



“The Number Seven”

Lodge Presentation:

*The following short article is written with the intention to be read within an open Lodge, or in fellowship, to all the members in attendance. This article is appropriate to be presented to **all Fellowcraft and Master Masons. Fellowcraft** Masons should be invited to attend the meeting where this is presented. Following this article is a list of discussion questions which should be presented immediately following the presentation of the article.*

The Number Seven

In the Fellowcraft degree, at the conclusion of the explanation of the winding stairs, we explain to the candidate that “for this, and many other reasons, the number seven is held in high estimation among Masons.” The number seven has been revered by various religions and other orders, including Freemasonry, for centuries. In fact, Albert Mackey in his ‘Encyclopedia of Freemasonry’ writes “Seven is a sacred number in Masonic symbolism. It has always been so.”

As Masons, when considering the meaning and significance of something to our craft, the place to start is our ritual. Mackey again notes that in the rituals of the eighteenth century “it was said that a Lodge required seven to make it perfect; but the only explanation to be found in any of those rituals of the sacredness of the number is the seven liberal arts and sciences, which, according to the old ‘Legend of the Craft’ were the foundation of Masonry.” In our ritual today, the same seven liberal arts and sciences and the seven officers that constitute a Lodge of Entered Apprentices are two of the notable references to the number. Some Masonic scholars believe the principal rounds of Jacob’s ladder originally consisted of seven: the three theological virtues plus the four cardinal virtues. Little more can be found in our ritual that explains why it is a significant number to us. To understand its significance to Freemasonry we must look at its significance in other cultures and systems and how they relate to our symbolism.

Reference to the significance to the number seven can be found in nearly every ancient religion. In the Holy Bible, Noah had seven days notice of the rain that brought the flood. The animals were brought onto the ark in sevens. The ark came to rest on Mt. Ararat in the seventh month. The doves were sent from the ark in intervals of seven days. Solomon built his Temple in seven years and it was dedicated in the seventh month, the feast lasting seven days.

The number seven was also predominant through the ancient systems. For example, there were seven ancient planets. The sun was the greatest and central planet of the ancient seven and thought to have been represented in the center of the seven-branched candlestick of the Tabernacle. Of the seven days of the week, one was known as Sol’s day, or Sunday. Anciently, the Sun was said to be the son of Saturn and followed his father’s day, Saturday.

As Masons, perhaps the most compelling explanation of the importance of the number seven comes from the great Pythagoras. He and his followers the Pythagoreans, who were influenced



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by mathematics and mysticism, called seven the perfect number because it was made up of three and four, representing the triangle and the square, which they considered to be two perfect figures. The square here refers to the four-sided geometric shape that the working tool of the same name is derived from. It reminds us of the virtuous behavior of a Mason. The triangle has long been a symbol for Deity and to the observant Mason can be found in many of our symbols. The triangle then reminds Masons of every-present Grand Architect of the Universe that pervades all aspects of our lives.

There are many more references to the number seven and its meaning throughout history and what is listed here represents a very small portion of them and there are as many interpretations as there are references.

To understand why seven is important to us as Freemasons, we must understand how its significance to other cultures influenced our symbolism. The symbolism of Freemasonry evolved over many years and though it is rooted in the working tools of the stone mason, it is comprised of pieces of moral and philosophical teachings from nearly every ancient culture and religion. Reviewing how and why these cultures revered the number seven, it becomes easy to understand why we, as Masons, hold it in such high esteem.

Although the specific Masonic references may seem minimal, its impact is anything but. Our adoration for the Grand Architect of the Universe, the wisdom we draw from the Volume of Sacred Law, our admiration towards the seven liberal arts and sciences, including the science of geometry, and many of the principals and tenets we hold dear can be traced to the esteem the number seven has held throughout history.

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Grand Lodge Free and Accepted Masons of Wisconsin



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Discussion Questions

The following discussion questions are written to be presented immediately following the presentation of the topic above. There is no right or wrong answers to these questions, they are designed to promote thought and engage all the members that are present in conversation. Take care that the presentation of the topic and the discussion questions does not exceed 30 minutes. The presenter can present any part of the questions below, or any additional questions, he feels is appropriate.

- What are some of the other references to the number seven in our ritual?
- What are some other instances of esteem for the number seven?
- When looking at the principals and tenets of Freemasonry, what are some that seem to have come from other sources?
- How has some of the explanations of the number seven impacted your life?
- Are there other meanings of the number seven not represented here?
- Besides the number seven, there are several other numbers that are significant to Freemasons. What are some of them and how are they represented in our ritual or our symbolism?