

THE LORD IS RISEN!

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Everything around is changing all the time! This is seen very easily in the springtime. Sprouts of flowers burst forth from the ground. Tiny leaves form on tree branches. Animals come out of their winter sleeping places. Everything begins to grow, changing in size and color. The air is changing almost from moment to moment. Even our bodies are changing. They grow and become different from what they were even a few days ago.

This is the nature of the Lord's Creation. Everything alive is changing. Even in our minds we are not the same people we were last week. Each day we learn new things. We gain new loves and become more and more mature.

We can also see how things go in circles or cycles. For example, after a chicken lays an egg, it sits on it for a time. Soon a tiny chick breaks forth from its shell. It begins to totter around the barnyard floor. It eats and grows. When it is big enough, it, too, lays eggs. The cycle is repeated. The shell of the egg was very important when the chick was inside. When it breaks, it is no longer needed and is laid aside.

Another example of change is the butterfly. These lovely insects, created by the Lord, were not always so beautiful. They begin as crawling worms. They cannot move very fast. Then they make their own shell. They spin tiny strands, or threads, and wrap themselves up. Finally, there is a hard shell so that nothing can harm them.

It seems, from the outside, like nothing is happening on the inside. But the rule holds true, that everything is changing. One of the prettiest sights in the world is to see that shell finally break open. And what comes out but a lovely butterfly with colorful wings that carry it through the air!

Later, these butterflies lay their own eggs. They hatch and turn into tiny caterpillars. The cycle is repeated.

Can the same be true of you and me? Of course. We also live by the rule of change. We begin as tiny eggs inside our mothers. After many months we are born as tiny babies. But it doesn't stop there. We grow and grow until we are adults like our parents.

But what happens to our bodies after we are grown up? Do they stop changing? No. The Lord has told us of new changes that take place. When our bodies are no longer needed, like the cocoon wrapped around the caterpillar,

they are set aside and placed in the ground. But what comes out? Wonderful to say, while we are in our bodies, another person is growing within each of us. Just as the butterfly breaks forth from its cocoon, so will you and I break forth from our “shells” and enter heaven with brand new bodies. They will be even more beautiful than the ones we left behind in the grave. We will be free to move around like the butterfly, even without wings! This is what it is like to wake up in the spiritual world.

Did you know that the Lord tried to teach this to all of us when He was born as a tiny Babe in Bethlehem? He, too, grew. And when He was an adult, He finished His work here. It was time for the Lord to set aside His body and to return to heaven. When He did it, He showed what will happen to everyone born on this earth. The people who came to His grave that first Easter morning thought that was the end of His cycle. But an angel was there to tell them the good news. “He is not here. He has risen, as He said.” And that is where He is now. He is waiting to greet us when we leave our earthly body and join Him in heaven.

So each Easter time, let us notice that things are always changing. Life never stays still. The beautiful flowers on your altar grew from tiny seeds. They produce more seeds. The cycle goes on and on. The Lord rose from the grave on Easter morning with a new body. And He has told us that after we have lived on this earth, learned His Commandments and the secret to happiness, that we, too, will set aside our natural bodies. We will rise up, like He did, to a new and better world. We will be beautiful, like butterflies. And we will live with others forever in heaven. That is the joyful message of Easter! *Amen.*