

## The Corps Of Discovery

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"Space, the final frontier. These are the voyages of the Starship Enterprise: its five year mission to seek out new worlds; to explore new civilizations, to boldly go where no man has gone before!"

Here, Captain James T. Kirk, and later Captain Jean-Luc Picard, led their carefully trained crews on great adventures of exploration, into places in time and space that no man had ever gone before. The shows and the movies were so popular because they addressed mankind's thirst for exploration of the great unknown.

But, all of the time, this bold exploration was being done from the comfort of the Starship Enterprise; a home away from home, that could satisfy every want and need.

It had food replicators that could, at the flip of a switch, produce any type of sumptuous and nutritious food that you desired. It was a ship that had more than all the comforts of home, with things like the Holodeck, where anyone could participate in any virtual fantasy their heart desired. They had a medical infirmary where any malady could be diagnosed and treated with the wave of a tri-corder; any surgery could be performed without so much as the tiniest incision.

The crew could be converted into pure energy, and beamed from one location to another, and then rematerialized. Their ship could travel the universe in almost the blink of an eye, by means of its warp propulsion system; a system that literally caused the time and space they were traversing to become warped and folded so that point A, which was light years away from point B, could be crossed in a matter of seconds allowing them to bring their brand of peaceful coexistence within the Space Federation to worlds around and beyond their own galaxy.

Here is mankind's version of tomorrow; a fantasyland of evolutionary thinking which distorts the real image of evolutionary involvement into a sort of super creature. But, is this really what we have to look forward to, and what we have to imagine it to be like?

**I John 3:1-3** Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God: therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be: but we know that

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when He is revealed, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.  
And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as he is pure.

Brethren, this is our hope! This is our imagination. This is the real vision of the future.  
But as you noticed, verse 3 shows us that it will take work.

I want to take a few minutes right now to look at a real situation of uncharted exploration that involved selection, vision, preparation, and execution. This may help us draw a clearer analogy to the reality of our work, rather than the fantasyland vision of Star Trek!

The historian Stephen Ambrose, in writing about the Lewis and Clark expedition, gives us a look into a real path of success for those who had been given the opportunity to boldly go where few had gone before.

Thomas Jefferson had been inaugurated as President of the United States in March of 1801. Stephen Ambrose wrote:

At the time of his inauguration the nation contained 5,308,483 persons with boundaries extending from the Atlantic to the Mississippi, and from the Great Lakes to nearly the Gulf of Mexico, but two thirds of the people lived within fifty miles of the tidewater. There were only four roads that crossed the Appalachian Mountains, and it was not even clear if the United States could even hold on to the land west of the mountains to the Mississippi.

He continues,

A critical fact in the world of 1801 was that nothing moved faster than the speed of a horse. No human being, no manufactured item, no bushel of wheat, no side of beef, no letter, no information, no idea, order, or instruction of any kind moved faster. Nothing ever had moved any faster, and as far as Jefferson's contemporaries were concerned NOTHING EVER WOULD.

Road conditions were abominable and there were not even many of them. The best highway in the country ran from Boston to New York; it took a light stagecoach, carrying only passengers, their baggage, and the mail, changing horses at every way station, three full days to make the 175 mile journey.

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To the west beyond the mountains, there were no roads at all, only trails. To move men or mail from the Mississippi River to the Atlantic Seaboard took six weeks or more; anything heavier than a letter took two months at least.

People took for granted that things would always be this way. The idea of progress based on technological improvements or mechanics, the notion of a power source other than muscle, falling water, or wind was utterly alien to virtually every American.

Thomas Jefferson was the exception.

Ambrose writes:

Since the birth of civilization, there had been almost no changes in commerce or transportation. But only sixty years later, when Abraham Lincoln took the oath of office, Americans could move bulky items in great quantity farther in an hour than Americans of 1801 could do in a day. Time and distance, mountains and rivers meant something entirely different to Thomas Jefferson from what they meant to Abraham Lincoln.

I have read this to you at length, because I wanted you to see an example like ours of the tremendous *vision* it takes to actually see beyond immediate circumstances! It was a vision that Thomas Jefferson, Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, and all those who accompanied them, had to share before they could even begin to step out and accomplish what lay before them!

The circumstances were such in 1801 that even if they could mark out the lay of the land, with conditions being what they were, what good would it do? It took incredible vision and courage to see beyond that time and place to do what had to be done, and to look beyond their present day reality.

