

# THE MASTER MASON



## The Third Degree Of Freemasonry

# THE MASTER MASON DEGREE

## Introduction

It is safe to say that among the countless thousands, who have in the past been raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason, not one of them realized at the time the full implications of the ceremony. Yet it is vitally important that the deeper meaning of this Degree be understood if one is to become a Master Mason, in fact, as well as in name.

The Third Degree is at once the climax of the Symbolic Lodge Ritual and the most profound Degree in Masonry. Its meaning is difficult to understand thoroughly, so while the Degree is fresh in your mind, we bring you the following subjects for discussion and reflection.

- The Reception and Obligation
- The Legend of The Master Workman
- The Lecture, Symbols, Emblems, and Allegories of the Laws and Landmarks of Masonry

## Master Mason

The Master Mason Degree is sometimes called the Sublime Degree, not just for the solemnity of the ceremonies, but also for the profound lesson of wisdom it teaches. This Degree symbolizes the great lesson of immortality of the soul.

The Master Mason Degree differs in many ways from the previous two Degrees. Many of the symbols are the same but they are interpreted differently.

In other Degrees, the Lodge is a symbol of the world in which we live trying to sustain life; striving to obtain knowledge; and becoming virtuous through wisdom.

In this Degree, the Lodge becomes a representation of the Sanctum Sanctorum, or Holy of Holies, of King Solomon's great Temple at Jerusalem. This magnificent structure was a symbol of Heaven to the Hebrew people. Supposedly, Solomon built it as the dwelling place of Jehovah, or, Yahweh, that he might be in the midst of his people in Israel. The Hebrew law of cleanliness was strictly enforced and nothing unclean was permitted to enter the Temple. When you attain the Sublime Degree of Master Mason you receive this most valuable lesson and truth that having been faithful to your trust, you must at last die in order to attain the ultimate reward of your fidelity. This teaches hope for the immortality of the soul.

In this State of life, man is represented to have died and then he is raised from the grave to another and better place. Thus, the ceremonies of the Degree lead to the inevitable conclusion that youth, properly directed, leads to an honorable and virtuous maturity and that regulated by morality, faith and justice, life will be rewarded in its closing hours by the prospect of eternal bliss and immortality.

## **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DEGREE**

The importance of the Master Mason Degree can best be understood when we compare it to the Entered Apprentice and Fellowcraft Degrees. In the first two Degrees, Architecture was the theme of the symbols. The symbols in the Degree of Master Mason refer to life, its tragedy, and its ultimate triumph if we lead virtuous lives. In other words, the symbols of this Degree deal with the spiritual part of man's life. We should keep in mind that, in our later years, we are getting closer and closer to immortality, and that we have work to perform which is given us by the Supreme Architect of the Universe.

## **PREPARATION OF THE CANDIDATE**

The preparation of the candidate reminds him of several things. First, through the clothing, he is reminded that he is to be humble. He is also taught that his Obligations become more extensive and binding each time he advances. Finally, he is reminded that he is able to attain many of his desires only with the assistance given by a friend or Brother.

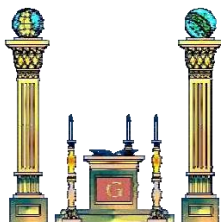
## **RECEPTION**

In the reception at the door you are reminded that all the Lessons of Freemasonry must be implanted in the heart if they are to serve a useful purpose and become a part of your way of life. You should practice these in your daily life.

## **THE OBLIGATION**

By the time you have reached the Master Mason Degree, the duties and responsibilities you have sworn to observe have become much more extensive. Some of the areas covered by the Obligation are outlined below.

## **AT THE ALTAR**



Your Obligations now take on more and more responsibility. As a Master Mason, your charity and love must know no limits. Your family, your friends, associates, widows, orphans and, especially God, have a constant claim on you. The circle drawn by the Compasses of friendship, morality and Brotherly love has no beginning, no ending.

This time when the Compasses were revealed to you, they were fixed so they would ever remind you of your Obligations.

## **CLANDESTINE LODGE AND CLANDESTINE MASON**

A Clandestine Lodge is one that is operating with a Charter that has not been issued by a duly recognized Grand Lodge. An individual who belongs to one of these lodges is a Clandestine Mason. Clandestine Lodges are rare. They are considered to be irregular and not eligible for visitation or Masonic communication.

