

A WORD TO MASTER MASONS

By the Supreme Grand Royal Arch Chapter of N.Z.

In the ceremony of Initiation you were exhorted to make a daily advancement in masonic knowledge. Many Brethren are not sure how to do this.

After receiving the Third Degree you may have felt a sense of disappointment and frustration on learning that certain important information has been lost: and later after reflection, you have probably felt a wish to seek the information to know how it can be recovered. The answer is to join a Royal Arch Chapter.

If you study Rule 326 of the Book of Constitution of the Grand Lodge of New Zealand, you will see the Grand Lodge recognises the following Degrees as part of pure antient Masonry namely the Degrees of Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, Master Mason, Mark Master, Excellent Master and the Holy Royal Arch. The last three of these Degrees are worked in Royal Arch Chapters under the control of the Supreme Grand Royal Arch Chapter of New Zealand.

The general set-up of a Chapter is similar to that of a Craft Lodge, If you wish to join a Chapter you may petition' in the same way as you did for your Lodge, and you will require to have a proposer and seconder who are both members of the Chapter which you wish to join. It is quite in order for members of the Chapter to invite you to join, as you are already a Master Mason and no question of solicitation arises.

It is not possible at this stage to tell you very much about Royal Arch Masonry, except that it has a long and honourable history dating from about 1740. The Supreme Grand Royal Arch Chapter of New Zealand was formed in 1892 and has over 100 Chapters throughout the Dominion, under its jurisdiction.

The ceremonies worked by the Chapters comprise Three Degrees and a brief explanation of them is set out below.

The Mark Degree

This is located in King Solomon's Quarries and represents the completion of the Fellow Craft Degree.

The Excellent Master Degree

This takes place at Babylon and deals with the Return of the Jews of Palestine after the Babylonish Captivity.

The Royal Arch Degree

This is the climax of antient Craft Masonry and represents the completion of the Third Degree and supplies what is missing there. The ceremony is represented as taking place when the ground is being cleared for the erection of the Second Temple by the returned Jews under the leadership of Zerubbabel, Haggai and Jeshua when certain important information, lost for many years, is dramatically recovered.

The ceremonies of Royal Arch Masonry are impressive, colourful and dignified and mark an important step in gaining masonic knowledge. Companionship is emphasised and the members are known as Companions instead of Brethren.

Some Brethren are of the opinion that a Brother should not join the Royal Arch until he is a Past Master. We suggest however that this is a mistaken view and that it is in the best interests of Brethren to join the Royal Arch early in their masonic career, even though they may not be able to take an active part in the work of the Chapter for a few years.