

# The Master Mason Degree



*Prepared by*  
**The Committee on Masonic Education and Information**  
**of**  
**The Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Ohio**

**Revised November, 2004**

**Presented to**  
*Master Mason*

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**By the Brethren of**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Lodge**

**No.** \_\_\_\_\_, **F. & A. M.**

**at** \_\_\_\_\_, **Ohio**

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**Worshipful Master**

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**Senior Warden**

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**Junior Warden**

## THE MASTER MASON DEGREE

### CONGRATULATIONS, MASTER MASON!

Now that you have received the three degrees of Freemasonry, you have experienced firsthand a bit of the unique fascination the Fraternity holds for its members. Where does this strong attachment come from, that binds a man to Freemasonry forever?

Is it the spiritual aspects—our desire to delve deeper into the mysteries of creation and become better men? Possibly. Is it the secrecy—the binding of men into a closely knit group through private knowledge? Perhaps. Is it the antiquity of the Institution—the sense of being a part of an ancient tradition, passed down from generation to generation and surviving unchanged for centuries? Maybe. Or could it be the fact that Freemasonry, like music and mathematics, is a universal language understood by men everywhere?

The truth is, probably all of these reasons, and more, are valid. Freemasonry is far greater than the sum of its parts. Later, as you learn more through experience and study, we feel sure that you will experience this bond deepening and growing even stronger.

### THE MASTER MASON DEGREE

This degree, like the two which preceded it, presents its many lessons quickly and at times almost casually, as if in passing. Yet the number of books written about masonic history, philosophy, and ritual could fill many libraries and represent many lifetimes of research. Therefore, you may wonder, “If Freemasonry is so complex, how will I ever learn enough to properly appreciate or understand it?”

It is true that Freemasonry is complex when looked at through the eyes of the masonic student. However, in its more fundamental aspects Freemasonry is not that complicated. Its messages can be perceived and understood by anyone who will seek them. It is your brothers’ hope that you will delve deeply into them on your own and with the willing help of your mentor and Lodge Education Officer.

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth . . .” comes to the Master Mason Degree from Ecclesiastes 12. This somber admonition sets the stage for the solemn reflections this degree invites. The passage is the most poetic of the lessons of the three degrees and its symbolism the most difficult to understand.

The more common interpretations see the images as symbolic of an elderly man nearing the end of life. The golden bowl, for instance, represents the skull. The almond tree becomes the white hair of an aged man. The day represented by this passage will come to all. The young Entered Apprentice will one day be the aged Master Mason. The time that now seems to stretch far into the future will one day shorten to the dusk of life.

Another interpretation sees the passage as describing the moments before a rare but violent Palestinian thunderstorm. “The grinders cease . . .” are women who must stop grinding meal in the face of the approaching storm. The storm clouds covering the sky indeed cause “. . . those

that look out of the windows [to] be darkened.” Like the sudden approach of an unexpected storm, the end of man’s life can come suddenly and even violently.

In either case the writer of Ecclesiastes entreats the young man to reflect upon his Creator *before* the days of age or unexpected death come—to “[r]emember *now* thy Creator.” In every stage of life we do well to turn to the Great Architect of the Universe, who not only created it, but also gives meaning and direction to our lives. The Creator is our final refuge and our eternal hope.

#### THE TALE OF HIRAM ABIF

The moving allegory you’ve witnessed may be one of the simplest stories ever recorded by man, and yet has levels and nuances that could be explored forever. No man who receives the Master Mason Degree ever forgets it.

The focal point of this degree’s story is the legend of Hiram Abif. The legend’s plot of murder by treachery, a search, and discovery has counterparts in the myths and folklore of most cultures around the world.

#### TRUTH OR MYTH?

Some believe the events in the story actually happened, and were passed down through the ages. While the story does not appear in the Bible, some have tried to link Hiram Abif to King Hiram of Tyre, who provided Solomon with the skilled laborers for the building of the Temple. Others believe the tale is a blending of other stories. Many fascinating books and theories exist, which you should explore.

Whether the life and death of this master builder actually occurred, or was gradually derived from other stories and refined over the centuries, is not really important. What is important is the eternal truth of the story’s themes and how that truth resonates in your life. By taking the role of Hiram, you were symbolically murdered because of your fidelity and refusal to betray your trust. You were subsequently raised so that you may begin fresh as a man of honor and as a Mason. Don’t squander this opportunity for renewal.

