

The Esoteric Significance of the Summer and Winter Solstices

The summer solstice occurs during summer. This is the June solstice in the Northern Hemisphere and the December solstice in the Southern Hemisphere. Depending on the shift of the calendar, the summer solstice occurs sometime between June 20 and June 22 in the Northern Hemisphere and between December 20 and December 23 in the Southern Hemisphere. The same dates in the opposite hemisphere are referred to as the winter solstice.

Solstice is derived from the Latin words sol (Sun) and sistere (to stand still).

Summer Solstice is the celebration of the birth of the body on earth. It is the time of our spiritual initiation and change, for a renewed life experiences to attain perfection in oneness with God.

Ancient Philosophers

Beginning with Pythagoras, then Plato, then the neo-platonists, Numenius, Macrobius, Proclus, and Porphyry, the concept of the immortality of the soul teaching was passed on to the Greeks from the Egyptians—who observed the unending cycles of nature: in the heavens, the sun seemed to be reborn each morning and die each night; spring was a time of birth, growth, and youth; autumn was a time of decline and old age; in winter plants died and even the sun seemed to fight for its existence; and the following spring the cycle began anew.

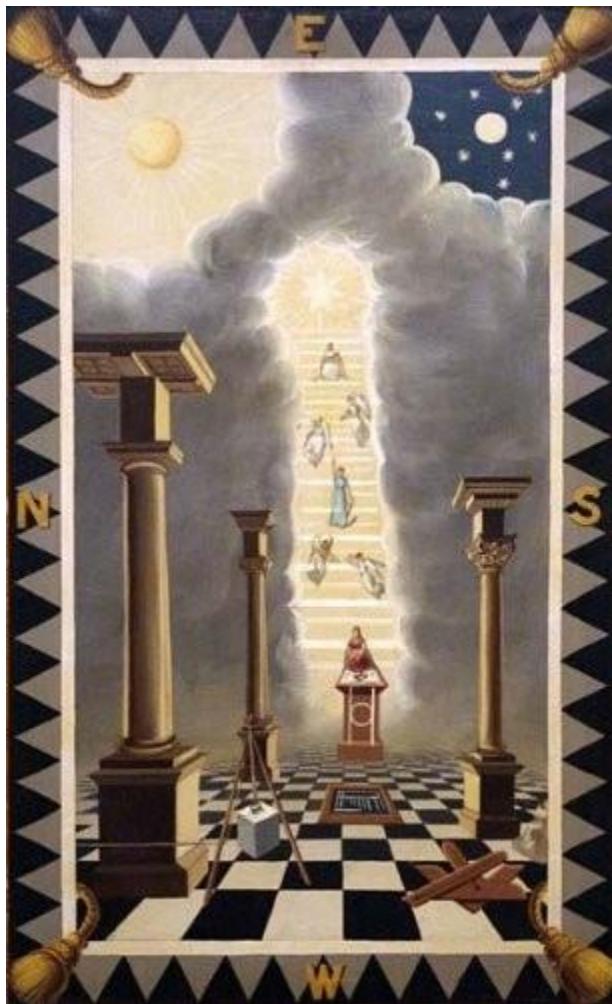
Passed on to the Greeks

Plato, the Athenian Philosopher (428-348 B.C.), like his teacher, Socrates was initiated into the Greater Mysteries at the age of 49. The initiation took place in one of the subterranean halls of the Great Pyramid in Egypt. Plato was the founder of the Academy, an institute for philosophical and scientific research just outside of Athens.

“The soul whose inseparable attitude is life will never admit of life’s opposite, death. Thus the soul is shown to be immortal and since immortal, indestructible... Do we believe there is such a thing as ‘death? To be sure. And is this anything but the separation of the soul and body? And being dead is the attainment of this separation when the soul exists in herself and separate from the body, and the body is parted from the soul. That is death... Death is merely the separation of the soul and body.”

Aristotle (384–322 BC) was an ancient Greek philosopher and scientist born in the city of Stagira, Chalkidiki, in the north of Classical Greece. Along with Plato, Aristotle is considered the “Father of Western Philosophy”, and is known for the Chaldean order of the astrological principles of the journey of the soul by alighting at each of the planets spheres descending from **Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury and the Moon**. With the pure essence of each planet collected in its downward movement, the soul arrived at the moon where it waited for the correct moment of the native’s birth where physical manifestation took place and soul joined with the body.

