

Sharing Life, Sharing Faith Discussion #12

I. The Angels

The word “Angel” comes from the Greek word, **ἄγγελος** *angelos*, which simply means “messenger”. (In Hebrew there is a similar word used: **מַלְאָךְ** *malach*, which also means “messenger” and is used in the same way as the Greek word)

There is an argument that states that since the doctrine of the angels is not central to the saving message of Jesus Christ, it is not important, or is not a doctrine at all. After all, we are brought into saving faith through Jesus Christ and His sacrifice on our behalf, not on whether or not we believe in angels. However, keep in mind that the angels are an integral part of the scriptures, and if they weren’t important, God would not have included them in His word.

But when a man has become a Christian and reads the Bible, he will find in it, from Genesis to Revelation, the doctrine of the angels, side by side with the central article of Christ, the Savior of sinners. And it certainly requires a great deal of inconsistency for him to accept the doctrine of Christ and reject the doctrine of the angels. ¹ **(Francis Pieper)**

The angel of the LORD found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur. **(Gen. 16:7)**

The angel answered, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. **(Luke 1:19)**

A. The Existence of Angels and the Time of Their Creation

From Genesis to Revelation Scripture bears witness to the existence of angels. On the basis of this testimony of scripture, and not on the basis of reasons of probability, we believe that there are angels. On the basis of Scripture, the Christian Church has a doctrine of the angels.²

They were created within the hexaemeron. They were not created before the universe, because before the universe there was only God **(John 1:1-3)**. They were not created after the universe, because after the creation of the universe God “rested from all His work” **(Gen. 2:2-3)**. On which day of the hexaemeron they were created cannot be determined with certainty, because Scripture is silent on this point. ³

B. The Nature of Angels

The angels are spirits, that is, immaterial beings. The scriptures show us that they possess intellect and will. They are powerful beings, and include both good, ministering angels as well as the evil angels, including Satan himself.

Praise the LORD, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word. **(Psalm 103:20)**

...and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels.

(2 Thessalonians 1:7)

We are told that the angels are spirits. However, there are occasions where angels have taken on the appearance of men to serve a specific purpose. This does not change the fact that we are told that they are beings of spirit without physical bodies.

The LORD appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground....Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way-- now that you have come to your servant." "Very well," they answered, "do as you say." **(Gen. 18:1-2,5)**

C. **Good And Evil Angels**

Originally all angels were positively good, not merely morally indifferent or even with a proclivity toward evil. Since the angels were created within the six days, God's verdict of "very good" **(Gen. 1:31)** necessarily applies also to the angels. The existence of two classes of angels, good and evil, is due to the fact that some of the angels did not remain in the *status originalis*, but fell away from God into sin. ⁴

We cannot determine the exact time when some of the angels fell. We know, however, that the fall of the angels occurred before the fall of man, since man fell through the seduction of the devil **(Gen. 3:1-14)** ⁵

1. **Good Angels and their Activities**

"See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven." **(Matthew 18:10)**

The good angels are confirmed in the good and are in the state of bliss. Their bliss consists in the beatific vision of God. During their ministrations on earth they always behold the face of God **(Matthew 18:10)**. With the vision of God is most intimately united the most fervent love of God; whoever beholds God cannot but love Him as the highest good. And so the will of the good angels coincides constantly and perfectly with the will of God; the sole object of their entire activity is the accomplishment of the good. ⁶ **(Francis Pieper)**

2. **Evil Angels and their Activities**

The activities of the evil angels are...evil throughout. Scriptures describes them, for our information and warning, very clearly and in full detail. All endeavors of the wicked angels are aimed at harming man in his body **(Luke 13:11,16)** in his temporal possessions **(Job 1:12)** and particularly in the soul **(I Peter 5:8)** ⁷

and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all...Then should not this woman, a

daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?" **(Luke 13:11,16)**

The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger." Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD. **(Job 1:12)**

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. **(I Peter 5:8)**

The activity of the evil angels against the Church is portrayed fully in Scripture. According to **Matt. 16:18**, "the gates of hell" are continually waging war against the Church, and it is Christ alone who preserves the Church against the onslaughts of the powers of hell.⁸

And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. **(Matthew 16:18)**

The punishment of the evil angels is eternal torment in the fire of hell. **(Matt 25:41)**⁹

"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. **(Matthew 25:41)**

Finally, we should bear in mind that all that the Bible says of the evil angels and their eternal punishment serves the ends of divine compassion. Its purpose is to impress on men the necessity of repentance and of faith in Him who by His blood ransomed mankind not for hell, but for heaven.¹⁰ **(Francis Pieper)**

II. Masonry and the Lodge¹¹

A. History and Organization of the Lodge

The organization was founded in 1717 by two clergymen, Dr. James Anderson, a Presbyterian, and Dr. John Theophilus Deaguliers, an Anglican.

