

World Religions, Cults, and Aberrant Beliefs

Lesson 9 – Freemasonry

Valley Bible Church Adult Sunday School

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History

Freemasonry, or simply Masonry, is the largest secret fraternity in the world. Masonry's purpose is to unite men in fellowship under the principal themes of the Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, and the immortality of the soul. Masonry exists in various forms all over the world with membership estimated around 5 million including around 2 million in the United States.

There was no single individual who founded Masonry. Masonry appears to have developed from obscure origins to its current form in the late 1500s to early 1600s. The oldest Masonic document dates to ~1390. Masonic legend places its origin to the building of Solomon's temple, building of the pyramids, and even the ancient civilization of Atlantis. The present form of Masonry is known as "speculative" Masonry to distinguish it from the "operative" or "working" Masonry of the medieval stonemasons. Freemasonry has no centralized organizational structure, but is organized by grand lodges, which exercise administrative powers over individual lodges.

In medieval Europe (900-1600 AD), large construction projects, such as castles and cathedrals, were built mainly by "free" itinerant skilled tradesmen. Often they lived together in huts or sheds called "lodges," sharing not only the skills of their crafts but views on philosophy, politics, and religion as well. Because of the prominence of brick and stone construction, masons became the prominent craftsmen. It was in these craft groups that apprentices were mentored by the masters and learned the skills of the trades. They were also taught the spiritual values of integrity, brotherhood, and belief in God. Gradually allegories, symbolism, and rituals developed comparing the building crafts, especially masonry, with the building of personal character and the spiritual life. Initially, Christianity influenced much of the spiritual teaching, but then their theology, symbolism, and rituals liberalized to encompass broader religious ideas, including medieval European occultism. A Biblical Perspective of Freemasonry By Clark Blanchard (www.relationalconcepts.org)

The Organization

For many Masons, Masonry is a religious quest for spiritual enlightenment. Freemasonry uses the metaphors of operative stonemasons' tools and implements, against the allegorical backdrop of the building of King Solomon's Temple, to convey what has been described by both Masons and critics as "*a system of morality veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols.*"

Generally, the membership requirements are: (from Wikipedia)

- Be a man who comes of his own free will.
- Belief in a Supreme Being. (The form of which is left to open interpretation by the candidate)
- Be at least the minimum age (from 18–25 years old depending on the jurisdiction).
- Be of good morals and of good reputation.
- Be of sound mind and body (Lodges had in the past denied membership to a man because of a physical disability; however, now, if a potential candidate says a disability will not cause problems, it will not be held against him).
- Be free-born (or "born free", i.e. not born a slave or bondsman). As with the previous, this is entirely an historical holdover. Some jurisdictions have removed this requirement.
- Be capable of furnishing character references, as well as one or two references from current Masons, depending on jurisdiction.

Masonic hierarchy in the USA is detailed below. All Masons strive for the 3rd degree or "Master Mason" after which there are additional degrees, which represent a lateral movement in Masonic education. These are degrees of instruction not degrees of rank.

