

A Message

For

The Master Mason

PREFACE

Sincere congratulations are extended you upon your completion of the Degree of Master Mason. No greater honor will ever come to you in your Masonic career as you have now attained this very honorable degree that makes you a member of the world's oldest and largest Fraternal Society. You are now privileged to have your name inscribed upon rolls that have been enhanced by names like Washington, Jefferson, Franklin and Lafayette. You have laid a lasting foundation for a moral edifice upon the most sublime principles that mankind has ever known. You have acquired a wealth of inspiration in which your inquiring mind may rove for a lifetime and never exhaust.

A philosophic system so extensive as Freemasonry cannot be completed in just three degrees. As great empires, towering Cathedrals and influential institutions are not completed in one generation, neither can we expect to complete our Masonic education in just three fundamental degrees.

Perhaps you have felt, as many have felt who have gone this way before you, that Masonry is incomplete in its symbolism. In the Degree of Master Mason you were left with an incompleting Temple as you were reminded that "the Temple is well-nigh complete." You were given a substitute word for the True Word, and were informed that you must wait until the Temple is completed and then if found worthy, you could have it. There is likely many questions concerning Masonry which are now unanswered, and must remain so forever unless you advance in your Masonic knowledge by taking additional degrees and thereby completing your Ancient Craft Masonry.

The degrees of the Lodge, Chapter and Council complete what is commonly known as Ancient Craft Masonry. These degrees completely equip the Mason with a completed Temple, the discovery and preservation of the Word and an ample explanation of the symbolism to which he has been introduced in the fundamental degrees. Then if the Mason is of the Christian faith, he will want to adorn his completed Masonic edifice with the principles of the Christian religion by receiving the Orders of Christian Knighthood as conferred by the Commandery.

CAPITULAR MASONRY

Chapters of Royal Arch Masons confer four degrees, namely Mark Master, Past Master, Most Excellent Master, and Royal Arch Mason.

MARK MASTER

This will be the first degree you will receive in your advancement. The lessons of this degree are based upon the Fellowcraft Degree, which you will recall as probably the most instructive degree you have received thus far in Masonry. You will resume your work as a Fellowcraft Mason and learn how to receive wages as such and the significance of the Keystone or Capstone.

According to Masonic tradition there were two classes of Fellowcrafts. There was one group that worked in the area of King Solomon's Temple in placing the stones in their proper places. They were paid their wages in corn, wine and oil, as you were taught in the Fellowcraft Degree. This was the type of Fellowcraft Mason you were caused to represent when you received that degree.

There was another group of Fellowcraft Masons who were probably more advanced than these, as they received their wages in money on the sixth day of the week. These Craftsmen worked in the quarries where the great stones for the Temple were raised, squared, polished and numbered. You will recall that all of these intricate details were done in the quarries, as there was not heard the sound of ax, hammer or any tool of metal in the Temple.

Each of these Craftsmen possessed a mark which he placed upon each stone he prepared and sent to the Temple. Hence they were called Mark Masters, and as such learned valuable lessons concerning good, true and square work and how that any other kind must be rejected.

To the Mason, King Solomon's Temple is but a symbol of that greater Temple—the human soul. The Mark Master learns that none but good, true and square work may be accepted and that any other kind offered must be rejected. He also learns that there is one superior stone, the Keystone, that is necessary for the completion of the Temple. There is one Supreme Personality necessary for the completion of our souls and “we must seek Him while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near.” The Mason must make diligent search for that stone if his life is to be complete.

PAST MASTER

Anciently no Mason could receive the Degree of Royal Arch Mason who was not a Past Master of his Lodge. In order to preserve that time honored Masonic tradition and also to teach some of the most important lessons in Masonry, the Degree of Past Master Mason is conferred.

There are two classes of Past Masters, **virtual** and **actual**. When you receive this degree, you will become a **virtual** Past Master, which means you have been instructed in the duties and responsibilities of the Master of the Symbolic Lodge, and that you are qualified to receive the

Degree of Royal Arch Mason. An **actual** Past Master is one who has been elected and installed Master of a Blue Lodge, and has completed his term of office as such. He has gained valuable experience and knowledge from his term of service, and as a result of this experience he has grown in his Masonic light and knowledge. All Masons should be entitled to the knowledge so derived if his Masonic education is to be complete.

