

The Cocoon

When I was a teenager, growing up in the country NSW town where I had been born, and just after I got kicked out of High School, I was befriended by a young man named Max. Max was from Sydney. He had just graduated as a Primary School teacher and had been sent to our country town for his first teaching appointment. But if Max had a passion, it was not for teaching; rather it was for butterfly collecting. He would go on to become probably Australia's leading entomologist, and certainly Australia's leading authority on cicadas (locusts), but back then, Max was interested in butterflies and little else. Max couldn't get enough butterflies; he collected them, he documented when they were caught, where they were caught, the temperature, and which direction the wind was blowing. He now has the largest, documented butterfly collection in the country. Max also collected caterpillars and built a giant humidity-crib where he would put the caterpillars and wait for them to turn into butterflies. He would observe them every day, several times a day, documenting down to minutes the metamorphosis process for different species of caterpillar.



Pretty soon a large number of the town kids were running around with butterfly nets, swooping at anything that moved. They would bring their catch to Max who would lavish them with praise, even if it was only another 'cabbage white'. But I didn't have a butterfly net. I was more interested in watching the transformation of creepy-crawly caterpillars into butterflies. I remember watching the caterpillars incessantly crawling and chewing their way through the leaves, and then finally, one by one, they would stop, attach their tails to a stick and lay still, exuding a sticky substance which would turn into a hard cocoon, trapping them inside. And then, for weeks, they seemed dead, unmoving in their tiny grey cocoon, until, finally, one morning the cocoon would begin to shake, the end would crack open, and a beautifully-formed butterfly would emerge. Max would document it and usually release it, just another small fragile life, but for me the fascination of watching the new-birth of the butterfly never waned.

You know, I hadn't thought much about Max for many years, although we still exchange Christmas cards, but in my reading this week I came across a statement that the new-birth of a butterfly is analogous (a *living parable*, the writer called it) to the resurrection of Jesus. Suddenly, I was 16 again, gazing in fascination at the emergence of a spectacularly beautiful butterfly. I love that analogy; that the new-birth of the butterfly is a parable of our Lord overcoming death, walking out of the tomb and rising into new life; wonderful, glorious new life. And though I once watched in fascination as the cocoon cracked open and the butterfly emerged, that experience pales into insignificance when I consider the death and resurrection of Jesus. But there are parallels; when the butterfly emerges the cocoon is forgotten, abandoned, discarded, just as the shroud which once was wrapped

continuously around the body of Jesus lay collapsed in the tomb that first Easter morning; mute testimony that the corpse it once wrapped has now emerged into new and glorious life. The bondage of death is broken. Christ is risen! We can face tomorrow with the assurance that Jesus is alive, in glorious new-life, to help us, to guide us, to give us hope for the future. And because He lives, *everything* is different, and nothing is impossible. Easter is the story of the promise of new life.