

INFORMATION for MASTER MASONS



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INFORMATION FOR THE MASTER MASON

In your journey through the three degrees of Symbolic Masonry and as you have learned the proficiency lecture for each degree, no doubt many questions have arisen concerning the meaning of the ritualistic ceremonies, the historical implications and the "why" of the legends of Freemasonry.

Although many erudite brethren have delved into the history and mysteries of Freemasonry no one has as yet determined the exact time the fraternity originated or where it first came into being.

Many believe the Sublime Degree of Master Mason to be the ultimate degree of Freemasonry and that all others are added and explanatory. Most students of Freemasonry agree that the story of the Craft as presented in the three degrees is incomplete and that the degrees offered in the York Rite of Freemasonry complete the story and answer many of the questions in the mind of the newly made Master Mason.

In Royal Arch Masonry is found the essentials of symbolism and philosophy necessary for a Master Mason to understand that which he has received only in part. On the union of the Grand Lodges in 1813, a part of the compact of union read, "Ancient Craft Masonry consists of three degrees and no more, namely, those of the Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft and Master Mason including the Holy Royal Arch."

The York Rite consists of the degrees of the Royal Arch Chapter, the Council of Royal and Select Masters and the orders of the Commandery of Knights Templar. In none of these is any memorization required to advance from one degree to another. There are many easily learned parts that any interested Mason may acquire and participate in the

conferring of the work. In the York Rite, most of the work is by a cast of characters made up to portray more vividly the message, and the cast is robed to add to the impressiveness of the lessons.

The Chapter, or Royal Arch Freemasonry consists of four degrees.

The degree of Mark Master teaches us to discharge our several duties punctually and with precision, the duty of assisting a distressed brother is forcibly illustrated. Historically the degree illustrates the process by which the work on the temple accomplished by each craftsman was identified.

The Past Master degree came into being because originally the degree of Royal Arch was conferred by the Symbolic Lodge only on actual Past Masters. This restriction prevented many worthy brethren from receiving the full information of the degrees of Freemasonry. The degree of Past Master was instituted in order to conform to tradition and to make it possible for worthy brethren to receive the Royal Arch degree. The conferring of this degree by a Chapter gives a brother no rights as a Past Master in a Symbolic Lodge unless he has actually served as Master of his Lodge.

The Most Excellent Master degree dramatizes the historical incidents of the completion and dedication of King Solomon's Temple. This degree emphasizes the opportunity and obligation of Companions to disseminate light and knowledge to less informed brethren.

The Royal Arch Degree is set in a later period in the history of the Jewish people. Events of the rebuilding of the second temple are the basis of the degree. We learn how many of the sacred objects of the Jewish people were preserved, discovered and restored. This degree is the culmination of Ancient

Craft Masonry for here we find that which was lost—the word for which you were given a substitute in the Master Mason degree is imparted to you in solemn and impressive ceremonies.

The degrees of the Council of Royal and Select Masters are necessary to fully complete your education in Ancient Craft Masonry. The degrees of our Masonic system are not chronologically arranged and in the degrees of Royal and Select Master, which many believe are the most beautiful and impressive of all, you learn of additional incidents in the building of the first temple. During these degrees you represent the Master Builder, Hiram Abiff, and learn why the word was lost and the secret of its preservation and recovery. The Super Excellent Master degree, though having no connection with Ancient Craft Masonry, is a vivid dramatization of truth and fidelity and never fails to impress those who witness it, either for the first time or after many times. The degrees of the Council will enable you to more fully understand your third degree of Symbolic Masonry and the degree of Royal Arch.

The Orders of Knighthood, the Commandery of Knights Templar, are three in number. The Order of the Red Cross, The Order of Malta and the Order of the Temple. Each of these portray beautiful and impressive lessons and explain the Christian interpretation of Freemasonry.

We trust that you have been intrigued by the lessons and mysteries of Freemasonry which you have thus far received and that you will in due time investigate those available in the York Rite of Freemasonry in order to complete your Masonic knowledge.

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