In the Degree of Past Master, you will be taught in a most impressive manner the place and importance of the furniture and implements of the Lodge. In this degree you will learn why the Altar is the center of the Lodge Room, and why the Master wears his hat. You will be caused to represent King Solomon, and learn something of the profound respect and veneration in which he was held by those who regarded him as “wisest of princes.”

Wisdom is a gift which is in the reach of every Mason if he would seek it from the proper source. In the Past Master’s Degree, the Mason is caused to realize the tragic condition of life when that source of wisdom is removed. Our world would grope in dark confusion and probably come to a disastrous dissolution if this source of true wisdom were permanently removed. As a Master Mason you are the recipient of the True Light. With the receipt of that gift goes the inescapable responsibility of preserving and defending it. These lessons are forcibly presented in this important and impressive degree.

MOST EXCELLENT MASTER

One serious theological question that has been raised in the mind of mankind has been, “Where is our God?” Some people would face the east in the hope that their Deity dwells in some ancient eastern city. Others would lift their eyes upward as though their Deity dwells above in some loftier realms. The Mason knows that his God dwells wherever he is, because in the Degree of Most Excellent Master, God dwells among His people and His glory fills His Temple.

Because of this important lesson so vividly presented, this degree is regarded by many Masons as the most sublime degree in all Masonry. When the Temple of Solomon was completed and dedicated, God received it, entered it and dwelled in it. We believe that when the Temple of our human soul is completed of accepted material—good, true and square and that soul is presented to God by faith, He receives it, enters it and dwells therein.

The symbolism of this degree is based upon the final completion and dedication of King Solomon’s Temple. We may well suppose that honor to those faithful Craftsmen who remained loyal to the final completion of the glorious Temple and that he conferred upon them a special degree or title. In this degree you will not only witness the completion of the Temple and be permitted to participate in the solemn ceremonies connected with the dedication of the Temple, but you will be recognized as a Most Excellent Master and have your name inscribed upon the rolls of those of whom it can be said, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many.” As you have been faithful to the final completion of the Temple, you are now entitled to be exalted to the very summit of Freemasonry and to receive the True Word.

ROYAL ARCH MASON

For a period of almost five hundred years the people worshipped in the Temple until idolatry was introduced. Then God permitted Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, to take the City of Jerusalem, destroy the Temple and carry the people captive into Babylon, where they remained as servants and slaves for a period of seventy years. This interesting period in Israel's history is portrayed in the Royal Arch Degree, which is probably the crowning degree in all Masonry. It is the very summit of Ancient Craft Masonry since it invests the Mason with the True Word and is the fulfillment of all the teachings you have received thus far in the Symbolic Lodge. It was expected that you would receive this degree when you received the Degree of Master Mason, because you were told that there was yet "a rough and rugged road lying before you." This referred to the Degree of Royal Arch Mason.

After King Cyrus had ascended the throne he issued a proclamation releasing the captives in Babylon and permitting them to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the city and Temple. This return was under the superintendence of a Jewish prince whose name was Zerubbabel. He was a direct descendant of King Solomon and was very noble and wise in every respect. Prince Zerubbabel is greatly admired and respected by all Royal Arch Masons and all Chapters are dedicated to him.

It was during the process of the rebuilding of the Temple that the important Lost Word was recovered. The candidate discovers the Word himself in a manner and in a place where he would least expect to find it, but the joy experienced upon finding it is no less diminished. He then has that inward satisfaction of knowing that he has been found worthy and that he has labored diligently and that his faithfulness has been well rewarded. Thus the Mason finds himself a completed Master Mason.

CRYPTIC MASONRY

Councils of Royal and Select Master confer three degrees, namely, Royal Master, Select Master and Super Excellent Master. When a Companion has received the Degree of Select Master, he is said to have passed the circle of perfection in Ancient Craft Masonry. Therefore, the degrees of the Council form a very important part of Ancient Craft Masonry. They complete or explain the symbolism of the Royal Arch Degree. In historical sequence the degrees of the Council are older than the other degrees of Masonry. Hiram Abiff is an important character in the Degrees of Royal and Select Master.

