

**Title:** Kingdom Bound: Redemption Draws Nigh – Matthew 24:36-51

**Aim:** Exhortation to be ready when King Jesus comes.

**Intro:** When our daughter Beth was a little girl, she was often skittish of trying new things. The 1<sup>st</sup> few times we went to the park w/her, she wouldn't dare go down the big slide. I think I went down it to show her it was ok, & I promised I would be at the bottom to catch her. Finally she made the long climb & perched at the top, but she wouldn't come down. "Come on, I'm ready. I'll catch you!" But she wouldn't come, & wouldn't come. Then Andi (I think w/then baby Blythe) caught my attention & I turned my head... Thud! Beth hit the ground at my feet & the bawling began. She has since recovered, tho she won't let me forget. I thought I was ready, but I wasn't. Sadly, that's the plight of many in our world & even in the church today - thinking they're ready for Christ to come again, but not. When in college, there was a popular Christian artist, sort of a pioneer in contemporary Christian music – Larry Norman – who wrote & sang a song entitled "I Wish We'd All Been Ready." Doctrine was a little skewed, w/the secret rapture & all, but Norman's heart was in the right place, longing for people to know Christ & be ready when He comes again. Theme: KB – for, by grace of God thru faith in Christ; by, in that the Lordship/reign of Christ the King must mark our lives here/now. I submit to you today that those who are KB are urged/exhorted to be ready when King Jesus returns. You may say, "Well, of course I'm ready. I've accepted Jesus as my Savior years ago." Let's consider what it means to be ready. Matthew 24:36-51 [READ]. It is generally agreed that Jesus is here answering the question, "What will be the sign of your coming & of the close of the age?" "Concerning that day & hour..." – the day & hour He comes again; that day when He returns to raise the dead, rapture His Church, judge the world & officially usher in His eternal kingdom on the new earth. It is then that time as we know it now will be no more. One age will close & the eternal age will begin. Jesus said that no one knows the day/hour/time of His return & the end of the age. The angels – God's holy messengers – don't know. They await the Father's command. And, not even the Son knows when He is coming again. I speculate that this was one of the human limitations to which Jesus submitted Himself

when He took on human flesh. Perhaps now as resurrected Lord He knows the time of His return. The point is, in answer to the question Jesus said, essentially, “I don’t know. Only the Father knows; that’s His business.” Certainly makes you wonder why anyone would ever venture to predict when Jesus will come, tho many thruout history have. But Jesus is saying, “There’s no specific sign of My coming.” Oh, there are many signs that tell us the time is at hand, but no one sign that, when we see it we can say, “Jesus is coming today/tomorrow.” God the Father has set a time, but we can’t know when it is, which I think is by God’s design. Jesus then said that when He comes again, it will be just like the days of Noah, before the flood. Then people were eating, drinking, marrying & giving in marriage; i.e. going about their day to day lives, their own business, paying no attention to God nor to Noah’s warnings about the impending judgment of the flood, oblivious to what was about to befall them. Certainly we can see the comparison to our world today. Many – most people today are exactly like those in Noah’s day – oblivious & lost! They’ve not a clue as to the impending judgment awaiting them, going about their own business, giving no thought to God or His claim on their lives. Relatively few even know the possibility of Christ coming again to officially establish He eternal world-wide kingdom. Many who have heard of that possibility don’t believe it or ignorantly think that they are somehow good enough to merit God’s acceptance. But even in the Church this is true. Jesus was speaking to His disciples (albeit, before the cross)! Even in the Church many have come to a faith “experience,” but are now doing their own thing – caught up in their own world, oblivious to the imminence of Christ’s return. There are too many (hope not you, but examine yourselves!) who think they’re ok w/God because “prayed a pray,” were baptized, but they’re not pursuing their relationship w/God – lost & don’t know it. I agree w/John Piper in Future Grace, that if transformation/growth, God’s work of sanctification is not taking place in you (not perfection, but transformation), then you’ve got to question whether or not you’re saved. On one hand don’t want anyone to struggle w/assurance – God wants us to know & has made provision for us to know that we are His, are saved; but it’s better to struggle w/assurance than to be lost &