- 1° Entered Apprentice. This degree begins a man's journey into freemasonry and represents youth
- 2° Fellowcraft. This degree symbolizes man in adulthood and represents work
- 3° Master Mason. This degree represents man in old age and relates to wisdom
- 4° Secret Master. In this degree, the dignity of fidelity and integrity is demonstrated.
- 5° Perfect Maser. This degree teaches that unworthy ambitions are corruptive and destructive to the man who forgets his duty to family, country and God
- 6° Intimate Secretary. This degree shows that a man who is trustworthy can survive false accusations
- 7° Provost and Judge. This degree teaches that Truth prevails, and Justice triumphs, tempered with mercy and forgiveness
- 8° Intendant of the Building. This degree symbolizes that the personal goal of title and position can cause strife
- 9° Master Elect of Nine. **This degree teaches that Truth often emerges from the clash of opinions, and to look at life and duty and God through the minds of others who do not share the same religious faith**
- 10° Master Elect of Fifteen. This degree uses the symbolism of Solomon's life and that his pride prevented him from asking for forgiveness
- 11° Sublime Master Elected. This degree emphasizes virtue of good citizenship and that a man should ever be loyal, brave and courageous in the conviction that right will eventually prevail
- 12° Grand Master Architect. This degree teaches that the quality of Mercy through a spirit of compassion and a tenderness of heart will enable one to overlook injuries, or to treat the offender better than they deserve
- 13° Master of the Ninth Arch. This degree portrays the history and legend of Enoch and prepares the candidate for the 14 degree
- 14° Grand Elect Mason. This degree describes the constant endeavor of perfection of character
- 15° Knight of the East or Sword. This degree shows the important lesson by the example of Zerubbabel, of loyalty to conviction, fidelity to duty, and devotion to Truth
- 16° Prince of Jerusalem. This degree is a drama of the rewards found in the lessons of the 15 degree
- 17° Knight of the East and West. This degree teaches that one should learn from, and avoid repeating, the errors of the past
- 18° Knight of the Rose Croix of H.R.D.M.. **In this degree, the principles of tolerance are affirmed and grants to each man the right to answer, in his own way, his convictions**
- 19° Grand Pontiff. **This degree proclaims the spiritual unity of all who believe in God and cherish the hope of immortality, no matter what religious leader they follow or what creed they profess.** It is concerned primarily with the perennial conflict between light and darkness, good and evil, God and Satan.
- 20° Master ad Vitam. This degree is a drama of the American spirit confronting the challenge of disloyalty and treason. Masonic principles and leadership are subjected to a crucial test. The degree demonstrates the Masonic condemnation of all who conspire against the security of the nation and the happiness of our people.
- 21° Patriarch Noachite. This degree teaches that Freemasonry is not a shield for evil doing and that justice is one of the chief supports of our fraternity.
- 22° Prince of Libanus. In this degree, the dignity of labor is demonstrated. It is no curse, but a privilege, for man to be allowed to earn his sustenance by work. Idleness, not labor, is disgraceful.
- 23° Chief of the Tabernacle. This degree teaches that those with faith in God and love for their fellow man will make great sacrifices to help others.
- 24° Prince of the Tabernacle. **This degree teaches that a mutual belief in a Supreme Power should bind all men together in a world-wide brotherhood.**
- 25° Knight of the Brazen Serpent. This degree teaches that there are desert stretches in every individual life in the history of every nation, with a resultant breakdown of discipline and loss of faith. This degree is a clarion call to faith-in ourselves, in each other, and in God.
- 26° Prince of Mercy. This degree teaches the quality of mercy; that it is a spirit of compassion and a tenderness of heart which dispose us to overlook injuries and to treat an offender better than he deserves.

27° Commander of the Temple. This degree teaches that Scottish Rite Freemasonry believes in the concept of a free church in a free state, each supreme in its own sphere, neither seeking to dominate the other, but cooperating for the common good.

28° Knight of the Sun. This degree using the symbolism of the tools and implements of architecture teaches that by building high moral character among its adherents, Freemasonry may advance man's determined quest for the achievement of unity and good will throughout the world.

29° Knight of St. Andrew. This degree emphasizes the Masonic teachings of equality and toleration. **We are reminded that no one man, no one Church, no one religion, has a monopoly of truth; that while we must be true and faithful to our own convictions, we must respect the opinions of others.**

30° Grand Elect Knight Kadosh. This degree sets forth the tests and ceremonies that symbolize the experiences we must undergo in the building of excellence in character.

31° Grand Inspector Inquisitor Commander. This degree teaches that we should give every man the benefit of innocence and purity of intentions. He who would judge others must first judge himself.

32° Sublime Prince of the Royal Secret. This degree describes the victory of the spiritual over the human in man and the conquest of appetites and passions by moral sense and reason. The exemplar represents every Freemason eager to serve humanity but caught between self-interest and the call of duty. Duty often requires sacrifice, sometimes the supreme sacrifice.

Remember that we can define a cult in two ways:

1. According to sociological, psychological, or behavior factors.
2. Any group that claims compatibility with Christianity, but deviates from Biblical Christianity in fundamental doctrines of the faith including: the source of authority, the nature of God including the Trinity, the person and work of Jesus Christ, the nature of man, and the means of salvation.

According to our first definition, we could call Freemasonry "cult-like". There are rites and teaching that are to be kept secret through the use of spiritual intimidation (in modern times) and through physical intimidation (historically).

According to our second definition, we could define Freemasonry as a cult because it claims compatibility with Christianity, but deviates from the Biblical teachings above. Among its general members, there is a view that it is simply a fraternal organization and is compatible with whatever one's own religious beliefs may be. However, there is a religious nature to Masonry, which is incompatible with Christianity. As we will see, Masonic teachings are cultish. We must also address: Is it right for a professing Christian to be a member of this organization?

Concerning the religious nature of Masonry, one of Freemasonry's most notable resources says:

"I contend without any sort of hesitation, that Masonry is, ... an eminently religious institution - that is indebted solely to the religious element which it contains for its continued existence, and that without this religious element it would scarcely be worthy of cultivation by the wise and the good. But, that I may be fully understood, it will be well first to agree upon the true definition of religion. There is nothing more illogical than to reason upon undefined terms."

