

Heart Issues Concerning The Transformation Process

Introduction

For over seven years Fire Ministries has been teaching children about the transformation process of Christ growing in us using the picture of a caterpillar turning into butterfly. Every year as the adult teachers shared with the children we found ourselves understanding a little more clearly what the cocoon represented spiritually in our lives! Year after year we have continued to laugh and marvel at how WE, the teachers, still have needed to comprehend and embrace the cocoon in our own lives. We understood immediately and could personally relate to the desperation of caterpillar life crawling around in the mud and feeling wretched. Likewise, we could easily comprehend the wonder of Resurrection New Life through Christ giving us wings and making us butterflies. But the cocoon... now what exactly does that mean? The more we pondered the cocoon and taught on the metamorphosis of the caterpillar, the more deeply we realized how little the Church is taught and understands the process of being conformed to the image of Christ. Somehow we assume that as soon as we are saved we are to immediately begin flying like Butterflies, yet we all know by experience that this is not the case! We are taught much concerning Christ's death and resurrection, but very little concerning His burial and the work of His burial in the born again believer.

There is a whole reality of vital spiritual significance that relates to the process of Christ being formed in us. This process does not happen at New Birth and must happen before we can experientially bring forth Christ as Life! Paul literally called this process a "metamorphosis" in Romans 12:2. The word "metamorphosis" is the word used to define what happens to a caterpillar as it becomes a butterfly. At the end of this "metamorphosis" there is a transformation. Transformation simply means that what is deep inside is given outward expression. In other words, the Jesus that was planted deep inside of us at New Birth will come forth in manifestation after this process of conformity has occurred. If we do not understand that we need to go through a process of conformity, we will be very confused with many things. We will wonder why we cannot fly yet and overcome in the trials of our lives. We will feel ashamed and like failures when we experience old hateful attitudes still rising in our hearts even after we are saved. Yet all of these situations are simply the result not having gone through the transformation process yet!

Every year my local Church has an annual "Christ As Life" conference. The theme for this year's preaching was primarily based on Noah's Ark. The emphasis of this sharing on Noah's ark was much like the purpose of the cocoon. Although I had pondered many things concerning the metamorphosis process as related to the cocoon, there were many vital points involving that same process that Noah's Ark brought forth with more clarity. Much like a cocoon, the ark is a place that we are shut up into after New Birth. They are both enclosed environments in which Christ can form in us as we allow the old nature to fall away. With the caterpillar, we are shut into a cocoon to allow

the inward metamorphosis to occur. With Noah, we are shut up into an ark with a bunch of beasts for a period of time. Spiritually speaking, those beasts represent the inward attitudes that are not Jesus, but the old fleshly nature. Although the entire old creation was crucified in the flood (representing the Cross); every believer must eventually be confronted with the reality that much of the old attitudes and selfish ways are still active within. In the ark our hearts begin to grow weary with allowing the old things to remain alive in us, as day after day we experience the wretched stench of our own flesh. We begin to “reckon these old stinky attitudes as dead with Christ”, allowing the work of the Cross to be applied to our inward nature. Christ will then begin to form within us, taking His rightful place as the Life of the believer. Of course, there is so much more to be said concerning this teaching, and it can be listened to in completion at the Christ As Life Website (www.christaslife.com). There is also a A.C.T.S. class entitled “Spiritual Realities of Noah” taught by R.T. Nusbaum that thoroughly covers this topic. I am bringing this aspect of teaching up right now to help prepare for the subject matter of this article.

There are many situations and pictures that begin to help us understand the significance of knowing Christ in the work of His burial. This time period of putting the old dead creation away to allow the new Life of Christ to come forth can be a very tumultuous time in anyone’s life. Our flesh can try to escape this process, limiting the in-working of the Cross in our hearts and lives and therefore restricting the outflow of Christ as the Life of the believer. There is a journey we all must make in order to move from crawling to flying. If we avoid the cocoon we can never grow wings. If we run screaming out of the Ark before the Lord opens the door, we will never know the fullness of Life in the New Creation. Although there are many phases to this process, this article is focusing on the final stage where it is time to leave (*put off*) the old (*man, creation, form, nature*) and enter into (*put on, walk in, experientially know*) the new (*nature, Life*). Although much must be left unsaid here for sake of space, I pray the Holy Spirit will speak to your heart in ways that will help you know His work in this area and can guide you in the future.

Excitement To Move On!

We all may rejoice at the prospect of hope and freedom that is coming when we get to exit the Ark. It is the same bubbling up of excitement that a caterpillar/butterfly feels before it leaves its cocoon, a baby chick knows before it hatches from its egg, or a prisoner feels knowing the time of release is soon coming. Thoughts may arise in the ark dweller such as, “I can finally leave this stinking place and be free from the horror and darkness of these evil beasts.” The caterpillar may think, “I will never have to crawl in the dirt again, all the heavens will be mine in the graceful flow of my new heavenly wings.” The baby chick could contemplate, “Once I am freed from this egg I will run and play”. The prisoner might consider, “As soon as these chains are removed I will experience true freedom again.” Each of these thoughts could reveal a misunderstanding of the true purpose of their situations, for the inward change is what brings the outward freedom. If the removal of restrictions is where our freedom lies, then no real inward change has occurred. To truly be ready to leave the tomb, one must already be

functioning in newness of Life. We should not desire to allow our death to walk among the living. The purpose of burial is to put away with finality that which is dead.

