

What is the Church?

Part 3

The Corporate Church The Purpose of Organization



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I like to put stories at the beginnings of studies, using them in a similar way to parables, because these stories serve to illustrate and fasten in the mind the lessons of the study, better than just pure arguments would. Today I have chosen a story that I think illustrates the lesson I want present today very well. It is built off an example that Christ gave.

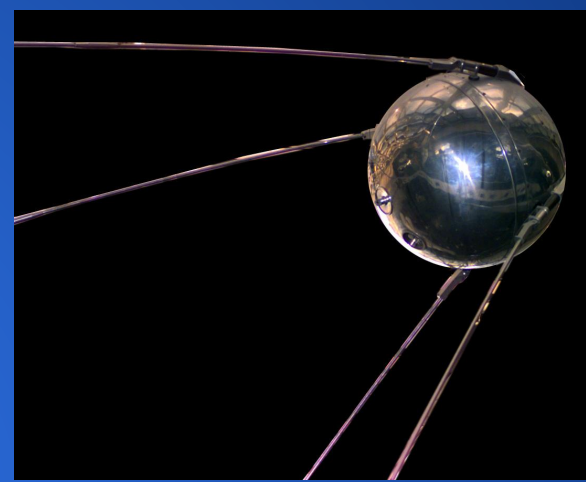
Christ said, in what is often called the parable of the wicked mammon, or unrighteous mammon: “And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.” Luke 16:8.

Often people of the world are wiser than God’s people, thus Christ gives this wise unjust steward as an example, not that we should be unjust, but that we should be wise like him. My story today is like this, a secular example, that gives us an example of what the world has done, to show us what we can do for God.

After the World War 2, two nations emerged as the world's sole superpowers. The United States and the Soviet Union. Both had nuclear weapons, both could destroy the entire planet in hours, if they wanted to. They both had a power no human should possess, the ability to bring fire down out of heaven, as predicted in Revelation 13, in the sight of men, that could consume the entire planet. Both nations hated each other and were bitter rivals for world supremacy. But because the risk of annihilating the world was too great if they were to fight, they never directly went to war with each. This became known as the Cold War, cold because there was no actual direct fighting, though in every other way they were at war. The Cold War would last from 1947-1991.



Their war reached a new arena in the late 1950s and 1960s, space. It would become known as the Space Race, it began in 1955 when both nations became rivals to see who could get a man made satellite orbiting the earth first. This first part of the Space Race the Soviets would win with the launch of Sputnik, the World's first Satellite in 1957. The Soviets quickly followed up by getting the first human, Yuri Gagarin, in space on April 12, 1961. The United States was in trouble, the Soviets were so far beating them, but just one month later, on May 5, the United States put the first American in space, Alan Shepard. At this point the race was really on, and a new goal was established for the race. John F. Kennedy President of the United States set the goal, reach the moon in that decade.



Sputnik

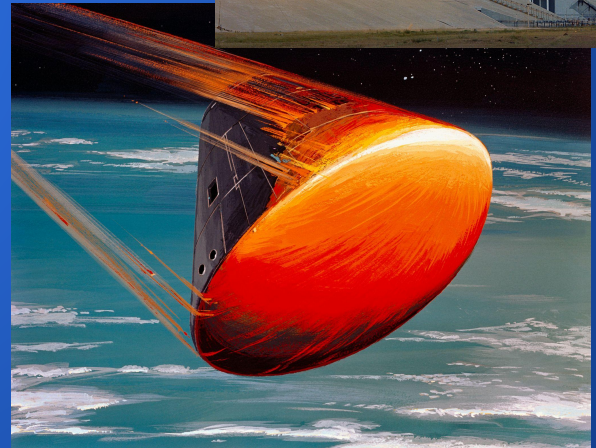
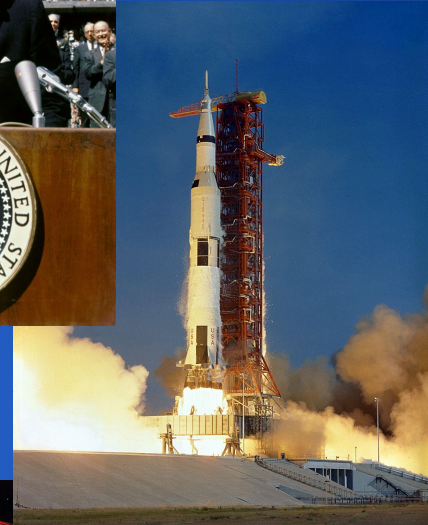