"Look at its ancient landmarks, its sublime ceremonies, its profound symbols and allegories - all inculcating religious doctrine, commanding religious observance, and teaching religious truth, and who can deny that it is eminently a religious institution?" An Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and Its Kindred Sciences by Albert G. Mackey, M.D., 33°

The Royal Arch degree declares, *"Every Masonic Lodge is a temple of religion and its teaching are instruction in religion."*

The Grand Elect, Perfect and Sublime Mason degree says, *"It is the universal, eternal, immutable religion."*

The Prince Adept degree declares, *"Masonry propagates no creed except its own most simple and sublime one; that universal religion taught by nature and reason."*

The Source of Authority

While the Bible may be freely quoted in some Lodges, for the Mason, the sources of authority are the Masonic Rituals, the Grand Lodges, and prominent Masonic authorities and writers. The rituals of the Scottish Rite teach that "Masonry is of divine origin." A Mason newsletter has stated that "Masonry is a divinely appointed institution..." In Freemasonry, the Masonic authorities supersede the Bible. For the Christian who is a Mason this is incompatible with the place of authority that the Word of God should have in their life.

Biblical Response

Scripture alone is the authority for the believer. The Scriptures are authoritative and constitute the believer's only source of faith and practice (Matt 5:18; 2 Tim 3:15-17; Heb 4:12; 2 Pet 1:20-21). Only Scripture is perfectly adequate for all matters of faith and conduct – for salvation and sanctification. It is all-sufficient in regards to the soul of man, in our relationship to God, and in our relationship to others.

The Nature of God

For the individual Mason, they may believe in any god that they choose. However, the Masonic name for god is the "Great Architect of the Universe" or "G.A.O.T.U.". As the Mason progresses through the degrees he is taught that the most significant secrete in Masonry is god's name and the true name for god is "Jabulon".

"This is probably Jabulum, incorrectly copied; which, as I have shown, meant 'the product of, that which proceeded, issued or emanated from Om.' If correctly written, it is compounded of ... Yu or Yah-u ... Baal or Bal or Bel, and Om, thus combining the names of the Hebrew, Phoenician and Hindu Deities, to indicate that they are in reality the same. In some old rituals it is Jabulum." Albert Pike, *The Book of the Words* p. 151.

This name conveys the Masonic view that all religions have the same idea of the deity.

Masonry teaches that god created the universe but is not currently active in either mercy or in judgment. Therefore, he cannot be known personally or by revelation but only generally through reason. Jesus Christ and the Bible, therefore, are not revelations of god.

Biblical Response

The Bible declares that there is only one God (Deut. 6:4). He is Creator and Lord of everything that exists (Gen 1-3). He is infinite (1 Kings 8:27; Acts 17:28), transcendent (yet personal), eternal (Gen 21:33; Psa 90:2), unchangeable (James 1:17), omnipresent (Psa 139:7-12), sovereign (Eph 1), omniscient (Matt 11:21), and omnipotent (Rev 19:6). He eternally exists as Triune God: three persons – Father (John 6:27, Eph 4:6), Son (Col 1:16-19; Heb 1:8), Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3-4) – each equal, having the same attributes, and are equally worthy of adoration, worship, and faith.

The Person and Work of Jesus Christ

For the Mason, Jesus was a good man who understood divine (Masonic) truth. Additionally, the Mason believes that there are many ways to God.

"In his private petitions a man may petition God or Jehovah, Allah or Buddha, Mohammed or Jesus; he may call upon the God of Israel or the First Great Cause. In the Masonic Lodge he hears petition to the Great Architect of the Universe, finding his own deity under that name. A hundred paths may wind upward around a mountain; at the top they meet." Carl H. Claudy, "Introduction to Freemasonry." p. 38

Biblical Response

The Bible declares that Jesus, the Christ, is the eternal, uncreated second person of the Trinity. He was eternally one with the Father and incarnated supernaturally (John 1:1-12; Matt 1:18-25). He is the eternal God-man. In the incarnation Jesus surrendered only the prerogatives of deity but nothing of the divine essence (Phil 2:5-8; Col 1:16-19). Jesus' birth, sinless life, death, and resurrection are literal, historical events. Jesus willingly died on the cross as the perfect sacrifice for sin (John 10:15; 3:16; Rom 3:24-25; 5:8; 1 Pet 2:24). The resurrection of Jesus confirmed His deity and proved that God had accepted His atoning sacrifice (John 5:26-29; 14:19; Rom 1:4; 4:25; 6:5-10). Jesus is the only mediator between God and man (1 Tim 2:5) – the only way to the Father (means of salvation) (John 14:6).