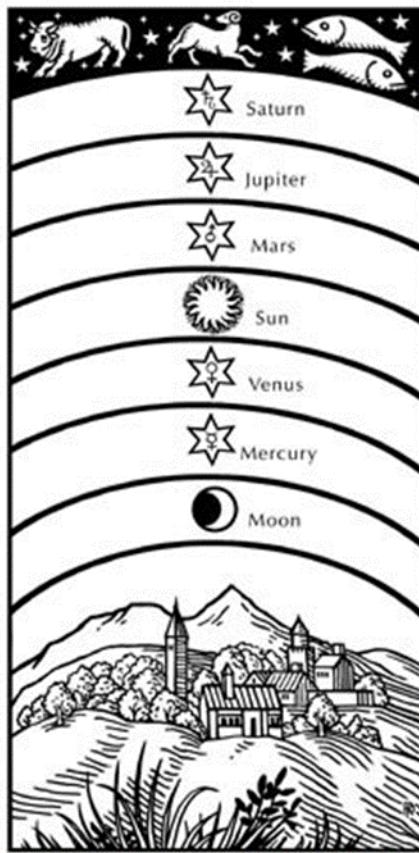
Masonic Tracing Board of Entered Apprentice Masons Degree, Summer Solstice



Soul descends from Heaven by way of Jacobs Ladder allegory through the tropical point cardinal water Cancer, the Gate of Men. The canopy of heaven with the hottest time of the year in the Fire Leo Sun combines the two other luminaries, the Moon ruled by Cancer with cluster stars of the Pleiades in Taurus and the Blazing Star Sirius properly illustrated by Masonic Philosophers, a belief emanated from Ancient Egypt passed on to the Greeks and Romans Philosophers.

Roman Writer Macrobius Ambrosius Theodosius (390-430 CE) is famous for his classical Seven Books on Saturnalia. The galaxy crosses the Zodiac in two opposite points, Cancer and Capricorn, the tropical points in the sun's course, ordinarily called the Gates of the Sun. Through these gates, souls descend to earth and re-ascend to Heaven. In Cicero's Dream of Scipio, a discourse on the nature of the cosmos, the Gate of Men; and the other, the Gate of the Gods. Cancer was the former

because souls descended by it to the earth, and Capricorn the latter, because by it they re-ascended to their seats of immortality and became Gods.



According to Macrobius, the soul descended through the spheres of the seven planets as it descends from the highest heavens to manifest as a physical matter on earth.

When the soul encounters **Saturn**'s heaven, the seventh sphere, it gains the power of reasoning and theorizing.

In the next sphere, the sixth level closer to earth, the soul alights on **Jupiter** where it showed the Saturn's gift of reason and critical analysis that can be put into practice so that the soul can direct the earthly body towards success or spiritual enlightenment.

In the **5th heaven Mars**, the soul obtains the passion, courage and zealous qualities to the soul.

Below Mars, the soul encounters the **Sun in the 4th level**, where it meets glorious light in the purest form and envisages the potential for its own illumination or enlightenment. It absorbs the Sun's spirit and brings with it the soul potential during the lifetime.

In the **third heaven Venus**, the soul inherits the motion of desires, beauty, and balance.

At the second level from earth, **Mercury** bestows the power of language and communication in order for it to be capable of interpreting human feelings and giving expression to its emotions.

When the soul enters the **Moon**' realm the sphere nearest to Earth, the soul absorbs the Moon's essence which includes the awareness that it will soon experience the changes of physical movement, growth, and eventual decay. The region of the Tropic of Cancer is the gate of man as it absorbs the characteristic of emotions, caring for the family.

When the soul is drawn towards the body, it begins to experience a material agitation, matter flowing into it and likens to the human experience of drinking excessive amounts of alcohol as Plato's remarked in the Phaedo.

The Seven Ages of Man

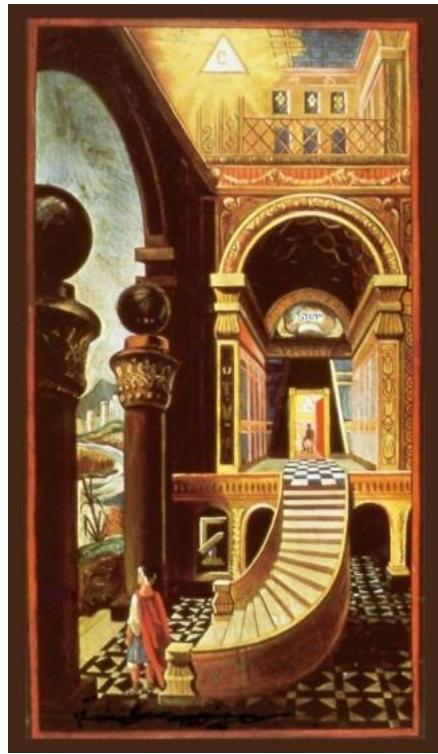
Moon	0 – 4	years old
Mercury	4 – 14	years old
Venus	14 – 22	years old
Sun	22 – 41	years old
Mars	41 – 56	years old
Jupiter	56 – 68	years old
Saturn	68 – 98	years old
Moon	98 – 102	years old

DIVINE PURPOSES OF THE TWO SOLSTICES

The Greeks described the "descent into generation" into re-birth, by the tropical gate of Cancer and the "ascent to god" of the soul after death, by the tropical gate of Capricorn, in which the soul ascends into the spiritual ether of the planetary spheres.

