

# Uneasy Lies the Head That Wears a Crown

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Bayside Lodge No. 218

June 1, 2023

In my Masonic career, I have always enjoyed ritual work. One of my greatest privileges is being the Installation Officer for a Lodge. That ceremony contains some of our best ritual. Tonight, I would like to spend a little time expanding on one emblem of the Master's authority: His hat. I would say to the newly installed Master:

Worshipful Sir, it is your province to remain covered while the rest of the brethren remain uncovered during the sessions of your Lodge.

The origin of this Masonic tradition may be founded upon the wearing of a crown by King Solomon as a mark of dignity. Rulers and Kings since his time have worn their crowns on ceremonial occasions as a symbol of their dignity and authority and their subjects have, as a mark of respect, uncovered in their presence.

The wearing of your hat while occupying the chair of the Worshipful Master symbolizes the dignity and authority of your office and distinguishes you from the rest of the Craft.

Now, is this true? Was King Solomon the first ruler in history to wear a crown? Or is this just poetic license? What else can we learn about crowns? Let us take a brief look at kings and crowns throughout human history.

## Uneasy Lies the Head That Wears a Crown – Christopher W. Douglas

The earliest crowns were known as diadems. Consider the difference between a diadem and a tiara. Both were head ornaments worn by nobility representing their power and authority. A tiara is an elaborate head ornament, typically worn by women, from brides, to queens and princesses, to Honored Queens and Chapter Sweethearts. A tiara is semi-circular and does not wrap all around the head. They are typically covered in elaborate jewels and designs. The word diadem originates from the Greek *diadein* "to bind around". It describes any circular piece that is worn on the head that symbolizes your status or power. Crowns, tiaras, and circlets are all diadems, but not every diadem is a tiara. Early diadems were just ribbons tied around the head. In ancient Greece, around 1000 B.C., the King wore an embroidered white silk ribbon, with two strips draped over the shoulders. Ribbons were also awarded to victorious athletes to recognize their success. The ancient Celts of Europe, dating back to 1200 B.C., wore a thin gold plate as a diadem. The Indus Valley Civilization of South Asia was from the Bronze Age from 3300 B.C. to 1300 B.C. Their famous "Priest King" statue wore a headband that was likely a diadem.

In ancient Egypt, royalty wore crowns that connected them to the Gods. More than any other culture, Egypt had a strong connection between their human rulers and the Gods themselves. Their crowns were symbols of a specific aspect of nature or power. By wearing a crown similar to the one a particular God was presumed to wear, that King or Queen was asserting that they had those powers themselves, and a direct connection to that God. Crowns also naturally made the person look taller, and were made with precious jewels that were only available to a select few.

The Red Crown and the White Crown were the oldest known crowns for Egyptian Kings, worn from 3200 B.C. until the end of ancient Egypt in 332 B.C. The Red Crown, or *desheret* ("red thing") identified the King as ruler of Lower, or Northern, Egypt. The White Crown, or *hedjet* ("white thing") signified the King ruled Upper Egypt. These crowns were likely made of leather or fabric, while their colors associated them with the planets and

the stars. They could be worn alone, or combined forming the Double Crown. The Gods Horus, Atum, and Mut were all depicted wearing the Double Crown.

In the Old Testament, both ordinary priests and the high priest wore fillets, a ribbon or narrow strip of material. Fillets evolved into turbans, which were long lengths of cotton or silk wrapped around the head. The addition of ornamental and precious materials to these turbans assumed the dignity of mitres. The high priest wore a diadem tied with ribbon of a hyacinth color. In Exodus 28:36, the Israelites are told to make a plate of pure gold, engraved with the words, "Holiness to the Lord", and tie it with a blue cord to the front of the high priest's turban. He must wear it when entering the Holy of Holies, lest he die.

The crowns of kings were white fillets, bound round the forehead, just as in ancient Greece. In 2 Chronicles 23:11 we read the king's son was anointed with a golden crown. In 2 Samuel 12:29, we read that when King David, father of Solomon, conquered the Ammonites, he took their king's crown, a crown of gold with precious stones, and set it on his own head.

So, we have established there are several cultures whose rulers wore a diadem, or crown, as a symbol of authority. But what of King Solomon, who reigned from 970 to 931 B.C.? In Song of Solomon 3:11, we read of King Solomon wearing the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding. Then in 1 Chronicles 29:22, David's son Solomon is crowned again as their new king. Far more is said in the Old Testament about the crowns, or mitres, worn by the high priest than is said about King Solomon's crown.

Speaking of priests, in our modern era in the Catholic Church, we see bishops and the Pope wearing mitres, which are rather tall headdresses that taper to a point. The

## Uneasy Lies the Head That Wears a Crown – Christopher W. Douglas

implication is that God himself wears a mitre, and the bishops wear theirs as symbol, indicating their connection to God. Even in the DeMolay Degree, we hear Jacques DeMolay defending himself against the charge of heresy:

But our souls' allegiance is to the "King of Kings" and to Him Who wears the miter of eternity.

