

Master of Ceremonies:

Brothers, we are here to give you a short program about the York Rite. the York Rite consists of four bodies, the symbolic lodge of Ancient Free Masons, the Chapter of Royal Arch Masons, the Council of Cryptic Masons, and the Commandery of Knights Templar. note that I said that the first York Rite body was the symbolic or blue lodge. This lodge, and most symbolic lodges in the USA use a ritual which is a York Rite ritual. There is a Scottish Rite ritual for the first three degrees, but it's use is limited to some lodges in Louisiana and by Prince Hall Lodges. If you look in literature published by the Southern Jurisdiction of the Scottish Rite, you will usually find a statement to the effect that the Scottish Rite yields jurisdiction of the first three degrees to the symbolic grand lodges, so all of you are already York Rite masons. Those of you who have not joined the Chapter, Council and Commandery just have not completed your York Rite degrees and orders. The members of the York Rite bodies will introduce you to each of the degrees and orders. We hope we peak your curiosity.

Master of Ceremonies:

The Chapter of Royal Arch Masons confers four degrees. The first of the degrees is Mark Master. Companion _____ who is representing one of the overseers of the work on King Solomon's Temple will introduce you to this degree.

Master Overseer: (*sleeves rolled up, holding a square*)

Brothers, to better control the work, King Solomon selected certain Fellowcrafts who were well skilled in their work, as well as the Master Masons working on the temple, and advanced them to the degree of Mark

Master. I am one of those Masons. I was assigned duties of Master Overseer. My job was to inspect and accept or reject the work of the Mark Masters. What a couple of weeks we just went through!! first, there was some excitement when someone tried to obtain wages when he was not entitled to them; then there was a lost piece of work which threatened to delay all the work on the temple; and finally, there was a wage dispute among the workmen. But, King Solomon solved all the problems, and in the process, taught the craft valuable lessons in the values of honest employment and charity. Those Fellowcrafts, as well as we Master Masons, won't forget what happened for a long time. Well, I'd better be going brothers.

Master of Ceremonies: the second of the Chapter degrees is the Past Master. Companion _____ will introduce you to this degree.

Past Master: (*suit of sport coat, top hat, carrying a gavel*)

Brothers, in the degree of Past Master, we leave the time of King Solomon and return to the present-day world. In the 18th century, when speculative masonry was being developed, the degree of Royal Arch Mason was controlled by the symbolic lodges. Only Past Masters could receive this degree. The thinking at that time was that the Royal Arch degree was so sublime and so important that only those well skilled in speculative masonry could understand its lessons and fully appreciate them. Obviously, this greatly limited the number of brothers who could receive the valuable lessons of the Royal Arch, especially when Royal Arch Chapters were formed independently of the blue lodges. In England and Canada, the Past Master requirement was dropped, however, in the United States, we confer

the degree of virtual Past Master. This maintains tradition, while allowing all Master Masons the opportunity to continue to the Royal Arch.

Obviously, this degree confers no honors or privileges outside of the Chapter and should in no way confuse virtual Past Masters with actual Past Masters, those who served as Worshipful Masters of symbolic lodges. The lessons imparted in this degree deal with the responsibilities of those who would lead their brothers.

Master of Ceremonies: This brings us to the degree of Most Excellent Master. This degree will be explained by Companion _____.

High Priest: (*dressed in high priest robes, including miter and breastplate*)

Brothers, we have returned to the time of King Solomon. I am the High Priest of the Jewish people. I am dressed in my ceremonial robes because in the degree of Most Excellent Master, I am to preside over the completion and the dedication of King Solomon's Temple. Yes, we have finally completed it, and it is magnificent!! The last stone of the temple is to be cemented in its place, the aprons of the workmen will be taken off and laid aside, the holy vessels of the temple finally will be carried into the Sanctum Sanctorum, and in a very impressive ceremony, the temple will be dedicated. I dare say that Jerusalem has never seen anything so ceremonial or splendid as what we have planned. After more than seven years of construction, the labors of the craftsmen are completed, and the Most Excellent Master's degree will be their reward, and finally, I will be able to walk from my quarters to the temple without having to detour around construction barriers!!

Master of Ceremonies:

The last of the Chapter degrees is the most sublime degree of Royal Arch Mason. in the Royal Arch Chapter, we refer to each other as companion, rather than brother. The degree of Royal Arch Mason was originally conferred by symbolic lodges and was once considered to be a part of the Master Mason degree. When the ancient and the modern grand lodges in England reunited in 1813, they issued a proclamation that “ancient craft masonry” consists of no more than three degrees, the Entered Apprentice, the Fellowcraft, and the Master Mason, which included the Holy Royal Arch.” Companion _____ will describe this degree.

