

WHEN?

Obedience is important! Jesus said: **“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.”** (Lk. 6:46-49)

It is obvious that if we want to build on a solid foundation we will “do” what Jesus commands us to do. The question is “when” shall we do it? The correct answer is “now”! It is important that we obey our Lord “immediately”. Please consider the following examples when immediate obedience was absolutely necessary.

- **“An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.” So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod.”** (Matt. 2:13-15) If Joseph had not immediately obeyed it is possible that the baby Jesus would have been killed.
- **“On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus’ disciples asked him, “Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?” So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, “Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. Say to the owner of the house he enters, ‘The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there.”** The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.” (Mk. 14:12-16). If these two disciples did not immediately obey Jesus the man there were supposed to follow would already be home.
- The same truth applies to Philip. **“Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means “queen of the Ethiopians”). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.”” (Acts 8:26-29) If Philip did not immediately obey, the eunuch would have passed by before he got there.**
- These examples can easily be multiplied. On two different occasions Jesus told His disciples where to cast their nets in order to catch fish (Lk. 5:4; Jn. 21:6). In both instances they caught a great many fish. They had to obey Jesus immediately for fish, of course, do not remain in the same place forever.
- After the disciples caught a great many fish **“Then Jesus said to Simon, ‘Don’t be afraid; from now on you will catch men.’ So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything, and followed him.”** (Lk. 5:10-11) Success in evangelism also requires immediate obedience.
- We also need to immediately obey Jesus! **“Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey – whether you are slaves to sin that leads to death, or to obedience that leads to righteousness.”** (Rom. 6:16)

OBEDIENCE IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

- It is obvious that the kingdom of heaven is here!
- John the Baptist preached **“Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near.”** (Matt. 3:3)
- Jesus also preached: **“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”** (Matt. 4:17)
- Jesus told His disciples: **“As you go preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near.’”** (Matt. 10:7)
- Jesus said: **“I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come in power.”** (Mk. 9:1)
- The kingdom did come and believers in the first century shared in the inheritance of His kingdom of light **“For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”** (Col. 1:12-13)
- Jesus taught us to pray: **“YOUR KINGDOM COME, YOUR WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.”** (Matt. 7:10)
- This means that we are to obey Jesus on earth just like the angels obey Him in heaven!

IN HEAVEN THE WILL OF GOD IS DONE IMMEDIATELY

- When Jesus was being arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane Peter drew his sword and cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest. Jesus told Peter to put his sword away and said **“Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?”** (Matt. 26:53) Those angels would have to save Jesus immediately or not at all!
- When Hagar ran away from her mistress God immediately sent an angel to tell her to go back home (Gen. 16:6-14).
- When God was about to destroy Sodom He sent two angels to save Lot and his family. Their message was **“Hurry and get out of this place because the Lord is about to destroy this city.”** (Gen. 19:14)
- When Abraham was about to offer Isaac on the altar an angel immediately called out from heaven and told him **“Do not lay a hand on the boy.”** (Gen. 22:12) If the angel had tarried even a minute Isaac would have been dead.
- When Shadrach, Mesach and Abednego were cast into the fiery furnace help from heaven came immediately (Dan. 3:19-25).
- When Daniel was thrown into the den of lions God immediately sent his angel who shut the mouths of the lions (Dan. 6:22). Thankfully the angel did not wait for a more convenient season.
- When the Assyrians were about to attack Jerusalem God sent an angel who put to death 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in a single night (Is. 37:36).
- These examples could easily be multiplied! YOU KNOW THAT THE ANGELS OF GOD IMMEDIATELY OBEY THE COMMANDS OF GOD! AND YOU ALSO KNOW THE WE ALSO NEED TO IMMEDIATELY OBEY THE COMMANDS OF GOD!

DON'T BE LIKE A HORSE OR A MULE

- God told David: **“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you. Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.” (Ps. 32:8-9)**
- Horses and mules have thick skins and sometimes must be beaten in order to make them obey. Balaam, for example, beat his donkey with a staff several times to make her obey (Nu. 22:23, 25, 27). God doesn't want us to be like a horse or a mule. He wants to guide us with his eye!
- When Jonah ran away from the Lord, God provided a great fish to swallow him (Jonah 1:17). After three days and three nights in the belly of that great fish, with sea weeds wrapped around his head, Jonah finally decided to do what God commanded him to do. If he had obeyed God immediately he would have saved himself a lot of trouble.
- Don't be like a horse or a mule, and don't be like Jonah!