The last phase of the conformity process involves the final transition of leaving the old and entering into the new. There is a specific danger in this stage of the journey. It is the danger of not knowing our part and passively waiting for God to make the transition complete. In science fiction stories people are oftentimes “tele-ported” to other worlds or places. A star-gate or machine will beam them from one reality to another and all they have to do is stand there and wait. It is not this way with God. If we want to leave the old and enter into the new, we are going to have to pick up our feet and walk in newness of life, dying to self and embracing the nature of the spirit realm.

A Burial Death

God’s goal is that a true metamorphosis has occurred within the ark, cocoon, egg, and prison. We are not just “doing our time” in these situations, we are being transformed in such a manner that the old is being removed and Christ is forming deep within. For us to truly redeem the time with the ark or cocoon a “burial-death” needs to happen. We may wonder, “Why does something that is already dead and in the grave need to go through death”? The answer is simple and a reality in many of our lives; even though we were crucified with Christ and all the old has been judged and slain... we may still love and hold onto those dead things, giving them place in our lives. Our days within the confines of the ark and cocoon experiences are meant to be filled with dying to the desire to live after the flesh. As we see the wretchedness of our own flesh we will begin counting all the treasures of our own lives and the temporal decaying earth as loss compared to the eternal Christ in His Lamb nature. This “burial death” is meant to happen in our “grave” as the LOVE of the old passes away in our hearts, even though the life of the old is already crucified. This is the only way for burial to truly work, for we will not bury something we still love. We will look at, live with and feed something that is yet dear to our hearts. The whole wretched burial experience is meant to help convince us that we no longer want to live in the realm of the dead anymore. The burial is meant to cause our hearts to hunger for the Life that is free from the bondage of selfishness. We will then willingly put off the old man and chose to put on the new instead (cf. Col).

Transition only Through Metamorphosis

All of the inward work that was meant to happen in the Ark, Cocoon, etc,... was in preparation for living as a creature that is now “after the new order”. We will have conformed to the “kind” of species that is in the image of the new creation (which is Christ all and in all). Many changes have happened in the “separation unto God decisions” of the cocoon, the beast confrontations of the Ark, and the long hours of heart purging in the prison cell. We will find new ways of considering things, a new value system, and an inward freedom that has come with acceptance and contentment with the Lord for Himself alone. These deep inward deaths and changes have given us new legs... new wings... new ways of existing, until we realize that we are no longer

functioning after the selfish, earthly, and petty old creation, but we are after the kind of Life that is found in Christ.

To truly walk out of the REAL prison cell of selfishness, the REAL cocoon of earth dwelling, and the REAL ark of bestial carnal motives will require exercising your changes! In this sense we must press out of the egg like the little chick. We press out of the old and into the new by dying to self and embracing the new order of Lamb Life that has begun to form in us in real and experiential ways. GOD has crucified His Son to put the old away. GOD has orchestrated circumstances to limit us unto the desire of burying the dead and conforming to the new. GOD has sent His Holy Spirit to form Christ within and guide us through the process. WE must embrace all that God has done by functioning in the New Life. We must determinably press out of the old and into the new in our walk.

Examples of Transition From the Old into The New

It may be helpful to consider a few practical examples of responses to the process of transformation that we have been discussing.

A Cocoon Situation

A person makes a decision to separate themselves to a place of restriction that will help them die to self and allow new life to grow within. Soon, in their experience, it becomes dark and confining. They are used to doing many things and now they find themselves limited from constant works. The Spirit continually speaks of deep inward changes that come from the indwelling Christ. The little caterpillar-person makes one decision after another to trade his earth feet for the wings of the Spirit of Life. Changes start happening in the way the person thinks and views things. This one becomes convinced that only Christ can bring forth fruit and only through His Life can we fly. A long time as elapsed in the pod of conformity. The changeling caterpillar become restless, ready to practice some of its new convictions and test out the wings of the Spirit of Life. He waits and waits for God to do something. It remains dark in the cocoon. He prays and cries for the open heavens, for the vast eternity of God's reality to fill His experience. He fasts and reads more scriptures. Situations come and go outside the cocoon, and yet he remains motionless, waiting for God to burst the cocoon open and lift Him up into flight. Yet all the while God is waiting for the heart of the butterfly to press out of the cocoon to manifest new life. He is watching to see if the new butterfly will see the situations happening all around him and become constrained by the love of God to bring new life into them with His wings. The time and change has come and it is now the butterflies turn to press out of the cocoon and use His wings!

