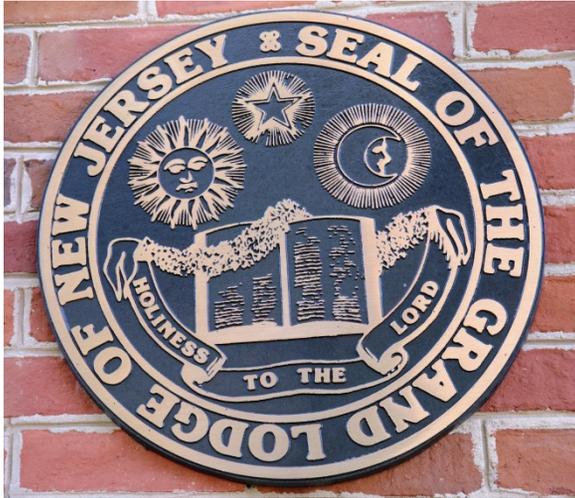


MIDDLE CHAMBER TALKS
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SHORT TALK
NO. 5

HIGHLIGHTS
ON THE
ENTERED
APPRENTICE
DEGREE

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THE GRAND LODGE OF NEW JERSEY
FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS

How Were You Prepared

First, you were divested of all minerals and metals. The Lodge is where men meet of all religions, faiths, political persuasions, in peace and in harmony. We meet on the level and deal squarely with each other. There is never to be discord in the Lodge or anything that would break the peace and harmony of the Lodge. You were then blindfolded, to teach you a lesson in trust. Additionally, with no outward objects to distract your attention, it is only then that the eye of reflection can probe the deepest and darkest recesses of your heart. You were neither naked nor clothed, because as Freemasons, we do not value a man's outward appearances, but what is in his heart. Both the Chief Executive and the Circus Clown enter through the same inner door in the same way and manner as all others who have gone this way before. Much like the umbilical cord, although cut, the bond between mother and child is never severed, so too, while the Cable Tow may be removed, the mystic tie between you and your brethren will never be severed. You knocked three times, as scripture states, Ask and ye shall receive, Seek and ye shall find, Knock and it shall be opened unto you.

How Were You Received

You were greeted with a sharp instrument and told never to reveal any of the secrets of Masonry. A man's word is his bond. There is nothing more valuable than a person's honesty and integrity.

Circumbulation

You knelt, and we all prayed for your success. You were then led around the Lodge from East to South to West. No man can go through life alone. Man always requires a trusted friend to confide in. As you walked around the Lodge, you did it without sight, but with faith and trust in your brother. Ancient faiths worshiped the sun which provided warmth and light. They found God in nature. In mimicking God, they would walk around their altars in a circular fashion. By walking around the altar, you followed the path of

millions of men who have come before you in worshipping Deity.

Freemasonry Was Defined

You were told that Freemasonry is a beautiful system or morality veiled in allegory and illustrated with symbols. It is founded on the purest principles of Morality, Brotherly Love, and Charity. Morality, to do what is right for no other reason other than it is right. Brotherly Love, to help another, not for blood ties or for mutual benefits, but because it celebrates the mystic tie that binds us. Charity is more than just writing a check, but devoting time to helping others, slow to anger, and quick to forgive.

What You Beheld at the Altar

At the altar, you took your oath and were given certain signs and words. Upon removal of the blindfold, you first saw the Holy Book, Square, and Compasses. What our ritual refers to as the Holy Bible may be any volume of sacred law, whether it be the New Testament, Old Testament, Qur'an, or any other Holy Book which would bind the candidate to the oath and obligation on the book of his faith. Here you are taught the principles of religious tolerance. The Square, a symbol of morality, teaches you how to deal with someone fairly and squarely. The Compasses teaches you to circumscribe your desires and keep your passions within due bounds.

White Lamb Skin Apron

We wear an apron, not for power, prestige, or wealth, but as a badge of innocence and purity. As the white lamb skin apron is unblemished and free of all stains, so should a Mason's character be unblemished and free of all stain. The apron is a Square and the flap a Triangle. The Square represents earth, as in the four corners of the world. It deals with matters of this earthly world. The Triangle represents spirituality or God. The apron represents the union of this world with the spiritual world, a union of our earthly bodies with that of our immortal spiritual souls.

