

**IOWA  
SYSTEMATIC  
MASONIC  
ENLIGHTENMENT  
COURSE**



**MASTER  
MASON  
DEGREE**



**IMPORTANT**  
To be given to the new brother  
immediately following the  
conferral of the degree.

## MASTER MASON DEGREE

Congratulations! You have been raised to the sublime degree of a Master Mason! There are several duties, rights and privileges to which you are now entitled. You will not find them anywhere fully or clearly numbered, stated, and catalogued. They are scattered here and there, some in the form of symbols, others of customs, and others of laws. Some are clearly and explicitly stated while others are merely implied.

Following the proving of your proficiency on the Third Degree you may: Vote, hold office, serve on committees, demit from your lodge(s), petition for dual or plural membership, and petition for degrees or membership in such Masonic Bodies as are recognized by the Grand Lodge of Iowa.

As a Master Mason your first duty is to live by and act consistently with your obligation. Unless this is done, you cannot perform your other duties nor should you be able to claim your rights and privileges.

The constant responsibility of a Master Mason is “to preserve the reputation of the Fraternity unsullied.” Leading an upright life is the best means of carrying through our individual responsibilities 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. With this as a foundation, some of these duties, rights and privileges will be discussed in detail.

### *Lodge Attendance*

We do not have a minimum attendance requirement as Ancient Lodges did; nor is there a penalty for not attending as there once was. However, every Master Mason has a moral obligation to be loyal to the lodge which gave him Masonic Light and all the benefits which come with it. This should be your inducement to attend lodge as often as possible and to join in the fellowship which makes up Freemasonry.

### *How often do lodges meet?*

Most lodges meet once a month for a Stated Communication or regular business meeting. The time and date of this Stated Communication is fixed by the Bylaws of the lodge. The Worshipful Master may call a special meeting whenever he deems it necessary for the conferral of degrees or any other purpose.

### *Department While in Lodge*

Your deportment while the lodge is open is governed by good taste. You should not engage in private conversations; nor through any other action, disrupt the business of the lodge. Discussions in the lodge are always a healthy sign and promote the interest of the lodge, if properly conducted. If you wish to speak, rise. After being recognized, address the Worshipful Master, give the sign of the degree the lodge is open in, make your remarks and then be seated. You should observe rules of propriety and refrain from mentioning personalities or disturbing the peace and harmony of the lodge. Religion, partisan politics, and any subject which might disrupt the peace and harmony of the lodge, should not be discussed in the lodge.

### *Masonic Visitation*

Visiting lodges in which you do not hold membership is both a right and a privilege, though not a duty. It is a right in the sense that you may seek admittance into any regular lodge recognized by the Grand Lodge of Iowa. It is a privilege in the sense that your admission into the lodge is contingent upon your being vouched for, or examined, and being permitted to enter by the Worshipful Master. If a Mason is not permitted to enter a lodge at a certain time, the fact does not cancel his right to seek to visit that lodge at another time or to seek to visit any other lodge. The right to visit is subject to the laws in each grand jurisdiction.

### *The Responsibility to Examine Visitors*

This responsibility belongs to the lodge itself and is delegated by the Worshipful Master to a committee of brothers who are to satisfy themselves that the visitor is a Master Mason in good standing and a member of a regular lodge. The Worshipful Master may call upon any member of the lodge to serve on the examining committee.

### *The Responsibility of Recommenders on Petitioners*

Before endorsing the petition you should take the time to discuss Masonry with the applicant. You should know why he wishes to become a Mason, what he expects, and what may be expected of him. The Investigating Committee should explain much of this to him but you, yourself, should be satisfied with his understanding and know that he is of good moral character. The signing of the petition should be a source of great pleasure for you.

