

Masonic Minutes – December Two

The Two Pillars of the Porch

The structure and symbolism of a Lodge Hall is drawn from a representation of the Temple of Solomon and it provides a working foundation for the Craft. In the historical descriptions of the Temple of Solomon are references to the Two Pillars of the Porch that serve to adorn and support the door to the Temple. Representations of these Two Pillars are typically present in every Lodge, and we normally pass by them without much notice. It is common in Freemasonry that the use of a symbol has many meanings. No doubt there are additional meanings and subtleties to these pillars some of which can be demonstrated in the next few minutes. What follows is a brief description of what is illustrated before you in your own Lodge, and it is hoped that you will stop to reflect on these ancient traditions and begin your own research.

Pillars have been regarded through time as structures that reflect the knowledge and achievements of man while honoring the Great Architect. While individual pillars are found prolifically through time, the use of the twin pillars is unique and sets the Two Pillars of the Porch apart from others in history. Imagine yourself in the west end of the Lodge Hall during the Second Section of the Second Degree as if you were entering King Solomon's Temple so that the pillar on your left is North and the pillar on the right is South.

Enoch – an extraordinarily early use of the Two Pillar concept comes to us in the first book of Antiquities of the Jews by Josephus where he describes that Enoch used Two Pillars to protect the knowledge that was found by mankind. It was foretold to Adam that the world would be destroyed twice, once by fire and once by water. Enoch was the grandson of Adam through Seth, and he placed the knowledge of man in a pillar of brick to protect from the fire, and a pillar of stone (some references say brass) to protect from the flood. Using pillars to house and protect knowledge is directly seen in the work of the Craft.

Moses – as Moses passed through the wilderness he was led by a Pillar of Fire by Night and a Pillar of Cloud by day. The use of the Two Pillars by King Solomon is said by some to carry forth the remembrance of these two great pillars as described in the Bible.

Strength and Beauty – for Freemasons the Two Pillars are the representation of strength and beauty, but they also support the canopy of heaven under the sky of a harmonious Blue Lodge. This is very symbolic in the joining together of several pieces of Freemasonry, which is ultimately found in the naming of each of the Twin Pillars. (As Missouri Ritual indicates these names in cipher, we will omit the names of the pillars.) The Masonic names of the pillar to the North and the pillar to the South, give us the ability to find the meaning for which King Solomon has established the Temple. It also bears mentioning that Solomon is said to have secured scrolls of knowledge within these pillars, just as Enoch did before the flood.

The Holy Saints John – the pillar to the North is given to Saint John the Baptist, and the pillar to the South is given to Saint John the Evangelist. As the Masonic North is said to be dark, the example of Saint John the Baptist gives us the faith to walk through darkness with a belief in God. The Masonic South provides us with exposure to the fullness of light and the use of Saint John the Evangelist represents the knowledge we obtain from God to walk in Enlightenment.

As we come to the end of this discussion, we arrive back to the most ancient of times with one of the most ancient of all symbols, the point within a circle. This is often shown with a set of parallel lines on either side, which represents the solstice of the summer and the solstice of the winter, with Saint John the Baptist to the North (left) and Saint John the Evangelist (right), and the Holy writing as the canopy of heaven across the top. Standing at the west of the Lodge with the pillars to the north and south of the altar, the symbolism of the Two Pillars and the diurnal cycle as the sun rises in the east, might give you new perspectives as you look at these symbols of your Lodge.