oblivious! Unaware, like those in Noah's day. Don't let that be you! Jesus is saying, urgently warning us to "Be ready when I come!" The word "ready" in vs44 – "you also must be ready" – carries the idea of being prepared to receive someone who is coming (Strong's). When you know visitors are coming, you make preparations to receive them – meal, clean house, prepare bed, etc. If knew they were coming but didn't know exactly when, might keep room ready or house clean, food on hand, so not to be caught off guard. The day of Christ's coming should not take us unaware, because we stay ready. Jesus spoke of people going about their daily work – 2 in field, 2 at mill (men/women not in original, just 2). When Jesus comes 1 will be taken & the other left – not talking about a secret rapture where one would suddenly disappear, where car will veer off road because driver has disappeared, or plane crash because pilot disappeared. I don't think that's Biblical. The one taken will be the believer, taken up in the rapture until the fires of judgment destroy this world & it is made new for our eternal habitation. The one left will be the unbeliever who will incur God's righteous wrath. Shouldn't it concern each of us to consider that the one(s) we work beside every day, the ones we sit at table w/every day, the ones we are in class w/every day, the ones we meet at the market every week are lost & going to hell? If Jesus were to come today, they would incur His judgment! I confess to you that I'm all too often caught up w/my own life/struggle/thing & I don't give due thought to the plight of those around me. Jesus said – vs42-44. How can we be ready for Christ's coming? 1) By being aware & awake. Aware that Christ's coming is imminent. It is my opinion that by God's design many of the signs of the times are seen in every generation, only intensifying as the time draws nearer. God has wanted & designed that every generation would correctly be convinced that Jesus' coming again was right at the door – so we'd be ready. We need to be aware that Jesus is coming again soon; aware that we need a Savior & Jesus is the only Way, Truth & Life. Need to be pursuing relationship w/Christ, getting to know Him more, growing in Him. And, we need to be aware that others need Jesus, too. What's more imp? Also, we need to be awake to the vital imp of living life in Christ – living by the leading of the Holy Spirit, like

we really know Him & believe He is coming again soon! Vigilant in the practice of following Christ. There are too many of us who name the name of Jesus who aren't walking w/Him – true of all of us at times. We've got our own plans & He doesn't always fit in. If Jesus were to come today (& He could!), would you be glad to see Him, or disappointed that you won't be able to complete this/that in your plans? If Jesus were to come today would you be ashamed of what He might find you doing – some of your habits, practices, pursuits? I know there are times, when I think of it, I would have been ashamed. But don't we realize that He knows? We need to be looking for His coming & living w/Him in mind & urgently pointing others to Him, telling others about Him, warning them to wake up to their need. Also can be ready for Christ's coming by 2) Being faithful to the Master (vs45-47). Was not unusual for a landowner who went away for business to leave his most trusted servant over the affairs of the household – make sure everyone is not only doing the work they were supposed to do, but also that they were taken care of – meals prepared, supplies meted out. And, especially if that particular servant had not been given so much responsibility, when the master returned & found things just as should have been, would entrust that servant w/more responsibility, because proven could handle it. Both master & servant would be happy. Jesus is making it clear that faithfulness is what He's looking for in us who are children of God by faith. As will see in parable of talents, God doesn't expect us to do more than He's enabled us to do, but to be faithful w/what He's given us. Be faithfully obedient! Just do what He has told us to do – love wife/husband/children, lead them in following Christ; live a life of love, following Christ's example, loving God w/all heart, soul, mind, strength, loving neighbor as yourself; say no to ungodliness & yes to Christ every day. Think about this: God is much more interested in you being obedient than in you being happy! But, here's the grace of God: happiness comes from steadfast obedience flowing from a heart in love w/Him. His commands are not burdensome when we love Him. And, be faithfully serving – serving the One who has saved us, being about His business. What does God want; what is His plan? The advance of the gospel, the expansion of the kingdom. That's

what we should be about also – knowing Him & making Him known. And serving God means serving one another – recognizing & seeing to the needs of those around us, especially, but not exclusively our bro/sis in Christ. Our love for one another is seen in our service to one another. In vs48-51, Jesus gives another warning - again using the analogy of a servant, this one unfaithful. “The master is not coming back anytime soon, so I can do as I want” – neglects duties, even mistreats fellow servants, carouses w/others of bad character. When master returns, finding him not faithfully obedient/serving, the punishment would be swift & complete. Likewise, those not ready – thru faith commitment to Christ, believing & yielding, & therefore actively following & growing – those not ready will be destroyed in the fires of hell. The weeping & gnashing of teeth depicts extreme anguish & utter despair, but also carries the idea of snarling – anger at God till the very end. Like Larry Norman, I do wish that we would all be ready when Jesus comes – found in Him, pursuing our relationship w/Him, faithfully about His business. Bro/Sis, we are Kingdom Bound! Let us be kingdom minded, King Jesus focused, ready when He comes!