**Deuteronomy 1:19-22, 27-32, 36-38** So we departed from Horeb, and went through all that great and terrible wilderness which you saw on the way to the mountains of the Amorites, as the LORD our God had commanded us. Then we came to Kadesh Barnea.. "And I said to you, 'You have come to the mountains of the Amorites, which the LORD our God is giving us. 'Look, the LORD your God has set the land before you; go up and possess it, as the LORD God of your fathers has spoken to you; do not fear or be discouraged.'

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"And every one of you came near to me and said, 'Let us send men before us, and let them search out the land for us, and bring back word to us of the way by which we should go up, and of the cities into which we shall come.' The plan pleased me well; so I took twelve of your men, one man from each tribe . . . and you complained in your tents, and said, 'Because the LOORD hates us, He has brought us out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us. 'Where can we go up? Our brethren have discouraged our hearts, saying, "The people are greater and taller than we; the cities are great and fortified up to heaven; moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakim there." "Then I said to you, 'Do not be terrified, or afraid of them. 'The LOORD your God, who goes before you, He will fight for you, according to all He did for you in Egypt before your eyes, 'and in the wilderness where you saw how the LOORD your God carried you, as a man carries his son, in all the way that you went until you came to this place.' "Yet, for all that, you did not believe the LOORD your God . . . except Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him and his children I am giving the land on which he walked, because he wholly followed the LOORD.' "The LOORD was also angry with me for your sakes, saying, 'Even you shall not go in there; 'Joshua the son of Nun, who stands before you, he shall go in there. Encourage him, for he shall cause Israel to inherit it.

The vision and trust of a few, in spite of perceived circumstances at the time, would cause the generations down the road to inherit God's promise!

An interesting thing to also note is that not only did the vision of God's promise motivate Joshua and Caleb to seek to do God's will when Israel had the first opportunity to enter the land, but it sustained them and led them to patiently wait, grow, learn, and serve through forty difficult years in the wilderness.

**Hebrews 2:5-11** For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels. But one testified in a certain place, saying: "What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him? You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet." For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. For it

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was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren.

**Hebrews 3:16-19** For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

**Hebrews 4:2-3** For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: "So I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest."

We see the great vision that was shared by the early members of the body of Christ, and also with us, through their word. But we are also warned of maintaining that vision through faith in God's Word!

Brethren, we are here celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles with this wonderful opportunity, year after year, to rehearse the vision of the plan that God made known to His end-time church. We have been given the privilege to see now a sharper definition of prophesied events every day. The time that we see in Revelation 20, of our promised opportunity to become kings and priests with Jesus Christ, as the time draws closer all the time!

But, as awesome as that particular vision is, that is not the vision that will drive us to succeed.

**I Peter 1:13-16** Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy.."

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This is the same vision that drove Joshua and Caleb to success, it drove all those faithful who have gone ahead of us, and it must drive us! We have the opportunity to become holy, as God is holy!

Vision can lead us toward that goal, but of and by of itself it is not going to do very much, unless it leads to careful preparation and execution.

Thomas Jefferson chose Meriwether Lewis to prepare and execute the vision that they shared.

Stephen Ambrose wrote:

Sometime late that summer or in the fall of 1802, President Jefferson informed Captain Lewis that he would command an expedition to the Pacific . . . .This was the most important and the most coveted command in the history of exploration of North America. Jefferson was confident that he had the right man under his roof.

It must be assumed that he and the President talked at great length about the nature of the country west of the Mississippi and the possible character of the speculative passage to Pacific waters.

Between the time of August and December of 1802, Jefferson gave Lewis a college undergraduate's introduction to the liberal arts, North American geography, botany, mineralogy, astronomy, and ethnology. While Jefferson worked on the instructions, Lewis had his own planning to do.

Between January and June 1803, Meriwether Lewis spent time preparing supplies and learning how to preserve specimens, and take scientific notes. He was tutored in astronomy, anatomy, and cartography by some of the leading men of the day in their fields, and all in order that he would be ready to successfully carry out his mission.

Through the late summer of 1803 until March of 1804, Jefferson, Lewis, Clark and a carefully selected group of men diligently worked; each carrying out their specifically assigned tasks to prepare in unison to begin the exploration of a land that they had only seen through a glass darkly. Always keeping the vision of exploration of uncharted lands before their eyes! By the middle of March most of the preparations were in place, but because of the winter they were not able to get started from their winter quarters down the

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Mississippi from St. Louis through April and into May.

There had been fights between the men. They were not willing to take orders from the sergeants who Lewis and Clark had left in charge while they made short runs for more supplies in St. Louis. These young heroes were in great shape, strong as bulls, eager to get going, and full of energy—and bored.

The 'Corps of Discovery,' as Lewis named it, was straining to get going. Every morning, the men looked at the Mississippi and saw the Missouri pouring into the main stream, so powerful its muddy waters drove clear across three-quarters of the width of the mighty Mississippi, the Missouri being the more powerful of the two.

