

THE COMPASS OR THE CROSS

AN INTERVIEW WITH DUANE WASHUM BY KEVIN A. WASHINGTON

“All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.” I Corinthians 6:12

There are times as Christians that we may want to belong to an organization such as a fraternity, sorority, or a lodge. Because of our walk with God and our commitment to Him, we question whether it is okay as a Christian or whether our walk will be compromised.

These are very real and serious questions that many people face during their Christian experience. Should we as Christians be limited to what social group or organization we belong to? Many brothers in the Lord have asked me this question concerning Freemasonry. I've been told of the good works that the Masons do, their love of community, and their commitment to each other. However, with all of this in mind, should a Christian belong to one?

I sought to find the answer to the questions that I was being asked by talking with a born again believer who used to be a member of a Masonic Lodge. My search led me to Duane Washum. Duane Washum was once a member of a Masonic Lodge ranking as high as “Worshipful Master”. He performed and oversaw the performance of many of the ritualistic proceedings in his local lodge. He has since founded a ministry called Ex-Masons for Jesus, which is a ministry for Christians who have left Freemasonry or one of the affiliated Masonic organizations such as Eastern Starr.

What is the attraction to Freemasonry for Men?

As a youngster, it seemed to me that virtually all the “pillars of the community” were Masons. I had no idea of what went on in a Masonic lodge room, but judging from the caliber of men known to be Masons, I felt as though it must have been something pretty special. My dad was one of those “pillars of the community”, and he was a Mason.

Why are so many Christian Men drawn to Freemasonry?

Generally, I believe it narrows down to five reasons a goodly number of men have for becoming Masons:

- Family members are Masons; it is a “family tradition”.
- Good friends are Masons.
- It would help to advance one’s career.
- Attraction to the philanthropies of the various Masonic bodies.
- Perhaps most of all, man’s natural need for a sense of belonging.

What were some of the internal conflicts that you had with your Christian walk and Freemasonry?

First of all, let’s talk about my alleged “Christian walk” while I was in the Lodge: my claim to being a Christian in those days was that I was on the membership rolls of a church, I had been immersed in a baptistry, and I owned a Bible with my name stamped on the cover of it. I went to church in spurts, and was known to drop a five dollar bill into the offering plate now and then – sometimes it was a ten dollar bill if I was feeling exceptionally “religious”. I only “talked the talk” on occasion, and I cannot honestly say that I was ever “walking the walk”. At best, I was “a work in progress”. The Holy Spirit did, even in those days, give me a conscience. I believe we know that term, more accurately, as being conviction.

I had an encounter with a Past Master who was also a Grand Lodge officer. He was often heard to use the Lord’s name in vain during lodge. I harshly confronted him about it one evening, and the vast majority of the men who talked to me later, seemed to be far more concerned about that man’s elevated stature in Masonry, than about what they all were used to hearing him say. This was probably the first of my concerns.

During the year I was Chaplain, I was admonished for praying in the name of Jesus Christ while saying grace before a potluck dinner at the lodge. It was then, and only then, that I first gave strict attention to the fact that terms such as “Father”, “Great Architect Of The Universe”, and “Most Holy and Glorious Lord God”, were used; but never did you hear “Jesus Christ”, or “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit”. I suppose it’s pretty much like not seeing the forest for the trees. I had assumed that the titles used in Masonic prayers were always, and exclusively, calling upon the only True and Living God. I found out that night, that this was not the case. When I mentioned the fact that it was the Holy Bible on our altar, I was also informed that it could just as easily be the Koran, or some other religion’s writings – that they all represented a “Volume of Sacred Law”, and that whatever book was on the altar, including the Bible, was only a symbol of that VSL.

The blood oaths themselves began to bother me. One is caused to verbally place himself under penalty of torturous death if he ever reveals the secrets of Masonry. Such oaths are covered, first of all, in Matthew 5:33-37. Further, in Leviticus, we find it to be a sin to swear to matters that we don't even know of yet. That is certainly the case in Masonry when you swear to never reveal that which you have not yet been exposed to.

And for those who contend that the penalties of the obligations are never intended to be carried out, this doesn't remedy the problem of oaths at all. It only confirms that the oaths are frivolous, constituting using the Lord's name frivolously.

What is the hold that Freemasonry has on Men once they join the organization?

I think, for the most part, this varies with each individual. I was pretty much engulfed in a negative situation on several counts. Most of the males in my family – dad, uncles, cousins, brother, etc.— were all Masons. Many of the men I worked with were Masons. Because of Masonry being such a large part of my life for several years, it became a situation where most of my “friends” were Masons. This can be difficult to walk away from. Then, there is the matter of pride. It is very difficult for some men to admit they have made a mistake, especially one as grievous as becoming involved in an organization that is certainly antithetical to the teachings of the Christian faith.