Masons, in spite of historical fact, will tell you that their organization is very old, that it goes back to Old Testament times. They state that "masons" were involved in the building of Solomon's temple, so that therefore, they know the true form of worship from that time. They claim historical figures such as John the Baptist, John the Evangelist, and Noah, among others, were "Masons". That, of course, is not true.

However, 15 presidents have been masons. These are Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, Jackson, Polk, Buchanan, Johnson, Garfield, McKinley, T. Roosevelt, Taft, Harding, F.D. Roosevelt, and Truman. It is possible that Pierce and Taylor were also mason, and it is claimed that Lincoln and Grant had both studied masonry but died before completing the necessary steps for membership.

Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, was also a mason, and many of the teachings of Mormonism came directly from the Lodge and its ceremonies and practices.

In the United States, the basic organization is the **Blue Lodge**. The Blue Lodge has three basic degrees which must be obtained, the **Entered Apprentice**, **Fellow Craft**, and **Master Mason**. Once a participant has achieved these three degrees, he may choose to continue along one of two paths, the Scottish Rite or the York Rite. The **Scottish Rite** has 30 degrees. With the three degrees of the Blue Lodge, this makes 33 the highest degree attainable. It is called the “Official Grade”, and is honorary. A Mason who earns the 32nd degree can be admitted to the side order of Masonry called **Shriner**. The **York Rite** has 10 degrees, the highest of which is the **Order of Knights Templar**.

Other affiliated **Side Orders** of masonry include the **Tall Cedars in Lebanon**, the **Acacia Fraternity**, the **Knights of the Red Cross** of Constantine, **White Shrine of Jerusalem**, **Order of Amaranth**, **Daughters of the Nile**, **Daughters of Mokanna**, the **Order of the Eastern Star**, **Order of the Builders**, **Order of Demolay**, **Order of Job’s Daughter’s**, and the **Order of the Rainbow**.

Each local lodge is led by a **Worshipful Master**. This is an autocratic position, and the holder of this position is in complete control over the lodge.

B. Teachings of the Lodge

To be eligible for membership, a person must have a belief in some form of “god”. Atheists are not eligible. However, the candidate must not state exactly in which “god” he or she believes, only that there is belief of some kind.

The creed of the lodge is basic works righteousness... live a good life and you will go to heaven.

An initiate to the lodge is given a lambskin apron to wear, symbolizing innocence and the purity of living a good life. From the Louisiana Masonic Monitor, pp. 44-45”

“The Lamb has in all ages been deemed an emblem of innocence. By the lambskin, therefore, the Mason is reminded of that purity of life and conduct which is essential to his gaining admission to the Celestial Lodge above, where the Supreme Architect of the Universe presides.”

Each lodge has three essential pieces of furniture which exemplify its teachings and are referred to as **the three great lights of Masonry**. These are the **Square**, the **Compass**, and the **Sacred Book**. The square is what a carpenter uses to measure right angles, and the compass is used by draftsmen to inscribe circles. Together, they symbolize the necessity of keeping one’s life “square” and circumscribed in harmony with others. The Sacred Book is whatever volume a particular lodge recognizes as Holy. It can be the Bible, the Torah, the Qur’an, or any other such book. It doesn’t matter what it is, it is never actually read, but is symbolic only.

Another symbol of masonic teaching is the **Ashlar**, as stone taken from the quarry which is unworked, rough and jagged. It’s purpose is to remind masons that human nature is “imperfect”. This is not the same as saying humans are sinful, they do not believe this. We are merely imperfect, and therefore, if one works hard enough, he may gain perfection.