### *The Responsibility to Investigate Petitioners*

Serving on the Investigating Committee should be regarded as a mark of special trust by those selected. Only those who can be counted on to make a complete and impartial inquiry into the petitioner's character, and determine his worthiness to become a Mason should be selected. This duty, well done, is a service to the petitioner, the lodge, and the Fraternity. Let quality, not quantity, be your watchword. Always remember, as a member of an Investigating Committee, you are selecting the material which will, in the future, make the structure of our Fraternity strong or weak.

### *The Privilege of Balloting*

Only members of the lodge voting, in good standing and proficient have a right to ballot. No member present can be excused from balloting on any question before the lodge, except by a vote of the lodge, and only when good cause is shown. No member will be permitted to retire from the lodge to avoid casting his ballot. The white balls are the affirmative, or favorable ballot, and the black cube is the negative, or unfavorable, ballot. If you do not have personal knowledge of anything unfavorable about the petitioner, personal piques and quarrels should have no effect on your ballot, then you should accept the word of the Investigating Committee and cast a favorable ballot. However, if you have first hand information that indicates the petitioner is unworthy to be a Mason, do not hesitate to use the black cube to protect the lodge from an undesirable member. As the ballot is spread, examine your own motives, and hope that the ballot you are about to cast will do justice to the candidate, to Freemasonry, and to yourself. Only by doing so will we be able to continue building a membership of worthy brothers. If in doubt, vote in favor of the lodge and Freemasonry. The Right to Secrecy of the Ballot is guaran-

ted by Masonic Law, and custom allows each member to have perfect freedom in balloting on petitioners. No brother should disclose how he voted, and no brother shall inquire into how another brother voted on a particular candidate. For a brother to reveal how he balloted on a vote is a Masonic offense.

There are three methods of balloting used in Masonic Lodges. They are the ballot box, written ballot and show of hands and are used in the following situations: When petitions are balloted on, the ballot box is used. At the annual meeting for election of officers in November, a written ballot is required. For all other types of balloting the vote is usually performed by raising the right hand.

#### *The Financial Responsibilities of a Mason*

These are twofold. First, in the area of mandatory support or lodge dues. Second, in the area of voluntary support. By paying dues, the brother carries his share of the expenses incurred by the lodge. In voluntary support, he must determine the extent of his participation, measuring needs versus his ability to contribute. Not being able to pay dues can be handled without embarrassment. No lodge desires to suspend a brother who is unable to make payment of his dues because of inability to pay. A distressed brother should inform the Worshipful Master or Secretary of his situation. One of these officers will take care of the situation; no record will be shown on the books, and no debt is accumulated. This is not Masonic Charity, but rather, Brotherly Love. It is felt that a brother who finds himself unable to pay his dues has an obligation to make his situation known to the Worshipful Master or Secretary.

#### *The Right of Masonic Memorial Services*

Master Masons in good standing are entitled to Masonic Memorial Services which are conducted only at the request of the Master Mason or his immediate family. The choice belongs to the family, not to the lodge. These Services may be held at the funeral home, church, graveside, or any other appropriate location.

#### *Masonic Law*

Every lodge is governed by the Grand Lodge from which it received its Dispensation, Warrant or Charter. It must adhere to the Laws, Rules and Regulations (Code) of the Grand Lodge from which it receives its authority. These Laws, Rules and Regulations can be amended by the voting delegates in attendance at the Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge.

#### *Clandestine Lodge and Clandestine Mason*

A Clandestine Lodge is one operating without a Dispensation, Charter or Warrant from a Grand Lodge that is recognized by the Grand Lodge of Iowa. A person that belongs to one of those lodges is considered a Clandestine Mason. You shall not visit a Clandestine Lodge nor converse on the secrets of Freemasonry with a Clandestine Mason.

