

MIRACLES, BUTTERFLIES, & RESURRECTION

by Joelee Chamberlain

Did you know that there are miracles all around us? Yes, there are! But just what is a miracle? A miracle is something wonderful that can't just happen all by itself, and a miracle is something really amazing that people can not make happen.

So how do miracles happen? Why, God makes miracles happen, of course!

Yes, only the Lord God can make miracles. And God does all sorts of miracles. In the Bible we read about some of them, like when God made the Red Sea all dry up so His people could walk across or when God let some prophets heal people or make the rain to stop or start right when they said. And Jesus, the Son of God, did lots of miracles when He was here on earth, didn't He? Yes, He healed sick people and made lots of food from just a tiny bit of food and made bad storms stop and lots of other miracles.

But the very first miracle that the Bible tells us about is when God began creating everything -- the miracle of Creation. This happened a long, long time ago and was when God made the heavens and the earth and the plants and the animals and people.

And when God made the plants and animals and people, He made them so that they would be able to make more plants and animals and people like themselves. Those are Creation miracles, something that can still happen now. They are pretty special miracles, aren't they?! And we see those Creation miracles all around us all of the time. We see the plants making seeds that grow up into more plants. We see animals having baby animals. We see people with their babies. These all can happen because of those first miracles, the miracle of Creation.

Well, today I want to talk to you about one of those miracles of Creation. We see it so often, though, that at first it may seem to be just an ordinary, everyday happening -- but that's because we live in God's Creation every day, so we get used to it. I see this Creation miracle happening every year in my own back yard. It is a miracle that starts with a bush in my back yard.

You see, every year in my back yard big fennel bushes come up. I don't plant them; they just grow there by themselves. The fennel bush is a pretty plant with leaves that don't look like the leaves on trees. The leaves look sort of like ferns. The bush gets very tall, as tall as or even taller than your daddy! First it gets lots of pretty lacy looking yellow flowers on it. Then the flowers make lots of little seeds. After a while the seeds drop off and fall on the ground. Then the bush dries up and dies. But the next year new fennel bushes grow from the seeds that dropped onto the ground. In fact, we get so many of the bushes that I have to mow some of them down or they'd be all over my whole back yard!

The plant and seeds smell and taste like licorice. Sometimes people use the fennel seeds in cooking. And sometimes people will just chew on a fennel seed. I've done that lots of times, and they taste good!

Now, just the fact that those big bushes can come from a little seed, that by itself is a miracle of God's Creation, isn't it? Why, even scientists can't make a little seed that can grow into a plant, can they?! Oh, I know that they can plant seeds and water them and then maybe the seeds will grow, but they can't make the seed itself. So how does the fennel seed grow into the fennel bush in my back yard? That's right. Because, as I just said, a long time ago at the time of Creation, God not only made plants, but He made it so that the plants would make seeds that would make even more plants. And that is what my fennel plant does every year. And that is a miracle, isn't it? One of the miracles from the time of Creation. -- But that is not the miracle I'm going to be talking about with you today. There is another Creation miracle that is connected with the fennel bush, and that is the miracle I want to tell you about today.

Now, I don't call this bush a fennel plant; I call it a caterpillar plant. But why do you think I call it a caterpillar plant? Well, I call it a caterpillar plant because every year it gets lots of pretty caterpillars on it! I like these caterpillars. And these caterpillars have to do with the Creation miracle that I'm going to be talking about with you today.

Now, how do you think the caterpillars get there on my big bush? Well, I'll tell you. You see, a butterfly will come to the bush and lay a tiny, white egg on it. The egg is only about the size of the head of a pin! In a few days the egg will turn brown. And inside of this little egg God has made it so that a little, tiny caterpillar begins to grow. And after a while a tiny black caterpillar hatches out of the egg. The caterpillar is only about as long as your fingernail is across.

The caterpillar is cute, and it has lots of tiny feet. It uses these tiny feet to hold onto the fennel plant. It can even be upside down on the fennel plant and not fall off! Then the tiny caterpillar crawls around on the fennel plant and begins eating the leaves. There are lots and lots of leaves on the fennel plant. So the tiny caterpillar eats and eats and grows and grows, getting bigger and bigger until it is almost as big as your mama's little finger. So then instead of being a cute, tiny caterpillar, now it is a cute, bigger caterpillar. And it can still crawl around on the fennel bush with it's little feet and still be upside down without falling off. I like to watch them!