C. The Theology of the Lodge

Lodge members claim to practice ancient religion in its most pure form. However, it is essentially Universalism, in that they believe that no religion has absolute truth, that god is whoever you personally perceive him to be. They do not call upon the name of God in any way, and most specifically, they deny the Triune God, Father Son and Holy Spirit. When they must refer to a god, they call him the *Great Architect of the Universe*. The secret name for god, which is whispered only in secret ceremonies and must never be said out loud, is *Mah-Ha-Bone*. However, in the *Christian Degree*, another secret name of god has been rediscovered. It is *Jah-Bul-On*. Jah is from the Hebrew name Jahwey, Bul is from the Assyrian god Baal, and On is from the Egyptian Sun god.

Masonry teaches that each man can, by himself, work out his own conception of god and thereby achieve salvation in the celestial lodge of the Great Architect. They do believe that the soul is immortal. However, the process of perfecting oneself will continue in the afterlife in some sort of eternal progression, much as in Mormonism. There is a belief that perfection is possible, given enough hard work.

Jesus Christ has no place in this theology. Since each person is merely imperfect, and can work out his own salvation by good living, there is no need for a savior of any kind. Oddly enough, in spite of this teaching, many so-called Christians are active masons, including many clergymen of many denominations.

Prayers are offered, but not in the name of any god. They explain this by saying,

“Failure to mention any deity by name is not denial, but merely the practice of a gracious courtesy, so that each man for whom prayer is offered can hear the name of his own deity in the all inclusive title of Great Architect”
(Short Talk Bulletin, 36:8)¹²

In other words, prayers offered in the name of Jesus Christ are not permitted! This means they are not Christian! Most so-called Christians who join the lodge, do not seem to be bothered by this contradiction. Rather, they feel that they can worship God in both ways, in a very Universalism manner. Some also feel that the business and social advantages are more important than professing faith in Jesus Christ.

“But the religion of Masonry is not sectarian. It admits men of every creed within its hospitable bosom, rejecting none and approving none for his peculiar faith. It is not Judaism, though there is nothing in it to offend a Jew; it is not Christianity, but there is nothing in it repugnant to the faith of a Christian. It's religion is that general one of nature and primitive revelation - handed down to us from some ancient and patriarchal priesthood, - in which all men may agree and in which no men can differ. It inculcates the practice of virtue, but it supplies no scheme of redemption for sin. It points its disciples to the path of righteousness, but it does not claim to be ‘the way, the truth, and the life’. In so far, therefore, it cannot become a substitute for Christianity, but its tendency is thitherward; and as the handmaid of religion, it may, and often does, act as the porch that introduces its votaries into the temple of divine truth. Masonry, then,

is indeed a religious institution; and on this ground mainly, if not alone, should the religiousMason defend it.”¹³

D. Oaths and Secrecy in the Lodge

Lodge members swear an oath to come to the aid of any fellow lodge member, even if he is in the wrong! It is also common to practice discriminatory business practices, with preference given to lodge members.

Another oath masons make requires that they always conceal and never reveal what goes on in the lodge. There are serious penalties involved for those who do reveal the secrets of the lodge. This secrecy even extends to spouses, pastors, and all people outside the lodge, which puts a barrier between him and all people who are not members.

Lodge members must take an oath of secrecy before they are told what it is they must keep secret. They are told these things later, when they have already taken the oath, and there are great penalties involved for those who decide later that they don't want to be part of it, which makes it very difficult for people to leave when they discover they have been manipulated.

The book, “Masonry Defined, Information Every Mason Should Have”, by Dr. Albert G. Mackey, a 33° Mason, describes this oath with these words. Note that they also describe the death penalty to be executed in a specific way for failure to keep the oath.

“He then takes the following obligation:

“I, _____, do in the presence of El Shaddai and of this worshipful assembly of Freemasons, Rough Masons, Wallers, Slaters, Paviers, Plasterers and Bricklayers, promise and declare that I will not at any time hereafter, by any act or circumstance whatsoever, directly or indirectly, write, print, cut, mark, publish, discover, reveal or make known any part or parts of the trade secrets, priviledges or councils of the Worshipful Fraternity or Fellowship of Freemasonry, which I may have known at any time, or at any time hereafter shall be made known unto me.

“The penalty for breaking this great oath shall abe the loss of my life.

