

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS AND FREEMASONRY; A CONNECTION THROUGH SYMBOLS

David Sinclair

Introduction

Living as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS) is what led me to Freemasonry. I love symbolism and both of these organizations are full of symbols screaming with meaning. Though I have wanted to offer an education on this subject for some time, it has been difficult to find an approach that will show the connection of Freemasonry's symbols to the symbols of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints without diminishing the sacredness of the rituals of each organization. I found by focusing on their literal meanings I was able to compare the two without divulging the secrets of either ritual. This is my approach tonight. This presentation will not be an exhaustive one, but one that fits into the time constraints of our purposes this evening.

Why me and this topic

As members of the LDS Church we serve 2 years (usually at the age of 18) as a missionary normally in a different location than where you grew up. I served my mission in Connecticut and Rhode Island. While in Connecticut I met Lisa. 1 year prior to our meeting Lisa joined the LDS Church and then moved to Seattle. While in Seattle she was given anti-Mormon information and soon after returned to Connecticut.

As missionaries' part of our responsibilities are to work with individuals who are new to the church or struggling with our faith. One of her questions for me was "if God told Joseph Smith not to join any church, why did he become a Freemason?" I told her I didn't know what Freemasonry was, but I would look into it and get back to her. This started my journey into Freemasonry and it wasn't until 8 years later that I was initiated.

History

In the early 1800's there was a large religious excitement known as the "second awakening" which was in full swing in New York where Joseph Smith Jr., founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, and his family were living. Although Joseph Smith Jr.'s father, Joseph Smith Sr., was religious, he didn't attend any churches as he believed the true church was not found on the earth. Even with this view he did try to teach his family from the Bible the best he could. Joseph Smith Jr.'s mother, Lucy Mack Smith, seemed to favor the Presbyterian faith and attended whenever she could. Joseph Smith Jr. (Joseph) attended many different religious (faith) paths as he could but did not unite with any particular one. Joseph Smith Jr observed all the different preachers claimed to have the correct interpretation of the bible yet argued with each other over their differing points of doctrine.

Joseph did lean towards the Methodist faith but states in his history "...it was impossible for a person young as I was, and so unacquainted with men and things, to come to any certain conclusion who was right and who was wrong." At some point during his bible studies Joseph had read a verse in the book of James which states "if any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God." He concluded that he either remain in darkness and confusion, or he could ask God.

In the early spring of 1820 when Joseph Smith was 14, he went into the woods behind his home in Palmyra New York and prayed about which church to join. In answer to his prayer God and Jesus appeared to him and told him to join none of the churches but that he, Joseph, will restore the church Jesus set up during His mortal ministry which disappeared with the death of His Apostles. 10 years later, on April 6, 1830 he officially organized the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. At that time the congregation consisted of a handful of people. Two years later, on Dec 27, 1832 Joseph receives a revelation that instructs him that part of his work in restoring the church will be restoring the practice of temple worship.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Experience.

We as members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints have a strong belief that anytime God has a prophet on the earth, He also has temples for the people to worship in. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints has temples and chapels. Chapels are where we have our weekly Sabbath worship, temples are set apart for a different type of worship. Not one of sermons but of performing saving ordinances. (In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints an ordinance is a sacred, formal act performed by the authority of the priesthood. Some ordinances are essential to our exaltation (salvation). These ordinances are called saving ordinances. They include baptism, confirmation, ordination to the Melchizedek Priesthood (for men), the temple endowment, and the marriage sealing. The Ordinance we will focus on today is called the Temple endowment or Temple Ceremony which will show the similarities and differences between Freemasonry and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

Throughout the history of the church, the early members were forced from their homes and they slowly made their way west, settling in Kirtland Ohio, Far West Missouri, Nauvoo Illinois, Winter Quarters Nebraska, and finally Salt Lake City Utah to name a few. We will be focusing on Josephs time in Nauvoo.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and Freemasonry

The first 5 presidents of the LDS Church were Freemasons. This included Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and Lorenzo Snow. They all joined in Nauvoo IL. Joseph's father and older brother Hyrum were both Freemasons and joined in New York years earlier.

