

‘DECEMBER 27th’
St. John the Evangelist Day

A STUDY FOR THE ENQUIRING FREEMASON

December 27th: St. John the Evangelist Day

If you're Christian, then you are aware of St. John the Evangelist. Well, not everyone anyways. My history with St. John growing up was hearing the name John everywhere in The Bible but never being able to make heads or tails of who John the Evangelist really was. It was all very confusing and frankly considering how important Jesus was to me, I largely didn't care for anyone else.

That is until I became a Mason. For non-Masons, we have two figures that are celebrated in Masonry and they are the Holy Saints John. Those saints are John the Baptist and John the Evangelist. And they both have holidays that coordinate with the winter and summer solstice, June 24th for John the Baptist and December 27th for John the Evangelist.

But for this entry with December 27th fast approaching we'll focus on John the Evangelist and the celebration of him.

The Holy Saints John

Certainly Saint John the Evangelist is important to us as Masons as well. It is fitting that while we have a relatively concrete biography of St. John the Baptist, whose theology and teachings were straightforward and rigid, the story of the Evangelist is more difficult to relate and requires more study much like his teachings. Saint John the Evangelist is likely the amalgamation of several New Testament Johns, including John the Disciple of Christ, John the Epistle writer and John the Divine of Patmos, the author of the Book of Revelation. There are many striking reasons why Freemasons would choose the Evangelist as Patron. Chiefly, the writings of this John (or group of Johns) read almost like Masonic ritual.

St. John's Day was created early on in Christian history when the Catholic Church expanded and absorbed pagan religions and holidays. For many of these pre-Christian belief systems, the sun and the moon were key to their understand of the world. Also that duality of death and rebirth of the sun was extremely important. For early Catholicism, this became so important to them as well that they placed John the Evangelist's day of recognition and celebration in accordance with the winter solstice. It's interesting that John the Evangelist's day came on the time of the year most shrouded in darkness, surrounded by cold and snow.

As time went on, his day remained on December 27th and became less of winter solstice day and more of a day of it's own, solidified on the 27th. Early Masons

became attracted to it because of its proximity to the New Year and thus became a key point in the Masonic calendar.



Firstly, let's look at a few reasons why John the Evangelist took such a prominent role in Masonry.

One argument would state his defining reason for us is to be a marker for the winter solstice and New Year. The winter and the world in the darkness have a deep symbolic meaning to Masons. For the world is at its darkest when St. John arrives. Maybe he is here to bring the light back or maybe he is here to represent the total darkness. Another thing to mention is that Europe in late December is a cold and dead world. Nature has left and the life around us is gone. The significance of this in relation to John should not be lost to us. John is associated with death and

darkness. And yet when the holiday ends, the world begins its journey back to light and life. That transition is a key element of St. John the Evangelist's Day.

Then there is another argument as to why he is highlighted in Masonry. The Masonry we know cares deeply about the symbolic significance and to just tie a man to a date in time ignores the actual man himself and what he meant. John was also the only disciple to not die a martyr but instead lived to an old age. He was also the one that Jesus held to his breast during the last supper. Also John lay next to the cross while Jesus was crucified. John was considered the most loyal and trusted of Jesus' disciples and the one closest to Jesus. They were so close that Jesus entrusted the protection of his mother Mary to him.

John however, is also one of the most complex of the disciples of Jesus. John the Evangelist wasn't just 1 man, but potentially 3 men. The three men being John the Evangelist, John the Apostle, and John of Patmos are all believed to be the same person and this tradition is generally held among all Christians. To know that a man could potentially encompass three different figures shows that John the Evangelist isn't just a man, but potentially a figure that has grown beyond his physical history into something greater and more profound. John also was the person to have received Revelation, the final chapter in the history of the earthly world, the end of history as we know it and even potentially the end of darkness forever.

John is also considered to be the most Masonic of disciples. For example, the Gospel of St. John the Evangelist begins like this:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The same was with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and darkness comprehended it not.

Let's stay with this phrasing for a while. For those of you who have read this blog, this description of the creator is jarring, thought provoking, and meditative. Statements like this are right up Masonry's ally. It's rich in contextual wording and phrases open for complex interpretation.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.

What could this sentence alone mean? In the beginning there was the Word? The Word started it all. The Word was with God, as in God and the Word are uniquely tied together. How are they tied together is by saying the Word was with God. It's something out of a deep esoteric playbook. You can take it in its more traditional terminology by saying that God was in the beginning and was the Word. Or you could turn around and look at it literally. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God. As in the Word of God created God. It's not a controversial thing to say if you take it in the direction that without the Word, there is no God. Any religion person will get that. But what is also interesting is this idea that these words created God. That God is the result of the creation of the Word. I myself am someone who firmly believes in the transcendent and immanent God of Christianity, I don't believe the Word existed before God. But I do like to think and meditate deeply about what the disciples of Jesus stated. And the next sentence clarifies the first as such.

