



My Bible School Lessons

Exploring the Word of God

Lesson #5: "Coming Again!"

BE YE ALSO READY!

Today we are privileged to have many modern conveniences that save us much time in labor, travel, communication, etc. But what are we doing with our spare time? Many are using it for gratification of selfish desires. Time is spent on various forms of entertainment: sports, movies, video games, television, magazines, novels, etc. But are the movies we watch, the programs we view on television, the books we read, tending to direct our minds toward the heavenly home that Jesus has gone to prepare for us? Are we using our time wisely, forming characters for the future, immortal life, or are we wasting time on selfish pleasure in the indulgence of sin?

Sarah Taylor's Dream

As the guests came together in the brilliantly lighted parlors at the home of Sarah Taylor that crisp winter evening, there was nothing unusual in the appearance of the rooms to indicate that the party to which they had been invited was to be in any respect different from the round of gaiety to which they had been devoting themselves for the greater part of the winter. Some of the guests noticed an unusual degree of nervousness in the manner of their young hostess, but, attributing it to the excitement of preparation and anticipation, thought no more of it, and all were soon engaged in conversation.

The musicians were in their places, and the young people were beginning to wonder why the signal was not given for them to begin playing, when Sarah Taylor, her sweet face flushed and pale by turns, took her stand near the musicians. After closing her eyes for a moment, during which the room became perfectly still, in a voice at first trembling, but clear and steady, she said: -

"Friends, I know you will think me very queer; but before we do anything else, I must tell you a little story.

"I had a dream last night, which has made such an impression on my mind and heart that I must tell it to you. I dreamed that tonight had arrived, and you had all assembled in these rooms, when there came to the door, and was ushered in, a Guest who seemed strangely familiar, and yet whom I could not recognize. He had a rare face, peaceful, yet a little sad in its expression, and His eyes were more penetrating than any that I had ever before seen. He was dressed in neat yet very plain clothing, but there was something in His appearance which marked Him as no ordinary man.

"While I was trying to think where I had seen Him, He advanced to me, took my hand, and said, gently, 'You do not recognize Me, Sarah?' Surprised at such a form of salutation from a Stranger, I could only say, 'Your face, Sir, seems familiar, yet I cannot recall Your name.'

'Yet I am One whom you have invited here this evening, or, I should rather say, One to whom both you and your parents have extended many invitations to be present here whenever I am able to come. You have even invited Me to make My home here; and I have come tonight to join your little company.'

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"I beg a thousand pardons,' I replied, 'but You mystify me all the more. Please, won't You tell me whom I have the pleasure of greeting?' "Then He offered to my view the palms of His hands, in which were scars as of nail wounds, and looked me through and through with those piercing yet tender eyes; and I did not need that He should say to me, 'I am Jesus Christ, your Lord.'

"To say that I was startled would be to express only a very small part of my feelings. For a moment I stood still, not knowing what to do or say. Why could I not fall at His feet and say with all my heart, 'I am filled with joy at seeing You here, Lord Jesus'?"

"With those eyes looking into mine, I could not say it; for it was not true. For some reason, on the instant only half comprehended by myself, I was sorry He had come. It was an awful thought, to be glad to have all the rest of you here, yet sorry to see my Saviour! Could it be that I was ashamed of Him, or was I ashamed of something in myself.

"At length I recovered myself in a degree, and said, 'You wish to speak to my parents, I am sure.'

'Yes, Sarah,' as He accompanied me to where my mother and father sat gazing in surprise at my evident confusion in greeting an unexpected Guest; 'but I came this evening chiefly to be with you and your young friends; for I have often heard you speak enthusiastically in your young people's meetings about how delightful it would be if you could have Me visibly present with you.'

"Again the blush came to my cheeks as the thought flashed through my mind, 'Tomorrow night is prayer meeting night; I should have been delighted to see Him then. But why not tonight, on this pleasant occasion?' I led Him to my parents, and, in a somewhat shamefaced fashion, introduced Him.