Joseph Smith joined Freemasonry on March 15, 1842. His initiation occurred on the same day as the lodge's installation of officers. From his journal entry Joseph Smith wrote "*Tuesday, March 15.*— "I officiated as grand chaplain at the installation of the Nauvoo Lodge of Free Masons, at the Grove near the Temple. Grand Master Jonas, of Columbus, being present, a large number of people assembled on the occasion. The day was exceedingly fine; all things

were done in order, and universal satisfaction was manifested. In the evening I received the first degree in Free Masonry in the Nauvoo Lodge, assembled in my general business office". It is interesting to note that he was not yet a mason when he officiated as grand chaplain.

Joseph was then made a Master Mason the next day, March 16, 1842. His journal for this date notes " I was with the Masonic Lodge and rose to the sublime degree". There is a myth that Joseph was made a MM by sight. However, he did go through all 3 degrees. The difference being that his proving up was vouched for.

At this time, there was no lodge hall in Nauvoo, so the lodge met in the upper room of Joseph Smith's red brick store. This room was used similar to a community hall. Many other organizations would rent the room. Joseph also used this room for church business as well as political meetings. On May 4th, 1842, 50 days after Joseph was initiated into Freemasonry, the first LDS temple endowment was given (the endowment, often referred to by friends of other faiths as the Mormon endowment, Mormon temple ceremony, or Mormon temple ritual--is one of a number of these saving gospel ordinances. Other ordinances include baptism for the dead, through which a merciful God allows those who have died without a knowledge of the gospel to receive it by proxy; marriage sealings in which couples are united in marriage for eternity; as well as washing, anointing, and clothing ordinances). It was given in the upper room of the red brick store because the Nauvoo temple was not yet complete. The cornerstone for the Masonic hall in Nauvoo, was laid at the corner of main and white streets June 24, 1843, a little over a year since Joseph was raised to the sublime degree.

Early claims

There is a claim Joseph stole the Masonic ritual and used it in the temple. This claim is relatively new in history and has little basis in fact. Heber C. Kimball (a long time mason and an LDS Apostle) wrote just a month after receiving his endowment "There is a similarity of Priesthood (*or the ordinances performed in the temple*) and in Masonry. And yet, no incredulous cry about bootlegging or fraud rang out from this group against the prophet." Some of the early church leaders have been quoted saying, "the temple endowment is true Masonry." Many early brethren believed the endowment was Freemasonry as it was originally intended to be. That Freemasonry and the endowment at one point in history were the same thing, but over time man changed it to suit their differing tastes. That Joseph had restored freemasonry in its original form. Both ideas are opinions and there are really no facts on either side to say one way or the other.

Similarities of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and Freemasonry

Both Freemasonry and the Latter-Day Saint endowment have 3 knocks, grips, 3 degrees (however, they represent different things), claims to antiquity (some in Masonry claim Masonic ritual has roots related to Solomon, Noah, and even Adam. The LDS Church profess their endowment goes back to Adam), penalties (which have since been discontinued in the LDS Temple Endowment), aprons and other ceremonial clothing, the all seeing eye, clasping hands, beehive, square and compasses, point within a circle, sun, moon, stars, and other symbols.(see following slides)

Point within a circle;



Moon stone found on the Nauvoo Temple;



Beehive on the doorknob of the Salt Lake City Temple;



The beehive found on top of the executive mansion of Brigham Young;



All-seeing eye and clasping hands found on the Salt Lake City Temple.



Mount Timpanogos Utah Temple with the front window depicting a Jacob's ladder motif;



A similar theme on the Albuquerque New Mexico Temple;



A blazing star in the center. This is found on the Las Vegas Temple and on the Cedar City Utah Temple.



The 3 different pillars found in the Philadelphia Temple. They are the Ionic, Doric, and the Composite.



Moon stones, a 5 pointed star on a keystone, and an arch on the Salt Lake City Temple;



An older rendering of the clasping hands. The beehive with the square and compasses on either side as found on the Spring City endowment house. This was a building used to administer the Temple Endowment before the Salt Lake Temple was completed.



