

OPENING/R.I. Dean Tollison

Good morning Companions and Sir Knights. We would like to welcome you to the 2014 York Rite State Educational Meeting. We are glad to see the large turnout this morning. Hopefully this committee has prepared an educational program that will be helpful to all of us. We live in a different world these days and as York Rite Masons we must work harder to keep our Brother Masons interested in joining our York Rite Fraternity. In the past 5 years our York Rite Fraternity has lost approximately 1,350 members from our Fraternity statewide. If we do not find some way to change this trend, 10 years from now, York Rite Masons will not exist in the state of South Carolina. There are several presentations that can be used in our Masonic Lodges to encourage interest. This committee has chosen a presentation that we recommend be used. It goes in depth to explain York Rite Masonry to our Brother Masons.

The York Rite consists of four bodies: The Symbolic Lodge of (Ancient) Free and Accepted 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 Lodge. Most Symbolic Lodges in the US use a Ritual, which is a York Rite Ritual. 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.

CHAPTER/R.I. Robert Norton

The Chapter of Royal Arch Masons confers four degrees. The first of the degrees is Mark Master. It represents the overseers of the work on King Solomon's Temple.

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. One of the Master Masons was assigned duties of Master Overseer. His job was to inspect, and accept or reject the work of the Mark Masters. 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 of the work on the temple. 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.

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. This degree confers no honors or privileges outside of the Chapter, and we 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.

We have returned to the time of King Solomon. The High Priest of the Jewish people presided 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 into 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 Degree will be their reward.

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. For example, 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, to include the Holy Royal Arch."

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 the guidance of the 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.

COUNCIL/M.I. Doug Knauer

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 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. In the Royal Master Degree, we encounter a Fellowcraft who wonders if he will ever receive the secrets of a Master Mason. He engages in a conversation, during which an attempt is made to ease his worries, as well as increase his knowledge, his patience, and his faith. However, the conversation with this young Fellowcraft causes some thought about his concerns, and leads directly to the creation and the activities of the Select Master Degree.

I hope you will shortly be qualified to receive the Select Master 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. In order to prevent this

evil, an agreement was made to erect a secret crypt or vault under the temple, in which to preserve some of our sacred treasures. Skilled workmen were selected to construct this vault, and were named 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.

COMMANDERY/R.I. Tommy Blackwood

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 of 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.

Zerubabel, a Prince of Judah, 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 Zerubabel was a boyhood friend of Darius, King of Persia, he was commissioned by the Jewish High Council to return to Persia to ask King Darius for his assistance. When you become candidates for the Order of the Red Cross, you will make this journey with him. It will be hazardous, and your lives may be forfeit, but it is necessary. Zerubabel should have sufficient persuasive-ness to convince King Darius that he should help by giving protection as well as monetary assistance. Let's hope so, or you will all be rotting away in a Persian prison!

The next degree is the Order of Malta. 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 St. 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, the 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.

The last degree is the Order of the Temple. A Knight of the Order of the Poor Fellow Soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon was known as a Knight Templar. The Knights Templar were formed in 1118 to protect the 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, the Templars were on the right of the Christian battle line, and the Knights of Malta were on the left. The 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, their reputation has spread far and wide, and attracts many noble young knights who desire 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 Knights Templar.

[CLOSING/R.I. Dean Tollison](#)

Thank you for your attention. As you see, this is a short, but very informative presentation that can be presented at a Masonic Lodge's Regular Communication. In order to present this at a Lodge, you must first contact the Master of the Lodge and ask permission to bring this information to the Brothers. I hope that each one of you will take this opportunity to do your part to educate our Brother Masons about York Rite Masons. I would also like to thank the committee members:

Doug Knauer, M.I. Grand Master

Robert D. Norton, R.I. Grand Principal Conductor of Works

Tommy Blackwood, R.I. Grand Captain of Guard

Does anyone have any questions they would like to ask any of the members of the committee?