



Worms and Butterflies

A STORY FOR EASTER

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Did you know that the Psalms of David, written many, many hundreds of years before the Lord was born on earth, foretell the events of His life, His thoughts, and His feelings?

In the twenty-second Psalm we are given a glimpse of what went on that darkest of days before the Lord was put to death. We learn of some of the agony and pain that the Lord felt. The very people that He had come to save rejected him. They did all kinds of cruel and demeaning things to Him when He was a prisoner. They made fun of His suffering; they “laughed Him to scorn.” He was treated as the lowliest of the low. It was then that He said of Himself, “I am a worm and no man. A reproach of men and despised of the people.”

This was the hells at work. The hells love nothing more than to jeer and sneer and taunt those whom they believe to be weak and helpless. They work through the evil in people on earth. We are told in the Heavenly Doctrine that they would murder us if they could.

And so the Lord was condemned to die and be nailed to the cross. Psalm 22 says, “They pierced My hands and My feet....” While He hung on the cross the soldiers below gambled for His discarded clothing. “They divide My garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.”

But guess what? No matter what evil people thought about Him, no matter what wickedness was done to Him, no matter how low He was forced to go, the Lord rose on Easter morning triumphant over all the hells. He, who had called himself a worm, became the most glorious Human Being. Easter is the story of how the most important Person in the universe was brought low, to seeming death, but rose to be the Most High King with Divine Majesty and Power.

The Lord said, “I am a worm and not a man” recognizing in Himself those tendencies to evil that He had inherited from His human mother, Mary. This was something that had to be fought against and rejected. When this was done, through years of struggle and temptation, He could be glorified and made One with the Infinite God, who was His Father and His Soul.

Easter is also the story of an every day miracle, a miracle that happens whenever caterpillars are changed into beautiful butterflies—winged creatures that fly up, as it were toward heaven. For butterflies are not at all like worms. A worm or caterpillar is a lowly creature, which crawls on the earth at a slow



almost crippled pace. They are not beautiful. They eat the leaves of plants. Sometimes we are tempted to crush them underfoot. But when a new body has been given to them, they are beautiful. They are free to fly above the earth, to soar and dip as if at play, to mate, to glide from flower to flower sipping sweet honey.

How does this happen?

Caterpillars, when the time comes, wrap themselves round and round with silken threads. They make a cocoon that is like a straight jacket holding them immobile and as if lifeless. So the Lord's body was wrapped in soft bands of cloth and buried in a cave with a stone covering it. When all is ready and prepared, a wonderful transformation takes place. The worm emerges to new life, reborn, regenerated, and, in the case of the Lord, glorified. Like the caterpillar in its cocoon the Lord was not dead. Spiritual forces were at work performing an Easter miracle so that on the third day the Lord rose with His whole, transformed body leaving nothing but the grave clothes behind in the tomb. In another Psalm the Lord said, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove; for then I would fly away and be at rest" (55:6). There are several other places in the Word where the Lord is spoken of as having wings.

And, as He said, "And I, if I be lifted up will draw all people unto Me" (John 12:32). This "lifting up" is nothing else than turning worms into beautiful butterflies. Because the Lord made heaven *and* earth, we can find examples in nature that explain spiritual things. Ordinary people like us, who have tendencies to think and tell things that are false and do what is wrong, can be totally changed into people who put the Lord first and love the neighbor as ourselves. We can be regenerated, reborn to become spiritual butterflies, angels whose true thoughts and good loves make life delightful and happy. In the Heavenly Doctrine the Lord tells us that a worm turning into a butterfly is like a person preparing to become an angel by putting on beautifully colored garments.

Babies can seem like squirmy little worms, especially when they are just born, but they have something within them that can grow and develop into the most beautiful butterflies. We can see this because babies have an inner urge to stand up, climb up, reach up, look up, jump up, swing up, and fly. Why? Because they want, from the very beginning of life, to become butterflies.

When we obey the Ten Commandments of the Lord, it can seem as if we are wrapping ourselves in silken threads that take away more and more of our freedom. We want to cry out against everything that happens that we don't like, to swear at restrictions. But the commandment says "not to take the name of the Lord in vain." So we restrain ourselves, obey by holding our tongue. Or we



want to take something that does not belong to us, to steal. But we know this is wrong, so we hold our hand back. Every time that we are tempted to disobey a commandment we use the silken thread of self-control, a restraint, and gradually bind ourselves into a conscience, like a cocoon.

When we restrain ourselves from conscience, we seem to lose our freedom, because we can't act or speak as we want. But the truth is that this cocoon of conscience is the means to change our life.

When we control the tongue that would swear or lie, when we hold back the hand that would steal or cheat, we begin to develop good habits, orderly ways of doing things. After a while these become delightful, and we act according to conscience because we want to do so. Angels don't feel restrained when they refrain from lying or stealing. To do what is right is heavenly freedom.

The Lord spoke of this freedom when He said, "If anyone will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for My sake shall find it."

To control and restrain oneself is to follow the Lord's way. To do whatever one feels like, whenever one feels like it, regardless of whether it hurts others or not, is to lose one's life in hell. To be willing to lose one's selfish life for the Lord's sake—obeying His commandments—is to find happiness and freedom in heaven.

The purpose of the Lord's birth at Christmas was to prepare for Easter, when He would rise in His Divine Human form. And, because He was lifted up, we too can be raised to eternal life.

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This is a chapter from *Take a Deep Breath*, an illustrated book for young people by the Rev. David R. Simons. *Take a Deep Breath* is available from the General Church Office of Education, 267-502-4949, oed@newchurch.org.