THE EXAMPLE OF BAPTISM

- Please consider the commandment of God to be baptized!
- When Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John, **“John tried to deter him, saying, ‘I have need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?’” Jesus replied, ‘Let it be so now; it is proper to fulfill all righteousness.’” (Matt. 3:14-15)** Jesus lived in Nazareth in Galilee, but John was baptizing in the wilderness of Judea (Matt. 3:1). This meant that Jesus walked 60 – 70 miles to be baptized by John.
- **“But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves because they had not been baptized by John.” (Lk. 7:30)**
- When Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were all present (Matt. 3:16-17). Jesus set a good example for everyone!
- Jesus commanded his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations **“baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matt. 28:19)** The commandment to be baptized is the only commandment in the Bible given in the name of the “Father and the Son and the holy Spirit”.
- Every example of baptism in the book of Acts indicates it was done immediately!
 - When Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost about 3,000 were baptized on that very day (Acts 2:41).
 - When the Samaritans believed the preaching of Philip **“they were baptized both men and women.” (Acts 8:12)**
 - When Philip told the eunuch the Good News about Jesus the eunuch said: **“Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?” (Acts 8:36)** They stopped the chariot and the eunuch was immediately baptized.
 - When Peter preached to the household of Cornelius he said: **“Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have. So he ordered them that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.” (Acts 10:47-48)**

- When the Philippian jailer asked: **“Sirs, what must I do to be saved? They replied, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.’ Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole household.” (Acts 16:30-34)**
- When Paul found disciples in Ephesus he asked them **“Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? They answered, ‘No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.’ So Paul asked, ‘Then what baptism did you receive?’ ‘John’s baptism,’ they replied. Paul said, ‘John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.’ On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. There were about twelve men in all.” (Acts 19:2-7)**
- The Apostle Paul described what happened to him in Damascus with these words: **“A man named Ananias came to see me. He was a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there. He stood beside me and said, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight!’ And at that very moment I was able to see him. ‘Then he said: ‘The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth. You will be his witness to all people of what you have seen and heard. And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.’” (Acts 22:12-16)**
- When you realize that God is commanding you to do something, it is wise to immediately obey!

TOMORROW?

Plague number two of the ten plagues that God brought upon Egypt was the plague of frogs. **“Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Go to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘This is what the Lord says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me. If you refuse to let them go, I will send a plague of frogs on your whole country. The Nile will teem with frogs. They will come up into your palace and your bedroom and onto your bed, into the houses of your officials and on your people, and into your ovens and kneading troughs. The frogs will come up on you and your people and all your officials.’” (Ex. 8:1-4)**

The plague of frogs made the Egyptians so miserable that **“Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, ‘Pray to the Lord to take the frogs away from me and my people, and I will let your people go to offer sacrifices to the Lord’. Moses said to Pharaoh, ‘I leave to you the honor of setting the time for me to pray for you and your officials and your people that you and your houses may be rid of the frogs, except for those that remain in the Nile.’” (Ex. 8:8-9)**

Let’s review the situation.

- Pharaoh refuse to let God’s people go to worship him.
- So God sent millions of frogs out of the Nile and filled the houses of the Egyptians. They were even in their beds and ovens.

- Pharaoh became desperate and called for Moses and Aaron to pray to the Lord to take away the frogs and then he would let the people go and offer sacrifices to the Lord.
- Moses gave Pharaoh the honor of telling God “when” to take away the frogs!
- Incredibly - **“Tomorrow, Pharaoh said” (Ex. 8:10)**
- WHY WOULD ANYONE WANT TO SPEND ONE MORE NIGHT WITH THE FROGS?
- PHARAOH SHOULD HAVE SAID “NOW”!
- As you know, “now” is not always convenient!
- The Governor Felix waited for a convenient time to become a Christian (Acts 24:25). As far as we know that convenient time never came!

NOW IS THE DAY OF SALVATION!

“As God’s co-workers we urge you not to receive God’s grace in vain. For he says, “In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.” I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation.” (2 Cor. 6:1-2)

We are creatures of habit. There was a time when we could not walk, now we can walk in our sleep. There was a time when we could not talk, now we can talk in our sleep. The most hardened criminal once found it difficult to steal, but it is possible, as you know, to steal so many times that it becomes a way of life.

The same principle applies to rejecting Christ! The more you reject Christ the easier it becomes! Paul warned of **“Hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.” (1 Tim. 4:2)** It is possible to reject Christ so many times that your heart becomes so hard and calloused that you lose all desire to follow Christ. The book of Revelation warns of sinners so hardened and opposed to God that they will gnaw their tongues in pain but still refuse to repent (Rev. 16:8-11). That’s why we need to **“Seek the Lord while he may be found and call on him while he is near.” (Is. 55:6)**

- God never changes! Malachi wrote: **“I the Lord do not change!” (Mal. 3:6)**
- Jesus never changes! **“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” (Heb. 13:8)**
- God wants you to be saved! **“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” (John 3:16-17)**
- Jesus invites **“all who are weary and burdened”** to come to him and be saved! (Matt. 11:28-30).
- If you come to Jesus and receive him as your Lord he will save you!
- The problem is that some people become so calloused and hardened that they lose all desire to come to Christ or obey Him.
- This is what happened to Judas!

