

## Treasures From the Original

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### Vital Lessons From Cups and Caterpillars

By Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Part two of a three-part series on the New Testament's use of two important Greek words. Read [part one](#).

#### Clean Cups and Caterpillars

The first word we need to understand is the Greek word *morphe* (pronounced *mór-fay*). This word means "an outward appearance that truly represents the inward nature." In other words, what you see is what you get — the outside agrees with what is on the inside.

If a cup that looks clean on the outside is also clean on the inside, we could say that its outward appearance is *morphe* — an accurate reflection of what's on the inside. When a caterpillar goes into its cocoon and later emerges as a butterfly, we call that *metamorphosis*, which is from the same word. That literally means "a change of outward appearance without a change of inward nature." In modern English we say that the caterpillar has *morphed* into a butterfly. But the creature that goes into the cocoon and the creature that comes out of the cocoon are one and the same creature. Both the caterpillar form and the butterfly form reflect the true nature of the insect, even though the outward appearance is different.

#### Whitewashed Tombs and Hidden Agendas

The second word from the original Greek that we need to understand is *schema* (pronounced *skée-ma*). This word means "an outward appearance that does not represent the inward nature." In other words, what you see is *not* what you get — the

outside does not accurately reflect what is on the inside. *Schema* is the opposite of *morphe*.

The cup that looks clean on the outside might be filthy on the inside. The Lord Jesus spoke of this when He described the character of the unbelieving religious leaders of His day: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence" ([Matthew 23:25](#)). And, "You are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness" ([Matthew 23:27](#)). Here the Lord described an outward appearance that is *schema* — it doesn't reflect what's on the inside.

As the old saying goes, "Looks can be deceiving." When we talk about a *scheming* person — which is from the same root word — we usually mean someone who is crafty, conniving, or tricky. We sometimes say that a person like that has a "hidden agenda." What that person says and does outwardly often does not reflect his true intentions, the inward reality.

So *morphe* means that the outside appearance agrees with what's on the inside. It is the *truthful* picture of things. *Schema* means that the outside appearance does *not* agree with what's on the inside. It is a *deceiving* picture of things.

With those two words in mind, let's look at five passages together.

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