

Obey Allah and Obey the Messenger; One or Two Sources?

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First we must summarise what has been learned in the other documents: -

1. The Qur'an is complete and detailed for our guidance. This implies that anything not in the Qur'an (by virtue of its completeness) is not binding upon us (45:6).
 - a. If what was outside the Qur'an was binding on us, then the Qur'an is not complete.
2. The excellent example of the messenger/prophet can be found in the Qur'an in the same way it can for Ibrahim. External sources are not defined or needed.
3. The only revelation given to Muhammad was the Qur'an. That is, it is the only guidance from Allah that reaches him. Those who do not judge by what is REVEALED are unbelievers/wrong doers/rebellious (5:44-50).

The direct consequences of these 3 points are that:

- Religious guidance can only have as its source the Qur'an/Allah.
- It means that there is nothing of the words and practice of the messenger/prophet that is not mentioned in the Qur'an that has any binding value on us now.
- The role of the messenger/prophet for the generations after him lies in no more than his transmission of the Qur'an.

A major argument of the followers of hadith for the need for and validity of hadith can be found in the "obey Allah and (obey) the Messenger" type ayahs. These ayahs are of two types:

The first says "Obey Allah and the messenger":

أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ

The second says "Obey Allah and **obey** the messenger".

أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ, this occurs less frequently in the Qur'an.

Allah has used a different phrasing for a reason; these statements do not mean the same thing. So let's analyse the ayaat where these are mentioned and understand them logically.

Obey the messenger

Messengers are to be obeyed as part of their societal roles, this is made clear in the Qur'an, it is however limited to that role. It is only to the guidance of Allah as

transmitted through the messenger (Qur'an) that is due complete and eternal obedience.

وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

And establish prayer and give zakah and **obey the Messenger** - that you may receive mercy.
(24:56)

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا لِيُطَاعَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ إِذْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ جَاءُوكَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا اللَّهَ وَاسْتَغْفَرَ لَهُمُ الرَّسُولُ لَوَجَدُوا اللَّهَ تَوَّابًا رَحِيمًا

“We sent no Messenger except to be obeyed by Allah’s permission. If only when they wronged themselves they had come to you and asked Allah’s forgiveness and the Messenger had asked forgiveness for them they would have found Allah Ever-Returning, Most Merciful.”

(4:64)

4:64 educates us that obedience to the messengers as societal figures (see paper on the role of the messenger), apart from obedience to ‘Allah and the/his messenger’ (which is fundamental and revelatory), is something extra (“by Allah’s permission”). No permission needs granting when it comes to obeying the revelation. So with 4:64, Allah is establishing their societal role as the leaders of their people apart from their religious roles of transmitting the message clearly.

For some examples:

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ نُوحٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا

When their brother Noah said to them, “Will you not fear Allah? Indeed, I am to you a trustworthy messenger. So fear Allah and obey me”.
(26:106-108. See also 26:124-126, 26:142-144, 26:161-163)

Obey Allah and his/the messenger

In what follows, I hope to show that this phrase actually means obedience to Allah by obeying the Qur'an as transmitted through the messenger.

قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْكَافِرِينَ

"Say, 'Obey Allah and the messenger'. Then if they turn away, Allah does not love the disbelievers."

(3:32)

This and similar ayaat tell us that not obeying what Allah and the messenger say/command makes you a disbeliever. It is therefore critical to obey, and critical to know what this phrase means.

إِنَّمَا كَانَ قَوْلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذَا دُعُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ

أَنْ يَقُولُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَيَخْشِ اللَّهَ وَيَتَّقْهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ

*The only statement of the [true] believers when they are called **to Allah and His messenger to judge** (singular form) **between them** is that they say, "We hear and we obey." And those are the successful.*

*And whoever obeys **Allah and His Messenger** and fears Allah and is conscious of Him - it is those who are the successful.*

(24:51-52) see also (8:1)

An interesting point here is that 'obey Allah and the messenger' would seem to refer to two (Allah and the messenger), however 'to judge' is in the singular form, implying that 'Allah and his messenger' are as one. If they are as one, then it must be that the messenger is as one with Allah and not the other way around.