But do you know how the caterpillar gets bigger? Why, it doesn't grow like you do. When you grow, your skin grows with you, doesn't it? But the caterpillar's skin doesn't grow with it! No! Instead, God has made it so that a new skin grows inside of the caterpillar's old skin. And then the old skin comes off, and there the caterpillar is, a little larger and in its new skin! That is a miracle, isn't it?

Well, at first the caterpillar stays nice and black. But then each time it gets a new skin and gets a little bigger, it starts getting new colors on it, pretty yellow and green stripes. Finally when it is all grown up and has its last skin, it is very beautiful. Yes, it is a beautiful green caterpillar with black stripes and orange dots. I like to see these beautiful caterpillars on my fennel plant.

Well, all of this time the caterpillar has been eating the leaves of the fennel plant and getting fatter. Finally it stops eating and crawls off of the plant and makes itself stick to a branch or post. Then God has made it so that the caterpillar's old skin comes off for the last time -- but now it doesn't have new skin. No. Instead of skin it has a sort of blanket-shell, and the blanket-shell gets hard around it and protects it while it just hangs there. This hard blanket-shell is

called a chry-sa-lis. And now you can't see the caterpillar anymore. You can just see its chrysalis, and the caterpillar is inside of the chrysalis. The chrysalis is about the size and shape of a Brazil nut.

So then in my back yard there the caterpillar is inside of its chrysalis, and the chrysalis is stuck to a branch or post. Then inside of the chrysalis, God has made it so that a wonderful thing happens. It is another Creation miracle. But we can't see this miracle happening, because the miracle is happening inside of the chrysalis. But after a while at just the right time the chrysalis splits open. And what do you think comes out of the chrysalis? Do you think it is another caterpillar? No!! It is a beautiful butterfly!! God has made it so that the caterpillar turned into a butterfly!! Why, the caterpillar was just a baby butterfly!!!!

So just what has been going on here? Well, first there was a butterfly that laid a tiny egg, and a tiny caterpillar grew inside of the egg. Then the caterpillar hatched out of the egg, ate leaves, got big, and then made a chrysalis. And then inside of the chrysalis the caterpillar changed into a butterfly. Butterfly, egg, caterpillar, chrysalis, then another butterfly!

That is a miracle, isn't it? Why, people couldn't make a caterpillar turn into a butterfly, could they?! No, only the Lord God can do that. And a long, long time ago when God first created butterflies, He made them so that they could lay eggs that would hatch into caterpillars that would turn into butterflies. Yes, God can do anything, can't he? God is so good to us in making this miracle and making these beautiful butterflies for us to see, isn't He? And that is the Creation miracle I wanted to tell you about today. But let's talk a little more about what happens out in my back yard after the butterfly comes out of its chrysalis.

Well, when the butterfly comes out of its chrysalis, at first the butterfly's wings are wet and crumpled up. And the butterfly just sits there; it can't fly just yet. Then the butterfly begins slowly waving its wet wings up and down, up and down. And as it waves its wings, the wings begin to get dryer and to get bigger and smoother until at last

the wings are all dry and they aren't at all crumpled up anymore. And finally it is a very beautiful butterfly with a black body and big, smooth, yellow wings. The yellow wings have black lines on them and some blue and red on them. And now the butterfly can fly around.

But now the butterfly doesn't eat leaves like it did when it was a caterpillar. No. Instead, the butterfly flies around and drinks tiny drops of nectar (sort of like honey) from different flowers. And after a while it will lay its own eggs on my fennel bush, too, eggs that will turn into more caterpillars that will turn into more butterflies. So again it will be, butterfly, egg, caterpillar, chrysalis, and then yet another butterfly!

This kind of butterfly is called a swallowtail butterfly. There are many other kinds of butterflies, but the swallowtail butterfly is the kind that comes from the caterpillars on my fennel bush.

Swallowtail butterfly! Now that is a funny name isn't it?! Why would a butterfly be called "swallowtail"?! Well, you see, there is a kind of pretty little bird called a "swallow". And the swallow bird has a tail that separates out into two parts. Well, the swallowtail butterfly has a sort of long part on the end of each of its two wings. And this reminded people of the tail of the swallow bird, so they called it a swallow-tail butterfly. (By the way, isn't "swallow" a funny name for a bird?! I don't know why they named it that!)

