

NOW OR LATER
Text: Romans 14:10-12

INTRO: Several years ago an oil filter company ran a series of national advertisements on TV showing a mechanic with an oil filter in his hand – and in the background an automobile with its engine being completely overhauled. The mechanic simply stated: you can pay me NOW (\$15 oil & filter change) or you can pay me LATER (a complete engine overhaul, costing into the hundreds of dollars).

The same principle is involved in our decisions regarding the will of God. We can obey Him now, or we can obey Him later – at tremendous cost.

I. WE MUST BELIEVE THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.
Mark 16:15-16; John 8:21, 24

A. When the apostle Thomas was first informed of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, he said, “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, & put my finger into the print of the nails, & put my hand into His side, I will not believe.” (John 20:25).

B. For Thomas, “seeing was believing.” But Jesus said, “because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” (John 20:29).

C. We too will someday see Him face to face – but we cannot afford the luxury of waiting until then to believe. Then, our faith will have come too late.

Rev 1:7. Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.

Matt 25:31-34, 41, When the Son of Man comes in His glory, & all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the

goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" ...Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'

D. At that time, there will be NO unbelievers. No atheists in fox holes. No unbelievers in hell.

II. WE MUST REPENT OF OUR SINS.

A. All have sinned, Rom. 3:23. The wages of sin is death, Rom. 6:23. The remedy for sin includes repentance on the part of the sinner.

2 Peter 3:9, The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

Acts 17:30-31, Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."

B. Repentance involves changing one's mind – particularly, changing one's mind about sinning. It includes sorrow for sin, remorse. The man in Luke 16 who had once been rich, changed his mind about sin. In fact, he changed his mind about a lot of things. He begged Abraham, "Send [Lazarus] to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' (Lk 16:27-28).

B. There is no question that ALL sinners will repent. But will it be now or later?

III. EACH SINNER MUST CONFESS CHRIST AS LORD.

Matt 10:32-33, "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. 33 But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.

Rom 10:9-10, If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

A. In deed, every accountable human will eventually confess Christ as Lord – but many will wait until it is too late to be to their benefit.

Rom 14:10-12, For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: "As I live, says the LORD, Every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God." So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.

B. It is not a question of whether we will confess Christ. It's just a question – will it be NOW or will it be LATER?

IV. ALL MUST BE BAPTIZED IN OBEDIENCE TO CHRIST.

Mark 16:16; John 3:5; Acts 2:36-38.

A. Millions thru the centuries have obeyed that command & received that blessing.

B. But, unfortunately, many have done as the Pharisees & lawyers did in the days of John the Baptist: The Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized (Luke 7:30).

C. But those who reject God's will for themselves by refusing to be baptized in water for the forgiveness of their sins, will yet be baptized – in fire.

Matt 3:10-12, And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit & fire. 12 His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Rev 19:20, Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.

Rev 20:10, The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire & brimstone where the beast & the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Rev 20:14-15, Then Death & Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

D. So, every accountable person will eventually be immersed. Those who choose to do so will be immersed in water in obedience to the gospel in the here and now. Others will choose NOT to obey the gospel – but these will be immersed in everlasting fire.

2 Thess 1:7-9, The Lord Jesus [will be] revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.

CONCLUSION: Someday all will believe. All will repent. All will confess, & all will be baptized. Even if you have never obeyed Him before, someday you WILL obey Jesus. Obey Him now & receive the forgiveness of your sins & assurance of a home in heaven. Or wait until He returns in judgment & says to you, “Depart from Me into everlasting fire...” You will obey Him. NOW or LATER.

Susquehanna, Marietta, PA, October 27, 2002
Highway 29, Liberty Hill, TX, June 7, 2004 (meeting)