

A Study Of Freemasonry #1

Introduction. Freemasonry is a seldom discussed religion, and many Christians do not know a lot about it. Regrettably, there are members of the church who are also Masons. My respect for friends who are Masons does not diminish my abhorrence for their Lodge. It is evil because it duplicates the sin of Absalom when he "stole the hearts of the men of Israel" (2 Samuel 15:6). Masonry will turn a Christian's heart away from God, for the Masonic Temple is the Temple of Baal, and at its altar many unsuspecting men vow their lives to a pagan god!

This current body of six million men and women includes a number of very recognizable past members. Presidents who were Masons include George Washington, James Monroe, Andrew Jackson, James K. Polk, James Buchanan, Andrew Johnson, James A. Garfield, William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, William Taft, Warren G. Harding, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry Truman, Lyndon Johnson and Gerald Ford. Influential people who were Masons include Benjamin Franklin, Henry Ford, Daniel Carter Beard (BSA), Dave Thomas (Wendy's), Harland Sanders (KFC), Conrad Hilton, William H. Dow (Dow Chemical), Fredrick Maytag, Frank Hoover, Jack Dempsey, Sugar Ray Robinson, Ty Cobb, Cy Young and Arnold Palmer.

Although Masonry is often thought of as a secret organization, one can obtain all the fundamentals about it from books written by their own prominent leaders and authorities. It is from these sources that we will present these two lessons.

I. ***The History Of Freemasonry***

- A. The historical material available on Freemasonry reveals that its existence in its present form cannot be traced beyond the late 17th or early 18th centuries.
 1. Most agree that modern Masonry began on June 24, 1717, when four Lodges in London, England constituted themselves into the Grand Lodge of England.
 2. The basic principles of the Grand Lodge of England were inspired by the ideal of tolerance and universal understanding of the Enlightenment and by the Scientific Revolution of the 17th century (Age of Reason).
- B. Before this time, the facts and origins of Freemasonry are not absolutely known and are therefore frequently explained by theories or legends.
 1. The origin of Freemasonry has variously been attributed to Euclid or Pythagoras, Moses, the Essenes, the Culdees, the Druids, the Gypsies, the Rosicrucians, the intellectual descendants of Noah and King Solomon and the construction of the Temple.

- a) Hiram Abiff, supposedly the chief architect of King Solomon's Temple, is presented as being, who is murdered by three ruffians during an unsuccessful attempt to force him to divulge the secret password of Master Mason.
 - b) In reference to Solomon's Temple being the birthplace of Masonry, E. R. Johnston wrote, "This is a point still open for discussion. On it I express no fixed opinion. The historical materials upon which to base an opinion are too scanty" (Masonry Defined, p. 227).
2. Some of the more popular theories of Freemasonry's origins also include being an offshoot of the ancient mystery schools, a direct descendant of the Knights Templar, or that it is an institutional outgrowth of the medieval guilds of stonemasons.
- a) Of all the theories, the stonemasons' guilds are among the strongest. These stonemasons were a respected guild that built the great cathedrals of Europe. Early operative Freemasons were free; that is, not bound to the land on which they were born. The various skills required in building complex stone structures, especially churches and cathedrals, allowed skilled masons to travel and find work at will. Their work required them to travel extensively, and they developed a set of signs and special handshakes to identify one another.
 - (1) They were lodged in a temporary structure -- either attached to, or near, the main stone building.
 - (2) In this lodge, they ate, slept and received their work assignments from the master of the work.
 - (3) To maintain the freedom they enjoyed required exclusivity of skills, and thus, as an apprentice was trained, his instructor attached moral values to the tools of the trade, binding him to his fellows of the craft.
 - b) Freemasonry's transition from a craft guild of operative, working stonemasons into a fraternity of speculative (non-working) Freemasons began in Scottish lodges during the early 1600s. They eventually outnumbered the working masons, and adopted and expanded their symbolism.

II. ***What Is Freemasonry?***

- A. "Freemasonry refers to the principles, institutions and practices of the fraternal order of Free and Accepted Masons. The largest worldwide society, Freemasonry is an organization of men based on the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, using builder's tools as symbols to teach basic moral truths generally accepted by persons of good will. It is religious in that a belief in God is the prime requirement for

membership, but it is nonsectarian in that no religious test is used" (*American Academic Encyclopedia*).