I would like to say this for the benefit of your readers. If there are any of you who are members of the Masonic Order, and who are considering leaving the Lodge, I won't candy-coat it for you. I was much of an outcast in my own family, save for my wife and children, who have always been by my side, and who were supportive of my leaving the Lodge. The “friends” I had in Masonry – men who at one time called me “brother” - would no longer speak to me; they, in fact, were urging others to shun me. These were things I weighed in my heart for several days before making my final decision to leave the lodge.

What it all boiled down to is putting things in proper perspective, and I know of no better way of doing this than reading God's Written Word. I thought of the 22nd Psalm, David's prophetic look to the tortures and agonies of my Lord and Savior dying on the cross for me. I visited the Gospels, where they gave an additional look at the beatings and humiliation our Lord and Savior was put through, beginning with His torturous inquisition, right on through His last breath as He was crucified for me. Once this was firmly refreshed in my mind, I knew there was no way I would be able to stand before Him one day and say, “Lord, I wanted to leave the Lodge. I truly did want to leave it; but You have no idea how tough that would have been on me.” I knew, at that moment, “It isn't about me; it's about Jesus.”

What is the impact of the Church itself when Pastors, Deacons, and others leaders are members of organizations such as Freemasonry?

I believe that any person who claims to be both a Christian and a Mason is severely compromised in his witness as a Christian. By their very membership in the Masonic Order, far too many of our church leaders are serving no other purpose but that of a Judas goat, leading lambs to slaughter. I do not contend that such men are doing this consciously. I do believe, however, that once such men (church leaders) are confronted with the truth about Freemasonry, they are then confronted with the choice God freely gives to all of us to either accept Him or reject Him. And there is no way that a person who accepts the syncretistic false religion of Freemasonry, giving credence to it by his very membership in the Masonic Order, can possibly claim himself to be one who has truly accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.

How do you minister to a Christian who is a Mason?

I think, first of all, it is a mistake to assume that all whose names appear on the membership rolls of a church are Christians. Dr. Adrian Rogers delivered a powerful sermon on August 3, 2005, titled, 'The Counterfeit Christian'. If it is still available in the archives of his website, I highly recommend that all who have internet access listen to it.

I have become a firm believer in Christian apologetics, when it comes to witnessing to men who profess the Christian faith. I believe this is especially effective when it comes to what a person's own church has to say in its doctrinal statements about who God is, and what one must do to be saved. This must then become the yard stick by which we measure what Masonry teaches.

Masonry teaches that its "Great Architect Of The Universe" (GAOTU) is an all-encompassing "god" of sorts in which all men of all religions, who gather together around a common altar, are supposedly able to find their own "god" regardless of what they call it. Because Masonry accepts men of all beliefs, this would necessarily include Allah, Krishna, Vishnu, even Lucifer, Baal, and Ra. Further, Masonry's salvific teachings are based on works, not faith in Jesus Christ. Masonry claims that which is "essentially necessary" for gaining admission into heaven is "a purity of life and rectitude of conduct." The universalistic approach of Freemasonry – a syncretism, or blending, of religions - places the emphasis on works and rejects the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

When these heretical teachings are presented to a Christian with scripture to back up our claims of them being heretical teachings, it must then be up to the "Christian" Mason to either accept the Truth of God's Word, or accept the heresies of the Lodge... we cannot serve both God and mammon.

Were there any ramifications to you for leaving Freemasonry? If so, what were they?

It was a “coincidence”, at the very least, that soon after I left the Lodge, I was “laid off” from a project that was employing hundreds of electricians at the time. It also happened to be a project that had a substantial number of Masons in supervisory positions. There was a two-man "reduction in force" – one was a man who was retiring; I was the other one. But that was good. Within a few days I was contacted by a bi-vocational pastor who was also an electrician. He knew of my situation. He came over to my home, prayed with me, and asked me to give my personal testimony at one of his church gatherings. So, you see, eventhough this might have been considered as a ramification, that is only in the eyes of those who felt they were punishing me for leaving the Lodge. In truth, it was God’s plan, not their’s. Without the loss of employment, I would have been hard-pressed to find the time to prepare for delivering my testimony. This proved to be the first function of my ministry of witnessing to the body of Christ. Thank you, Lord.

How did Ex-Masons for Jesus come about?

“Ex-Masons For Jesus” was formed several years ago by two former Masons, Charlie Wiley and Tom Hilton, who met at a “Ministry To Masons” Conference. It was two men who had one thing in common: they had necessarily left Freemasonry in order to walk in the Light that is Jesus Christ.

What is your vision for this Ministry?