Alan Shepard

In his famous speech he would give a year later, he would say to the American People. "...if...we shall send to the moon, 240,000 miles away... a giant rocket more than 300 feet tall... made of new metal alloys, some of which have not yet been invented, capable of standing heat and stresses several times more than have ever been experienced... on an untried mission, to an unknown celestial body, and then return it safely to earth, re-entering the atmosphere at speeds of over 25,000 miles per hour, causing heat about half that of the temperature of the sun... and do all this, and do it right, and do it first before this decade is out--then we must be bold.



J. F. Kennedy

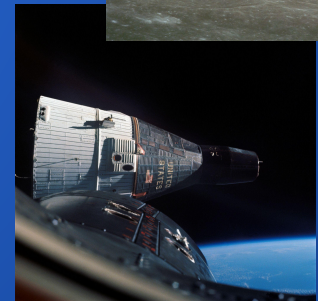




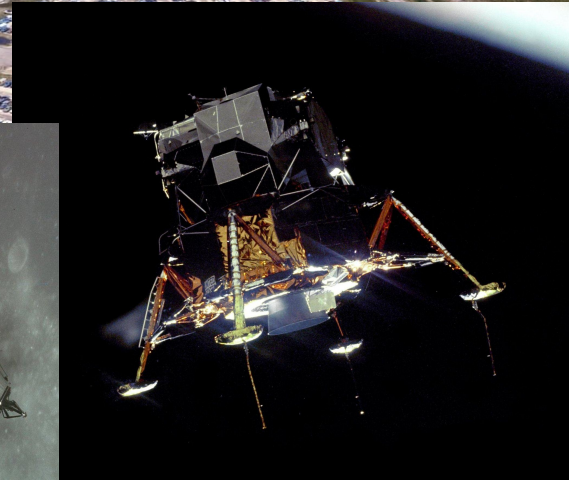
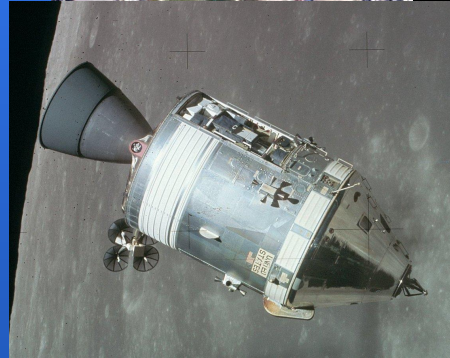
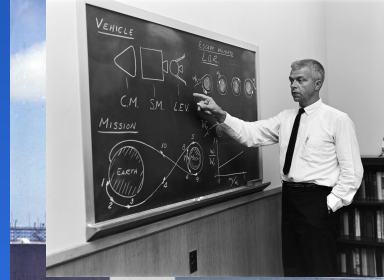
“But why, some say, the Moon? Why choose this as our goal? And they may well ask, why climb the highest mountain? Why, 35 years ago, fly the Atlantic? Why does Rice play Texas? We choose to go to the Moon. We choose to go to the Moon... We choose to go to the Moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard; because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one we intend to win...”

“And, therefore, as we set sail we ask God's blessing on the most hazardous and dangerous and greatest adventure on which man has ever embarked.”

The goal was now to be the first nation to put a human being on the moon, before 1970.