The next ayah clarifies the source of all judgement as witnessed by the messenger:

أَفَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ أَبْتَغِي حَكْمًا وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكِتَابَ مُفَصَّلًا

وَالَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ مُنَزَّلٌ مِّن رَّبِّكَ بِالْحَقِّ فَلَا

تَكُونُ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ

"Am I to desire someone other than Allah as a judge when it is He Who has sent down the Book explained in detail?" Those We have given the Book know that it has been sent down from your Lord with truth, so on no account be among the doubters"

(6:114)

إِنِ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ أَمَرَ

“Surely the Hukm (Law and Judgment) is for none but Allah”
(12:40)

لَا يُشْرِكُ فِي حُكْمِهِ أَحَدًا

“He does not make anyone His associate in His Hukm (Law and Judgment)”
(18:26)

This makes absolutely clear that Allah is the (only) source of religious judgement, and so confirming that ‘Allah and his messenger’ refers to the words of Allah through the mouth of the messenger/prophet. With this in mind we can also interpret:

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَلَا لِمُؤْمِنَةٍ إِذَا قَضَى اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَمْرًا أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا مُبِينًا

“When Allah and His Messenger have decided something it is not for any man or woman of the believers to have a choice about it. **Anyone who disobeys Allah and His Messenger is clearly misguided.**”
(33:36)

It is obvious from these ayaat that the Messenger will relay whatever Allah decides, and hence there cannot be any separation in this regard (that is, that you would obey the decisions of Allah in the Qur’an, and separately obey the religious decisions of the Messenger even if they have no Qur’anic basis). The ayaat clarify that it is only Allah who judges anything and not the messenger. That is why the messenger can make no judgement unless it is Allah’s. This is yet another clear indication that to obey Allah and the messenger is strictly the obedience of Allah in the Qur’an.

The next ayah again clarifies how the phrase ‘Allah and his messenger’ is referring to one thing, the message of Allah (Qur’an) through the messenger.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَجِيبُوا لِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيكُمْ
وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَحُولُ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَأَنَّهُ إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ

O you who have believed, **respond to Allah and to the Messenger when he calls** you to that which gives you life. And know that Allah intervenes between a man and his heart and that to Him you will be gathered.
(8:24)

We are told to respond to Allah and his messenger (dual) when he (singular) is calling them to that which gives them life (guidance, salvation, Jannah, etc.),

which is the Qur'an. The Qur'an is the **only** speech that can be attributed to both the messenger and Allah.

The next ayah tells us of an announcement from Allah and his messenger.

وَأَذَانٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ إِلَى النَّاسِ يَوْمَ الْحَجِّ الْأَكْبَرِ أَنَّ اللَّهَ
بِرِيءٍ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ^{لَا} وَرَسُولُهُ^ج فَإِن تَابْتُمْ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ^{مِط} وَإِن
تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ غَيْرُ مُعْجِزِي اللَّهِ^ق وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِعَذَابٍ
أَلِيمٍ

And [it is] an announcement from Allah and His Messenger to the people on the day of the greater pilgrimage that Allah is disassociated from the disbelievers, and [so is] His Messenger. So if you repent, that is best for you; but if you turn away - then know that you will not cause failure to Allah . And give tidings to those who disbelieve of a painful punishment.

(9:3)

The first point is that what is announced here is the Qur'an as it is recorded (9:3 etc.). The second point is that Allah has announced this through his messenger's mouth; hence 'Allah and the messenger' have announced it. Allah does not directly speak to the generality of mankind, he speaks through his messengers. This is the clear indication of the meaning of the obey Allah and the messenger phrases in the Qur'an.

Think about it, why have 'Allah and the messenger' and not just 'the messenger'? It is because 'Allah and the messenger' reminds us clearly of the source of the message and the medium for it (the **messenger**). Obedience to the messenger independent of the exact words of the Qur'an does actually exist in the Qur'an, but it is local, conditional and societal; not global, absolute and religious.

