

T.F.S.  
**Three, five, and seven**  
**3 5 7**  
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**“Numbers constitute the only universal language.”** Nathanael West

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**“Discipline is the soul of an army. It makes small numbers formidable; procures success to the weak, and esteem to all.”** President and W. Bro. George Washington

## Freemasonry and 153 Fish

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Freemasonry teaches through metaphors, numbers, geometry and symbols in general. It is a progressive science that encourages us to become better men through the study of the liberal arts and sciences, especially geometry. The 47th proposition of Euclid is a central symbol to freemasonry and teaches masons to be general lovers of the arts and sciences. There are two reasons that may explain why it is a prominent symbol within freemasonry. Firstly, it was believed to be a highly guarded secret within the Pythagorean mystery school because it shows that the universe is ordered by numbers and gives the appearance of design by a great creator. Secondly, it is simple in its design and complex in its explanation and interpretation. Like masonry as a whole, it is plain and practical on its face, yet abstract and theoretical when studied further.

The 1st proposition of Euclid is likewise simple in its notions and complex in its meaning, it was likely chosen as the first because of how strikingly it shows this attribute of being simple in notion and complex in meaning. The 1st proposition of Euclid shows how an equilateral triangle can be constructed by beginning with two points within a circle. The circles surrounding the points are arranged so that the circle of both overlaps the points of both. By drawing a line between the points and the intersection of the circles, an equilateral triangle is created. This symbol and the resulting fish shaped symbol is more well-known and has been remarked on throughout history. The fish shaped symbol within the 1st proposition of Euclid is often called the 'Vesica piscis'. In the Pythagorean tradition, the height to width ratio of the fish was 265:153. As a result, 153 was referred to as the number of the fish.

There are interesting religious examples of the number 153 being connected to fish. It appears in Pythagorean legend, the gospel of John, and likely as a result, the historian Jerome estimated the total varieties of fish to be 153. In the Pythagorean legend, Pythagoras traveled from Sybaris to Croton. On his way he met some fishermen who had caught a large number of fish. He asked them if he could guess how many fish they had caught, if they would give them to him. He proclaimed that they had 153 fish. They humored him and counted out the fish. To their surprise, there were indeed 153 fish in their net. When asked what they wanted him to do with his fish, he told them to set them back. Miraculously, despite the long length of time they had been out of the water, every fish survived. A strikingly similar story is recorded in John 21:1-14. John 21:11 reads "Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn." The apostles were told to be 'fishers of men'.

In these examples, the number 153 is associated with the fish. The number 264, the first number in the ratio of the fish can be seen as the net. The 265 is a square lattice number, in that it can be arranged as a lattice, like how the number five is represented on dice. Corresponding with the twelve apostles being charged with being fishers of men, the number 265 is the twelfth square lattice number. Further, the last digit in all square lattice numbers repeats the digits of the

number of the fish; 1,5,3,5,1. The net always 'catches' the last digit of the fish, and always will, no matter how large the number; even with so many, the 'net' will not tear.

These geometrical propositions show us how relatively simple symbols can hold deeper meaning and through another person's interpretation can teach with a fuller meaning and take on a life of its own, separate from its author's intent. Masonry is like that, its symbols take on a life of their own when interpreted and understood from our own experiences.

**“Hamming's Motto: The purpose of computing is insight, not numbers.”** Hamming

**Words to live by:** Whatever special gift you have been given, celebrate it and share it as often as possible.

**From volumes of Sacred Law:**

“Moreover, man does not know his time: like fish caught in a treacherous net and birds trapped in a snare, so the sons of men are ensnared at an evil time when it suddenly falls on them.”  
Ecclesiastes 9:12 – NASB Tanakh

They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish;” Luke 24:42 NASB New Testament

“To hunt and to eat the fish of the sea is made lawful for you, a provision for you and for seafarers; but to hunt on land is forbidden you so long as ye are on the pilgrimage. Be mindful of your duty to Allah, unto Whom ye will be gathered.” Qur'an 005:096 Pickthall translations

Please remember: if you would like to participate in the latest Masonic Monday Question, please go to <http://www.lodgebuilder.org> and click on the Lodge Education forum. When you have an answer send it to [masonicmonday@gmail.com](mailto:masonicmonday@gmail.com) the Masonic Monday Question for the week of 02/22/10 is: **The idea behind the creation of the Grand Lodge of England in 1717, was for the principal officers of the few Lodges in a small area of central London to meet together quarterly in brotherly communication and once a year hold a Grand Assembly and Feast. How many Grand Lodge Officers were there in 1717?**

**“A few honest men are better than numbers.”** Oliver Cromwell

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**“Round numbers are always false.”** Samuel Johnson

The newest Education video from the Grand Lodge of Minnesota has been posted by Brother Ian Luhm at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MijX1zxpnrE> Some of Ed's papers can be read at: <http://www.mn-masons.org>

TFS & Masonic Matters can also be read on Ed's Face Book page; <http://www.facebook.com/ed.halpaus>

Please remember – Ed's new email address is [erhmasonic@gmail.com](mailto:erhmasonic@gmail.com) the old one is going away.

With “Brotherly Love”,  
Ed Halpaus  
Grand Lodge Education Officer

**Seek to mentor a Brother Mason:  
It's good for him, it's good for you, and it's good for Freemasonry!**