

THE CHRONOLOGICAL DATES OF
THE YORK RITE DEGREES

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The chronological dates of the York Rite degrees and orders from Enter Apprentice through Order of the Temple.

One might think without looking into it very much that the degrees of E.A. thru O.T. may fall into chronological order as they are conferred on oneself. While this is true of the first few degrees it does not remain that way.

There are some clues in many of the degrees that one may pick up to place that degree in the order that it should take place.

In most cases there is no set dates for the degrees and one must look to other degrees to set each of them in proper order.

In other cases one must simply use one own judgement in setting the order.

For the purpose of outlining the 13 degrees and orders starting with the blue lodge thru the R.A. chapter and the Council and ending with the Commandery, I have divided them into 5 groups. Four of them dealing with King Solomen's Temple, and the fifth with the crusades.

The 1st is the building of the temple and holds the greatest number of degrees. Next is the completion. The 3rd is the destruction of the temple. The 4th is the rebuilding of the temple. The 5th is the crusades or Christian era.

While studying the 13 degrees and orders I feel that I have a chronological order when they occurred. In many cases degrees overlap each other.

While we do not really know what degrees came first we have to go to the person receiving the degrees in the order that one receives them. This would then start with the E.A. This is the 1st degree we receive in masonry. The E.A. was the labor at the building of the temple. As the E.A. advanced in knowledge he advanced to F.C.

Now we depart from the order that degrees are conferred and jump all the way to the select master degree. Why do we leave the blue lodge slip thru the chapter degrees and go to the council?

While the temple was being built the secret vault was also being built. We also know that Hiram Abif was still alive as the ritual has him speaking a few lines and aiding in the building of a copy of the ark of the covenant.

The next degree is the royal master which is right before the master mason degree in my order. The royal master is the only degree that we have a good talk with Hiram Abif before his death which happens in the Master Mason degree. In the R.M. Hiram talks about death and later in the degree we find that he is dead when the grip of the degree is explained. Therefore the R.M. overlaps the M.M. degree.

The most important degree in the blue lodge if not in all masonry is the master mason degree. Here we are symbolic murdered and later brought back to life to show us that there is life after death.

Before the temple is completed there is one degree call the Mark Master. In this degree we find that we are entering a fellow craft lodge. Near the end of the degree a search is made for the keystone, which is the only thing needed to complete the temple. This work was assigned to H.A. before he dies and we find that it is first lost and later found after his death.

The temple is completed and we are in the Most Excellent Master degree. We have labored for $7\frac{1}{2}$ years and the glorious work of the temple is complete. In this degree we dedicate the temple. At this point we must go back a little because in the Select Master degree we learn that the masters word was to be conferred on those fellowcrafts found worthy.

It is not clear, if due to the fact of H.A. death, if the masters was ever conferred. The secret vault was built to store the word and to confer it in due time. This was not done until the Royal Arch degree. Since in the Master Mason degree we have another word for the true word we have to wait to the Royal Arch degree to receive the true word.

We now enter the 3rd era of the temple, that of its destruction. The R.A. degree has in very little detail the destruction of the temple. We must go to the Super Excelant Master degree to see in more detail its destruction.

The R.A. degree actually covers more time than all the other degrees because in the beginning we see the briefest detail of its destruction and then we jump over 70 years to the rebuilding of the second temple. In this degree we find the true word.

The S.E.M. degree is next. While it only covers a short period of time it shows in more detail the destruction of the temple and the taking of the children of Isreal. It teaches a important lesson in fidelity. The final moments of a king who broke his covenant with god and god's wrath upon him and his people. It could be said that the S.E.M. degree could be placed before the R.A. since that degree is mostly after the S.E.M. The beginning of both degrees for all practical purposes are the same. In the R.A. we hear the clashing of swords symbolizing the destruction of the temple, while in the S.E.M. the fighting has already begun. One could divide the R.A. into two parts and place the S.E.M. in between.

We next move to the Commandery orders. The Order of the Red Cross is within the R.A. degree. In this order Zerubbabel was allowed to go back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple.

The last part of the Royal Arch shows Zerubbabel already in Jerusalem starting the work.

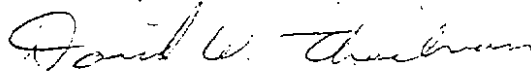
We next jump over 1000 years to the Order of Malta which has to do with the Knights Temple from the year 1099 to 1530. This order tells us about the Knights finally finding a place of their own on the island of Malta.

The order of the temple deals with a knight after the crusades who wishes to visit the Sepulchre in the holy lands. This could be anytime after the crusades.

If you have been following this paper closely you will know that one remaining degree has not been included. This is the Past Master degree in the chapter. This degree has no place in the actual building of the temple although the setting of the degree takes place in the temple. The ritual has the degree taking place at a later time. Its only purpose is the conferring of a honorary degree upon the candidate, because the conferring of the R.A. up until about 200 years ago was deemed too important for anyone except for the Master of the blue lodge. This degree was started so that other masons other than Past Masters could receive the R.A. degree. The degree draws on the character of King Solomon and the candidate assumes that role. This makes the candidate a virtual Past Master as opposed to a actual Past Master of a blue lodge.

In closing I would like to recap the order which I feel the degrees and orders took place: E.A., F.C., S.M., R.M., Master Mason, Mark Master, ME.M., R.A., S.E.M., O.R.C., O.M., O.T., And P.M.

I hope you have like this paper and I would gladly talk to anyone who would like to discuss this or any other subject.



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