The website for “Ex-Masons For Jesus” is found at “www.emfj.org”. Our Ministry Vision is stated there, the crux of which is, *We seek to expose the non-Christian nature of the teachings of Freemasonry and to make ourselves available to witness and testify of our firsthand knowledge. Our purpose is to encourage others to renounce Freemasonry and through education, to prevent still others from being seduced into joining.*

We know that only the Holy Spirit can convict. However, we serve Him as seed planters by revealing the truth of Freemasonry’s incompatibility with the Christian faith. He does the harvesting.

Are there any articles that a Christian who is thinking about joining a lodge could read?

My paper titled, 'The Lambskin Apron and the Great White Throne' is published on the *Saints Alive in Jesus* website. This deals with the explanation of the symbolism of the lambskin apron the candidate receives on the night of his initiation. It can be found at:

“http://www.saintsalive.com/freemasonry/masonic_apron.htm”.

There are numerous other articles at that site regarding Freemasonry, as well as at the websites I am most closely associated with - Ex Masons For Jesus and Ephesians 5:11, Inc., located at

“<http://www.ephesians5-11.org>”.

There is also an excellent book available, ‘Masonic Rites and Wrongs’ by Dr. Steven Tsoukalas. I have the continuing privilege of working with Steve, who is an adjunct professor at Asbury Theological Seminary. His book first addresses the issue of why we rightly state that Freemasonry is a religion. It then goes on to discuss, in detail, the three degrees of blue lodge Masonry, and the additional degrees of the Scottish Rite. If there is only one book a person can afford to buy, I strongly urge that it be this one.

I invite your readers to write to me at washum@emfj.org with any concerns they might have, for which I could possibly provide other resource materials.

Why is a ministry such as Ex-Masons for Jesus important to Men who are coming out of Freemasonry?

It’s a two-pronged ministry. For one thing, we offer support to each other, and this can often be an ongoing process for several years. I do quite a bit of video work, through Ephesians 5:11, Inc. For several years, Larry Kunk of “E5-11” wanted to do a video of ritual re-enactment. It wasn’t until about 4 years ago that I was finally able to take part in something like that. I had spent so much time beating myself up over having administered the blood oaths of Masonry to literally dozens of men, that any time the matter came up, I was burdened with a tremendously huge guilt trip. It would sometimes bring me to tears of guilt. I have pretty much gotten over that now. For some men, they are reluctant to discuss any part of ritual with others, because they continue to be in bondage. They come out of Freemasonry knowing it to be wrong, but they don’t feel comfortable with witnessing to others about rituals because of the oaths they took as Masons. We try to offer support to men, showing them, through Christian apologetics, that Masonic oaths are only binding if we want them to be; and that God has taken those burdens from us. In essence, when we hang onto such burdens, we are fighting God instead of letting Him take those burdens of guilt from us.

The other aspect of our ministry is to provide information on matters of heresy taught by the Lodge that might not have been realized at the time some of these men leave the lodge. There were things pertaining to ritual that were not fully revealed to me until after I left Freemasonry. A few years ago, the Lord laid it on my heart to put a presentation together dealing with the counterfeit baptism that is conducted during the second section of the Master Mason degree. This is usually known as the Legend of Hiram Abif. During the re-enactment of the Legend, the candidate, while portraying this fictitious character of Masonic lore, is caused symbolically to undergo death, burial, and resurrection. Even though this had been one of the matters of concern I began to ponder while still a Mason (I left Freemasonry in 1984), it was several years later (1998) before God revisited the Legend with me and said, "Witness about this." A former Mason once told me that he had never fully understood the true meaning of that part of Masonic ritual until he saw the evidence I presented in the presentation the Lord led me to. We also have written of the several other symbolisms of Freemasonry that one needs to realize as being salvific in nature.

Are there scriptures that someone who is currently in Freemasonry or contemplating joining Freemasonry could read to give them direction?

Absolutely. The problem with citing scriptures is that there are so many of them. But I look to two very basic passages that pretty much say it all, regarding the teachings of Freemasonry. Consider that Freemasonry states its "Great Architect Of The Universe" to be a symbol, representative of whatever any of its members want it to be, and contrast that to Exodus 20:1-5:

And God spake all these words, saying, I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

Consider that Freemasonry teaches that its lambskin apron represents, "that purity of life and rectitude of conduct which is so essentially necessary for gaining admission into the Celestial Lodge above, where the Supreme Architect of the Universe presides." This salvific teaching is a works-based salvation, which flies in the face of John 14:6: Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. †

RESOURCES:

“<http://www.ephesians5-11.org>”

“http://www.saintsalive.com/freemasonry/masonic_apron.htm”

“www.emfj.org”

Duane Washum’s email address: washum@emfj.org