To accomplish this goal a new space Program was created, the Apollo Program, under NASA, the National Aeronautics and Space Association. The plans were made, and everybody was given a job to accomplish this goal. The German Wernher Von Braun (who was the first person to send something into space) and his team of Germans were in charge of the rocket and rocket launch pad, the company Grumman Aircraft Engineering corporation, was put in charge of designing the landing module, that would land on the moon. North America Aviation was put in charge of making the command module.



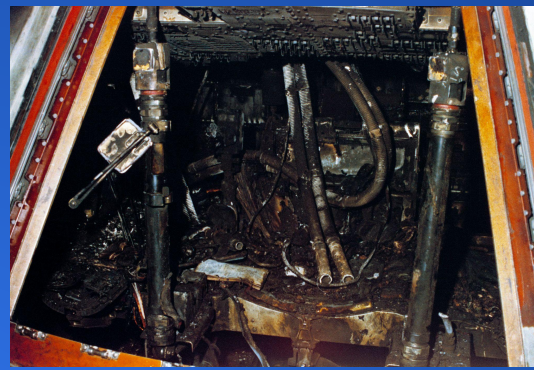
A MIT team were put in charge of writing the navigation software. Command and control were in charge of organization and communication. Nasa's Webb was the head of the project. And of course the astronauts would be in charge of testing and eventually landing these machines on the moon. Even professional weavers were literally at one point brought in to weave the computer components together in such way so that they could be stored in the smallest format possible. The whole project would take extreme organization, order, and corporation to achieve in that decade. Only by proper order and organization, by working together in unity and harmony, could they do it.



**The
Navigation
Software**



Then came the time for the launches, but before they could even get off the ground there was a disaster. In 1967, While three astronauts were inside the launch capsule on the ground, testing it, frayed wiring caused a fire, in the closed off and oxygen rich environment, all three astronauts were quickly consumed. There was no way to get them out in time. This set Nasa back a year, as they realized they had to fix a lot of things, so that a disaster like this could never happen again, the next few apollo missions were unmanned tests. Finally in 1968 Apollo 7 took a crew into earth orbit and back to earth again safely. About this same time the Soviet Union got an unmanned rocket to fly around the moon.



Actual picture of the inside of Apollo 1 after the fire.



**The 3 Astronauts killed in the Apollo 1 fire
Ed White, Gus Grissom, Roger Chaffee**

The United States knew that they needed to get a human crew to fly around the moon before the Soviets if they wanted to win, and with the Soviets already sending an unmanned mission, they could send a manned mission at any time. So in late december of 1968, the United States launched Apollo 8, which took 3 astronauts out of earth's orbit for the first time, and sent them 200,000 miles away, where they orbited the moon for almost a day, and took many pictures. As apollo 8 was circling the moon, they read to the world through the radio, "in the beginning God created the Heaven and the earth. And God said let there be light."