"They both gave a start of amazed surprise, but, convinced by His appearance that there was no mistake, my father recovered a degree of self-possession, and bade Him welcome,, as he offered Him a seat, remarking that this was an unexpected pleasure. After a somewhat lengthy pause, he explained to Jesus that his daughter, Sarah, being very closely occupied with her studies, and having little variety in life, had been allowed to invite a few friends in for a social evening, with a little quiet dancing by way of healthful exercise. Her friends were all of the very choicest, and he felt that this was a harmless amusement, which the church had come to look upon in a somewhat different light from that in which it was viewed in the past. Removing the objectionable feature of bad company had made this pleasant pastime a safe indulgence.

"As my father stammered out, in the presence of Jesus, these words of apology, which had fallen from my own lips, I felt myself flush crimson with shame both for my dear father and for myself. Why should he apologize at all for what he considered unquestionably right? How hollow it all sounded there in the presence of the Lord! Did not Jesus know that my studies were not so pressing but that I could keep late hours, sometimes several nights a week, at parties?"

"Then father, anxious to relieve my evident embarrassment, said, 'I am sure we can leave these young people safely to themselves, and nothing would please me so well as to take You, my Lord Jesus, off into my study for a talk.'

'No,' said Jesus, 'Sarah has often invited Me, and I came tonight especially to be with her. Will you introduce Me to your friends, Sarah? Some of them I know, but some I do not know.'

Of course, all this time you, friends, were looking much in our direction, wondering at our embarrassment, and perhaps guessing that we had been made uncomfortable by the arrival of a not altogether welcome Guest. I led Him first to some of the church members among you, and there was not one of you who looked so comfortable after the introduction as before.

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As it became known who the Guest was, faces changed color, and some of you looked very much as if you would like to leave the room. It really seemed as if the church members were quite as unwilling to meet Jesus as those who were not Christians.

"One of you came up quietly and whispered to me, 'Shall I tell the musicians not to play the dance music, but to look up some sacred pieces?' Jesus caught the question, and, looking us both squarely in the face, He simply asked, 'Why should you?' and we could not answer. Some one else suggested that we could have a very pleasant and profitable evening if we should change our original plans, and invite Jesus to talk to us. And he also was met with that searching question, 'Why should My presence change your plans?'

"After I had introduced the Lord Jesus to you all, and no one knew what to do next, Jesus turned to me and said: 'You were planning for dancing, were you not? It is high time you began, or you cannot complete your program before daylight. Will you not give the word to the musicians, Sarah?'

"I was much embarrassed. If my original plan was all right, His presence ought only to add joy to the occasion; yet here were all my guests, as well as myself, made wretchedly uncomfortable by the presence of Him whom most of us called our best Friend. Determined to throw off this feeling and be myself, at His word I ordered the musicians to play for the first dance.

"The young man with whom I was engaged for that dance did not come to claim me, and no one went upon the floor. This was still worse embarrassment. The musicians played once more, and two or three couples, more to relieve me than for any other reason, began to dance in a rather formal fashion. I was almost beside myself with shame and confusion, when the Lord Jesus turned to me and said, 'Sarah, your guests do not seem at ease. Why do you not, as their hostess, relieve their embarrassment by dancing yourself. Would it help you any if I should offer to dance with you?'

"My confusion gave way to an expression almost of horror, as I looked into those tenderly sad eyes and cried, 'You dance! You cannot mean it!'

"'Why not, Sarah? If My disciples may dance, may not I? Did you think all this winter, when you and others of My disciples have gathered for the dance, or the card party, or at the theater, that you left Me at home or in the church? You prayed for My presence in the prayer meeting; you did not quite want it here; but why not, My dear child? Why have you not welcomed Me tonight, Sarah? Why has My presence spoiled your pleasure? Though I am "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," yet I delight to share and increase all the pure joys of My disciples. Is it possible that you leave Me out of any of your pleasures, Sarah? If so, is it not because you feel that they do not help you to become like Me and to glorify Me; that they take your time and strength and thought to such an extent that you have less delight in My Word and in communion with Me? You have been asking, 'What's the harm?' Have you asked, 'What is the gain?' Have you done these things for the glory of God?'

"It was plain to me now. Overcome with self-reproach and profound sorrow, I threw myself on the floor at His feet, and sobbed out my repentance.

