



**1. SYMBOLIC MASONRY**

The Symbolic Degrees of *Entered Apprentice*, *Fellowcraft*, and *Master Mason*, as conferred in the United States, are degrees of the York Rite.

York Masonry is the oldest and best known of all Masonic Rites. It takes its name from York, England, where the earliest known record of Masonry exists, dating from about A.D. 923. Masonry's first written record is centered in and around York, the seat of the Ancient York Grand Lodge. In 1813, this Grand Lodge merged with another group called the Modern Grand Lodge, to form the United Grand Lodge of England. This is the basis upon which our present system of Symbolic Lodge Masonry is built.

You, as a Master Mason, have received the first three degrees of the York Rite. Having begun your Masonic work in the York Rite, it is natural that you should want to continue with it.

According to Masonic legend, every man raised to the sublime degree of a Master Mason received "substitute secrets", as the "true secrets" were lost. It may prove a surprise to the average man, believing his work is completed, to be told that the secrets pertaining to the ceremony will not be given to him! This is unfortunate, but the veil is lifted in the degree of the Royal Arch and in that degree only. Hence, no man actually becomes a Master Mason until he is exalted to that holy order.

Some would have the newly raised Master Mason believe that he can receive the secrets and word in a degree other than the Royal Arch. This is not true, historically or otherwise. The mother Grand Lodge of England was so emphatic regarding the necessity of the Royal Arch degree that many years ago, it set forth this as Paragraph One (1) of its Laws and Regulations:

*"By the solemn act of the union between the two Grand Lodges of Freemasons of England in December, 1813, it was declared and pronounced that Pure Ancient Masonry consists of three degrees and no more, viz: those of the Entered Apprentice, the Fellowcraft, and the Master Mason, INCLUDING THE SUPREME ORDER OF THE HOLY ROYAL ARCH."*

On the North American Continent, there are additional degrees in the system, supplementing the work of the Lodge, Chapter, and Council, and the Orders conferred in the Commandery have been arranged into a system or Rite referred to as the American, Canadian, or York Rite of Freemasonry. It is American in structure, as it is a democratic organization in which every member has a voice and a right to be heard.



**2. ROYAL ARCH MASONRY**

The various local Chapters operate under the jurisdiction of the "Grand Chapter" of each state, which in turn is governed by the General Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons International. The General Grand Chapter constitutes the largest Masonic Body in the world.

The Chapter confers four degrees (Capitular Degrees), giving a complete story of Masonic symbolism, in the following order:

- Mark Master*
- Past Master (Virtual)*
- Most Excellent Master*
- Royal Arch*



The *Mark Master Degree* is perhaps the oldest Masonic degree, and is one of the most highly respected. It teaches practical lessons for everyday living. This degree supplements the Fellowcraft Degree.



The *Past Master Degree* teaches the candidate the important duties and responsibilities of the Oriental Chair and is qualification for advancement.



It is commonly known that the symbolism of Freemasonry surrounds the building of the Temple. In symbolic Free-Masonry, the Temple is never completed. In the *Most Excellent Master Degree*, we are taught the lessons of the completion and dedication of the Temple.

In the degree of the *Royal Arch*, the epitome of Masonic symbolism is found. It has been said "the Royal Arch is the root, heart and marrow of Masonry, without knowledge of which the Masonic character cannot be complete".



The Royal Arch degree is the completion of the whole system of Freemasonry. Having begun regular advancement through the Symbolic Lodge, it is the duty of each Master Mason to complete the degree series. He who has sought further Masonic education should return to the Symbolic Lodge, retrace his steps and advance through the Rite until he can receive the climax of Masonic symbolism, as taught in the Royal Arch.

Only those who have attained the Royal Arch may be said to have completed their Masonic Work.



**3. CRYPTIC MASONRY**

The Councils of Cryptic Masons operate under the jurisdiction of the Grand Council of Cryptic Masons of each state and most Grand Councils operate under the General Grand Council of the United States. They confer the following three degrees:

- Royal Master*
- Select Master*
- Super Excellent Master*



Without the *Royal and Select Master Degrees*, neither the Master Mason degree nor the Royal Arch degree is complete. These two degrees account for the concealment and preservation of the treasures revealed in the Royal Arch.



The *Super Excellent Master* is an honorary degree, qualifications for which are fulfilled by virtue of being in good standing in a Council. This degree is the most dramatic and spectacular of all Masonic systems.



#### 4. KNIGHT TEMPLAR MASONRY

Local Commanderies are governed by the Grand Commandery of each jurisdiction, and they in turn by the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the U.S.A.

In the Commandery, the Chivalric Orders of Christian Knighthood are conferred as follows:

*The Illustrious Order of the Red Cross  
The Order of Knight of Malta  
The Order of the Temple*



The *Illustrious Order of the Red Cross* is founded upon Truth – a divine attribute, the foundation of every virtue.



*Knights of Malta*, first called Knights Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem are known to have been in existence as early as 1099 A.D. It was the first organized body whose avowed purpose was the aid and care of those injured on a battlefield. The teaching of Christian applications of Masonic precepts begins with this Order. The Order of the Temple is the crowning glory of York Rite Masonry. It is widely regarded as the most solemn and impressive experience in Masonry. Here the aspirant progresses in the footsteps of Jesus of Nazareth. At the empty tomb grows a sprig of acacia, teaching that we shall dwell forever in the realms of life and light eternal. Freemasonry demands only a belief in a monotheistic God, where Hindu, Muslim, Jew and Gentile may, together, worship around their altars.



The Christian Freemason alone has at his disposal a branch of the fraternity where he is free to interpret the teachings of the Symbolic Lodge according to his religious belief. The Masonic Orders of Christian Knighthood are the logical outcome of the Christian Mason's belief in Christ as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. That Mason believes Christ's hand will raise the dead to life, and in His Holy Name the True Word is found and restored at last. *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"*.

WHAT DOES YORK RITE MASONRY OFFER?  
The noble heritage of York Masonry is yours to take. The regular meetings of the various grades are conducive to firmer relationships and a closer spirit of brotherly love. Being a York Rite Mason does not mean you are elevated to a "higher rank".

It is an educational tool to help you realize the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man in your own life. We trust the foregoing has increased your interest in the York Rite. We invite **you** to claim this heritage.

#### HONORARY INVITATIONAL YORK RITE BODIES IN SOUTH CAROLINA



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WHY YOU  
A MASTER MASON  
SHOULD BE  
INTERESTED IN

THE  
YORK RITE  
OF  
FREEMASONRY  
IN  
SOUTH CAROLINA

CONSISTS OF FOUR  
DISTINCT AND SEPARATE  
SOVEREIGN MASONIC BODIES:



*The Symbolic Lodge  
The Chapter of Royal Arch Masons  
The Council of Cryptic Masons  
The Commandery of Knights Templar*