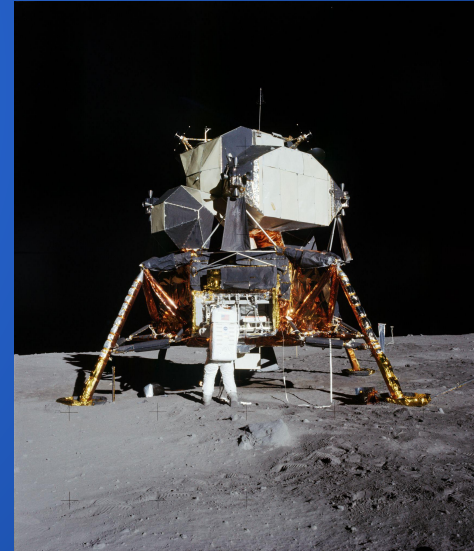


Pictures of earthrise taken by Apollo 8

Apollo 9 did more tests in March of 1969, then Apollo 10 returned to the moon in June of that year. Using their lander, they came within 10 miles of the moon's surface, but did not land. NASA now only had 7 months to land on the moon if they were to achieve Kennedy's goal of a man on the moon before the end of the decade. In July NASA launched Apollo 11. After reaching the moon, 2 of the three astronauts, Buzz Aldrin and Neil Armstrong entered the landing module and detached from the command module, which would continue to orbit the moon with command module pilot Michael Collins until they came back. Soon Aldrin and Armstrong touched down on the moon's surface. After landing they waited 6 hours before actually leaving the space craft. During this time Aldrin, who was a Christian and elder at a Presbyterian church, had communion, he had asked his pastor to prepare it for him before he left, and now he decided there was no better way to commemorate landing on the moon, then this sacred commemoration of Christ's death.



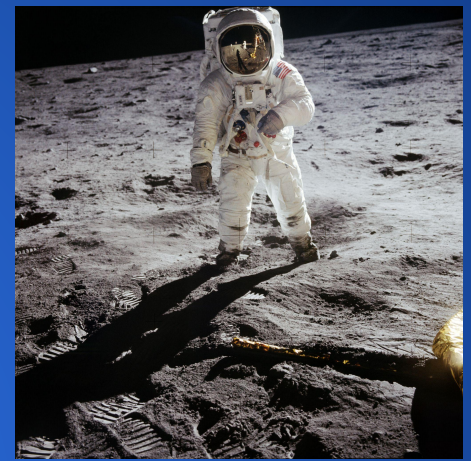
Apollo 11 Crew



Lunar Lander

After 6 hours, Neil Armstrong would become the first person to walk on the moon, as he touched on the lunar surface, he said: "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." After landing on the moon, they rose the American flag, and would place two plaques, one bearing the names of the three astronauts who had been killed by fire on Apollo 1, and 2 of the Soviet Astronauts who had also died in this race.

The second plaque they placed read:
"Here men from the planet Earth first set foot upon the Moon July 1969, A. D. We came in peace for all mankind."



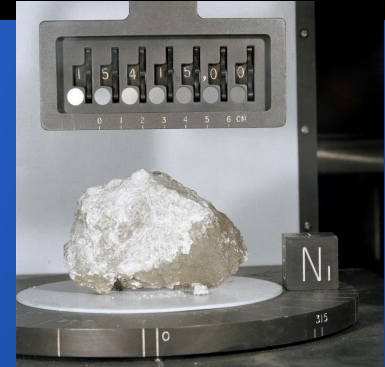
Buzz Aldrin on the Moon
Picture taken by Neil Armstrong



The United States had done it, they had won the space race, they reached their goal, they had put a man on the moon before 1970. This victory over the Soviet Union, was one of the key things that put the United States on top in the Cold War, and was another step in the fulfilling of prophecy which predicted that the United States at the time of the end would have the power to cause the entire world to worship the image to the beast.



**Moon
Rock**



NASA's goal had been to reach the moon before 1970, our goal is the spreading of the third angel's message and the loud cry of this message, to enlighten the entire world with its glory as quickly and powerfully as possible, so that Jesus can return. Just as it required order, organization, unity, and harmonies action, for NASA to achieve their goal, the goal God has given us will require the same. We cannot fulfill God's purpose without working together. Organization and order for Spiritual work, is just as important as it is for secular work. This is the purpose of organization, to fulfil a goal.



**Pictures
from the
last Apollo
Mission,
Apollo 17**

In our first presentation we saw how the true church of God, is not an organization that the world calls a church, but is invisible and spiritual, and is made up of all those who love Jesus and our living up to all the light they have. In our second presentation, we saw how God's true people are a denominated people, not by having a specific name, or being part of a specific denomination, but by present truth, the message God wants his people giving the world in their day.



“One stood up in the midst of us and pointed us back to the Israelites as an illustration of a distinct people, denominated of God. That which made them denominational was the observance of God's commandments.”
Manuscript Releases, Vol. 19, p 38.