*Clasped hands and rays of light.
Salt Lake Temple, 1853-93*



*Square, compass, beehive on Spring
City Endowment House, 1876
Sunstone, Vol. 10, No. 5, May 1985, p.41*

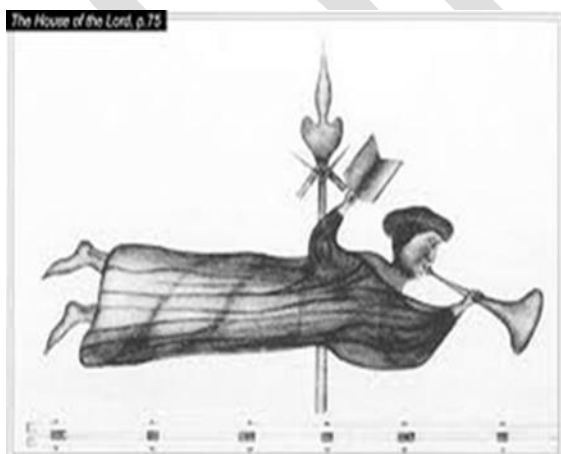
Some inverted 5 pointed stars, 6 pointed stars and some sun stones found on the Nauvoo temple;



You will recognize this popular LDS symbol. This is the angel Moroni and is found on top of most of our temples. For the most part, the trumpet points east. There are a few exceptions but that is a story for another time.



Following is an early rendering of what the angel Moroni would look like. Notice the square and compasses, the book, and the priestly robes. Notice too that it appears the square and compasses seem to be inverted.



The differences between the LDS Church and Freemasonry?

In discussing the differences between the LDS Church and Freemasonry the starting point must be the fundamental concept of religion. The endowment is centered on teaching all its members salvation and how to enter heaven. Freemasonry makes no religious claim and has no instructions for salvation. The LDS endowment focuses on the Creation, Garden of Eden, the Fall, and the Redemption of Man. Freemasonry focuses on building a personal representation of Solomon's temple as a representative of moral instruction.

These differences between the LDS Church and Freemasonry are underpinned by the legend of Solomon for Freemasons and Creation, Garden of Eden, the Fall, and Redemption of Man for Latter-Day Saints. Masons use aprons symbolically replicating those the stone masons wore while Latter-Day Saints wear aprons that represent the apron Adam and Eve made of fig leaves to hide their nakedness. Freemasonry uses 3 knocks to enter the lodge which are used at the beginning of their ceremony. Latter-Day Saints use 3 knocks at the end of the endowment to pass through the veil, or curtain, to enter the presence of God, or a room representing the place of God called the Celestial Room. Masonry uses grips as modes of recognition. Latter-Day Saints use grips as tokens accompanying a name and sign to pass the angels who stand as sentinels guarding the highest degree of heaven. The three degrees of Freemasonry refer to EA, FC, and MM. The 3 degrees in the Latter-Day Saint endowment refer to the 3 degrees or levels of Heaven: Telestial, Terrestrial, and Celestial.

Freemasonry practices separation of cultural symbols in its ceremonies. Thus, the removal of all metals and minerals, neither naked nor clad, and barefoot nor shod. LDS ceremonies are centered in the religious and moral teachings of the Bible and so dress as the high priests of old. Within the Latter-Day Saint temples there are also washings, anointings, baptisms, sealings (marriage for eternity) and vicarious work for the dead. There are no such observances in Freemasonry. Women play no role within Craft Freemasonry. Women are involved in all aspects of the Temple endowment

Conclusion

I find it fascinating that the history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints is so intertwined with Freemasonry. It is a beautiful thing to have two rituals that use a lot of the same symbols and teach many of the same principles be so different. I am grateful that I was led into Freemasonry by living the principles taught in my own faith. This helped me see the purity of Freemasonry. That brotherly love, relief, and truth extend beyond chapels and inhabit every good man that has traveled from darkness to light. That faith, hope and charity are prevalent throughout mankind, not only because of missionaries and church goers, but also because of those who have long wandered in darkness and were brought to light, as all true brothers and fellows have done.