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Why Join the Royal Arch?

I find it difficult to understand why more brethren do not seek membership in the Royal Arch.

No Rite of Freemasonry covers the world, as does Royal Arch Masonry. In every country, and on every continent will be found Royal Arch Chapters, eager and willing to receive their companions from other parts of the world into the full fellowship that characterizes Royal Arch Masonry.

In our own country, we find upwards of 750,000 members in 3,000 Chapters in every state. All Chapter business is conducted in a Royal Arch Chapter.

Royal Arch Masonry is said to have derived its origin from the original Masonic Degrees and traditions. The Royal Arch was described "as the heart, root, and marrow of Freemasonry" by Laurence Dermott, Secretary of the Antients Grand Lodge of England.

The Degree of Royal Arch Mason is founded upon the destruction of the first and the building of the second Temple. The ceremonies of the Degree have an interesting and graphic historical setting, and a profound and reverential moral significance. The Royal Arch Degree is the complement of the Master's Degree, the unfolding into a second volume of the history of that which was lost to its final recovery. Without the Royal Arch, the Master's Degree is like a song half sung, a tale partly told, or a promise unfulfilled.

Why should anyone join the Royal Arch?

My first reason would be that indissoluble link to Blue Lodge (Craft) Freemasonry. Another reason would be companionship and enjoyment. But, above all, joining the Royal Arch should increase your enjoyment of Freemasonry. It brings with it new experiences, new insights and new Companions, all of which add to our pleasure and our enjoyment of Freemasonry.

Every Master Mason aspires to attain the summit of Ancient Craft Masonry. All wish most earnestly to receive all the light and instruction which pertains to the Ancient Craft - the origin and foundation of the Institution. In the life of every Master Mason, moreover, there comes a time when he realizes that he has not yet attained that goal, that he is not yet in possession of all the rights and light of a Master Mason, as these were known and understood by his ancient brethren.

But he does not realize that the goal of his aspirations is near at hand - in the Royal Arch Degree.

Our progress through Freemasonry is a journey of self-discovery and self-knowledge. In the Craft we are presented with eminently practical principles and rules which, if we follow them in our lives, we would hope to live a life of service to our fellow man and pleasing to God, however we worship Him.

But we are not simply practical beings. We have a vital spiritual aspect to our natures which is addressed in the Royal Arch. In essence the Royal Arch, without transgressing the bounds of religion, invites the candidate to consider the nature of God and his relationship with Him.

In that way the Royal Arch completes the man by leading him from the practical to the spiritual, and the Craft and Royal Arch form “pure ancient masonry”.

The Capitular Degrees are a set of four degrees controlled by the Royal Arch Chapter.

They center on the construction phases of Solomon's Temple, with the exception of the degree of Past Master, hence the title of Capitular.

Mark Master

- A Degree that emphasizes the lessons of regularity, discipline, and integrity. It is a most impressive Degree centered on the story of the Fellowcraft of the quarry and their role in the building of the Temple. Its importance in English Craft Masonry can be judged by the fact that it operates as a separate Grand Lodge, and is highly sought by members of the Craft in that jurisdiction.

Past Master (Virtual)

- A Degree that emphasizes the lesson of harmony. This Degree is conferred because ancient custom required that a Mason must be a Past Master in order to be exalted to the Royal Arch. In some Grand Jurisdictions this Degree is conferred upon all sitting Masters of the Blue Lodge. The Degree confers no actual rank upon the recipient, but is exemplified to maintain the ancient custom.

Most Excellent Master

- A Degree that emphasizes the lesson of reverence. This Degree is centered on the dedication of the Temple after its completion, particularly the consecration of the Sanctum Sanctorum and the descent of the Host into the Temple. It is complimentary to the Mark Master Degree and completes the symbolic lessons

introduced in that Degree.

The Royal Arch

- The completion of the Master Mason Degree and the summit of the original Degrees of the Blue Lodge as practiced in the Antients Lodges of England before 1820. The Degree explains the origins of the Substitute Word found in the Master Mason Degree, the recovery of the Ineffable Word, and its concealment within the Royal Arch Word. This Degree, together with the Master Mason Degree, may have once been exemplified as one large or "super" Degree, with the Master Mason Degree explaining the loss of the Master's Word and the Royal Arch explaining the recovery of the Master's Word. The presiding body is a Chapter, and the presiding officer is a High Priest (titled Excellent).

The Degree of Royal Arch Mason

will be justly appreciated by all who are Exalted to that Most Sublime Degree, particularly by those who are seeking to complete their Masonic education. It reveals the full light of Ancient Craft masonry, presents it as a complete system in accordance with the original plan and confers at last the rights and light of a Master Mason in fact as well as in name. It truly leads to a fuller understanding of the purposes and spirit of Freemasonry, for standing upon this towering summit we are able for the first time to perceive the completeness of the Ancient Craft and to understand how all its forms and ceremonies, from the Entered Apprentice to the Master Mason's Degree, are the preparation for the final goal, the Most Sublime Degree of Royal Arch Mason.

The motto of the Royal Arch is

- *Kodes La Adonai*. It means - "Holiness to the Lord."

Royal Arch Masonry is not a religion and does not endeavor to fix ones conception of God. Royal Arch Masonry regards your religious belief as your own; it does not attempt to influence your belief. It only asks that you have a belief. The motto of the Royal Arch - "Holiness To The Lord" - ever reminds us of the reverence due the Great and Beneficent Author of our existence, who is a Being without beginning of days or ending of years.

A Royal Arch Mason is taught to continually attempt to build with Plumb, Square and Level, that Temple of Character which is the great goal of our gentle Craft.

Having completed your degrees in Symbolic Masonry (Blue Lodge), your next step in advancing in York Rite Masonry is the Chapter of Capitular Degrees.

If you are not yet a Royal Arch Freemason and you seek more light in Masonry then just ask a Brother of your lodge who is already a Companion of a Royal Arch Chapter. They will guide you on the path to membership. There are also many Past Masters of Craft Lodges that are not Royal Arch Companions. They are particularly welcome to join the Royal Arch as well as all Master Masons.