

## **DEO Talk at District Ritual Meeting More Symbolism and Teachings of the Degree of Master Mason**

The Degree of Master Mason is the culmination of the three Blue Lodge Degrees. And while we may continue our search for additional light in Masonry by taking Scottish and York Rite degrees, there is no degree higher or more important than that of Master Mason.

We speak of the three phases of life being youth, manhood, and old age, and our three Degrees focus on those three stages. As an Entered Apprentice, beginning our Masonic journey, we are as a youth; just starting to learn what Freemasonry is all about. In the Degree of Fellowcraft, we continue our education, stressing the liberal arts and sciences and the study of geometry or Masonry. In this Degree we are symbolically at the age of manhood, earning our way in the world. Then, in the Degree of Master Mason, we review our personal progress and make midcourse corrections as we continue to develop our character and improve ourselves in Masonry.

In this Degree we continue the search for light we began in the first two Degrees, but now, we are urged to concentrate on our spiritual growth, always keeping clearly in mind the all important concerns of eternity. Thus, we speak about being raised to the “Sublime Degree” of Master Mason.

What makes the Degree “sublime” is the profound moral and spiritual lessons it teaches. We learn how we need to act toward our Brethren – as one Master Mason should act toward another, and we learn how we need to treat all mankind – with dignity and respect. Most of all, we learn that we must build our own spiritual temple, and act so as to be worthy of our creator.

We enter the Lodge at the beginning of the Degree of Master Mason in darkness, for we have not yet witnessed the light of this Degree. And at our reception into the Lodge room at the start of the Degree, we are reminded that all the lessons of Freemasonry must be imprinted in our hearts as well as our minds, if they were to be a part of our the way we live our life. And we also are taught that as we progress in Freemasonry our obligations become more extensive.

In this Degree, the Lodge becomes a representation of the Sanctum Sanctorum, or Holy of Holies, within King Solomon's Temple at Jerusalem. So participating in this Degree is a matter of forging a link with history, and with the innermost teachings of the Order.

The three Grand Masters mentioned in our rituals concerning the building of the Temple are: Solomon, King of Israel; Hiram, King of Tyre; and Hiram Abiff. The secrets alleged to have been known only to these three Grand Masters typify Divine truth, which was known only through God, and was not to be communicated to man until he had completed his own spiritual temple. Once these secrets are attained, a man can reap the rewards of a well-spent life, and confidently travel toward that unknown country to which all of us are drawn.

We know from the teachings of the Entered Apprentice Degree what "money and metals" are in a Masonic sense, and that they represent the attractive power of temporal possessions, earthly belongings, and affections of all description.

The Master Mason Degree teaches us that while we do not have to be literally and physically dispossessed of our worldly possessions, we need to understand their true place in our lives and not become so attached to our physical possessions or allow them to so control our lives that we lose sight of the more important spiritual values. In short, we are reminded that the real treasures are of heaven not of earth.

Additional symbolism is found as we examine the opening and closing of a Master Mason Lodge. We can by analogy find that the human soul has originated in the eternal East – “East,” of course, refers to the world of the Spirit and not to any geographical direction. Then the spirit travels a course towards the “West” – to the material world. And finally, the Spirit is on a quest of recovery to find something lost, which we know to be the lost word and the genuine secrets of a Master Mason.

The ancient philosophers like Plato and Aristotle concerned themselves with vast spiritual worlds, and their method of gaining admission through various spiritual spheres was through secret passwords, grips, signs, and holy words.

And in the Degree of Master Mason, we are taught certain modes of recognition, but we also are taught that we must put up with the substitutions for the word until we have found the right, and that we have much work ahead of us before we discover these realities and achieve our great reward.

So you see, the symbolism of this Degree is designed to focus our minds on the divine rather than the secular. Indeed, you can examine the contrast in the symbolism taught in the two preceding degrees about our kneeling at the altar. In this Degree, we were not focused on the “weaker part of man” or on our fidelity, instead, we are placed in proper form to make supplication to the Supreme Architect of the Universe to grant us “more Light in Masonry,” become fully committed to the Fraternity, and completely put our faith in God, the Great Light in Masonry.

As Master Masons we are finally entitled to all of the rights and benefits of Masonry, including the rights of visitation, relief, and burial. But we also are expected to live up to our obligations of charity and brotherhood; to support freedom of speech, thought and conscience; to eliminate prejudice, and to restrain our passions.

Some feel that, as we absorb and internalize the lessons of the Degree of Master Mason our consciousness is heightened, we achieve new levels with retrospection, and our demeanor and behavior become more disciplined and more principled.

Although we have touched upon only a few of the many symbols found in the Master Mason's Degree, each of them helps us to remember the lessons we were taught in the Degree, and assists us to continue our journey towards "more light."

Each of us needs to continue to study the symbolism of this Degree and familiarize ourselves with its teachings in order to fully appreciate and enjoy the historical, philosophical, and moral underpinnings of our Fraternity.

But more than simply appreciating these great truths, we need to incorporate these moral principles into our daily life.

If we are truly mindful of our Masonic obligations and the moral lessons taught in the Degree of Master Mason, we

will strive daily to be a shining example to our friends, neighbors, family, and the community at large. And in so doing, we will begin to reach our full potential of being virtuous and honorable men.

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Credits:

Master Mason Educational Proficiency Manual, Grand Lodge AF & AM of Virginia

The Master Mason Degree, Grand Lodge F & AM of California

The Meaning of Masonry: Third or Master Mason's Degree.

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