## SIGNS, TOKENS AND WORDS

The Signs, Tokens and Words are important because they provide modes of recognition. Each has a symbolic meaning that helps to illustrate and explain the lessons they accompany. You should know how to give all the Signs properly, in order to show your respect for the dignity of the ceremonies and to enable yourself to visit other lodges.

## THE WORKING TOOLS



The working tools of a Master Mason are all the implements of Masonry. In the United States, the Trowel is especially assigned to this Degree. The Master Mason is to use the Trowel to cement ties between Masons, and to use it to spread Brotherly Love and Friendship.

## THE THREE GRAND MASTERS



The three Grand Masters, mentioned often in our rituals as they relate to the building of the Temple, are: Solomon, King of Israel; Hiram, King of Tyre; and Hiram Abif. The secrets known only to these Three Grand Masters typify the Divine Truth which was known only to Deity and was not to be communicated to man until he had completed his own spiritual Temple. Once these secrets were attained a Mason could reap the rewards of a well-spent life, and travel to that well-known country toward which all of us are traveling. All of us are forever reaching outward and upward, looking for further knowledge of God and our relationship with Him, which is Divine Truth.

## THE TEMPLE OF SOLOMON

This Temple was located on Mount Moriah, at Jerusalem. It was near the place where Abraham was about to offer up his son, Isaac. The site was purchased by David, King of Israel, for it was here that the hand of the Destroying Angel was stayed after David had repented. The incident is recorded in II Samuel, Chapter 24, verses 15 through 25, and I Chronicles, Chapter 21, verses 14 through 30.

The building of the Temple was begun around 1012 BC, and finished eight years later, around 1004 BC. It was about 480 years after the people of Israel came out of Egypt as a band of refugees. The people later lost their sense of spiritual direction and destiny resulting in the destruction of the Temple in the year 586 BC, by Nebuchadnezzar.

## THE SYMBOLISM OF THE TEMPLE

The chief purpose of Solomon's Temple was to provide a dwelling place for God in the midst of his people, Israel. People thought that God dwelt with man in those days, and this should still be a fundamental human thought, today. Some people of that day claim Solomon's Temple was the most perfect building ever erected by man. Whether it was or not is open to conjecture, but perfection was certainly the goal of both David and Solomon.

The symbol of the Temple for each of us is founded upon the idea that man himself is a living Temple where God resides. Freemasonry tries to undertake the task of helping each of its members build a more Stately mansion within themselves where God can reside. Each of us should work toward the same type of perfection in our own Temple as that sought for in the Temple at Jerusalem.

Our individual Temples are mental, physical and spiritual. Our work on these Temples should be as close to perfection as is possible.

## **SOLOMON, KING OF ISRAEL**

Solomon was the son of David and Bathsheba. He became king at the age of 20 and reigned 40 years. During Solomon's reign, Israel had its greatest power, prosperity and recognition. The name Solomon means peaceful, and his reign was one of peace.

## **HIRAM, KING OF TYRE**

Hiram was a friend of King David, and became both ally and friend of King Solomon. According to Biblical accounts, he helped Solomon by supplying certain materials for the construction of the Temple and, in return, received a gift of ten cities from King Solomon.

## **THE MASTER WORKMAN**

The Master Workman was the son of a woman of Tyre, from the tribe of Naphtali. He was sent by King Hiram to help Solomon in building the Temple. He was a well-known person who is alluded to in the Second Book of Chronicles, which tells us of his skill in the Arts and Crafts during that period.

## **TRAVEL IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES**

The ultimate goal of our ancient Operative Brothers was to become Masters that they might possess secrets and knowledge that would enable them to practice the arts of the builder no matter where they traveled, even in foreign countries.

"Foreign countries," as used in Freemasonry, is a symbolic place and is not meant to refer to a certain geographical location. Freemasonry, itself, is a foreign country to every member. If he is to travel in it, if he is to earn Master's wages, he must learn its language, understand its customs and study its history and traditions. He must become a part of it to fully appreciate and enjoy its privileges and pleasures.

We, as Speculative Masons, still desire to travel in foreign countries. Some of us feel the urge strongly enough to diligently study Masonry, so we may receive proper instructions and be permitted to travel and receive Master's wages. Becoming a Master Mason gives each man the right to travel in foreign countries in Freemasonry. All you have to do is learn the work and keep yourself in good standing that you may find Lodges open to you everywhere. By studying the writings of Freemasonry, you will find pleasant traveling.

