

## TRANSFORMATION

**“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing, and perfect will” (Rom. 12:2).**

As you know there are 4 stages to the life cycle of a butterfly. (1) Egg. (2) Caterpillar. (3) Cocoon. (4) Butterfly. For the sake of this brief article we will concentrate on only two, the caterpillar and the butterfly.

Caterpillars are a very destructive insect pest. They can devastate a food crop overnight. All they do is eat! They start by consuming the leaf on which they were hatched and then proceed to destroy everything they touch. During this stage of their life they can eat over 30,000 times their own weight. They move by arching their bodies and inching forward. Obviously they cannot move very fast.

Butterflies, by contrast, move fast by comparison and will not destroy your garden. These brightly colored creatures can be a welcome addition to your garden. Not only are they beautiful, but they are also useful in pollinating flowers. As you know, they come out of their cocoon with the amazing ability to fly and also to navigate. With reference to the monarch butterfly they typically start their northward journey somewhere in Mexico or the Southern U.S. Several generations later, in less than a year, they wind up in Canada. As winter approaches this new generation of monarch butterfly defies the life span of it’s parents and lives long enough to fly 3,000 miles back home to Mexico.

This transformation from caterpillar to butterfly is called “metamorphosis”. This is a compound of two different Greek words “meta” (change) and “morphe” (form). This is precisely the word used in Romans 12:2 to describe conversion. Christians are not to be “conformed” but “transformed”. The word “transformed” is the Greek word for “metamorphosis”. It is used 4 times in the N.T. Scriptures. Two times it refers to what happened to Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:2; Mk. 9:2). Two times it refers to what happens to the Christian in conversion (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18).

The metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly is an eloquent illustration of conversion. No matter how hard you try, or much money you spend, you can never teach a caterpillar to fly. Similarly, no matter how hard you try you can never teach an unconverted sinner to produce the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Both the butterfly and the Christian need to go through a metamorphosis.

The contrast between a caterpillar and a butterfly is so obvious that even the casual observer cannot help but notice. The same kind of transformation also takes place when someone is converted to Christ. Take, for example, the dramatic difference between the way Saul of Tarsus was before his life was transformed by Christ. Saul was destructive just like a caterpillar. Listen to his own words: **“On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the Lord’s people in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. I was so obsessed with persecuting them that I even hunted them down in foreign cities” (Acts 26:10,11).** After his “transformation”, however, he harmed nobody! He even went so far as to wish himself accursed if only the people who persecuted him might be saved (Rom. 9:1-5).

Peter also experienced a “transformation”. He was once a headstrong and vacillating fisherman named Simon. After his “transformation” he was known as “Peter” which means “Rock” (Jn. 1:42). This rock solid nature earned him the privilege of being listed first in every listing of the 12 apostles.

As an old man Peter recalled the transformation of Christ on the sacred mountain. He considered this as the primary proof that he was not following cleverly invented stories (2 Pet. 1:16-21). Just as Peter was an eyewitness of the transformation of Jesus, each one of us can also be an eyewitness of a similar transformation for it takes place every time someone is converted to Christ. When the works of the flesh are miraculously replaced by the fruit of the Spirit it is like a light shining from a hill that cannot be hidden (Gal. 5:19-23). That’s what it means to be “transformed”!