The traditional symbolism of the gate of god to the north in Capricorn and the gate of men to the south in Cancer represents the actual physical astronomy of our annual ascending and descending phases of the tropical zodiac as symbolized by the winter and summer solstices.

Traditionally, the Gate of Man was that zodiacal house where the soul, before birth and intended for incarnation on earth, would descend into the moon sphere waiting for re-birth. The Gate of the Sun was that zodiacal house wherein the human soul, after death, would ascend into the planetary spheres beyond the moon sphere, for its sojourn thru the spiritual worlds, to meet God.



The Second Degree Masons Tracing Board, the ascending journey of the soul, Winter Solstice

After a lifetime on earth, the human soul exits thru the gate of the sun in Capricorn and to begin its journey after death. After its return from the celestial spheres, the human soul will then reenter the earth sphere for re-birth thru the gate of man in the sign of Cancer.

The Ancient Wisdom taught that the soul after death, traveled first, to the successive spheres of Moon -Mercury-Venus-Sun -Mars –Jupiter –Saturn on its outward journey.

THE CHRISTIAN FEASTS OF TWO ST. JOHNS

When the soul enters the cardinal element water, the sign of Cancer which the ruled by Moon, it is the descending journey from heaven through the halfway of the ecliptic from cardinal earth Capricorn ruled by the planet Saturn.

In Christianity, the symbols of the solstices are two feasts of the two St. Johns. These feasts are always held at the same time, at or near the summer and winter solstices. In Roman Calendar, these feast dates of June 24 as Feast of St. John , the Baptist ruled by element water and December 27, St. John the Evangelist ruled by earth element Capricorn which is also symbolizes with the Silver and the Golden Keys.



KEYS OF HEAVEN



The two Gates are currently symbolized by the Golden and Silver Keys of the shield of the Vatican.

Albert Pike and his book, MORALS AND DOGMA, the 25th degree - KNIGHT OF THE BRAZEN SERPENT summarized the journey of the soul from heaven to earth

"The ancient Philosophers regarded the soul of man as having had its origin in Heaven. That was, Macrobius says, a settled opinion among them all; and they held it to be the only true wisdom, for the soul, while united with the body, to look ever toward its source, and strive to return to the place whence it came. Among the fixed stars it dwelt, until, seduced by the desire of animating a body, it descended to be imprisoned in matter."

Let us, in order to understand this old Thought, first follow the soul in its descent. The sphere or Heaven of the fixed stars was that Holy Region, and those Elysian Fields, that were the native domicile of souls, and the place to which they re-ascended when they had recovered their primitive purity and simplicity. From that luminous region the soul set forth, when it journeyed toward the body; a destination which it did not reach until it had undergone three degradations, designated by the name of Deaths; and until it had passed through the several spheres and the elements.

All souls remained in possession of Heaven and of happiness, so long as they were wise enough to avoid the contagion of the body and to keep themselves from any contact with matter. But those who, from that lofty abode, where they were lapped in eternal light, have looked longingly toward the body, and toward that which we here below call life, but which is to the soul a real death; and who have conceived for it a secret desire,—those souls, victims of their concupiscence, are attracted by degrees toward the inferior regions of the world, by the mere weight of thought and of that terrestrial desire.

The soul, perfectly incorporeal, does not at once invest itself with the gross envelope of the body, but little by little, by successive and insensible alterations, and in proportion as it removes further and further from the simple and perfect substance in which it dwelt at first. It first surrounds itself with a body composed of the substance of the stars; and afterward, as it descends through the several spheres, with ethereal matter more and grosser, thus by degrees descending to an earthly body; and its number of degradations or deaths being the same as that of the spheres which it traverses.

This fiction is also found in Virgil. “If souls,” says Macrobius, “carried with them into the bodies they occupy all the knowledge which they had acquired of divine things, during their sojourn in the Heavens, men would not differ in opinion as to the Deity; but some of them forget more, and some less, of that which they had learned.”

The celestial bodies, Heaven, the Stars, and the other Divine elements, ever aspire to rise. The soul reaching the region which mortality inhabits tends toward terrestrial bodies and is deemed to die. Let no one, says Macrobius, be surprised that we so frequently speak of the death of this soul, which yet we call immortal. It is neither annulled nor destroyed by such death: but merely enfeebled for a time; and does not thereby forfeit its prerogative of immortality; for afterward, freed from the body, when it has been purified from the vice-stains contracted during that connection, it is re-established in all its privileges, and returns to the luminous abode of its immortality.

All this agrees with the doctrine of Plato, that the soul cannot re-enter into Heaven until the revolutions of the Universe shall have restored it to its primitive condition, and purified it from the effects of its contact with the four elements.”

“Thus, the secret science and mysterious emblems of initiation were connected with the heavens, the spheres and the constellations, and this connection must be studied by whomsoever would understand the ancient mind and be enabled to interpret the allegories and explore the meaning of the symbols.” ...From Morals and Dogma by Albert Pike.

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