The areas of study include history, traditions, philosophy, ritual and many other areas leading to countless treasures which each of you must discover for yourself. These are the rewards of Master Masons who travel in foreign countries.

## **THE WAGES OF A MASTER MASON**

Operative Masons performed manual labor and received wages which would contribute to their physical welfare. These wages are symbolically cited as Corn, Wine, and Oil. The wages of a Speculative Mason must come from within, because he is concerned with the moral rather than the physical labor. The intangibles of love, friendship, respect, opportunity, worthwhile labor, and association are the wages of a Master Mason. Not all earn them. That is why the Senior Warden, in the opening of the Lodge, declares: "To pay the Craft their wages, if any be due."

## **LOW TWELVE**

High Twelve denotes noon, with the sun at its highest. Low Twelve denotes midnight, the black of the night. Therefore, the solemn stroke of twelve marked the completion of life and the coming of death. Masonically, Low Twelve is a symbol of death.

## **THE FIVE POINTS OF FELLOWSHIP**

In the instructions on the duties of Brotherly Love and the specific Obligations which a Mason has toward his Brethren there is a symbolic allusion to certain points of the body which, from the lessons taught, are called the "Five Points of Fellowship." These points are summed up as "assisting a Brother in his distress, supporting him in his virtuous undertakings; praying for his welfare, keeping inviolate his secrets and vindicating his reputation as well in his absence as in his presence." These Five Points of Fellowship are very important for you to learn.

## **THE SETTING MAUL**



This was a wooden instrument used by Operative Masons. In Freemasonry it is also an emblem of casualty or disease which shall eventually terminate our lives. In Proverbs 25:18 we find, "A man that beareth false witness against his neighbor is a maul and a sword, and a sharp arrow."

## **THE SPRIG OF ACACIA**

Hebrew people planted a sprig of acacia at the head of a grave for two purposes: to mark the location of the grave, and to show belief in immortality. Because of its evergreen nature, they believed it to be an emblem of both immortality and innocence. The true acacia is a thorny plant that abounds in Israel. Both Jews and Egyptians believed that, because of its hardness, its evergreen nature, and its ability to live in the face of despair, it signified immortality.

It is believed that the acacia was used to construct most of the furniture and the tabernacle in the Temple.

## RAISING THE CANDIDATE

Most people do not understand what being "raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason" means. Symbolically, it represents our Masonic faith in the immortality of the soul. This Degree is the climax of Symbolic Freemasonry.

Masonry teaches no creed, no dogma and no religion; only that there is a hope of immortality and through God's mercy, we may live again.

## THE LECTURE

### SYMBOLISM

The Third Degree the Master Mason Degree is the pinnacle of Freemasonry. True, there are Degrees with higher numbers that are offered by bodies affiliated with Freemasonry, but none can exist without Master Mason Lodges. Membership in any affiliated body is dependent on maintaining your Symbolic or Masonic Lodge membership.

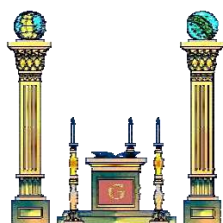
What you have sought through Masonry is light. As we have said, when you seek light, you are trying to discover truth. As in the first two Degrees, you wore the Cable Tow. However, in this Degree, it symbolized how strongly you are now united with the Craft and the Craft with you. Your ties, Obligations, duties and responsibilities have increased considerably with your being raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason. These will remain with you the rest of your life. In the Master Mason Degree, as well as the Entered Apprentice and Fellowcraft Degrees you received lessons that are to be stored in your Temple for all times to be used now and throughout your life.

The symbols you learned in the first two Degrees concern themselves with the tools and emblems of architecture for you to use in laying your foundation for the lessons and symbols concerning your soul. Spiritually, you are now reaching full manhood. In the First Degree, you received a warning. In the Second Degree, instructions in the manner that you should deal with your fellow man. In the Third Degree, you are asked to reflect on man's moral and spiritual nature.



The Compasses take on a much deeper meaning. They begin at a point, draw a circle and return to the beginning point. They symbolize the beginning, span and end of your life on Earth. More importantly, the Compasses suggest the continuation of your existence the immortality of your soul and eternity with the Supreme Architect of the Universe.

## THE ALTAR



The Altar is located in the center of every Masonic Lodge room. It is a symbol of the perfection for which Masons strive in their Masonic life. Upon the Altar we place the Three Great Lights of Masonry, the Holy Bible, the square and compasses. It is upon this Altar and the Holy Bible that you have been obligated and bound to the Fraternity.

