

## A BUTTERFLY TALE

The challenge of chasing a butterfly for a kid provides just the right level of difficulty for many a young one. With all the gracefulness of a ballerina, the butterfly is equally skilled at quick maneuvers and allusiveness that would make a politician envious. I have fond recollections of my kids running barefooted through the yard in a pair of overalls chasing a butterfly that gets to be almost in reach when the butterfly succeeds in defying Mr. Snaggletooth once again. But on occasion the kid gets lucky and catches one resting on a dandelion (the one flower I can grow with success), and for a while this delicate creature roams the back of his hand while he admires the radiant colors and senses the frailty. The whole picture is one of beauty, simplicity, and purity.

The life story of a butterfly is one of amazement. It began as a tiny egg on a leaf. The egg grows and hatches into a little worm so small it could ride easily on the eraser of a pencil. It then begins to eat in massive amounts and grows into its larva stage that we better know as the caterpillar. Its skin can't stretch as it grows so it builds and sheds skins for all of its life as a caterpillar. In time it quits eating as hormonal changes lead it to find a home beneath a leaf or stem, and soon it begins to molt for the last time. Inside its own shell the caterpillar now virtually dissolves, often during the winter months. But in the spring its metamorphosis is completed, and the once ugly fuzzy worm is now a beautiful butterfly that takes its splendor to the sky.

There's something a little familiar to that story, isn't there? It seems like maybe I've heard of another tale of some old creature dying to become a new one.

About the winter of 1998 we had a widow lady that met with us in a small East Texas congregation by the name of Willie Faye McLeroy. Willie Faye was a delightful soul that was just a pleasure to be around. I happened to hear her name announced on the radio around Valentine's Day as she had won an award in a personality contest the radio was putting on, determining who the sweetheart of Sulphur Springs was. She had been nominated by the nursing home she lived in, for all the care and kindness she had exhibited by washing the ladies' hair and generally just making life better for all who came in contact with her. On the first day of spring that year she passed away, and soon her

family contacted me asking if I would preach her funeral. There are some funerals that are easier than others, and despite my emotional attachment to her she had led a life that was a pleasure to tell. Here I would tell the story of a butterfly...

Let's consider the familiar passage in Romans 12:1-2. *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."* We're given two potential paths for change, but only one delights the Lord.

When we think of conforming to the world, we often think of a lackadaisical attitude of warming up to the world and allowing it to have too much influence in our lives. The Greek word employed here as "conformed" is *suschematizo* and means "to fashion alike". It is used twice in the gospels, referring to Christ's transfiguration and in 1 Peter 1:14: which says, *"As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance."* I understand that it is from this Greek word that we get our word "schematic." So the point seems to be don't let the world be your blue print, don't design your life the way the world designs itself, don't allow its standards to become your standards. The children of old were certainly warned of the influence the pagans could have in their lives. In Leviticus 18:2-4 they were told *"Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, I am the LORD your God. After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do: neither shall ye walk in their ordinances. Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I am the LORD your God."* Conforming exacts what is reprehensible to the Lord. His message is clear: don't do what they do.

The use of "transformed" in Romans 12 comes from the Greek word *metamorphoo* and is the Greek word from which we get metamorphosis. This word is used in the gospels twice, referring to the transfiguration of Christ and then in 2 Corinthians 3:18 we're told, *"But we all...are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."* God told us that He reveals Himself to us through His creation (Romans 1:20), and I have no further to go than to the backyard to see this for myself. Like all of mankind, we started life in the confines of the womb of our mothers. No sooner had we hatched,

then we begin to show signs of selfishness and a determined self will. Physically we learned to crawl and then to walk and then to run, ever confident of our own strength and power. But sin would ever grow in our lives until we might well have wanted to die. And a wonderful Father said, "That's all right with me." Covered in our sin, we gave ourselves to be infolded in a cocoon of complete trust in the Father. This begins with our conversion as we confess Christ and are cleansed of our sins in baptism, and it then continues everyday of our lives. It is evident that Paul is speaking to brethren who were still in the process of transformation. Here God changes us by helping us to be less the caterpillar of the old man and more the butterfly of Christ. He whittles away at what we used to be, and as we face the events He's planned for our lives we begin to see the proof of *"...what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."*

Sometimes we might prefer former states of being. It is true that there wasn't much responsibility as an egg, and gorging in worldly enticements had been pleasurable as a worm. But you weren't designed to stay in such low estates... you were made to fly! And somewhere there is a Savior who eagerly waits to see you come out of your shell and dazzle the heavens. The only thing I can think would be better than seeing my kids smile would be to see His smile on His glorious face. Let's be diligent in our sanctification to see that He does!

ALLEN KIRK  
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## APOLOGIA

QUESTION: As you know we have experienced some unusual weather lately. Someone told me that the Bible says that this is a sign that the end is near. They said that before the end of time we would not be able to tell one season from another. Where in the Bible does it say this?