Of note is the fact that we never read in the Qur'an words like "Obey Allah and obey Muhammad", there is something instructive in this, as it is not Muhammad the man that was to be obeyed, it was the messenger that was to be obeyed, this is to emphasise that what is to be obeyed is the "message" of Allah and not the words, ideas or views of the man Muhammad.

The following ayaat demonstrate that there is a distinction made between following Muhammad (making him the leader who judges by the Qur'an and uses consultation) because they love Allah, and obeying Allah and the messenger (the verbatim word of Allah). This will be explored further in the next section.

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ

ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْكَافِرِينَ

“Say: If you love Allah, then **follow me**, Allah will love you and forgive you your sins, and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful

Say: **Obey Allah and the Messenger**; but if they turn back, then surely Allah does not love the unbelievers.”

(3:31-32)

If obey Allah and the messenger referred to separate sources of guidance, then ‘follow me’ would be redundant as ‘following’ is a subset of ‘obedience’.

However ‘following’ does not imply complete ‘obedience’. We see here that to follow the messenger is not the same as ‘obey Allah and the messenger’.

The following ayaat similarly differentiate between the messenger himself and ‘Allah and the messenger’ in terms of the ability to guide.

وَأَنَّهُ لَمَّا قَامَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ يَدْعُوهُ كَادُوا يَكُونُونَ عَلَيْهِ لِبَدًا قُلْ إِنَّمَا

أَدْعُو رَبِّي وَلَا أُشْرِكُ بِهِ أَحَدًا

قُلْ إِنِّي لَا أَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ ضَرًّا وَلَا رَشَدًا قُلْ إِنِّي لَنْ يُجِيرَنِي مِنَ اللَّهِ

أَحَدٌ وَلَنْ أَجِدَ مِنْ دُونِهِ مُلْتَحَدًا

إِلَّا بَلَاغًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِسَالَاتِهِ وَمَنْ يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَإِنَّ لَهُ نَارًا

جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا رَأَوْا مَا يُوعَدُونَ فَسَيَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ أَضَعُفٌ نَّاصِرًا وَأَقَلُّ

عَدَدًا قُلْ إِنْ أَدْرِي أَقْرَبُ مَا تُوعَدُونَ أَمْ يَجْعَلُ لَهُ رَبِّي أَمَدًا

“When the servant of Allah stands calling on Him, they almost swarm all over him. Say: ‘I call only upon my Lord and do not associate anyone else with Him.

‘Say: **I possess for you no harm or guidance to the right direction.**’ Say:

‘No one can protect me from Allah and I will never find any refuge apart from Him –only in transmitting from Allah and His Messages. **As for him who**

disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he will have the Fire of Hell, remaining in it timelessly, for ever and ever.’ So that when they see what they were promised, they will know who has less support and smaller numbers.

Say: 'I do not know whether what you are promised is close or whether my Lord will appoint a longer time before it.'
(72:19-25)

If we study the two highlighted statements in these ayaat we very clearly get an understanding of what it means to say 'Obey Allah and his messenger'. The first statement: -

Say: 'I possess for you no harm or guidance to the right direction.'

This very clearly indicates that Muhammad CANNOT of himself guide us correctly. It is within the context of ayaat where he is made to proclaim that he calls only upon Allah and that no one other than Allah can protect him. The context is clarifying that the Messenger is just a man like them.

Yet the next statement says: -

As for him who disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he will have the Fire of Hell, remaining in it timelessly, for ever and ever.

And it implies that obeying Allah and the messenger is a guide for us! Therefore as Muhammad cannot guide us, but Allah and the messenger can guide us, it follows that 'Allah and his messenger' does not refer to the separate obedience of the messenger and Allah for our guidance, but instead to the obedience of Allah through the obedience of the Messenger when he recites the Qur'an .

So in summary, the evidence indicates that when we have 'Allah and his/the messenger', this is referring to a unified source. It is the word of Allah as spoken by the messenger, the Qur'an. We should note that throughout the life of the messenger the Qur'an was being revealed and so what they had with them in their memory and in writing was the word of Allah (Obey Allah), as was the words of the messenger when the Qur'an was being revealed (Obey Allah and the/his messenger).