An Ark Situation

A believer knows there is more after salvation, and realizes that they have not known the fullness of all they received in New Birth. They cry out to God for all He has in His Son for them! Soon they find themselves gathering together with the family of God, dwelling with those on a journey to truly know Christ. Situations arise that reveal

injustice among the brethren. Jealously, competition, strife and envy begin to arise over “godly things and offices”. Circumstance after circumstance comes in waves within the gathering of the “family”! Before too long this person experiences inward reactions to all of these “injustices” that manifest ugly, hateful, selfish motives deep within himself. Instead of blaming all the other beasts in the ark, this one cries out, “Not my brother, not my sister, but its me oh Lord, standing in the need of prayer!” God begins to reveal His Son in this open and humble heart. New motives of love and forgiveness begin to arise in this ones heart. In the midst of the confines of the ark he begins to forgive, to pray for others instead of blaming them. He begins to love instead of justify self. He glories in the lower seat so his brethren can experience a higher seat. One day the door to the ark opens and this one walks through it in the same way he walked in the ark. This one is prepared for the new creation for the transition has already come by walking in the new Life even before the door was opened. Their change did not come the day the door was opened, but came through a constant conformity that daily responded to the challenges of the ark through death to self and union with the self-giving nature of the Lamb.

Those who chose to remain beasts continued to fight with one another, biting and devouring until the end. They covered over and justified their ugly inward monsters, and were unchanged by the journey. When the door to the ark opened the beasts rushed forward to get away from those that drove them to manifest their vileness. As soon as they tried to enter into the realm of life, they disappeared because there was no place for them in this creation.

The opened door of the ark changed nothing but simply gave manifestation to those who had embraced the work of the cross in the Ark. To be able to “walk through that door” will require a determination to walk in love in the midst of the stinky and dark Ark before the door opens. We must exercise our changes before full release can come!

A Prison Situation

A person is exiled through illness, persecution, or correction to a place of great limitation, much like a prison cell. Here they cannot “enjoy life” like they used to. All the things they once took for granted are gone. Even the basics, like food and sleep and fellowship are hard to come by. They can do nothing here but simply exist. They begin to see there own fragileness and the shortness/vanity of this life. They begin to weigh what is really important. They begin to love the Lord for who He is and not what He can do for them. They find His heart and Spirit as their portion and not the earth things He gives them. They begin to relate to Him in oneness rather than by their works and ministry.

Their limited earth has pressed them into the heavens of God heart and here they find God in ways they had never dreamed of. Their limited prison in the earth has helped them to leave the earth and all its treasures to abide in God above the earth in all His fullness. Their faith takes flight and they experientially begin to know the heights and depths of the Lord in His realm in ways nothing in the earth could compare to. Their heart becomes united to God in His eternal Person, and they are free from the earth and its limitation. Their prison cell no longer confines them for they have found their place in

Christ and it is a large and glorious habitation! When the door to the prison cell is opened, they do not run out but rather kiss its bars for helping them to look up and see the glorious Christ they had been missing for so long!

If a person in the same situation just sat in their cell counting the days until the door would open, they would be as unchanged and selfish as the day they entered the cell. It has been said, "Self is the only prison that can bind the soul". If we do not allow the cross to eradicate the inward selfishness that binds us to the earth, no situation of freedom will ever truly release us from bondage. If we do not spend our time in captivity learning to dwell in the Spirit Realm of Union with Christ above the earth, we will never experience the glorious liberty known to the sons of God by Christ.

An opened ark door and an unchained prisoner does not guarantee freedom in the new creation. Our only guarantee of life in the New is to embrace the changes in our circumstances. Every day and every decision will determine our future dwelling place. It is not all up to God for we are very much a part of the determining factors and results.

Where Are You At The End of The Journey?

The Spirit AND THE BRIDE must together come forth into the new. God does not do it all. And the heart cry of the Spirit and the Bride at the end of the book of Revelation is "COME FORTH LORD JESUS!" and not "PRAISE GOD FOR FREEDOM FROM UGLY FLESH AND CONFINING CIRCUMSTANCES!". At the end of the GREAT TRIBULATION you find two kinds of humans,... those worshiping the beast and those living in union of kind with the Lamb government. Each human had to make active decisions on a daily basis of loving their life in this earth or dying to self and loving the Lamb. Those decisions and ways of living determined their end state. The fires of the tribulation either pressed them to embrace the selfish, earthly ways of the old creation, or conformed them into His image through hard decisions of dying to self and loving the Lamb as their motive and way. The end will show those who would not let go of the old dead attitudes in their daily life, and those who pressed through into the new creation Life of Christ, exercising their changes through a new walk that embraced union with the Lamb in actual decisions and motivations.

God can put us face to face with our beasts and tell us the old is crucified. God can limit us in a cocoon with the express purpose of growing wings to give us a whole new way of living. God can confine us in prisons to give us the chance to think about what is really important and where our life is truly found. But none of those dealings guarantee that a true inward change will come. We guarantee the change every time we say "yes" to His motives and "no" to our selfishness.

May our hearts thrill at the constant daily OPPORTUNITIES to be with the Lord in ways that are eternal and Life! May our hearts also fear missing opportunities to redeem our circumstances and conform to the image of Christ while there is still time.***