But this brings us to another question, if the church is not a specific organization, if it is spiritual, and if we are denominated, not by being part of a denomination or having a name, but by present truth, then what about organization and unity, what is the purpose of organization? This will be our subject today. Why have an organization, why have a corporate church, what is the purpose of a name?



“If all who have influence felt the necessity of co-operation and would seek to answer the prayer of Christ, that they may be one as He is one with the Father, the cause of present truth would be a power upon this coast. But the people of God are asleep, and do not see the wants of the cause for this time. They do not feel the importance of concentrated action. Satan is ever seeking to divide the faith and hearts of God’s people. He well knows that union is their strength, and division their weakness. It is important and essential that all of Christ’s followers understand Satan’s devices and with a united front meet his attacks and vanquish him. They need to make continual efforts to press together even if it be at some sacrifice to themselves.” **Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 2, page 434.**

“Union is strength; division is weakness. When those who believe present truth are united, they exert a telling influence. Satan well understands this. Never was he more determined than now to make of none effect the truth of God by causing bitterness and dissension among the Lord’s people.” **Testimonies for the Church, Vol 5, page 236**



“The church of Christ is organized for service. Its watchword is ministry. Its members are soldiers, to be trained for conflict under the Captain of their salvation. Christian ministers, physicians, teachers, have a broader work than many have recognized. They are not only to minister to the people, but to teach them to minister. They should not only give instruction in right principles, but educate their hearers to impart these principles. Truth that is not lived, that is not imparted, loses its life-giving power, its healing virtue. Its blessing can be retained only as it is shared.” **A Call to Medical Evangelism and Health Education, page 17.**

“The spirit of Christ is a missionary spirit. The very first impulse of the renewed heart is to bring others also to the Saviour.” **The Great Controversy, page 70**

Every Christian is a spiritual soldier, and just as armies must have order, organization and discipline to complete their mission, we need or these same things to complete ours. It is not the organization itself that is important, its the purpose that is important, the spreading of present truth. True Organization is a missionary endeavor. The Bible gives many examples of the purpose of organization, and how it is to be used in Christ's Church.

One example of this is the children of Israel under Moses. The Children of Israel, who were probably more than 2 million when they came out of Egypt, were organized by Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, into their 12 respective tribes, then these 12 tribes were divided between 4 standards. When the Tabernacle was finished, it was put in the middle of the camp, the Levites, who were responsible for the Sanctuary, placed their tents around the Tabernacle, while the other 12 tribes were distributed into standards, 3 tribes per standard, and each standard got one section of the camp. One to the north, another to the south, another to the west, and one to the east. When they left camp, they had to march in a specific order too. The Levites were divided into multiple groups, based on the families within Levi, and each family line was given a specific part of the Tabernacle it was their job to take care of. The purpose of all this order was to create peace, harmony, and primarily, to accomplish the mission God had given them, the possession of the land of Canaan. We see from this that God values perfect order, and want His people to be organized.

Another part of Israel's order, was the delegation of authority. At first Moses was solely in charge of dealing with every issue that came up among the people, and to teach the people the way that God wanted them to act. Jethro, his father in law, pointed out, how this was counterproductive, for if he continued like this, he would soon lose all of his strength, and be unable to help at all. Jethro told him to divide the responsibility of governing the organization up, putting people in charge of 50s, 100s, 1000s, etc, and then only the big matters that they could not figure out would be sent to Moses.

Besides the history of Israel, we also have the history of the early church. Christ started the organization of the early church himself by the selection of the 12 apostles. Later, after his death, when the 12 apostles were being overwhelmed with the taking care of the people in need among them, 7 deacons were appointed, whose specific jobs was to help these people, so that the 12 apostles could work more earnestly in spreading the message.



“Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.” **1 Corinthians 12:27-28.**

Acts 15 also gives us an example of the delegation of authority in the church. When the question of the requirements of the Jewish Ceremonial law came up, and the churches did not know what to do, each church sent a representative and all the churches through their representatives met together, and made the decision on this subject. Christ has given the church as a body authority, when they come together, in organized fashion, they have the power to make decisions, within their proper sphere.