“That I shall be branded with the mark of the traitor and slain according to ancient customs by being throatalled * * * SO THAT MY SOUL SHOULD HAVE NO REST BY NIGHT OR DAY.”¹⁴

E. Witnessing to Lodge Members

The oaths and secrecy surrounding the lodge make it very difficult to witness to these people. In-depths discussions and conversations about faith will be difficult, if not impossible, because of the secrecy oaths. This is a true barrier to sharing our faith. However, keep in mind that the Holy Spirit can overcome even this, and He will most definitely work through you and as you proclaim the word of God to them, even if you don't see it happening. Remember to be a real friend, and be patient with them, and loving.

Keep in mind that these people have a very shallow understanding of real Christianity. They may think they are Christians, but it is because they do not understand the exclusive nature of God. General discussions about the person of Jesus Christ may be helpful.

The person generally has a lot invested in the lodge. By the time he has paid his membership, taken the oaths, and entered the fraternal atmosphere, his pride will make it very difficult for him to admit to an error in judgment. Be patient. Try not to make the person defensive, for that will only solidify his error.

Remember too that the consequences of leaving the lodge are tremendous. It can effect that person's very livelihood, through blacklists in the business world, and shunning by prominent members. This makes it extremely difficult for a person to consider leaving, even if they come to realize that its teachings are wrong.

Remember once again that, in spite of all these difficulties, there are a few people who manage to leave the lodge. God can and does call people to Himself. These people need to hear our message just as every other sinner in the world does.

Remember your law and gospel! The law convicts, and lets them know that they cannot reach God through their own efforts. The gospel then offers God's forgiveness and salvation through Jesus Christ and his sacrifice for us.

III. Outside Reading - Study Guide on Angels by Rev. Bolland

IV. Summary and Conclusion of the Program

A. Scenarios Summary

The whole idea of all our scenarios has been to learn that we can witness most effectively through our friendships. However, in order for that to happen, we must be genuine friends. That means caring about them sincerely, and listening to them without putting conditions on our friendship. Let your conversations be natural. Pray for God to give you opportunities in those conversations to share your faith. He will surely do so!

We have learned to recognize the beliefs systems of various non-Christian groups in our world and community. We have learned also to recognize when a person does not acknowledge his sinful nature, and therefore needs to hear law, and when a person has been convicted by the law and needs to hear the gospel. Rightly dividing law and gospel is the key to sharing our faith, so continue learning this distinction from Pastor Bolland, by listening to his sermons, and observing his teachings, both in **what** he teaches and **how** he teaches.

B. Sharing Life, Sharing Faith... What next?

Congratulations! You have completed the curriculum for our Sharing Life Sharing Faith program. However, this is not the end, but merely the beginning. If you desire, you are invited to become involved as a leader of another group. By teaching this material to others, you will find that you learn even more than you did as a participant.

Whether or not you continue formally with the program, please keep your manuals for reference. The journals, too, are yours to continue documenting your experiences, concerns, and encounters and conversations with others. Your other group members, as well as Pastor Bolland, are always available to discuss situations you may encounter, to help you in your witness to your friends and neighbors.

The Bible you have been given is yours. God works on the hearts of unbelievers through His means of grace, the Word. Keep this Bible so that when God gives you an opportunity to speak with someone about the word, you will have a Bible to give to them.

God has given you the desire to share your faith with others. Remember that while God is preparing opportunities for you to share your faith, He is also busy preparing others to hear your words, that through His grace, their hearts may be changed from unbelief to faith. May God continue to bless you, to strengthen your faith, and in your witness of the wonderful message, the joy and peace we know through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

¹ Pieper, Francis, “Christian Dogmatics”, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO, Vol. I, pg 498

² Ibid, pg 498

³ Ibid, pg 499

⁴ Ibid, pg 504-505

⁵ Ibid, pg 505

⁶ Ibid, pg 506

⁷ Ibid, pg 508-509

⁸ Ibid, pg 510

⁹ Ibid, pg 510

¹⁰ Ibid, pg 511

¹¹ Rongstad, L. James, “How to Respond: The Lodge”, © 1995, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis MO - information from this section taken primarily from this work

¹² Ibid, pg 40

¹³ Mackey, Dr. Albert G, 33°, “Masonry Defined”, © 1925 Masonic Supply Co., Lippincott Publishers, pp 250-251

¹⁴ Ibid, pg 355