- B. "There have been many definitions of Freemasonry. Perhaps one of the simplest and most direct is that employed by our English brethren: 'Freemasonry is a system of morality, veiled in allegory, and illustrated by symbols'" (*On The Threshold*, p. 5, Grand Lodge of Indiana).
- C. The metaphors used are of stonemasons' tools and implements, placed against the allegorical backdrop of the building of King Solomon's Temple. The following are the "Working Tools of a Master Mason":
 - 1. The 24-inch gauge -- to divide the day.
 - 2. The common gavel -- to break off the rough corners of life.
 - 3. The plumb -- admonishes Masons to walk uprightly.
 - 4. The square -- to "square actions" by virtue.
 - 5. The level -- to "travel upon the level of time."
 - 6. The trowel -- "spreading the cement of brotherly love."
- D. The organization of Freemasonry.
 - 1. Freemasons meet as a Lodge not in a Lodge, although Masonic premises may be called Lodges, as well as Temples.
 - a) At the heart of the Masonic Lodge is the Blue Lodge (or the Symbolic Lodge), to which all masons must belong. The Blue Lodge consists of the first three degrees of Freemasonry: Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft and Master Mason.
 - b) The Blue Lodge is said to refer to the traditional color of regalia in Lodges derived from English or Irish Freemasonry.
 - 2. Lodges are governed by national, state or provincial authorities, usually called Grand Lodges or Grand Orients, whose published constitutions define the structure of freemasonry under their authority. The Grand Lodge for Texas is located in Waco.
 - 3. Local Lodges may be found in practically every city and town across America. The active participants of a lodge meeting are as follows:
 - a) Worshipful Master.
 - b) Senior and Junior Warden.
 - c) Treasurer.
 - d) Secretary.
 - e) Senior and Junior Deacon.
 - f) Senior and Junior Steward.
 - g) Tyler.
 - h) Chaplain.
 - i) Lecturer -- designated by the Worshipful Master.
 - j) Candidate (if applicable).
 - 4. After receiving the first three degrees of the Blue Lodge, the Mason is now eligible to enter into the York Rite and/or the Scottish Rite.

- a) Attainment of the third Masonic degree (Master Mason), represents the attainment of the highest rank in all of Masonry.
 - (1) Additional degrees are sometimes referred to as appendant degrees, even where the degree numbering might imply a hierarchy.
 - (2) They represent a lateral movement in Masonic Education rather than an upward movement, and are degrees of instruction rather than rank.
 - (3) The various sections of degrees are under the control of their appropriate Jurisdiction. While some of the names of the degrees are slightly different, depending upon which Jurisdiction is being referenced, they are basically the same and contain the same symbols and teachings.
- b) The York Rite (12 degrees).
 - (1) Its name derives from the city of York, where, according to a Masonic legend, the first meetings of Masons in England took place.
 - (2) The York Rite is described as "the oldest of all the Rites" and sometimes is called the "American Rite."
 - (a) The Symbolic Degrees.
 - i) Entered Apprentice.
 - ii) Fellow Craft.
 - iii) Master Mason.
 - (b) The Capitular Degrees.
 - i) Mark Master.
 - ii) Past Master.
 - iii) Most Excellent Master.
 - iv) Royal Arch.
 - (c) The Cryptic Degrees.
 - i) Royal Master.
 - ii) Select Master.
 - (d) The Chivalric Orders.
 - i) Illustrious Order of the Red Cross.
 - ii) Order of Malta.
 - iii) Order of the Temple.
- c) The Scottish Rite (33 degrees).
 - (1) The Scottish Rite did not come into being until the formation of the Mother Supreme Council at Charleston, South Carolina, in May, 1801.
 - (2) However, it is believed that the Scottish Rite degrees actually originated in France and were based on legends that came from Scotland.

- (a) Symbolic Lodge.
 - i) Entered Apprentice.
 - ii) Fellow Craft.
 - iii) Master Mason.
 - (b) Lodge Of Perfection.
 - i) Secret Master or Mark Master.
 - ii) Perfect Master or Past Master.
 - iii) Intimate Secretary or Most Excellent Master.
 - iv) Provost and Judge or Royal Arch Degree.
 - v) Intendant of the Building.
 - vi) Elu, or Elected Knight of the Nine.
 - vii) Illustrious Elect, or Elu, of the Fifteen.
 - viii) Sublime Knight Elect, or Elu, of the Twelve.
 - ix) Grand Master Architect.
 - x) Knight of the Ninth Arch, or Royal Arch of Solomon.
 - xi) Grand Elect, Perfect and Sublime Mason, or Perfect Elu.
 - (c) Chapter Of Rose Croix
 - i) Knight of the East.
 - ii) Prince of Jerusalem.
 - iii) Knight of the East and West.
 - iv) Prince Rose Croix.
 - (d) Council Of Kadosh
 - i) Grand Pontiff.
 - ii) Grand Master of Symbolic Lodges.
 - iii) Noachite, or Prussian Knight.
 - iv) Knight of the Royal Ax, or Prince of Libanus.
 - v) Chief of the Tabernacle.
 - vi) Prince of the Tabernacle.
 - vii) Knight of the Brazen Serpent.
 - viii) Prince of Mercy.
 - ix) Knight Commander of the Temple.
 - x) Knight of the Sun, or Prince Adept.
 - xi) Grand Scottish Knight of Saint Andrew.
 - xii) Knight Kadosh.
 - (e) Consistory Of Sublime Princes Of The Royal Secret.
 - i) Inspector Inquisitor Commander.
 - ii) Sublime Prince of the Royal Secret.
 - (f) The Supreme Council consists of the 33rd degree, which is called the Sovereign Grand Inspector-General.
- (3) You earn the first 32 degrees; the 33rd degree is bestowed upon you by the Supreme Council. It is conferred on mem-