Working Tools of an Entered Apprentice

All of the tools that you will be introduced to during your masonic travels are tools to be used symbolically to better yourself. To help mold you from that imperfect ashlar, to that perfect ashlar. The Twenty-Four Inch Gauge is a lesson in time. It is precious and fleeting and should never be wasted. The Common Gavel is used to remove the rough edges of our personalities, to mold us into better men. As a famous sculptor was once asked, "How do you carve such beautiful work out of stone", to which he replied, "It is simple, I merely knock away with a hammer and chisel the stone that I do not need, and the beautiful statue is there – it was there all the time". You inherently already possess perfection, you merely need to use the gavel to break off the rough edges and corners. That perfection is the immortal soul bestowed upon you by God.

You Were Placed in the Northeast Corner

The North is esoterically known as the place of darkness and the East as a place of light. You were placed at the crossroads of the two. What direction will you choose to travel in? Will you waste this opportunity and squander it in the North, or will you labor to the East and search for enlightenment? The choice is yours to make. You were compared to the cornerstone of any building and how that stone must be perfectly squared and perfectly cubed. The Square is the emblem of morality and a strict performance of every duty. The Cube is the emblem of truth, similar to the Tabernacle, a cube building representing divine truth.

You were Shown a Circle with a Point, Two Lines, and a Bible

The point represents an individual brother, and the circle is the boundary line beyond which he never lets his passions trespass. As he travels around the circle, he will touch the two parallel lines and the Bible, keeping him in check so as never to materially err.

As every point on the circle is of equal distance to the center point, so every person we meet, we should treat with the same level of equality.

A circle, being without end represents God, and the two parallel lines represent his infinite wisdom and power. When man realized there exists but one God, he drew a single point. When he realized God was eternal and infinite, he drew a circle around the point. When he realized that God was a God of rectitude, justice, and boundless mercy, he drew two straight lines. Upon this, he placed the Holy Bible, the inestimable gift given from God to man. The point represents male, the circle female, and the Holy Bible God. Man consists of the body he receives from his parents and his immortal soul from God.

Who Are the St. Johns

St. John, the Baptist, was a humble man, a plain man who held, above all, his obligations to God and with almost unbelievable steadfastness, met martyrdom. He preached repentance, virtue, and humility.

St. John, the Evangelist taught the importance of brotherly love. Of all the gospels, The Gospel of St. John is the most Masonic for the central theme is LIGHT.

Together, they exemplified the principles of Freemasonry in their daily lives by their deeds and their words. These two humble men did not engage in any of the pomp or glory of the world. It is because Masonry regards the character and internal qualifications of a man - not the exterior appearances - that these two men are fittingly called the patrons of this fraternity.

Three Great Duties

The three great duties of every Mason is his duty to God, his Neighbor, and Himself. To God, revere him and implore him in all of your undertakings. Acknowledge him as the one true God responsible for everything that happens to

you in life, whether good or bad. To your Neighbor, that tried and true principle, do unto others as you wish others to do unto you. Finally, to Yourself, to live a moral and upright life. Maimomedies wrote that every human being has the ability to achieve the greatness of a Moses. What will you do today to achieve that level of holiness?

Mosaic Pavement with its Tasseled Border and Blazing Star

You were taught that the mosaic pavement checked with black and white tiles represents all the good and evil that befalls us in life. In our journey, we will encounter good and evil, friends and foes, and are faced with various challenges and have difficult choices to make every day. The checkered floor is surrounded by tasseled border representing the bountiful blessings and mercy bestowed upon us by the one and true God, as represented by the blazing star. While the Atheist may deny God and the Gnostic will explain away evil with the use of multiple gods, both good and bad, we as Masons believe in the one true God responsible for all that happens to us in life. No matter how dejected we may feel, no matter how much we may suffer, God always surrounds us with his unending love.

Questions and Answers

You were asked a series of questions during the initiation. Is this an act of your own freewill and accord, to which you responded "**IT IS**". In whom do you put your trust? "**IN GOD**". Are you willing to take the oath or obligation, "**I AM**". And lastly, at the altar, what do you most desire, and you said "**LIGHT**". You see, the truth was always buried deep within your heart, **It is in God, I am Light.**

Conclusion

My brother, this is just the beginning. We have barely scratched the surface. You have much to learn and long to travel, but know, that this journey is not one that you take alone.