ANSWER: Peter tells us *"if any man speaks let him speak as the oracles of God"*. We are thus admonished to make sure that when we speak concerning Biblical matters that we refrain from offering our opinions and establish our words based on scripture. We are also told to *"prove all things and hold fast that which is good."* Unfortunately we often fail to do either. Mankind has a tendency to repeat whatever they hear and as the saying goes, the story grows larger on down the line!

So it is with the above statement. We also have heard many say that the Bible says that toward the end of time we would not be able to tell one season from another. That is when we have spring like winters or cold snaps in the summer that this is God's way of telling us that the end is near. This for many seems to explain what might be hard to explain in any other way. The problem with this is that it is not true. The Bible does not make the above reference and as we will show it actually teaches quite the opposite.

In doing research on this subject, we are not sure how this idea was propagated. We think that it is a misquotation of the words of Jesus in the parable of the fig tree found in Matthew chapter 24.

Before we examine the parable itself, it would be good for us to establish the context of Matthew 24 and then explain the parable as it relates to the immediate context.

Matthew chapter 24 is often referred to as the Olivet Discourse. It is recorded for us in three places; Matthew 24:1-51, Mark. 13:1-37, and Luke 21:5-36. There are various views as to the nature of Jesus' teaching. There are some who maintain that the entire discourse has reference to end of time. Some believe that the scope is the destruction of Jerusalem and others believe that it refers to both.

The statements that Jesus made concerning Jerusalem's destruction follow several parables where He depicted Israel's rejection of Him and the consequence of the rejection. These parables can be found in Matthew chapters 21-23. It is after these are told that the disciples were showing Him the building of the Temple. Jesus tells them that there would not be one stone left up another (Matt. 24:2) indicating that the Temple would be destroyed. This prompted them to ask two questions. The first was "When will these things be?" and "What will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?" It is at this point that Jesus begins to discuss the events that will bring about the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple.

As Jesus gives the signs that will accompany this event in Israel's history He tells a parable concerning a fig tree. He states in Matthew 24:32-35,

*"Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see all these things, know that*

*it is near-at the door!" Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away."*

This is the verse that many are referring to when they say that when the end of time is near we will not be able to tell the seasons apart! As one can plainly see this verse says nothing at all like what it is purported to say! In fact it should be obvious that it says the exact opposite.

First, keep in mind that Jesus is not talking about the end of the world at this time. It is obvious that He is discussing the destruction of the Jewish nation by His remark that this (present) generation will not pass until all these things (the signs previously mentioned) be fulfilled!

Second, the parable concerning the fig tree is told so that when the time of the destruction approaches they will be aware. He tells them new branches and leaves indicate that summer is near. This is His way of saying when the things mentioned earlier begin to transpire they will know that the fulfillment of His teaching is at hand. This is told to both admonish and prepare them to flee the city.

How this became twisted to the idea that there will be no seasons right before the end of time is beyond me. But it has! In addition to this subject we do have the promise of God that such will not be the case. After the great flood described in Genesis, Noah built an altar and made sacrifice to God. In Genesis 8:20-21 we read,

*"Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the Lord smelled a soothing aroma. Then the Lord said in His heart, "I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done."*

Now note the next statement made by the Lord. Does this sound like the seasons will disappear before the end?

*"While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, Cold and heat, Winter and summer, And Day and night, Shall not cease." (Genesis 8:22)*

From this express statement we know that whatever else might happen the seasons will remain as long as does the earth.

Some may read this and think that it isn't that big of a deal. So we might have gotten it wrong. But does it really make any difference?

We do consider it a dangerous thing to attribute to the Lord that which He has not said. But the pattern for many is to do this on many things. For example, there are those who say the Lord says it doesn't matter what Church you attend, just attend one. Did the Lord really say that? The answer is no! Some say, the Lord doesn't really care if you are baptized or not. Did He really? Again the answer is no! The list could go on and on. And these are very serious matters.

As people who are concerned about being obedient to the Lord, we must take the time to verify our beliefs in light of the word!

SAM DICK  
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## GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
March 12 – 16	Owen's Road Congregation Prattville, AL	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)
March 16 – 18	Freefield Congregation State Line, MS	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY) Tentative
March 23 – 25	Fayetteville Road Congregation Fairburn, GA	Allan Daniel (Woodland, AL)
March 23 – 25	Mt. Zion Congregation Crab Orchard, KY	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
March 25 – 28	Nobel Congregation LaFayette, GA	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)
March 26 – 30	Blanchester Congregation Blanchester, OH	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)

March 25 –  
April 1

Fourth Avenue Congregation  
Algood, TN

Harry Cobb  
(Wedowee, AL)

## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

Remember last month's questions?

1. Which tribe did God tell the Israelites was to lead them against the Canaanites? THE TRIBE OF JUDAH (Judges 1:2)
2. In Esther, who suggested that Mordecai be given royal treatment for potentially saving the king's life? HAMAN (Esther 6:6-9)
3. What was the first miracle of Jesus that Mark mentioned? EXORCISING AN UNCLEAN SPIRIT (Mark 1:23-26)
4. According to 1st Corinthians, who is the last enemy that Christ will destroy? DEATH (1st Cor. 15:26)
5. Where did Paul leave Titus? CRETE (Titus 1:5)