## **THE VIRGIN WEeping OVER A BROKEN COLUMN**

Time, patience and perseverance will accomplish all things, you are told. These are three of the virtues stressed in all leadership training courses. But scientific management was unknown when the rituals of Freemasonry were developed.

These virtues are symbolically represented by a monument of a beautiful virgin, weeping over a broken column. The monument symbolizes immortality. Many of man's virtues are contained within the pages of the book on the broken column, which should more accurately have been pictured as a scroll, as books were unknown in King Solomon's time.

## **POT OF INCENSE**

You were told the Pot of Incense was the emblem of a pure heart. Of the five senses mentioned in the Fellowcraft Degree, smell is most closely associated with emotion. Smells remind us of experience, some pleasant, some not. The smell of flowers, wood smoke around a campfire, or odors in a doctor's office they carry emotional memories for all. The Pot which holds the incense is Symbolic of sacrifice. It means giving up selfishness and working for others. There must be a constant examination of one's self; no man should ever be content to stand still and he must never be satisfied with his accomplishments.

## **THE BEE HIVE**

The Bee Hive is the symbol of industry. It tells us that we should never be content to be idle, especially when we can help our fellow man by exerting a little effort.

## **THE TYLER'S SWORD**

The Tyler's sword is symbolic of a need in the days when this instrument was the principal means of offense or defense. It may have been used during the days of the Operative Masons to protect the secrets of the Master Builder from the cowan (an ignorant Mason, one who laid stones without mortar, one who had not served the required time of apprenticeship; today an uninitiated man who poses as a Freemason). The sword has become the symbol of the Tiler's authority to protect the Lodge from impostors. To us, as Speculative Masons, the sword should serve as a reminder of moral lessons. It should admonish us to:

- Set a guard over our thoughts;
- A watch at our lips;
- And post a sentinel over our actions, thereby preventing the approach of any unworthy thought or deed to our hearts, and preserving our conscience void of offense toward God and man.



## **THE BOOK OF CONSTITUTIONS**

The Book of Constitutions, or the Masonic Law, is not a symbol of secrecy. It contains the laws of Masonry. It is published for all to read. It is considered so important that every Worshipful Master, at his installation, is charged to search this book at all times. It is the symbol of Masonic Law. We should fear less the cowan than the uninformed Mason. He has learned just enough to cause Masonry irreparable harm. He knows so little about the Craft that he believes everything about it is secret. Actually, there are few things that are secret. All that we have covered in these lectures is not secret. It is written out for all to read. You can tell all of what we are now telling you.

Too often good men never petition a Lodge because the member with whom they discussed Freemasonry could, or would, not tell them anything. You, by virtue of these "Portals", are more highly informed and educated in Masonic teachings and principles than most of your Brethren. If you still feel unable to discreetly discuss the Craft, then when asked about the Fraternity, you should immediately contact one of your better informed Brethren.

## **THE ALL-SEEING EYE**

The all-seeing eye has been the symbol of Deity from the beginning of religion. From many ages has come the knowledge that the Supreme Architect of the Universe sees all, knows all and controls all things. It is little wonder that the early ritualists associated this symbol with control of the sun, moon, stars and comets. It reminds man that God is powerful, yet just, merciful and loving.

## **THE 47TH PROBLEM OF EUCLID**

This symbol was brought to Freemasonry for two reasons:

- It was most important to Operative Masons
- To extol and illustrate some of the virtues of Pythagoras.

Euclid's 47th Problem was absolutely necessary for the cathedral builders, as it reads: "In every right triangle, the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides." It is the root theorem of Geometry and the foundation of mathematics.

To some extent, Masonic Lodges of today are patterned after the Brotherhood Pythagoras founded. The philosophy he taught in the 6th century BC is much the same as Freemasons follow today. Pythagoras:

- Found the use of music to have therapeutic value.
- Was the first to conceive the Earth as a sphere revolving in space.
- Was the first to consider women equal to men, and admitted both to his school on equal terms.
- Was the first to teach by parable and symbols.

What does the 47th Problem of Euclid symbolize? Perseverance, the search for Truth, and the need for more knowledge!