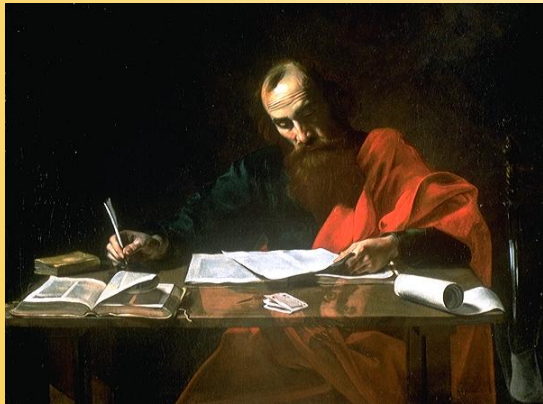


“Christ gives power to the voice of the church. ‘Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.’ No such thing is countenanced as one man’s starting out upon his own individual responsibility and advocating what views he chooses, irrespective of the judgment of the church. God has bestowed the highest power under heaven upon His church. It is the voice of God in His united people in church capacity which is to be respected.” **Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 3, page 450.**

We learn from this passage that authority in the church is necessary for the organization and preservation of order. When the Church comes together in unity to make decision with representatives from everywhere, they have authority. However their power is also limited, there are some areas the church cannot rightfully command. People in the church and God too, has rights in the church. the Holy Spirit has a place in the church, and when the church starts dictating things that go against the Holy Spirit, and try to take the place of God, and starts working against the truth. Then an organization becomes Babylon, and is no longer to be respected, and must be separated from. No Church is infallible. But this will be our subject in our next study.

The Early Church at first did not really have a name, eventually they would gain the name Christians from the Gentiles, and this name would stick, as a way to differentiate them. This name was accurate, for it was a literal description of who they were, Christ's People. Today a name serves the same purpose, it is simply to differentiate us by the truths we teach from others who are not teaching present truth. The name itself is not important, it's the truths behind that name. Sometimes a name is required by the government, for legal reasons, in that situation a specific name is needed for the spreading of the message, and this is the purpose of organization as whole, for the spreading of the message.

There is also another aspect when it comes to the purpose of organization. To help preserve the the truth and the spirituality of God's people. Fellowship, and coming together, in order to worship God has a power. It brings us closer to Christ, when we are closer together with each other.



“not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” **Hebrews 10:25**

“endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” **Ephesians 4:3**



“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

Matthew 18:20

“that they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” **John 17:21**

The Holy Spirit will only work with those who are in harmony with Christ, and being in harmony with Christ means being one with Christ, one with the Father, and one with one another. While Christ does work with Individuals who sincerely following him, and while the Holy Spirit does give power to the efforts of individuals, God wants us to work together as one. We see an example of this at Pentecost, where after the all the disciples of Christ came together in perfect unity, in the upper room, the Holy Spirit was poured out upon them.

Satan uses a common temptation when it comes to organization, He always try make the church the organization, he makes people look to the organization as their Savior, but the organization, is not the church, it is only a part of it, and serves for the spreading of the message. It's not the organization that is of value in God's eyes, it's His people in it, and the message it is organized around giving.

We organize for a goal. As Kennedy said about the goal of reaching the moon “Because that goal will serve to utilize and organize the best of our energies and skills.” This is the purpose of the church, and of its organization, it is the giving of present truth that organizes the church, and that the church is organized for, not the other way round. And if organization does not serve this purpose, then it has failed. When the spirit of missionary activity is lost, it means Christ is lost in the church. The true purpose of organization, is not to save us, not to be a place where God is confined to our specific organization, but as an organized effort of the true invisible church to spread the present truth for today that denominates us. This is true organization.

But what about Babylon? What is a Babylonian Church? How do we know when an organization has been abandoned by God?

To Be Continued...