ROYAL MASTER

In the Royal Masters Degree, we find a circumstance quite similar to that in the Masters Degree. The Fellowcrafts, who were intent in obtaining from the Master Builder the True Word, attempted to secure it through bribery. It was their thought that if they should present an unusually beautiful piece of work to the Master Builder, that while in a happy frame of mind they might extract from him the True Word. In the drama of this degree that procedure is attempted, but the answer is the same as it was in the Master's Degree. They would have to wait until the Temple was completed; and then if found worthy, they could have it. One of the

Craftsmen proposes an interesting question when he asks what will happen to the Word if Hiram Abiff should die before the Temple is completed.

The important lesson of this degree is the reality of the truth that God is the great preserver of all things that He has created. Throughout then eons God has preserved all the particles of life that He created in the beginning. Not one atom or molecule has ever been lost. Therefore, as Masons, we can be confident that God preserves every good life, every kind word and deed and every noble thought.

SELECT MASTER

Masonry comes to us from time immemorial. No man is able to date its beginning and it is difficult to explain how its teachings and symbolism have been preserved. In the Select Masters Degree we learn that the perpetuation of Ancient Craft Masonry was not left to chance, but by careful planning its mysteries were kept so that no despot or tyrant might ever destroy them. When you receive the Degree of Select Master, you will be privileged to be admitted to the secret recesses of King Solomon's Temple and allowed to observe the great work of preserving Divine Truths. There you will come to understand why the mysteries of Freemasonry are never written. There you will appreciate and understand how that Masonry throughout time has been the preserver of those spiritual blessings that you hold most dear.

Our three Ancient Grand Masters, before the untimely fall of one of them, hid away from the eyes of the unworthy all the tools and implements used in the building of the Temple, and all the sacred articles used in the worship in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple, which were later found and brought to light at the time of the rebuilding of the Temple. Every tool and every sacred article is important to the Mason as it was important in the building of King Solomon's Temple. You, as a Master Mason, are entitled to understand the importance of these implements and articles. Therefore, we cordially invite you to complete your Ancient Craft Masonry by receiving the Degrees of Royal and Select Master.

CHIVALRIC MASONRY

Masons are justly proud of the wide and tolerant embrace of faiths based upon the firm foundation of a belief in Deity. However, the Mason who is a Christian must of necessity feel an inadequacy in Freemasonry, unless somewhere the quest for truth is culminated in the person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—the Word made flesh. The Christian Orders of Knighthood in this respect constitute the very apex of all Masonry. Here the Christian Mason may find Masonic fellowship and truth in the Brotherhood of Christian Knights.

The Orders of Christian Knighthood are conferred in Commanderies of Knights Templar. Because of the chivalric nature of the work, the term "Order" is used instead of "Degrees." There are three of these Orders, namely The Illustrious Order of the Red Cross, The Order of Malta, and the Order of the Temple.

ORDER OF THE RED CROSS

The history of the Order of the Red Cross is based upon the events of the Royal Arch Degree. The Royal Arch Degree closes with the discovery of the True Word, which was found soon after the work of rebuilding the Temple was begun. This work was being pursued upon an edict issued by King Cyrus. After the death of King Cyrus, his son, Cambyses, became the King of Persia. Cambyses revoked the edict of his father, and the work on the Temple was suspended during his reign. Cambyses was succeeded by King Darius, who had been a boyhood friend and companion of Prince Zerubbabel. With the ascent of Darius, Zerubbabel was inspired with new hope of securing from him permission to rebuild the Temple. He undertook the hazardous journey back to Persia, armed with the weapon of Divine Truth.

The principle teaching of this order is the force and power of Truth. When you were brought to Light in the Entered Apprentice Degree, the Masonic implement denoting Truth was the closest article to you. You were taught that there is a Divine Truth, by which you are to square your actions toward all mankind. At each succeeding step in your advancement, this teaching has been impressed; but the full force and power of Divine Truth will be taught you when you receive the Illustrious Order of the Red Cross.