## **THE HOUR GLASS AND THE SCYTHE**

The Hour Glass is an emblem of human life. As you learned in the Entered Apprentice Degree, each day should be divided into portions to be used wisely, for every second wasted is lost forever and can never be recovered. The Scythe is an emblem of Time. The ritual speaks of cutting "the brittle thread of life and the devouring scythe of time." But in spite of those words, hope is held out by using time in our youth and manhood wisely to acquire knowledge, our reward will be great. We will achieve immortality. So the Scythe becomes also the symbol of Learning and Immortality.

## **THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF A MASTER MASON**

The constant responsibility of a Master Mason is "to preserve the reputation of the Fraternity unsullied." Leading a good life is the best means of carrying out our individual responsibility to our Lodge and our Craft. The conduct of each Master Mason is strictly his own responsibility. He should choose the course that will bring credit to himself and honor to the Fraternity.

## **CONCLUSION**

In closing, we offer the following suggestion for your consideration, which can be of great value as you ponder the teachings of Masonry. Learn as much as you can about the Fraternity now; study the ritual, ask questions of your more informed Brothers, read a book or two on the Craft and especially study the Charges of the Degrees found elsewhere in this book. You have actively participated in one of the greatest dramas of all time. You were an active participant so these lessons would be deeply implanted, never to be lost. You represented a historical Biblical character. What transpired though, was a legend, a drama and an allegory. It depicted man's search for Truth, for Courage, for Prudence and for his Immortal Soul. The Master Workman's enemies came from the workers he trusted. So do most of man's adversaries. He will usually guard himself against attacks from those he believes he must fear, but has no reason to protect himself from those he loves and trusts.

As The Master Workman prayed daily for guidance from God before drawing his designs, so must we. Through the Supreme Architect of the Universe, we acquire the self-image we must have if we are to be successful. Until a man learns how to pray for himself, he cannot hope to learn the Supreme Masonic Secret. It is through prayer and through living, that this secret will come to life. In putting into practice the Brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God, he will develop his character and personality in the image of the Supreme Architect of the Universe. This is the greatest lesson taught though the Legend of the Third Degree! The legend of the Third Degree also teaches all Freemasons that to betray a trust is a fate worse than death itself. It reminds man that he should live each day prepared to die, and die as a man prepared to live forever. But each man must find his own sprig of acacia. Each must set his own goals and draw his own designs to achieve those goals. It is comforting to know, however, that he can call on his Brethren for assistance and advice.

- They can give him a sense of direction.
- They can give him moral support and enthusiastic backing.
- They can give him ideas with which to work.

But no one can make another's decisions. A man's final course is the one he must set for himself. Freemasonry and all its many lessons are now open to you and at your disposal. May you use them well and become part of that greater good, that good that makes a difference for you and your fellow man. Freemasonry has given you the tools, now what will you build with them?

## The Master Mason Degree Charge

Your zeal for the Institution of Masonry, the progress you have made in the mystery, and your conformity to our regulations have pointed you out as a proper object of our favor and esteem.

You are now bound by duty, honor and gratitude, to be faithful to your trust; to support the dignity of your character on every occasion; and to enforce, by precept and example, obedience to the tenets of the Fraternity. In the character of a Master Mason you are authorized to correct the errors and irregularities of your uninformed Brethren, and to guard them against a breach of fidelity. To preserve the reputation of the Fraternity unsullied, must be your constant care; and for this purpose it is your province to recommend to your inferiors, obedience and submission; to your equals, courtesy and affability; to your superiors, kindness and condescension. Universal benevolence you are always to inculcate, and by the regularity of your own behavior, afford the best example for the conduct of others less informed.

The ancient landmarks of the Institution, entrusted to your care, you are carefully to preserve; and never suffer them to be infringed, or countenance a deviation from the established usages and customs of the Fraternity. Your virtue, honor, and reputation are concerned in supporting with dignity the character you now bear. Let no motive, therefore, make you swerve from your duty, violate your vows or betray your trust; but be true and faithful, and imitate the example of that celebrated artist whom you have this evening represented. Thus you will render yourself deserving of the honor which we have conferred, and merit the confidence that we have reposed.

### TYLER'S OATH

I, repeat name, ..... do hereby and hereon solemnly swear, that I have been regularly Initiated as an E.A., passed to the Degree of F.C. and raised to the sublime Degree of Master Mason. I am now a member of ..... Lodge, No ..... under the jurisdiction of .....

I do not stand suspended or expelled from any regular Lodge and know of no just cause why I should be so dealt with. (KISS THE BIBLE)

## **MASTER MASON TEST QUESTIONS**

Retrieve MM Questions from "MM Questions with Answers" after review!