

Wisdom in the Three Steps

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Who is to dispense "light" in the Lodge?

"...It is the duty of the Master to dispense Light to the Brethren, either by himself, through the Wardens or by the assistance of the brethren."

One who thinks he is an accomplished Mason must not be content merely to hear or even to understand the lectures; they must aid him, and he must study, understand, and develop these symbols for himself.

Can Masonry make an "evil" man good?

"Masonry does not change human nature and cannot make honest men out of a person who wishes to be a crook or scoundrel."

Do Symbols have only a singular Interpretation?

"To present a visible symbol to the eye of another does not necessarily inform him of the meaning of that symbol or its meaning to you. Only through communication can this be accomplished."

Do all who are raised to the Degree of Master Mason understand the secrets of Masonry?

"Masonry, like all the Mysteries, and sects, conceals its secrets from all except those who have been elected to the degrees; and uses false explanations and misinterpretations of its symbols to mislead those who deserve to be misled, to conceal the Truth from them, and to draw them away from it. Truth, which we call Light, is not for those unworthy to receive it, causing it to be perverted in its message."

What do "light" and "darkness" in Masonry symbolize?

"Knowledge . . . is Light, as Ignorance is Darkness."

These questions are answered when one understands the "The Three Steps" symbol. This symbol addresses the three stages of human life and its connection with Masonry. Which we commonly picture as three men standing on three steps.

We speak of the three phases of life: youth, manhood, and old age, and in Masonry, the three Degrees. As an Entered Apprentice, we begin our

Masonic journey; we are in our youth, just starting to learn what Freemasonry is all about. In the Degree of Fellowcraft, we continue our education, stressing the liberal arts and sciences and the study of geometry or Masonry. To this Degree, we are symbolically at the age of manhood, earning our way in the world. Then, in the Degree of Master Mason, we review our progress and make corrections to our life as we continue to develop our character and improve ourselves in Masonry, becoming older men or Master Masons to enjoy the rewards of living and practicing the spiritual tenets of the Lodge.

The object of the First Degree is to teach by what means the human mind is struggling in darkness for genuine Light and may be prepared to advance appropriately to that of the second. Teaching the proper order of this progression and the means thereby which he may be conducted to the attainment of the true philosophy of life amid the difficulties which burden every labor of life. The Entered Apprentice comes from darkness to moral Light.

The Fellow Craft goes from intellectual darkness into luminescent knowledge. The Second Degree, therefore, by its lessons, represents the struggles of the eager mind in attaining Truth - moral and intelligent - and instills and teaches above all that divine Truth, the comprehension of which surpasses human understanding. Here in this Degree, we are taught how a man becomes the sovereign of the material world through science, art, and philosophy. The Second Degree we, therefore, call the Degree of Science.

The ceremony of the Third Degree is, without doubt, the most important, impressive, and instructive of all the Masonic rites; it transcends all others in the depth of its philosophy and the dramatic interest with which it is invested. That portion which is connected with the legend of the Widow's Son is worthy of the deep and earnest study of thoughtful men. It draws the attention of the mind to the contemplation of a subject that extends beyond the grave through the boundless realms of eternity - to that eternal principle that makes man the rational, thinking being that he is.

The Master Mason is an upright man on his journey through life. In the First and Second degrees, this man is found to be whole in moral values and intellectual principles, completing his journey in the Third Degree by having a relationship with his Maker. The Master Mason degree embraces all the possible conditions of humanity, ranges through all worlds, reveals the law of eternal justice, announces the supremacy of Truth, and proclaims the immortality of man. It pictures to the mind, impressively, the conflict of Truth with error; Light with darkness; life with death; and the final triumph of the former and destruction of the latter. It teaches us that the same power which creates destroys - destroys and creates again.

In all these things, if we have seen only a series of insignificant rites and ceremonies, have we learned our ritual, our mystic words, and signs, and there ended the lesson? If so, Masonry is a delusion to us and has failed in its teachings. However, no intelligent Mason can take such a view, for in the science of Masonic symbolism, the temple represented the world, purified by the Divine presence; and as every Masonic Lodge is symbolic of the temple, it is, therefore, a symbol of the world purified. Hence, to enter the Lodge and be made a Mason is to become good, pure, and noble.

We have wandered long in the darkness, asked for Light, and sought wisdom in the world of the uninformed. We knocked at the door of Masonry, and coming in the name of GOD, and being free born, full grown, and well-tried, the door opened to us, and we stood within the porch of the temple, and there learned to practice charity, and observe the Divine Order. We have all passed between the pillars of strength and establishment, ascended the flight of winding stairs, stood in the middle chamber, learned our labors' results, and stood completely in the center. We have beheld the scenes which belong to the familiar but most wonderful and impressive legend of all time, whose symbolic lesson is the destruction of Humanity and that Divine power which alone can raise weak and selfish human nature from the dead level of mortality to the living perpendicular of eternal life, yet still signifying that though man may approach, yet never can reach perfection. We have seen and passed through all these things, and the lessons inculcated should be deeply impressed on our minds. The Truth was the object of our labors, and though we have received a substitute representing it, it signifies to us an important fact that man in this world can guess only to the complete conception of Truth.

Finally, Brethren, in our estimation of Masonry, let us look beyond its secret works, rituals, lectures, ceremonies, signs, and symbols, for these are but the garment in which it is clothed - they are the visible body - Masonry is the invisible soul. The promotion of virtue, the practice of morality, and the relief of distress are the fruits of the vital active principle within. Masonry is more than mere signs and ceremonies. We may know its history, its traditions, its achievements, and its laws; we may be learned in its lectures and masters of its secret work; we may be able to understand its symbolism and be termed "bright Masons," and yet the whole volume of Masonry be to us a sealed and a silent book. We may admire its spirit and refuse that spirit dwelling within our soul; we may admire its wisdom, its strength, its harmony, the perfection of its ceremonies, its lectures, and its laws; and yet if we have failed to learn that these are but avenues leading up to the moral society beyond; that the visual and mental emblems are of an illuminating spiritual structure; then, indeed, have we labored in vain, and spent our strength for nothing.

So remember, Brethren, when leaving the Lodge tonight. As you take those steps, remember those symbolic three, and you will become examples to all to follow inside and outside the Lodge.

Bibliography

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<http://www.freemasonhall.com/masonry/what-are-some-of-the-symbols-of-freemasonry>