



# *The Grand Lodge of Virginia*

## *Ancient Free and Accepted Masons*



### On the Immortality of the Soul

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It is this time of the year that the earth sheds its winter coat and embraces Spring filled with new life. But what is the value of life?

Spring returns every year like the hands of the clock, round and round it goes until it returns to the place from which it began. The years go by; seasons come and go and life changes in ways that at times we cannot predict.

The earth remains fixed in its orbit and it never lags behind. Rain falls to the earth and the earth remains thirsty. A child is born and cries in its first breath, the young gain in age and rise going from the vitality of youth into the weariness of seniority.

On and on time turns like a wheel with no beginning and no end and the weight of our physical station begins to outweigh our heavenly aim.

The world around us does not share this fatigue. It too seems to persist like a well-oiled machine while we toil in what may seem like a futile attempt to leave a lasting impression on the world or its inhabitants.

For our ancestors, life, death and their value was of equal importance both spiritually and philosophically. A farmer plants seeds and reaps a harvest. The field perishes in the winter and returns once more, not completely dead but beneath the chilled soil new life was waiting for the right moment to spring forward. Many of our ancestors came from this agrarian perspective, viewing death too as a reaper come to harvest souls for his own harvest.

Perhaps this is where they began to believe that on the spot where a tree falls, a root dies, where waters flood and recede that life could be born from death.

But they too sought comfort in this world. They also hoped for life beyond death. In one of the oldest tales from one of these agrarian nations we read of an ancient king named Gilgamesh. He was the king of the ancient city of Uruk which is in the same region of Ur where Abraham came from.

According to the saga, Gilgamesh was so powerful that the gods created a warrior named Enkidu (In-key-do) to challenge him. But what really happens is that Gilgamesh subdues Enkidu and they become like brothers. But the gods were angered by Gilgamesh's persistence and as easily as they created Enkidu, they killed him.

Thus, Gilgamesh traveled the known world in an effort either bring his friend back from the underworld or uncover the secret of immortality.

From the Greeks, we are given the legend of Odysseus. While being lost at sea, he seeks the words of a clairvoyant named Tiresias but he is already dead. Odysseus manages to cross the boundary between life and death and speaks with the prophet.

But death, as one of the ultimate facts of life also shows Odysseus that in his absence at sea his mother had passed away. Her ghost was there only to say goodbye.

Our ancient ancestors did struggle with life and finding purpose while living in the shadow of death.

From John the Evangelist, we are illuminated to the life and death of a man named Lazarus. He was a young man of wealth who lived with his two sisters but his most noted for being the best friend of Jesus outside of his disciples.

But there came a day where Lazarus became sick and the sickness did not go away. Lazarus died leaving his sisters to grieve while Jesus was away in another place and could not visit him while he still lived. When He heard that His best friend had died, He waited two additional days in the place where He already was.

For us, death is an inevitability. Time spins infinitely like a wheel, but man's days are numbered and pained on a single flat line. Our strength, our pleasures even our minds can fade away suddenly as we approach that last day and where does our comfort go as well?

But recall our creator in heaven, how we are all of his design. We were not created to be as animals, we were given purpose: to be like our creator.

Gilgamesh did not find the secret to eternal life but he found something else. Though he perished like any other man his story lives on immortalized so that even thousands of years after his passing we still remember him.

Odysseus eventually succeeded in getting back home, saving his wife and son in the process.

And Lazarus, four days after his death we are told that he was asked to get up and walk right out of his own tomb and he did.

Why did they get up when other men would have laid down? What did they see?

They saw two things. They saw that death was not their enemy. Death comes to greet us like a friend, a pat on the back and a drink at the end of a long race. And, though our time on this earth is temporary, our deeds echo through eternity. Our creator watches over us with his ever-vigilant eye; there is nothing secret to him and we shall all be judged by this.

Nothing can change that we must all face our struggles daily but my hope is this Easter when you see the trees blossom, when you hear the birds chirping, when you see the new sun crest the horizon you see that life goes on and so do we.

If you are struggling in your own life, take this time to remember that nothing is ever too late. Today is the best day to begin again, to try again and to let the past stay in the past.

Live as if today is the first day of your life and that tomorrow is the beginning of a new one. Lift up your eyes, even if your body fails you and your sight leaves you remember that the light of dawn shines on those who cannot see it but know it is there.

Have a blessed Passover and Merry Easter.



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