#### THE LOST WORD

The lost word is perhaps the most important symbol of this allegory. A missing or lost word is a common motif in the histories of many ancient cultures, especially the ancient Hebrews.

The priesthood of the ancient Jewish people held the secret name of God sacred, to be pronounced out loud only by the High Priest, once a year, and only in the innermost sanctum of the Temple, the Holy of Holies. Somehow, perhaps through the untimely death of a High Priest, the knowledge of how to pronounce the sacred name of God was lost forever.

In Freemasonry the lost word has become a symbol of the never-ending search for light, or truth, which is another way to say the search for unity or oneness with God.

#### OTHER SYMBOLS OF THE DEGREE

You encountered many more symbols in the Master Mason Degree. Explore the meaning of the trowel, the three steps, the pot of incense, the beehive, the Book of Constitutions guarded by the

Tyler's sword, the sword pointing to the naked heart, the anchor and ark, the forty-seventh problem of Euclid, the hour-glass, the scythe, the setting maul, spade, coffin, and the sprig of acacia. You will be richly rewarded if you take the time to examine them and think about them, by yourself or with the help of your counselor.

#### THE RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES OF A MASTER MASON

Now that you are a Master Mason, you have the full rights and privileges of membership in our fraternity. Among them, you have:

- the privilege of visiting other lodges;
- the privilege of being vouched for;
- the right to ask for masonic relief;
- the privilege of affiliating with a different lodge should you move;
- the right to trial should you be charged with a masonic offense;
- the right of appeal if found guilty;
- the right to masonic burial;
- the right to appear in public masonic processions;
- the right to vote;
- the right to hold office;
- the right to join in discussions in your lodge;
- the right and privilege of giving masonic service;
- and, of course, the right to be taught all that Masonry includes, and enjoy all the privileges it offers to the spirit, mind, and heart.

However, you now also have the responsibilities of that membership.

#### A MASON'S DUTY AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A Freemason is obliged to abide by the Constitution, laws, and edicts of the Grand Lodge and the By-Laws of his particular lodge. As Freemasons, we take our obligations seriously, and there are consequences for the violation of our code of conduct. A masonic offense is defined as "any act unbecoming a good man and true." Any Mason brought to trial and found guilty of such conduct is subject to reprimand, suspension, or even expulsion from the Fraternity. The penalties of the obligations you recited are purely symbolic, to illustrate that a Freemason's word of honor is so important that he would rather suffer extreme punishment than perjure himself.

#### MASONIC DUTIES

Among your duties as a Master Mason are strict compliance with your obligation; loyalty to your lodge and to the Fraternity; prompt payment of your annual dues; obedience to the laws, written and unwritten, of Freemasonry, and to be an affiliated Mason – that is, a member in good standing of a lodge.

It is also your privilege to recommend a man to be made a Freemason. Once more, however, you are cautioned not to recommend him unless you are satisfied that he will conform to the principles of our Fraternity and be a credit to the Craft.

## KEEP LEARNING

Don't make the mistake of resting on your laurels, now that you have passed through the three degrees. We strongly urge you, through study, to learn more about the great Fraternity of which you are now a member.

The website for the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Ohio has many educational articles and links through its home page at <http://www.freemason.com>. Here you will find reference information, suggested reading lists, links to masonic research organizations and other grand lodges, as well as information on other masonic bodies. Many masonic lodges and organizations maintain extensive libraries. And lastly, by attending your lodge meetings, visiting other lodges, and talking with your brothers, you will come to know why Freemasonry is the world's oldest and largest fraternity.

## YOUR NEW MASONIC LIFE

You are now a Master Mason. You, and only you, can build upon this foundation. At its simplest, Freemasonry is a fraternity of men, a place for fellowship, fun, and camaraderie. But for those who delve deeper into its mysteries, it is the framework through which they grow and develop, becoming the kind of men they could not have envisioned otherwise. Search after still more Light. You will certainly arrive at the end of your road with the full and happy satisfaction of a well-spent life.

This booklet has been prepared as one of a series of four to provide the new Mason with a greater insight into the degrees and to encourage him to seek additional light in Masonry.

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