Principal Sojourner: (*sojourner robes with staff*)

Brothers, it has been 470 years since King Solomon’s Temple was completed and dedicated. But the temple stands no more. Because of disobedience to God’s commands, the enemies of the Jewish nation were loosed upon them. Jerusalem was captured, the holy vessels were taken from the temple, the temple was destroyed, and the Jewish people were made captive and forcibly taken to Babylon. When the Persians conquered Babylon, the Jewish captives were released and allowed to return to their homeland to rebuild the city and the house of the Lord. In the Royal Arch degree, the candidates represent sojourners, who under my guidance as principal sojourner, make the hazardous journey from Babylon to Jerusalem, and then volunteer their services to assist in the rebuilding of the temple on the site of the original temple of Solomon. During their labors, valuable discoveries are made, culminating in the recovery of the lost master’s word.

Master of Ceremonies: My brothers, this concludes the description of the degrees of the Chapter of Royal Arch Masons. Royal Arch Masons refer to each other as Companion, rather than brother, this alludes to their sharing of hardships during the journey from Babylon to Jerusalem. Chapters are led by three elected officers, the High Priest, the King and the Scribe, who represent the three officers who led the building of the second temple. These were Joshua, the High Priest, Zerubbabel the King, and Haggi the Scribe. The Chapter is governed by the Grand Chapter of South Carolina. Our primary charity is the Royal Arch Research Assistance Philanthropy or "RARA" which provides funds for research in Central Auditory Processing Disorders.

Master of Ceremonies:

The next body in the York Rite is the Council of Cryptic Masons. The term Cryptic refers to the scene or location of the drama of the Select Master's degree.

The order in which events happen is seldom the order in which we learn about them. The successive degrees of York Rite masonry picture events in the order we learn about them, not in the chronological order in which they occurred. The Cryptic degrees portray events that occurred before and after the tragedy of the third degree, and fill gaps in our knowledge of that degree and the Royal Arch degree. The degree of Royal Master will be explained by Companion _____.

Hiram Abif: (dressed in robes).

Brothers, for those of you who do not recognize me, I am Hiram Abif. In the Royal Master's degree, we encounter a fellowcraft who wonders if he will

ever receive the secrets of a Master Mason. He engages me in a conversation, during which I attempt to ease his worries, as well as increase his knowledge, his patience, and his faith. However, the conversation with this young fellowcraft makes me give some thought to his concerns and led directly to the creation and the activities of the Select Master's degree.

Master of Ceremonies: The Select Master's degree will be described to you by Companion _____.

King Solomon: (*royal robes, with a crown and scepter*)

Brothers, it's good to see you here. I know it's not often that you get to see King Solomon himself, up close and personal. and I hope you will shortly be qualified to receive the Select Master's degree. I, with my companions, Hiram King of Tyre and Hiram Abif, being in possession of the writings of Moses and the prophets, well knew that if the children of Israel deviate from the laws of God, their enemies will be set upon them, the cities and temple sacked and destroyed, and the sacred treasures in the Sanctum Sanctorum forever lost. To prevent this evil, we agreed to erect a secret crypt or vault under the temple, in which to preserve some of our sacred treasures. We selected skilled workmen to construct this vault and made them Select Masters. The ceremony of the degree dramatizes our efforts in preserving our sacred treasures for posterity. We hope you will be able to join us soon, as Select Masters.

Master of Ceremonies: Council business is conducted in the Select Master's degree. However, the Council also confers a "side degree", the Super

Excellent Master's degree. Companion _____ will give you some information on this degree.

Prophet: (*robe*) Greetings, my name is Ezekiel. Some call me a prophet, but I am not sure that is a proper term. I am more of a messenger from God. Things are not going well in our nation. As you know from descriptions in the Holy Bible, Solomon's kingdom split into two kingdoms, Israel and Judah. Israel was conquered and is no more. Now Judah is looking at the same fate. The people have sinned against God. Our king has proven to be without honor, and Nebuchadnezzar, the King of the Chaldeans, is approaching our borders with his vast army. the Super Excellent Master's degree portrays what awaits us if the King and the nation do not repent. It is the most dramatic degree in all of masonry, requiring an extremely large cast and its lessons are profound.