We can therefore easily consider the 'obey Allah' that is dealt with in the following section as (at least) referring to what is already revealed and with us, eternally.

Obey Allah and obey the messenger

This is the second formulation seen in the Qur'an, wherein we see obey Allah and obey the messenger. In the previous section we saw that Allah and the messenger referred to one source. In this section we see where Allah and the messenger are actually split in the phrase construction (an additional obey between Allah and the messenger), and as I hope to show, split also in terms of what is referred to.

The obligatory and singular role of the messenger is to clearly transmit the message, the societal role that follows as part of this task is secondary and temporal. Lest we forget:

وَإِنْ تُكَذِّبُوا فَقَدْ كَذَّبَ أُمَمٌ مِّن قَبْلِكُمْ وَمَا عَلَى الرَّسُولِ إِلَّا
الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ

And if you reject (the truth), nations before you did indeed reject (the truth); and **nothing is obligated on the messenger other than the clear deliverance** (of the Qur'an).
(29:18)

To fulfil his temporal role, the messenger was not given anything other than the Qur'an. Rather, his central role remained (29:18) and his societal role merely aided in that regard.

For this reason we read:

قُلْ مَا كُنْتُ بِدَعَا مِّن الرُّسُلِ وَمَا أَدْرِي مَا يُفَعَّلُ بِي وَلَا بِيَوْمِئِذٍ
أَتَّبِعُ إِلَّا مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ وَمَا أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ

"Say: 'I am nothing new among the Messengers. I have no idea what will be done with me or you. **I only follow what has been revealed to me. I am only a clear warner.**'"
(46:9)

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِتَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِمَا أَرَاكَ اللَّهُ
وَلَا تَكُن لِّلْخَائِنِينَ خَصِيمًا

"Surely We have revealed/descended the Book (Qur'an) to you with the truth that **you may judge between people by means of that which Allah has showed/taught you**; and be not an advocate on behalf of the treacherous."
(4:105)

And so we see that the societal role of the messenger becomes merely a medium for him to transmit the guidance/revelation/judgements of Allah to the people, not to create his own. This is key, because if the messenger had any other religious role, the above ayahs would be incorrect. Therefore, his other functions must be to fulfil the role of clear deliverance of the message (29:18)

The next ayah clearly helps us understand the distinction between obeying the messenger the man, and the messenger the mouthpiece of revelation.

يَأْتِيهَا النَّبِيُّ إِذَا جَاءَكَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتُ يُبَايِعْنَكَ عَلَى أَنْ لَا يُشْرِكْنَ بِاللَّهِ
 شَيْئاً وَلَا يَسْرِقْنَ وَلَا يَزْنِينَ وَلَا يَقْتُلْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ وَلَا يَأْتِينَ بِبُهْتَانٍ
 يَفْتَرِيئَهُ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِنَّ وَأَرْجُلِهِنَّ وَلَا يَعْصِينَكَ فِي مَعْرُوفٍ
 فَبَايِعْهُنَّ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُنَّ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

*“O Prophet! when believing women come to you giving you a pledge that they will not associate aught with Allah, and will not steal, and will not commit fornication, and will not kill their children, and will not bring a calumny which they have forged of themselves, **and will not disobey you in what is good**, accept their pledge, and ask forgiveness for them from Allah; surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.”*

(60:12)

Here Allah is telling Muhammad that the women that are given refuge with the Muslims must pledge to obey him (Muhammad, the messenger, see 4:64) in **what is good**. We never have this leniency in terms of obeying Allah and the/his messenger, because to obey Allah is absolute, whereas to obey his messenger the man is not. With this clearly in mind we can read the next ayah.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ
 مِنْكُمْ فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ
 تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا

*O you who have believed, **obey Allah and obey the messenger and those in authority** among you. And if you disagree over anything, refer it to **Allah and the messenger**, if you should believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is the best [way] and best in result.*

(4:59)

This great ayah teaches us several important lessons:

“obey Allah and obey the messenger and those in authority among you”

- It follows the same pattern of ‘obey Allah and obey the messenger’ but with an interesting addition.
 - ‘obey the messenger and those in authority among you’ is in the same form as ‘obey Allah and the/his messenger’. In the same way as ‘obey Allah and the messenger’ referred to one source of

authority, 'obey the messenger and those in authority among you' refers to the same kind of authority.