When my children were young, they would sometimes bring some little caterpillars into the house and put them into a big jar with leaves from the fennel plant. And they would watch God's Creation miracle as the little caterpillars would grow bigger and bigger. Finally a caterpillar would make its chrysalis. Then a few weeks later we would see the beautiful swallowtail butterfly come out of the chrysalis. We would watch it as it waved its wet, crumpled wings up and down. Then when the wings were all dry and big and smooth, we would hold our finger down close to the butterfly, and the butterfly would climb onto our finger. Then we would carefully carry it outside so that it could fly around and drink nectar from flowers. And finally this butterfly would lay its own eggs on the fennel bush so that more caterpillars could be born.

Do you see now why I call the fennel plant a caterpillar plant?! I have fun every year watching God's Creation miracle happening on my caterpillar plant.

Now, when the caterpillar makes a chrysalis and we can't see it and then when it comes out as a beautiful butterfly, that reminds me of an even bigger miracle. In fact, it reminds me of two miracles. One of these miracles has already happened, but the other miracle is one that hasn't happened yet. Would you like for me to tell you about the two other miracles, the ones that the butterfly reminds me of? All right.

The first miracle the butterfly reminds me of is something that happened a long time ago, about 2000 years ago. It is something that we celebrate at Easter time. Do you

remember what it is that we celebrate at Easter? Yes, at Easter we celebrate that Jesus rose from the dead, don't we? Remember that the Bible tells us that God loves us so much that God the Father sent God the Son (that's Jesus, isn't it?) to die on the cross for our sins. Well, after Jesus died, His body was taken down from the cross and was wrapped up and put in a tomb, and nobody could see it. (And this reminds me of when the caterpillar is inside its chrysalis and we can't see it anymore.) Then 3 days later Jesus was resurrected, He was alive again, and He came out of the tomb. Yes, Jesus was alive, and He had a resurrection body. (This reminds me of when the butterfly comes out of the chrysalis.) And many people saw Him, and then after a while He went back up into heaven. (And this reminds me of when after the butterfly comes out of the chrysalis, that it is able to fly away.) And Jesus is still alive today, isn't He? (Can you see now why the butterfly reminds me of Jesus?)

Yes, Jesus died for our sins and then rose from the dead, and this made a way that people who trusted in Him to save them from their sins could then go to heaven some day and be with Him. And all we have to do is to turn from our sins and ask Jesus to forgive us, and He will. God always keeps His promises, doesn't He?!

But I said that the caterpillar as it comes of its chrysalis as a butterfly also reminds me of a second miracle. This second miracle hasn't happened yet, but it will someday -- and it will happen to me and to everyone else who has ever trusted Jesus to save them from their sins!!

You see, someday the Lord Jesus is going to come back to earth and be King over the whole world forever. And when He does, He is going to make things all new again. And when He comes back, He's going to give a resurrection body to everyone who has trusted Him to save them from their sins! Our resurrection bodies will be nice and strong and will never be weak or get sick again! And we will be with the Lord Jesus forever and ever in our wonderful resurrection bodies! Wow!!!

Thinking about that makes me very happy! I have trusted Jesus to save me from my sins, so whenever I see a butterfly and I remember that it had once been a caterpillar, that reminds me about God's promise of a resurrection body for me someday! Won't that be wonderful?! I can hardly wait!!

I know that God will always do whatever He says He'll do. We can trust Him for that, can't we?

Yes, there are miracles from the Creation all around us, aren't there? Every seed that grows is a miracle from Creation. Every caterpillar is a miracle. Every butterfly is a miracle. Every animal is a miracle. Every person is a miracle from Creation. The sun and moon and stars are miracles. These things can't just happen by themselves, can they? And people can't make any of those things happen, can they? Only the Lord God made them. And when He first created them, God made the plants and animals and people and even

butterflies so that they would be able to make more plants and animals and people and butterflies, didn't He? Yes, God did this a long, long time ago when He first created the whole world. These are all Creation miracles.

So now whenever you see a butterfly, let that remind you that Jesus died for your sins but is alive again and in heaven. And also whenever you see a butterfly, let that remind you that God has promised that everyone who trusts in Jesus to forgive their sins will someday have strong, healthy, wonderful resurrection bodies. Yes, God can do anything, can't He? And God always keeps His promises, too, doesn't He?

I hope you have enjoyed hearing about God's miracle of the swallowtail butterfly. I see this Creation miracle every year in my own back yard, and I always praise and thank the Lord God for it.

But there is one last thing I want you to remember today. And that is that God takes care of caterpillars and butterflies, doesn't He? But you are much more important to God than a caterpillar or a butterfly! So, God takes care of caterpillars and butterflies, and God takes care of you, too. And God loves you very much.