## *SYMBOLISM OF THE DEGREE*

The Sublime Degree of Master Mason is indeed a “sublime” degree, one that a man may study for years without exhausting its lessons. Any interpretation must necessarily be only a hint. Yet a hint may stimulate you to reflect upon it for yourself and to study it more thoroughly in the future. In the First and Second Degrees you were surrounded by the symbols and emblems of architecture. In the Third Degree you found a different type of symbolism; one that speaks the language of the soul, its life, its tragedy, and its triumph. To recognize this is the first step in interpretation. The second step is to recognize that the ritual of the Third Degree has many meanings. It is not intended to be a lesson finished and closed, but rather lessons that can last a lifetime.

There are many interpretations of this degree and each one is true. But essentially it is a drama setting forth the truth that though a man withers away and perishes, there is always a part of him which never dies.

### *What does the Raising signify?*

If you have the answer to this question, you can afterwards find your way into other meanings of the degree. In the life of a man we find a number of groups of experiences, each of a different kind. Let us consider a few of them. There are those experiences which are incidental to our passage from childhood, through manhood, to old age. There are those incidental to the life of the body such as hunger, sleep, weariness, the senses, the feelings, etc. There are those which have to do with religion, worship, God, and the meaning and purpose of life. There are those which have to do with a man’s work, his trade or occupation and how he makes a living for himself and his dependents. There are those which center about his life in the community, a social being, a neighbor, a citizen. For a man to be happy, he must be able to live in and to deal with each of these groups of facts, circumstances, realities, and experiences. To have the spirit rest in God and to have a sincere and unwavering faith in truth and goodness are the inner secrets of a Master Mason, to teach this is the purpose of the Third Degree.

### *Reception*

In your reception at the door you were reminded that all the lessons of Freemasonry must be taken to heart if they are to serve a useful purpose and become a part of you. You were also reminded that you should practice them in your daily life.

### *Obligation*

The Obligation is the focal point of the degree. When you assumed the Obligation of the degree a bond was created between yourself and the other members of the lodge who have already made the pledge, thus creating duty common to all. By taking the Obligation, you obtained the privileges, rights, and benefits of the Masonic institution. You must know the Obligation, not only its words but more especially the underlying meanings, if you are to abide by it. The penalties have the same significance as those of the First and Second Degrees and are symbolic rather than physical.

### *Signs, Tokens, and Words*

These are very important as they provide modes of recognition whereby one Mason may know another in the dark as well as in the light. Each Sign, Token, and Word have symbolic meanings, which serves to enrich our minds and improve our lives as Masons. You should know how to properly execute all the Signs of each degree in order to show your respect for the dignity of this part of the ceremonies.

### *The Working Tools*

The working tools of a Master Mason are all the implements of Masonry indiscriminately but more especially the trowel. You as a Master Mason are charged with using the trowel to cement the ties between Masons and to spread the cement of Brotherly Love.

### *The Legend of Hiram*

Hiram Abif, the widow's son of the Tribe of Naphtali, was a skilled artificer. Earlier accounts of Hiram are recorded in the First Book of Kings, Chapter 7, Verses 13 and 14. His coming to work on the great Temple of Jerusalem is mentioned in a letter written to King Solomon by Hiram, the King of Tyre, and recorded in II Chronicles, Chapter 2 Verses 13 and 14. The word Abif means "his father" or "my father;" and the name is translated to "Hiram, my father." He was regarded as the father of all his workmen on the Temple. By using Hiram Abif we are taught the magnificent lessons of fidelity.

Did the drama that you took part in actually take place in history? No, probably not. Does that make it any less meaningful or important? Absolutely not! The symbolic method of teaching is part of the beauty of our gentle craft. Learning what Masonry has to teach is much easier, more enjoyable and a more personal experience when taught in this format.

### *The Three Grand Masters*

The three men most often mentioned in our rituals concerning the building of the Temple are: Solomon, King of Israel; Hiram, King of Tyre; and Hiram Abif. In early times, it was thought that Deity was regarded as three persons working together to get things done.