- The messenger and those in authority have similar societal roles.
- Obey Allah here refers to the Qur'an that was with them.
- Obey the messenger and those in authority refers to the Muslim leaders/people in authority.
 - This reinforces that the societal role the messenger had was human and limited in nature.

*"And if you disagree over anything, refer it to **Allah and the messenger**"*

- Upon disagreement between the population and those in authority on how society is being run (because the revelation of the Qur'an was not yet complete), Muslims are to refer it to the messenger in his role as mouthpiece for Allah's words.
 - O you who believe! Ask not about things which, if made plain to you, may cause you trouble. But if you ask about them while the Qur'an is being revealed, they will be made plain to you. Allah has forgiven that, and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Forbearing. (5:101)
 - This role is no longer needed now as the Qur'an is complete.
 - We are taught here that society is to be run according to the Qur'an.

In this ayah we are told the high level way a Muslim society is to be run for all time, where we see the role of the messenger and have it equated with those of Muslims authorities during his time and after.

The following ayaat summarise all of this:

قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ ۖ فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْهِ مَا حُمِّلَ وَعَلَيْكُمْ مَا حُمِّلْتُمْ ۖ وَإِن تُطِيعُوهُ تَهْتَدُوا ۚ وَمَا عَلَى الرَّسُولِ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ

وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

Say, "**Obey Allah and obey the Messenger**; but if you turn away - then upon him is only that [duty] with which he has been charged, and upon you is that with which you have been charged. And if you obey him, you will be [rightly]

guided. And **nothing is obligated on the messenger other than the clear deliverance** (of the Qur'an)." ...

And establish prayer and give zakah and **obey the Messenger** - that you may receive mercy.

(24:54,56)

From this we learn to obey Allah and the messenger (The recited Qur'an). The **only** obligation of the messenger is the clear deliverance of the Qur'an (recall 4:105, 46:9). We must obey the messenger as the societal leader. Following on from this, we have the guidance (that was his role to convey) that transitions us from the time of the messenger to the time he is gone.

The following 3 ayaat help us conclude this section with a very basic lesson:

وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَاحْذَرُوا فَإِن تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَأَعْلَمُوا
أَنَّمَا عَلَى رَسُولِنَا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ

"And **obey Allah and obey the messenger** and be cautious; but if you turn back, **then know that obligated on our messenger is (only) the clear delivery** (of the Qur'an)"

(5:92)

قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْهِ مَا
حُمِّلَ وَعَلَيْكُمْ مَا حُمِّلْتُمْ وَإِن تُطِيعُوهُ تَهْتَدُوا وَمَا عَلَى الرَّسُولِ
إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ

Say, "**Obey Allah and obey the Messenger**; but if you turn away - then upon him is only that [duty] with which he has been charged, and upon you is that with which you have been charged. And if you obey him, you will be [rightly] guided. **And nothing is obligated on the messenger other than the clear deliverance** (of the Qur'an)."

(24:54)

وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ فَإِن تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَإِنَّمَا عَلَى رَسُولِنَا
الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ

"And **obey Allah and obey the messenger**, but if you turn back, **then obligated on our messenger is (only) the clear delivery** (of the Qur'an)".

(64:12)

The lesson is this, 'obey Allah and obey the messenger' **BUT/AND** the **only** obligation/responsibility the messenger has is the clear communication of the message. In these verses Allah separates the obedience to Him and to the messenger, because these are different kinds of obedience. One is total and eternal, the other is conditional (obey in what is good) and temporal (his lifetime).

These verses to me are like timeless reminders for Muslims. We have already seen in this and previous documents that:

- The only revelation given to the messenger/prophet is the Qur'an.
- The only source of guidance and judgement is Allah.
- We must only follow what has been revealed.
- The messenger himself has no ability to guide us.
- The messenger only follows what has been revealed to him.
- Allah commands the messenger to judge by what has been revealed to him.