The same was with God.

This generally clarifies the last sentence of *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God*. Replace Word with God in the last sentence and it comes out to *In the beginning was God, and God was with the Word and God was the Word*. It's an interesting prose system but it's meaning is crystal clear. God and the word are one and the same. They are WITH each other. What we can also learn here is the hyper importance of context. The first sentence almost made it seem like the Word created God, in this it feels more like God created the word. We must remember this in life, that words and their context matter very deeply. About going back to the very first sentence, the design of the sentence to flow back and forth for what is attributed to what still allows for us to see that the Word was in the beginning...but God along with it.

All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

This sentence is easy to read and to understand until after “anything made”. Yet if you look closely and assess again you can see that it really means that nothing didn’t come from God. Everything is from him. However our final two sentences are the most Masonic.

In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

This first sentence in the context of the sentences before is complex and I even dare say potentially controversial. There was life in God. And the life was the light of men. In Masonry light is a powerful symbolic element that is routinely used in various ways of instruction and thinking. Light in our case generally means knowledge. You could almost read the first sentence as; God was alive through the knowledge of men. That men brought God to life. Again, controversial but something that can be interpreted from this. Or you could read it as, in God was life, and the knowledge of men made God feel alive. That more men know the more alive God becomes. To further complicate this the Bible uses light in a very specific way in Genesis.

1. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

3 And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.

4 God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness.

5 God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

Light is the first thing created by God in the creation of the world. By giving light, God gave us the world and our identity in reality. Light, darkness. Night and day. Possibly further evidence that the creation of men brought life to God.

And the light shineth in darkness; and darkness comprehended it not.

If we use our first interpretation, that the knowledge of God created him, then this verse becomes complex. You could almost read it as, the knowledge of God can shine into the dark, the unknown. And the unknown can not comprehend it. Yet the way the sentence is designed, it acts almost like darkness is alive. That darkness has

the power of comprehension. You could almost even associate Satan with darkness. The unknown. Or you could say that people who live in a state of darkness will not know knowledge. They may not know true knowledge without God. Something to think about.

Back to St. John the Evangelist. It is things like that statement I just dissected, things like the esoteric nature of the Book of Revelations, that make St. John the Evangelist stick out. Looking at Revelations, any sample verse will make you scratch your head if you take it literally, but serve to make you think and observe if you take it figuratively.

Here are three verses from Chapter 8 in Revelations.

[1] And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.

[2] And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.

[3] And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

You could spend days just trying to think through this specific section and what it means. And the entire book is filled with figures and symbols. No wonder Masons hold John the Evangelist in such high regard.

Going back to John the figure, his influence on Biblical cannon and even Masonry is never fully realized. And we can learn some things about how he lived his life. For one, his long age served Jesus and Christianity extremely well. His length of life allowed him to contribute not only gospels but epistles and even the end times. John's survival allowed him to bring the word of God and Jesus to the world in a far more diverse and effective way than if he had died like everyone else connected to Jesus. Another thing about the man, is he stood next to Jesus through his entire life and was loyal to him and what he represented. John's loyalty made him special. It's a loyalty that we as Masons and non-Masons could learn from. And also John created the church along with Peter. A lesson for us being, that we may be followers our entire lives but one day we may have to be part of building something great and profound.

We are now about a week away from December 27th. For many members of the Fraternity, St. John's Day is a lost day, a day where its meaning and significance are not fully realized and the depth of what he meant is unclear. John the Evangelist was

a man who lived a long, deep, and influential life. The things he said and his recordings of Jesus had a profound impact on the world and served to create the structure of a great belief system, Christianity. Christians view Jesus as perfect in moral design. We can learn from this. We as Masons know that if we steadfastly stick to those of great and perfect design, man and God, then we will influence the world as profoundly as John the Evangelist did.

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This article was sourced from the Masonology Blog, the author of which goes by the pen name of Livingstone a Master Mason in Los Angeles.

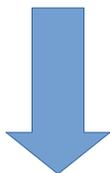
Studies for the New Freemason.

This excellent article was scanned, prepared and type-set for this booklet by Bro. J. Stewart Donaldson, Secretary of Hawick Lodge No.111 for the education of the enquiring Freemason. Where any typo errors occur, I apologise, but I have kept the original spelling and grammar.

Article 34 – 2020

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Merry Christmas
from all at
SRA76



This is not
the year to get
lessonslearnedlifeinc.©
everything you **want.**
This is the year to
appreciate everything
you **have.**



God Bless Us Everyone!