bers who have made major contributions to society or to Masonry in general.

5. Other Masonic organizations.
 - a) The Shriners.
 - (1) This is a social and charitable organization for 32nd degree Masons. They are perhaps the most well-known of all Masonic organizations.
 - (2) They are also known by their more official title, The Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine.
 - b) Order of the Eastern Star (for Master Masons and their wives).
 - c) Order of DeMolay (for boys).
 - d) Order of Job's Daughters (for girls).

III. **Is Masonry A Religion?**

- A. Webster's Dictionary defines "religion" as "a) belief in a divine or superhuman power of powers to be obeyed and worshiped as the creator(s) and ruler(s) of the universe; b) expression of such a belief in conduct and ritual."
- B. Leading Masons declare that it is a religion.
 1. "Freemasonry is a charitable, benevolent, educational, and religious society" (*Indiana Monitor*, p. 35)
 2. "On the contrary, we contend, without any sort of hesitation, that Masonry, is, in every sense of the word, except one, and that its least philosophical, an eminently religious institution -- that it is indebted solely to the religious element which it contains for its origin and for its continued existence, and that without this religious element it would scarcely be worthy of cultivation by the wise and good" (*Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*, p. 847).
 3. "Masonry, then, is indeed, a religious institution; and on this ground mainly, if not alone, should the Mason defend it" (Ibid., p. 848).
 4. "Every Masonic Lodge is a temple of religion; and its teachings are instruction in religion" (*Morals and Dogma*, p. 213).
 5. "Masonry is not a religion, but Religion: not a church, but a worship, in which men of all religions may unite ..." (*Religion of Masonry*, Joseph F. Newton, p.11).
 6. "Everything in Masonry has reference to God, implies God, speaks of God, points and leads to God. Not a degree, not a symbol, not an obligation, not a lecture, not a change but finds it meaning and derives its beauty from God, the Great Architect, in whose Temple all Masons are working men. Every Lodge is erected to God and labors in His name, seeking to make His will the design upon its Trestle-Board" (Ibid., p. 59).

- C. In 1985, The Faith and Order Committee of the Methodist Church issued a report on the Masonic Lodge.
1. The report urged men not to join the Masonic Lodge since it is a "competitor of Christianity."
 2. The report also states, "There is a great danger that the Christian who becomes a Freemason will find himself compromising his Christian beliefs or his allegiance to Christ, perhaps without realizing what he is doing" (*Evansville Courier*, June 13, 1985).
- D. In the spirit of "ecumenism," the Roman Catholic Church rescinded its Papal ban on Lodge membership in 1983. However, the fact that Masonry was previously banned demonstrates that the Catholic Church saw elements within it sufficient enough to issue a ban to its members.
- E. To show that it is a religion is enough to show why Christians cannot be a part of it. In the New Testament the church is the body ordained by God in His divine plan (Ephesians 3:9-11).
1. There is only one body in God's plan (Ephesians 4:4) and that one body is the church (Ephesians 1:21-23). Hence, another religious body conflicts with the one body in God's plan; it cannot be part of His plan for He ordained only one.
 2. For one to belong to the church and another religious body runs contrary to God's plan (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

Conclusion. Perhaps the Mason who is striving to be a Christian is sincere in his regard of Masonry as nothing more than a fraternal organization. Nevertheless, his own personal attitude about the Lodge does not change the facts of the matter. If Masonry claims to be a religion, speaks like a religion, looks like a religion and functions like a religion, we must conclude that it is a religion, a false religion! It teaches a Christ-less universalist religious philosophy and as long as one remains identified with it, he is lending his support and is having fellowship with a false religious organization.

The attitude of the true Christian is that above all he wants to be right so that heaven will be his home in eternity. Thus, he is eager for study and investigation and invites those who differ to point out where they think he is wrong. He never closes his mind to additional information, for he knows such an action might cost him his soul. The scriptures demand this attitude of all who would be pleasing to God (2 Corinthians 13:5; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; 2 Peter 1:10).