In the evening, the men could watch the sun go down over the Missouri.... they stared at the river, and talked about it, and thought about it....they just became more eager to get going.

On May 14<sup>th</sup> 1804, they set out on the Mississippi and then on into the Missouri.

There had been a number of people in the New World who shared some sort of wanderlust vision of what was out there beyond the Mississippi but there were only a certain elect who shared the same specific vision and preparation to achieve what was accomplished through the 'Corps of Discovery.'

There are four things within this analogy, after the vision, that are of absolute importance to us here within this very room, and the other places throughout the world where God's faithful elect in His 'Corps of Discovery' are gathered to continue this expedition.

The first one deals with what I have just said; there were many with wanderlust, but only a few were selected for this mission.

We will touch on four scriptures that point us to the pattern of God's selection process.

**Deuteronomy 29:10-15** All of you stand today before the LORD your God: your leaders and your tribes and your elders and your officers, all the men of Israel, your little ones and your wives—also the stranger who is in your

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camp, from the one who cuts your wood to the one who draws your water—that you may enter into covenant with the LOORD your God, and into His oath, which the LOORD your God makes with you today, that He may establish you today as a people for Himself, and that He may be God to you, just as He has spoken to you, and just as He has sworn to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I make this covenant and this oath, not with you alone, but with him who stands here with us today before the LOORD our God, as well as with him who is not here with us today.

Only the elect can take the covenant oath of allegiance to the 'Corps of Discovery..'

**Isaiah 43:1, 4, 7-10** But now, thus says the LOORD, who created you, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. . . .Since you were precious in My sight, You have been honored, and I have loved you; therefore I will give men for you, and people for your life. . . .Everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him. Bring out the blind people who have eyes, and the deaf who have ears. Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled. Who among them can declare this, and show us former things? Let them bring out their witnesses, that they may be justified; or let them hear and say, "It is truth." "You are My witnesses," says the LOORD, "and My servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me.

Those set apart, and made precious and honorable, will bring back a witness of the true picture of a place where the rest of men have never been except God.

**John 15:15-16** No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you..

Chosen and ordained to be a productive part of the "Corps of Discovery."

The second point is that only diligent study, and use of all the assets available to us, anticipating the needs along the way, will produce success.

**Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 4-6, 9** Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the LOORD God of your fathers is giving you. You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LOORD your God which I command you. . . .But you who held fast to the LOORD your God are alive today, every one of you. Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LOORD my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess. Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people'. . . .Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren.

**Deuteronomy 31:9-13** So Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who bore the ark of the covenant of the LOORD, and to all the elders of Israel. And Moses commanded them, saying: "At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles, when all Israel comes to appear before the LOORD your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the LOORD your God and carefully observe all the words of this law, and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LOORD your God as long as you live in the land which you cross the Jordan to possess."

Diligently hearing, studying, and faithfulness mean the difference between life and death.

Only constantly going over the specific and complex plan and purpose can insure success. Even after the exploration is in progress, faithfully following the plan is critical because it keeps our focus of duty sure and brings clarity at the forks in the road along the way.

**Isaiah 44:1-3, 6-8** Yet hear now, O Jacob My servant, And Israel whom I have chosen. Thus says the LORD who made you and formed you from the womb, who will help you: 'Fear not, O Jacob My servant; and you, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, and My blessing on your offspring; . . ."Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: 'I am the First and I am the Last; besides Me there is no God. And who can proclaim as I do? Then let him declare it and set it in order for Me, since I appointed the ancient people. And the things that are coming and shall come, let them show these to them. Do not fear, nor be afraid; have I not told you from that time, and declared it? You are My witnesses. Is there a God besides Me? Indeed there is no other Rock; I know not one.'"

Just as Lewis was able to take advantage of the finest experts of his day to prepare for the trek, we have the best expert ever to teach us what to expect along the way. But please keep firmly established in your mind that part of our diligent preparation is to learn to fear God, and not our circumstances, and have absolute confidence in going forward with the "Corps of Discovery!"

Then finally, on this point:

**Ephesians 6:11-19** Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel.

Notice in verses 18 and 19, in the context of the meticulous preparation for the expedition, as we continue putting on the whole armor of God, we are told to *pray diligently* and with *great perseverance*, for all the others within the "Corps of Discovery," and for the proper words and boldness to be given to the leadership!

Each is assigned his own particular set of duties in order to make the mission a success. Without every member faithfully completing his part, the individual, and perhaps the entire mission, is jeopardized.