THE BAD EXAMPLE OF JUDAS

- The original sin happened in heaven when Lucifer decided to deliberately disobey God. He knew what God wanted but deliberately chose to do his own will rather than the will of God (Is. 14:12-15; Ez. 13-17).
- This is apparently what Judas did!
- Jesus prayed all night long before selecting Judas to be an apostle. He was apparently a godly man at that time (Lk. 6:12-16).
- Judas was so well respected that he was chosen to take care of the money for all of the apostles.
- At some point in time, however, Judas began stealing this money for himself (Jn. 12:4-8).
- He obviously knew it was wrong, but chose to do it anyhow.
- Jesus warned Judas over and over that he was going to be betrayed!
 - **“As Jesus was about to go up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve disciples aside by themselves, and on the way He said to them, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, and will hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up.” (Matt. 20:17-19)**
 - **“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles. They will mock Him and spit on Him, and scourge Him and kill Him, and three days later He will rise again.” (Mk. 10:33-34)**
 - **“As they were eating, He said, “Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me.” (Matt. 16:21)**
 - **“As they were reclining at the table and eating, Jesus said, “Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me—one who is eating with Me.” They began to be grieved and to say to Him one by one, “Surely not I?” And He said to them, “It is one of the twelve, one who dips with Me in the bowl.” (Mk. 14:18-20)**
 - **“But behold, the hand of the one betraying Me is with Mine on the table.” (Lk. 22:21)**
 - **“When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified and said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me.” The disciples began looking at one another, at a loss to know of which one He was speaking.” (Jn. 13:21-22)**
 - **YET JUDAS WAS SUCH A GOOD LIAR THAT NO ONE SUSPECTED HIM!**
 - John, as you know, was sitting right next to Jesus. **When John asked him who it was: “Jesus answered, “It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.”Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. So Jesus told him,“What you are about to do, do quickly.” But no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the festival, or to give something to the poor. As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.” (Jn. 13:26-30)**

IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER FOR JUDAS IF HE HAD NOT BEEN BORN

Jesus said: **“The Son of Man will go just as it has been written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had never been born. Then**

Judas, the one who should betray him said, ‘Surely not I, Rabbi?’ Jesus answered, ‘Yes, it is you’” (Matt. 26:24-25)

- Judas apparently had been lying and stealing so long that nothing Jesus said had any influence on him. Judas had become his own god!
- Judas **“Went to the chief priests and asked, ‘What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?’ So they counted out for him thirty silver coins. From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.” (Matt. 26:15-16)**
- After Jesus told Judas that he was the one who would betray him, Satan entered into Judas (Jn. 13:27).
- Jesus then said **“What you are about to do, do quickly.” (Jn 13:27)**
- Instead of repenting Judas left to betray Jesus, but the other apostles assumed he was going to buy something needed for the feast or to give money to the poor (Jn. 13:28-29).
- The Psalmist predicted: **“Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread has lifted up his heel against me” (Ps. 41:9.** Jesus quoted this psalm at the last supper (Jn. 13:18).
- **“As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.” (Jn. 13:30)**
- Judas knew the place in Gethsemane where Jesus prayed and guided a detachment of soldiers to arrest Him (Jn 18:2-3).
- Judas had arranged a signal with the soldiers saying: **“The one I kiss is the man; arrest him.” (Matt. 26:48)**
- **“Going at once to Jesus, Judas said: ‘Greetings Rabbi!’ and kissed him. (Matt. 26:49)**
- The trials of Jesus lasted all night long and **“Early in the morning, all the chief priests and elders of the people came to the decision to put Jesus to death.” (Matt. 27:1)**
- **“When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. “I have sinned,” he said, “for I have betrayed innocent blood.” “What is that to us?” they replied. “That’s your responsibility.” So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.” (Matt. 27:3-5)**
- Apparently the rope broke and **“He fell headlong, his body burst open, and his intestines spilled out.” (Acts 1:18)**
- When Judas returned the 30 pieces of silver and threw the money into the temple **“The chief priests picked up the coins and said, ‘It is against the law to put this into the treasury, since it is blood money.’ So they decided to use the money to buy the potter’s field as a burial place for strangers.” (Matt. 27:26-27)**
- **“Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this so they called that field in their language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.” (Acts 1:19)**

WHAT LESSON CAN WE LEARN FROM JUDAS

I’m sure there are many lessons we can learn from Judas, but for the purpose of this brief article we ask: “When should Judas have obeyed Jesus?”

The correct answer, of course, is “immediately”. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh (1 Tim 3:16). The very idea that Judas, or anyone else, can disregard or postpone obeying Christ borders on

blasphemy. It is obvious that Judas ultimately completely rejected all obedience to Christ! This was bad news for Judas for it would have been good for him if he had never been born. Don't be like Judas!

Please prayerfully consider how Christ commended the faith of a Roman Centurion. **“When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. “Lord,” he said, “my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly.” Jesus said to him, “Shall I come and heal him?” The centurion replied, “Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, “Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.” (Matt. 8:5-10)**

“Then Jesus said to the centurion, ‘Go and it shall be done just as you believed it would.’ And his servant was healed at that very hour.” (Matt. 8:13)

“When” you “immediately” do what Christ commands you to do, perhaps He will also be “amazed” by your faith and answer your prayers!

NOW IS THE DAY OF SALVATION!