"With a, 'Daughter, go in peace; thy sins be forgiven thee,' He was gone.

I awoke and found that it was as all a dream. And now I want to ask you, my friends, shall we go on with the program tonight, or shall we take these lists which we have prepared, and discuss for a time with our partners the question, 'What can young people do to make the world better for their having lived in it?'"

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As the vote was unanimous in favor of the latter plan, which was followed by other wholesome recreations, and as the social evening was declared the most delightful of the winter, it is safe to say that the Lord Jesus had sent that dream for others besides Sarah Taylor.

Note: This story may seem a bit unrealistic in this day and age of television and amusements, which have dulled the conscience of so many young people, but it is a true story that took place many years ago.

NO HURRY !

A man once had a vision in which he seemed to be standing in the midst of an assembly of evil spirits. On the throne sat their dark ruler, Satan, grasping the scepter of wickedness in his hand. Summoning his subjects about him, Satan said in a loud voice, "Who will go to earth and persuade men to accomplish the ruin of their souls?"

One of the attendant spirits said, "I will go."

"And how will you persuade them?" asked the grim monarch.

"I will persuade them," was the answer, "that there is no heaven.

But Satan replied, "No, that will not do. You will never be able to force such a belief on the generality of mankind.

Then a second spoke up and said, "I will go."

"And how will you persuade them?" asked Satan.

"I will persuade them that there is no hell."

But again Satan answered, "That will not do. You will never persuade the generality of men that that is so, for conscience will witness against you. We must have something else, something which will appeal to all classes and ages and dispositions and which will be acceptable to the human race as a whole.

Thereupon a dark spirit glided forward and said, "Satan, I will go."

"And what wilt thou tell them?" asked Satan.

"I will tell them," answered the spirit, "that there is no hurry."

He was the spirit chosen to go and still he is abroad in the earth.

When we say, "Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4:13, 14), we do not mean that a man is not to take wise forethought for tomorrow. Any worthy life must plan nobly for tomorrow. Most of the blessings of civilization and liberty which we enjoy are fruit sown by men who thought about tomorrow.

We should all Plan for greater things, statelier mansions, a nobler life, tomorrow-and a life tomorrow that is better than today's. But no one can boast of tomorrow. No one can count on tomorrow. How many good things were going to be done tomorrow but were never done; for tomorrow was always one day ahead, or always one day behind; Yesterday.

TOMORROW

He was going to be all that a mortal should be - To-morrow.
No one should be kinder or braver than he - To-morrow.
A friend who was troubled and weary he knew,
Who'd be glad of a lift and who needed it, too,
On him he would call and see what he could do - To-morrow.

Each morning he stacked up the letters he'd write - To-morrow.
And thought of the folks he would fill with delight - To-morrow.
It was too bad, indeed, he was busy today,
And hadn't a minute to stop on his way,
More time he would have to give others, he'd say, - To-morrow.

The greatest of workers this man would have been - To-morrow.
The world would have known him, had he ever seen - To-morrow.
But the fact is he died and faded from view,
And all that he left here when living was through
Was a mountain of things he intended to do - To-morrow.

Tomorrow is the chain that binds men to loathsome habits. Tomorrow is the barred and bolted door that shuts man out from the house of his dreams. "Tomorrow" is the epitaph upon the graves of those who failed and came short of life's true goal. Tomorrow is the downward path that leads men into the land of regret. Tomorrow is the siren's song that seduces men from the path of duty. Tomorrow is the slumber that paralyzes the energies of man. Tomorrow is the snare that traps men's feet. Tomorrow is the sword of self-destruction upon which men fall. "Tomorrow" is the word cut over the realms of the lost. "Tomorrow" is the word which, in that kingdom of the lost, blends with that other word "Never." "Today" is the Holy Spirit's word. "Tomorrow" is the word of the tempter and deceiver of mankind.

Are you choosing to spend your precious moments of time preparing for tomorrow, today? Tomorrow will soon be here and the Lord Jesus will come to take those whose characters are in harmony with heaven home with Him. In 2 Corinthians 3: 18 we are told "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Won't you choose today to start spending time with Jesus, learning more of His lovely character and becoming more and more like Him, being "changed into the same image from glory to glory"?