We already read what happened in Deuteronomy 1, where the people failed to keep their responsibilities, and it is one of the most obvious examples of faithlessness we have seen.

But now I would like to turn back to Deuteronomy 7, to see God's principle for success.

**Deuteronomy 7:9, 11-13** "Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments; . . . .  
."Therefore you shall keep the commandment, the statutes, and the judgments which I command you today, to observe them. Then it shall come to pass, because you listen to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the LORD your God will keep with you the covenant and the mercy which He swore to your fathers. And He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your land, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flock, in the land of which He swore to your fathers to give you.

**Deuteronomy 17:14-15, 18-20** "When you come to the land which the LORD your God is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it, and say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me,' you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses; one from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. . . ."Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel."

There will be many different responsibilities assigned within those chosen people, but the bottom line is that it is each individual's privilege; first and foremost, in order to make the "Corps of Discovery" a success is to keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which have been lighted clearly for us.

God selects whom He will, and the only way for success, for the complete mission to be achieved, is by knowing the whole plan, carrying out our job according to the details of the plan, and understanding who is really in charge and sovereign, and in humility we carry out our functions and our offices.

Let us take this forward into the New Testament. But before we read these words, I would like you to consider something in our analogy here.

Meriwether Lewis had named the expeditionary force that he had the privilege to be part of, the "Corps of Discovery." This is certainly a name that is quite suitable to us. Corps comes from the Latin word *Corpus* meaning body. Discovery comes to us from the Latin *Discoopeire*, and literally means the opposite of to cover up.

Now keeping this in mind:

**Ephesians 4:16-18** From whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.

Brethren, each of us has been specifically selected to be part of the "Corps of Discovery," to do its part within that Body, uncovering the darkness, and beholding the righteousness and true holiness of Almighty God!

Point four in our analogy. Perhaps one of the most dangerous times for us is when things are not moving along at quite the pace that we think that they should, and we become impatient with each other and with God.

**Deuteronomy 9:7-9** "Remember! Do not forget how you provoked the LOORD

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your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day that you departed from the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the LOORD. Also in Horeb you provoked the LOORD to wrath, so that the LOORD was angry enough with you to have destroyed you. When I went up into the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant which the LOORD made with you, then I stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water."

As we all know, brethren, from the rest of this, the Israelites became impatient, they thought that they knew better than God, and they would not wait on Moses. They became involved in all sorts of debauchery, and in-fighting. They had not looked at the miracles that God had performed, and they had not kept in mind what God had given them. Because they were not moving as they thought that they should be they fell into anarchy, debauchery, and idolatry because God was not doing what they thought He should be doing.

God has directly selected, blessed, and promised us, and sometimes when we have been told to sit and wait, we lose sight of who is sovereign over His creation, and we get antsy and bored. Just as with Lewis and Clark's "Corps of Discovery," the waiting without discipline stirred up fighting and anarchy.

**Luke 12:35-38, 42-46** Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. . . .And the Lord said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season?" Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. "Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has." But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.

We must have our loins girded, lights burning, and be ready to go and do the work that God has for us to do. Sometimes that work is only steadfastly watching, waiting, and loving our brethren.

But if we are not careful to follow where God leads, even if it is only to wait on Him, human nature and Satan will drive us to the same thing that the Israelites did in Horeb; except now with much deadlier consequences!

On the morning of September 23, 1806, the expedition set off for their last day's voyage. In less than an hour, it was swinging into the Mississippi River, past the old camp at Wood River, last seen twenty-eight months and eight thousand miles ago.

They had completed the epic voyage...they had planned, organized and carried out the voyage of discovery, that had been Lewis' dream for what seemed like all of his life. Indeed it seemed he and the others had been born for it, and had been training for it since childhood. Their success was due to that training, and to their character, well suited for the challenge. Unruly soldiers had been molded into the Corps of Discovery, an elite platoon of rough, hardy, resourceful, well-disciplined men.

They had been the first. Everyone who has ever paddled a canoe on the Missouri, or the Columbia, does so in the wake of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Everyone who crosses the Lolo Trail walks in their footsteps.

Brethren, as much as the "Corps of Discovery" was an elect body that served to open a nation that had been covered, we have the awesome privilege to have been selected to serve in the Corps of Discovery, being led by our elder brother Jesus Christ, to serve within whatever responsibilities He chooses to glorify God before the nations.

Our focus now needs to be on our purpose as God's Corps of Discovery, to prepare again as John tells us:

**I John 3:2-3** Beloved, now are we children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be: but we know that, when He is revealed, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

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The Corps will be working to be holy as He is holy, because our duty will be as it says in Revelation 14:

**Revelation 14:1-5** Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.