### *King Solomon's Temple*

This magnificent structure 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, and Verses 14 through 30. The building of the Temple was begun around 1012 B.C., and finished eight years later. It was about 480 years after the people of Israel came out of Egypt as a band of refugees. Over time the people had lost their sense of spiritual direction and destiny, so their Temple was destroyed in the year 586 B.C. 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 believed that God dwelled with man in those days, and this should be a fundamental human thought today. Some people of that day claimed this Temple was the most perfect building ever erected by man.

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 encourages each of its members to build a more stately mansion within themselves. Each of us should be aware of the fact that we are a symbolic Temple and that we should work toward the same type of perfection in our own Temple as that sought for in the Temple of Jerusalem. Our individual temples are mental, physical and spiritual, and our work on these temples should not be inferior.

### *The Three Ruffians*

There are many symbolic explanations for the appearance of these three in our Ritualistic work. Their attempt to obtain the secrets not rightfully theirs and the dire consequences of their acts are symbolic of many things. Each of us is reminded that rewards must be earned rather than obtained by violence. The Ruffians are also symbols of the "passions" of yourself which you have "come here to subdue." There is another symbolism that can be applied to today's world. When man is enslaved, the first of his privileges to be denied or curtailed is that of free speech and unrestricted communications with his fellow citizens. This is symbolized by the blow across the throat by the first Ruffian. Man's affection is the next area attacked for those who control a people also force the families to comply with their orders. This is symbolized by the blow across the chest by the second Ruffian. Finally, man's reason is attacked because your enemies will always seek to destroy your mind as the final step to enslavement. This is shown by the blow to the forehead by the third Ruffian.

### *The Lost Word*

In reality we are not searching for a particular word. The Masonic search for the Word symbolizes the search for truth, particularly Divine Truth. We must always search diligently for truth, and never permit prejudices, passions, or conflicts of interest, to hinder us in our search. We must keep our minds open to receiving truth from any source. Thus Masons are devoted to freedom of thought, speech, and action. In Symbolic Masonry we do not have the true Word, but rather a substitute. Thus we are reminded that in this life we may approach an approximation of truth, but probably will never attain it in perfection. We always will be searching, but will not receive it until we pass on to "That House Not Made With Hands, Eternal in the Heavens."

### *The Sprig of Acacia*

Hebrew people used to plant a sprig of Acacia at the head of a grave for two purposes: To mark the location of the grave, and to show their belief in the immortality of the soul. Because of its evergreen nature they believed it to be an emblem of both immortality and innocence. The true Acacia is a thorny plant which abounds in Palestine. 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 Acacia was used to construct the tabernacle and most of the furniture in King Solomon's Temple.

### *The Raising of a Candidate*

Symbolically, the Raising represents our Masonic belief in the immortality of the soul. This Degree is the sublime climax of Symbolic Freemasonry. If you learn only that the living, dying, and Raising in a Master Mason Degree is a drama designed to teach the virtues of fidelity and fortitude, then you have received only partial light and have seen nothing more than a drama with a moral.

The following is a quote taken from the book Introduction to Freemasonry by Carl H. Claudy:

“In its Second Section the Sublime Degree departs from the familiar. Instead of being concerned with moral principles and exhortations, as is the first degree, or with architecture and learning, as is the second, it answers the cry of Job, ‘If a man die, shall he live again?’

The degree delves into the deepest recesses of a man’s nature. While it leads the initiate into the Sanctum Sanctorum of the Temple, it probes the Holy of Holies of his heart.

As a whole the degree is symbolical of that old age by the wisdom of which ‘we may enjoy the happy reflections consequent on a well-spent life, and die in the hope of a glorious immortality.’

But it is much more than that. It is at once the universal and yearning question of man throughout all ages and its answer. It teaches no creed, no dogma, no religion; only that there is a hope of immortality; there is a Great Architect by whose mercy we may live again, leaving to each brother his choice of interpretations by which he may read the Great Beyond.”

### *The Grand Masonic Word*

This was demonstrated in the second section of the degree and as stated in the obligation it must never be given except on the five points of fellowship then and only then in a low breath (whisper).