⁶Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; **no one comes to the Father but through Me.** John 14:6

The nature of man

According to Masons, humans are flawed, but not depraved. All non-Masons exist in spiritual darkness. Humans are able to improve their behavior and character and each individual must be educated to reach this perfection. Freemasonry provides the means by which one can attain salvation. Humans are not in the need of someone to make atonement for their sins. Humans are capable of doing all that is needed for their salvation, through Masonry.

Biblical Response

The Bible declares, God created mankind in His image and likeness – sinless, with intelligence, self-consciousness, and self-determination (Gen 2:7; 15-25; 1 Cor 11:7; James 3:9). By their free will, mankind chose to sin against God and are therefore under the condemnation of physical and spiritual death (eternal separation from their creator) (Gen 3; Rom 3:23; Isa 59:1-2). The corruption of sin extends to every aspect of our being (Rom. 1:18–3:20) including intellect (2 Cor. 4:4), conscience (1 Tim. 4:2), will (Rom. 1:28), and heart (Eph. 4:18). All people are therefore unable to enter into a personal relationship with God on their own initiative (Rom 3:23; 6:23; Eph 2:1-3).

The Means of salvation

Masonry teaches a works salvation which is opposed to the Biblical plan of salvation of grace through faith in Jesus.

"These three degrees (1st, 2nd, 3rd) thus form a perfect and harmonious whole, nor can it be conceived that anything can be suggested more, which the soul of man requires." Daniel Sickles, "Ahimon Rezon or Freemason's Guide." page 196

"If we with suitable true devotion maintain our Masonic profession, our faith will become a beam of light and bring us to those blessed mansions where we shall be eternally happy with God, the Great Architect of the Universe." Daniel Sickles, "Ahimon Rezon or Freemason's Guide." page 79

"...salvation by faith and the vicarious atonement were not taught as now interpreted, by Jesus, nor are these doctrines taught in the esoteric scriptures. They are later and ignorant perversions of the original doctrines." J.D. Buck, "Mystic Masonry." page 57

Biblical Response

The Bible declares, salvation is the work of God whereby he saves individuals from the penalty, power, and one day the very presence of sin. It is completely by God and not on the basis of human merit or works (John 1:12; Eph 1:7; 2:8-10; 1 Pet 1:18-19). Forgiveness of sins (Col 2:13-14) is a free gift (Eph 2:8-9) that is given to those that repent from their sins (Heb 6:1) and exercise faith (John 3:16) in Jesus as Lord and Savior. No pre-forgiveness work is required (i.e. baptism, good deeds, obeying commandments, going to church, giving money, praying, doing penance, surrendering to an organization, etc.).

Witnessing Strategies for Freemasons

Let's remember some of our general strategies:

1. Sanctify your heart. (1 Pet 3:15)
2. Pray – this is a spiritual battle for the truth. (2 Cor 10:3-5)
3. Be ready with a good understanding of the Scriptures.
4. Do not argue. Do not attack the person. (2 Tim 2:24-26)
5. Make sure you define words.
6. Do not get off on tangents. The important points are the source of authority, the nature of God, the person and work of Jesus, the nature of man, and the means of salvation.
7. Avoid Christian jargon – it has no meaning for the unchurched.
8. Share your testimony and your assurance of eternal life through Christ.

Some specifics:

1. For the non-Believer, share specifics of their own religion.
2. For the Believer, show the incompatibility of Masonry with Christianity.

It is clear that Freemasonry teaches doctrines of authority, God, Jesus, man and salvation that are contrary to what the Bible teaches. If what is taught in Freemasonry is opposed to Christianity, why would a professing believer remain a Mason?

1. Ignorance
2. Immaturity
3. Fear men more than God
4. Not true believer

It is this writer's personal observation that most men who go into Masonry do so out of good human intentions but are unaware of its incompatibility with biblical truth. Its effect on individuals is usually biblical apathy, doctrinal liberalism, and pride. If these men are church members, they will have the same liberalizing effect on their churches. If they have no church affiliation, Freemasonry will tend to become their entire religion (2 Timothy 2:24-26). Many oppose Freemasonry because it is a secret organization, but its secrecy is a secondary issue. The primary issue is its false teaching that a person can merit God's approval by quality of character and good deeds apart from the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. A Biblical Perspective of Freemasonry By Clark Blanchard (relationalconcepts.org)