study the Scriptures and bring ourselves into conformity with them, we will see ourselves, "*being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*" (2Cor. 3:18).