So whether it is the ancient Egyptians or the Catholic Church, when someone wears a crown, they are sending the message, "This is what God wears, by wearing it, I am calling on the power and the authority of God".

In Shakespeare's Henry IV Part 2, the king says, "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown", meaning that unlike a cabin boy who is able to sleep during a storm, the king has so much pressure on him he does not have a moment's peace.

As someone who has spent a great deal of time in both DeMolay and Masonry, it is interesting to contrast and compare the messages presented in the ritual of both bodies. A line from the DeMolay Installation Service should probably be added to our Masonic Installation Ceremony. The Installing Officer says to the newly installed Master Councilor:

"Never forgetting that, though you are temporarily the chief among your brethren, you have only emerged for a brief time from the ranks and to the ranks you will soon return."

## Uneasy Lies the Head That Wears a Crown – Christopher W. Douglas

I think a lot of my Brother Masons would benefit from hearing that admonishment. In most Lodges it is expected that when the Master has completed his term of office, he will go to work serving the Lodge in some other way or at least sit on the sidelines and be an active member.

In the Grand Lodge of Virginia, the custom is you retain the title of your office, this varies from other jurisdictions. Once you have completed your term as Worshipful Master, for the rest of your life you will be referred to as, "Worshipful". Once you have served as District Deputy Grand Master, or as an elected Grand Lodge Officer, for the rest of your life you will be referred to as, "Right Worshipful." One you have served as Grand Master, for the rest of your life you will be referred to as "Most Worshipful". Most Masons are sufficiently humble enough that they realize that this honorific is in reference to the service they have performed for Freemasonry, and do not think that simply because they were elected or appointed to a position, they are in any way better than any other man. They were simply in the right place at the right time to serve the craft in that role.

Being Master of a Lodge is an important duty, it is unlike being in charge of most other organizations out there that a man can belong to, whether your title is President or Chairman or what have you. He is entrusted with many things during his year in office. For one thing, a majority of Lodges own their own Temple. The Worshipful Master is on call for anything that happens physically to the property of the Lodge. He is responsible for maintaining the building and its property, be it the air conditioning system, the kitchen appliances, the furniture, or even mowing the lawn. Even Lodges that rent, or are part of a corporation, have a responsibility to report issues that occur to the appropriate person. Everything that happens in your Lodge is ultimately your responsibility. You can delegate the duties, you can direct your officers to be in charge of certain things, like meals and degree teams and coaching, you can form committees to maintain the building

## Uneasy Lies the Head That Wears a Crown – Christopher W. Douglas

and the property. All the heavy lifting can be delegated, but in the end, every single thing that happens to your Lodge is your responsibility during your time in office.

I recall when I was Master of Ocean View Lodge, I felt a weight on my shoulders for the entire year. It wasn't anything specific, just the knowledge that if a Brother was sick, if he was hospitalized, or God forbid, he passed away, it was on me to represent the Lodge and to see that that Brother was properly taken care of. We have a Funeral Committee in our District that arranges the Memorial Service. But there are still duties for the Master to oversee. So just knowing that something could potentially happen, and everyone would look to you to handle it, was a burden. There is more to serving as Worshipful Master than getting your Warden's Certificate, planning a dozen or so meetings, making sure you have a program, making sure that all degree parts are filled, and that the candidates are coached. The burden is the knowledge that you are responsible for ALL of it.

I like to think that every Lodge has a distinct personality that derives from the members who are currently active and also those members who are no longer with us. A Lodge develops a reputation over time, and those who are in your Lodge now, consciously or subconsciously, perpetuate that personality because "That's just how Bayside Lodge is!" It's a wonderful thing most really don't think about. I would never want Freemasonry to become cookie cutter. We are not a franchise like McDonald's, where a Big Mac at this McDonald's must taste exactly like a Big Mac at another McDonald's across town, or even across the country. Masonic Lodges are unique, and always should be. I should feel slightly different in this Lodge than I would at another Lodge, even in the same city. The ritual is the same, the layout of the Lodge room is the same, the offices are the same, the dress code is usually the same, everywhere in our jurisdiction. But the personality of the Lodge shines through, making each just a little bit different, and just a little bit special.

In the same manner, a good Master is a man who has his own distinct personality, and will reveal that personality through the term plan he executes his year. It will shine through in the way he treats this awesome responsibility for twelve months. It won't be just another year for the Lodge. When people look back, and talk about John Farr's year of 2023, they will feel the impression of his personality that he left upon this Lodge. May your crown not weigh too heavy on your head, Worshipful Sir.

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