Yet later generations have still somehow found a way to believe that the messenger was a source of guidance outside of the Qur'an that must be followed. It is to people such as these that Allah makes absolutely clear that the messenger's **ONLY** obligation was the clear communication of the Qur'an. When this role is completed and when he is dead, that is the end of his role.

Who obeys the messenger has obeyed Allah

مَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَمَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِنْ نَفْسِكَ ۗ
وَأَرْسَلْنَاكَ لِلنَّاسِ رَسُولًا ۖ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا ۚ مَنْ يُطِيعِ الرَّسُولَ
فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ ۗ وَمَنْ تَوَلَّىٰ فَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظًا

What comes to you of good is from Allah, but what comes to you of evil is from yourself. And We have sent you to the people as a messenger, and sufficient is Allah as Witness.

He who obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah; but those who turn away -
We have not sent you over them as a guardian.

(4:79-80)

These two verses tell us that Muhammad was sent as a messenger, and when the messenger of Allah is obeyed, then Allah is obeyed. The context here tells us that Muhammad was not sent as a guardian to the deniers, so he would not have been their societal leader to disobey. This means that what they were turning away from was the guidance of Allah as transmitted by the messenger.

This falls in line with a similar verses:

قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بَصَائِرٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ ۖ فَمَنْ أَبْصَرَ فَلِنَفْسِهِ ۖ وَمَنْ عَمِيَ فَعَلَيْهَا
وَمَا أَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِحَفِيظٍ

وَكَذَلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ الْآيَاتِ وَلِيَقُولُوا دَرَسْتَ وَلِنُبَيِّنَهُ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ

There has come to you enlightenment from your Lord. So whoever will see does so for [the benefit of] his soul, and whoever is blind [does harm] against it. And [say], "I am not a guardian over you."

And thus do We diversify the verses so the disbelievers will say, "You have studied," and so We may make the Qur'an clear for a people who know.
(6:104-105)

Conclusion

There are three destinations for obedience as defined by the Qur'an:

- Allah:
 - This refers to the Qur'an that is revealed and with people in their mind, books etc.
 - This is timeless.
- Allah and the/his messenger:
 - This is the as yet unrevealed Qur'an being revealed through the messenger. This must have complete obedience.
 - Once the Qur'an has been revealed, this category comes to an end and we can interpret it as just obey Allah.
- The messenger and/or those in authority among us:
 - This refers to societal obedience to those in authority who must judge by the Qur'an.
 - By Allah mandating societal obedience to the messenger (4:64) Allah is also defining the leadership role in society for the messenger.
 - The level of authority for the messenger in society and those in authority is similar.
 - This category is bound to manage society based on the Qur'an.

Allah has told us that the Qur'an is detailed, clear and complete for our guidance, what sense does it then make to say that Allah is telling us to follow more/separate guidance from Muhammad?

أَفَعَيِّرَ اللَّهُ أَبْتِغِي حَكْمًا وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكِتَابَ مُفَصَّلًا
وَالَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ مُنْذَلٌّ مِّنْ رَبِّكَ بِالْحَقِّ ۖ فَلَا
تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ

“Am I to desire someone other than Allah as a judge when it is He Who has sent down the Book explained in detail?” Those We have given the Book know that it has been sent down from your Lord with truth, so on no account be among the doubters”
(6:114)

Should we be seeking the made up words ascribed to Muhammad (or any companions or whoever) as a source of judgement on our religious affairs? The unequivocal answer of this ayah is no.

تِلْكَ آيَاتُ اللَّهِ نَتْلُوهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ فَبِأَيِّ حَدِيثٍ بَعْدَ اللَّهِ وَآيَاتِهِ
يُؤْمِنُونَ

*These are the ayaat of Allah which We recite to you in truth. Then in what statement (**hadith**) after Allah and His ayaat will they believe?*
(Qur'an, 45:6)

What will you answer? “The Hadith, Sunnah, fiqh and ijma” or “Nothing other than your Qur'an my Lord”?