

MARK WELL THE ENTERING IN OF THE HOUSE



It has often been emphasized that Masonry is NOT a religion. But we require every candidate to profess a belief in Deity, and a Lodge in session has an open copy of the Holy Writings on its altar. In every degree of Masonry with which I am familiar, quotations from the Bible are a part of the ritual. So I see no problem in using a verse of Scripture as a point of departure for a matter I wish to discuss with the objective of stimulating thought on your part.

In one of the degrees of the York Rite, the following is read from the 44th Chapter of the Old Testament book of Ezekiel: "And the Lord said unto me, Son of man, mark well, and behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears all that I have to say to thee concerning the ordinances of the house of the Lord, and all the laws thereof; and mark well the entering in of the house, with every going forth of the sanctuary.

In our own day and time there is much "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth" over our declining membership, and the difficulty of getting and keeping willing and capable workers and leaders in our various Masonic bodies. To become a Mason, a man must first express an interest, petition, be investigated and be elected by a unanimous ballot. But it appears that many become members who have little or no qualification except a signed petition and a check for the amount of the fees. Investigating committees too often do little or no investigating. It would seem that we have been too interested in numbers of dues-paying members, and not sufficiently interested in our Lodges and other bodies being made of groups of people dedicated to the principles of Masonry and recognized by the community at large as moral and outstanding citizens, to whom people can point with pride. I remember vividly some 40 years ago when I was a young Mason that the wife of a non-Masonic friend of mine told my wife that, when she was a girl, her father told her that if she was ever in any trouble or danger, she should go to any man wearing a Masonic pin, and he would help and protect her. But she went on to say that she would not trust her daughters near of lot of men she now saw wearing Masonic insignia. What a pity!

It has been my privilege in recent years to be a member of a Masonic body, which happens to be related to the York Rite, in which the number of members is strictly limited, and in which membership is by invitation only. I am intensely proud of that affiliation, and try to live up to its principles and actively support it. There are such limited membership groups elsewhere in Masonry, and I feel sure their members are equally proud and active.

Referring back to the passage quoted from Ezekiel, we are exhorted to "mark well" the entrance to the temple. The phrase "mark well" has been paraphrased in some newer translations as "take heed to" or "look carefully to." "It seems to me that if Masonry is to continue as a viable force in today's world, we are going to have to forget the "numbers game" and look for quality in our membership, in order that we may have the respect of the community and show by our lives the moral principles about which we learn more and more as we take part in the various branches of Masonry.

The purpose of a church is or should be to change the lives of people, to start them in the right direction in their lives and then to help and encourage them to continue in that path. As Masons we are in the business, or we should be, of taking good moral men and making them better through our moral teachings. Just as those in a church or synagogue should be constantly growing in their faith and works, so we, if we are true Masons, must grow in the knowledge and practice of the moral teachings in our rites. In that way, we can set an example in our communities and in the world which should improve this troubled world in which we live. May the Supreme Architect of the universe guide us to do just that!

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