



Chapter of Royal Arch Masons, The Capitular Degrees

MARK MASTER:

The work on the temple continues. Amplifying the Fellowcraft Degree, we are taught that the learning we receive there can most usefully and judiciously be employed for our honor and the profit of others, to whom our duty is more clearly defined. A beautiful lesson is exemplified, inculcating the encouraging truth that though we are often misunderstood, underrated, and defamed, there is ONE who will make the rejected stone, the Head of the Corner.

PAST MASTER:

This Degree begins the preparation for the Royal Arch. We are told it was removed from the Symbolic Degrees, of which it was once a part, to reserve it for the more earnest seeker of more Light in Freemasonry. Originally, only actual Past Masters of Lodges were admitted to the sublime secrets of the Royal Arch, which meant that very few could receive them. The Degree of Past Master (virtual), by teaching the candidate that he must first learn to obey before he can rule, and to govern himself before he can govern others, fulfills the obligation and qualifies him for advancement.

MOST EXCELLENT MASTER:

Here we have the most significant Degree in Ancient Craft Masonry. King Solomon's Temple, which was begun so suspiciously and halted so dramatically in the third Degree, is here completed amid much rejoicing and great splendor. The labors of the Craft are given the blessing of the Lord descending as fire from heaven, and King Solomon in his gratitude, received and acknowledged them Most Excellent Masters, empowered to travel and receive Master's Wages, and charged with the responsibility of sharing their Masonic Light and Knowledge, with those who needed it.

ROYAL ARCH:

In this Degree we find the actual completion of the Master Mason's Degree and the Recovery of the lost Word. After the death of King Solomon, his magnificent Temple was destroyed and the Israelites carried away captive to Babylon. Here they lived for about seventy years, many

of them acquiring considerable wealth, and some attaining high rank and influence in the Chaldean government. However, when liberated by King Cyrus, many of them returned to Jerusalem and began the rebuilding of the Temple. While this work was going on and the rubbish of the ruins of the first Temple was being cleared away, many interesting and valuable discoveries were made, chief of which was the recovery of the lost WORD. With the recovery of that which was lost, it would seem to the novice that his search for Light was ended, however, in order that he might better acquire the lessons, a seemingly inverse movement of the Degree historically is set up.



Council of Royal & Select Masters, The Cryptic Degrees

ROYAL MASTER:

This Degree takes us backward in time to a day before the death of the builder, who is again the central character. He imparts to the candidate

sublime teaching of a useful labor on earth, and gives him valuable instruction as to preservation of our valuable secrets. This is one of the most beautiful Degrees in all Freemasonry with lessons so impressive that they are never forgotten. It is especially illustrative of the third and seventh Degrees.

SELECT MASTER:

This degree also historically occurs prior to the third Degree, and deals with incidents that occurred at the building of the first Temple. It is closely connected with the Royal Arch Degree and affords the explanation needed for its perfect understanding. This Degree is highly dramatic and of great interest.

SUPER EXCELLENT MASTER:

This Degree, which is conferred usually on large classes and on special occasions, refers to circumstances and incidents during the siege of Jerusalem, and the final destruction of the Temple. It is very dramatic and impressive, and is conferred upon Select Masters. Here is completed the Circle of Perfection of Ancient Craft Masonry, but to the follower of Christ there is a definite need and desire for the application of these impressive lessons and beautiful ceremonies to the Christian Believer and his way of life. To fulfill this need we have the...



Commandery of Knights Templar, The Chivalric Orders

ORDER OF THE RED CROSS:

Here again we revert to the period of the Royal Arch Degree, when the Jews were returning from Babylon to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple. One of their number prevails upon the King to restore to the new Temple the Holy Vessels carried away by the Babylonian armies when the first Temple was destroyed. In presenting his plea before Darius the King, a powerful testimony to the almighty force of Truth was offered, and a new Order founded, which is a fitting foundation stone for the Orders that follow.

ORDER OF KNIGHT OF MALTA AND THE MEDITERRANEAN PASS:

Shifting to the time of the Crusades, admission to the Mediterranean Pass is sought, that a safe pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulcher might be undertaken, this is a very sublime and sacred Order, which culminates in the enrollment of the candidate as a Knight of Malta.

ORDER OF THE TEMPLE:

No Degree or Order in Freemasonry is more solemn, more impressive or more soul-searching than the Order of the Temple. It becomes a fitting climax to the labors of the humble penitent, who has faithfully performed the symbolic seven years of preparation for the consummation of his endeavors, his knighting as a Christian Warrior. Knights Templar were so named because of their close association with the site of the Temple, during the number of years that they occupied and held Jerusalem. The Ancient Order of the Temple has been dispersed, and the warlike spirit of the Order has passed away, but there remains a spirit of refined and moral Chivalry, which prompts its members to be ever ready to defend the weak, the innocent, the helpless, and the oppressed, and thus warrant the title of true KNIGHTS TEMPLAR. The Order of the Temple has been called the most beautiful of all the Orders and Degrees of Freemasonry. No Freemason, who is a believer in the Christian religion, should be satisfied until he has received this, the capstone of the York Rite.