THE ORDER OF MALTA

This Order seeks to perpetuate the ideals fostered by the Christian Crusades of the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries. In the eleventh century there was organized in Jerusalem a Military Order called the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem. This was a Militant Christian Order and contributed greatly to the spread of Christianity in the early day. This Order established its headquarters on the various islands of the Mediterranean Sea and ultimately were victorious in claiming the island of Melita or Malta.

No medieval Order rendered a greater service to mankind than did the Knights of Malta. As early as 1046 we find them establishing and maintaining a hospital for the sick and needy in Jerusalem. In addition to administering to the sick, they often took up the sword in defense of the needy. They dedicated themselves to the task of making and preserving peace. They exemplified the admonition of the Saviour when He taught, "Blessed are the peace makers, for they shall be called the children of God."

Therefore, we are not surprised to find the modern day members of this benevolent Order still engaged in labors of love and mercy. The modern, well equipped hospital at the Home for Aged Masons at Arlington, Texas, was built and equipped by the Sir Knights of Texas. Through the years the Sir Knights have given generous support to the maintenance and expansion of the hospital. Then more recently, the Sir Knights of this country have engaged themselves in the work of the Eye Foundation, whereby needed eye surgery may be provided for anyone regardless of race, color, age or creed who needs it. Thus, when you come among us, you will be privileged to join us in perpetuating the work of Him who gave sight to the blind and strength to the lame.

ORDER OF THE TEMPLE

From a very early period of the Christian era it was customary for Christians to make pilgrimages to Palestine to visit the sacred shrines connected with the birth and death of our

Lord. Early in the seventh century Palestine fell into the hands of the Mohammedans. Christian pilgrims continued their journeys to Palestine, although under difficulties. When Jerusalem fell into the hands of the barbarous Turks in 1075, Christian pilgrims were subjected to all sorts of indignities and cruel mistreatment. The resentment aroused led to the First Crusade to regain the sacred shrines and restore Palestine to Christian hands. Jerusalem was captured in 1099 and a Christian kingdom established.

Still pilgrims to Palestine faced constant danger and peril. Bands of Moslems infested the mountain heights. From their hiding places they fell upon the pilgrims, plundering their goods and putting them to the sword. "To remedy this state of affairs, nine noble knights, led by Hugh de Paynes, who had mightily distinguished himself at the siege of Jerusalem, formed a Holy brotherhood in arms and entered into a solemn compact to aid in clearing the highways and in protecting the pilgrims on their way to the Holy City." This was in 1113. Within five years they had rendered such efficient service that they were assigned the use of a building on the ancient site of Solomon's Temple. From this fact they were first known as "Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and the Temple of Solomon," or more simply as "Poor Knights of the Temple," and ultimately as "Knights Templar."

The bravery of this small band soon won wide acclaim. Recruits in large numbers joined their ranks. The highways to Jerusalem were patrolled and eventually their protection was cast about pilgrims in other areas. The Order grew in wealth and power, exciting the avarice and jealousy of Pope Clement V and Philip the Fair of France. By the connivance of these two, all Templars in France were arrested and after undergoing the tortures of the inquisition, Grand Master Jacques de Molay and Guy de Charney, were burned at the stake on March 11, 1314. The vast properties of the Templars were confiscated, the character of the Knights defamed, and many died as martyrs. The Pope dissolved the Order and what was left of their revenues and possessions were deeded to the Knights of Malta.

The Order of the Temple in impressiveness is unexcelled in all the rites of Freemasonry. It is an awe-inspiring ceremony of such solemnity and meaning that it appropriately concludes the York Rite.

CONCLUSION

The Degrees and Orders of York Rite Masonry all revolve around one great center—the True Word. In the Lodge that Word became lost; in the Chapter it is found; in the Council it is preserved; and in the Orders of the Commandery it is explained. As a Master Mason you are entitled to a full and complete explanation of this great Truth. Therefore, we invite you to petition for these Degrees and Orders. Do not wait for some Brother to approach you and invite you to come among us. Feel free to approach any York Rite Mason and he will be pleased to assist you by "dispensing true Mason Light and knowledge to all less informed Brethren."