Master of Ceremonies: Like the Chapter, the Council is led by three elected officers, the Illustrious Master who represents King Solomon, the Deputy Master who represents Hiram King of Tyre, and the Principal Conductor of the Work who represents Hiram Abif. The Council is governed by the Grand Council of South Carolina. Our primary charity is the Cryptic Masons Medical Research foundation. The CMMRF funds research in the causes, prevention, and treatment of atherosclerosis and vascular biology. This is the one charity which all of us will hopefully receive direct benefits from, because atherosclerosis is the leading cause of death in men over 50, that includes most of us, brothers. The CMMRF and the Shriners burns centers are the only masonic charities that deal with life and death issues.

Master of Ceremonies: Brothers, the last of the bodies of the York Rite is the Commandery of Knights Templar. Unlike all other masonic bodies, the Commandery confers orders, not degrees. and unlike all the degrees of masonry, the Commandery orders have a definite Christian character, so much so that the non-Christian mason may feel uncomfortable receiving them. The first of the orders is the Order of the Red Cross, which will be explained by Companion _____.

Zerubbabel: (*royal robes*)

Brothers, I am Zerubbabel, a prince of Judah. I was in the first group of captives that was released from Babylon to return to Jerusalem, which you heard about in the description of the Royal Arch degree. Well, things are not going well. We have been interfered with and hindered in every manner conceivable. Since I was a boyhood friend of Darrius, King of Persia, I have been commissioned by the Jewish High Council to return to Persia to ask King Darrius for his assistance. When you become candidates for the Order of the Red Cross, you will make this journey with me. It will be hazardous, and our lives may be forfeited, but it is necessary. I think I have sufficient persuasiveness to convince King Darrius that he should help us by giving us protection as well as monetary assistance. Let's hope so, or we will all be rotting away in a Persian prison!!

Master of Ceremonies: Brothers, this brings us to the order of Malta, which will be explained by Knight _____.

Prior (*prior cape and mantle, sword*)

Brothers we now leap forward to the 12th century in the Christian era. Muslim invaders have taken over the Holy Land, and their marauders have made the sea lanes in the Mediterranean Sea unsafe for travel. One of the orders that came into being during this time was the Knights of Saint John, also known as the hospitallers, for the hospital that they ran in Jerusalem. In 1118, the order organized a military arm to fight the enemies of Christianity. The fortunes or rather misfortunes of war caused the order to move its headquarters several times. They moved from Jerusalem to Acre, then to Cyprus, then Rhodes, and finally to Malta. The last move gave them the name by which they are known today, the Order of Malta. The ceremonies of this order explain the history of the order, and will constitute you a Knight of Malta, sworn to protect travelers to the Holy Land, give them shelter, and when necessary, to wield your sword in their defense.

Master of Ceremonies: Brothers, this brings us to the last order of the Commandery, the Order of the Temple. This order will be described by Sir Knight _____.

Commander (*full knight templar uniform, with chapeau and sword*)

Brothers, I am a Knight of the order of the poor fellow soldiers of Christ and of the temple of Solomon, better known as a Knight Templar. The Knights Templar were formed in 1118, to protect pilgrims traveling to the Holy Land. The Knights Templar and the Knights of Malta were formed at approximately the same time and had their headquarters in Jerusalem. In many battles with the Muslim forces, we Templars were on the right of the Christian battle line, and the Knights of Malta were on the left. We Templars had a reputation as fierce warriors, never asking or giving

quarter, and at the same time protecting innocent maidens, helpless orphans, and the Christian religion. As a result, our reputation has spread far and wide, and attracts many noble Knights who desired to enlist in our cause. Should you become a candidate for the Order of the Temple, you will symbolically undergo the trials incident to the acceptance of a new Knight into our order. The ceremonies are striking and impressive, ceremonies that I am sure you will keep in your memory always. I look forward to dubbing and creating you a Knight Templar.

Master of Ceremonies: Knights Templar refer to each other as Sir Knight. The Commandery of Knights Templar is governed by an Eminent Commander, a Generalissimo, and a Captain General. Being a military order, all participants are in uniform. All members carry swords, and during our ceremonies, the swords are drawn and used as instructed in a sword manual. This gets interesting at times, and real blood has been spilled on occasion, although in minor and nonlife threatening quantities. I must admit that the wounds are almost always self-inflicted during practice. The Commandery is governed by the Grand Commandery of South Carolina. The Grand Comandery has as its philanthropy the Knights Templar eye foundation, whose mission is to improve vision through research, education and supporting access to eye care; The KT Education Scholarship program; and the Holy Land Pilgrimage Program.

Master of Ceremonies: My brothers, this concludes your introduction to the York Rite. We hope that we have informed you of our Rite, aroused your curiosity to find out more about our degrees and orders, and perhaps induced you to ask for a petition. Any questions?