



***Past Master  
Or  
Fifth Degree***

**STUDY PACKET**

**Property of Anthony T. Stafford Chapter # 10  
Holy Royal Arch Masons PHA**

**Delray Beach, FL**

**REVISIONS**

**Revised 2010**

EHP Michael Campbell, (10)  
EHP William Wims, (10)  
EHP Terry Alexander, (10)

**Revised 2020**

EHP W. Matthew Stevenson, (10)  
EK George Lockhart (10)

# ***PAST MASTER DEGREE***

## **Symbolism**

The Past Master Degree is, in many jurisdictions, an Honorary Degree. It is often conferred upon the Master of a Lodge upon his installation into office. The Past Master's Degree teaches the need and responsibilities of leadership. This degree teaches moderation. The Past Master (Virtual) degree teaches the candidate the lessons of Psalm 25: that he must first learn to obey before he can rule, govern himself before he can govern others, and govern in moderation and propriety. The ceremonial degree ritual for the Past Master (Virtual) is short and similar to the installation ritual of a Worshipful Master of a lodge of Freemasons.

Another name for this degree is the "Secrets of the Chair." It divides into five sections. The first treats of **the manner of constituting a Lodge of Master Masons**. The second treats of **the ceremony of installation**, including the manner of receiving candidates to this degree, as given above. The third treats of the ceremonies observed at laying the foundation-stones of public structures. The fourth section of the ceremony was observed at the dedication of Masonic Halls. The fifth of **the ceremony observed at funerals**, according to the ancient custom, with the service used on the occasion. The symbolic color of the Past Master's Degree is **purple**. The apron is of white lambskin, edged with **purple**, and should have the jewel of the degree inscribed upon it. The collar is purple, edged with gold. But, as Past Masters' Lodges are held under the warrants of Royal Arch Chapters, the collars, aprons, and jewels of the Chapter are generally made use of in conferring the Past Master's Degree.

### **Ecclesiastes 12:1-14**

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; <sup>2</sup> While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain: <sup>3</sup> In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened, <sup>4</sup> And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low; <sup>5</sup> Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: <sup>6</sup> Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. <sup>7</sup> Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. <sup>8</sup> Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity. <sup>9</sup> And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs. <sup>10</sup> The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth. <sup>11</sup> The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd. <sup>12</sup> And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh. <sup>13</sup> Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. <sup>14</sup> For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”

## *Color of this Degree*

The symbolic color of the Past Master's Degree is purple. The apron is of white lambskin, edged with purple, and should have the jewel of the Degree inscribed upon it. The collar is of purple, edged with gold. But, as Past Masters' Lodges are held under the warrants of Royal Arch Chapters, the collars, aprons, and jewels of the Chapter are generally made use of in conferring the Past Master's Degree.



FIG. 25. DUEGARD AND STEP OF A PAST MASTER.



FIG. 26. SIGN OF A PAST MASTER.

### *Dueguard*

The Master now steps off with his left foot and then places the heel of his right foot at the toe of the left, so as to bring the two feet at right angles and make them the right angle of a square. He then gives the sign, placing the thumb of his right hand (fingers clinched) upon his lips. It alludes to the penalty of having his tongue split from tip to root (figure 25).

### *Sign of Past Master*

The Master then gives a second sign by placing his right hand upon the left side of his neck and drawing it edgewise downward toward the right side so as to cross the three former penalties (figure 26).

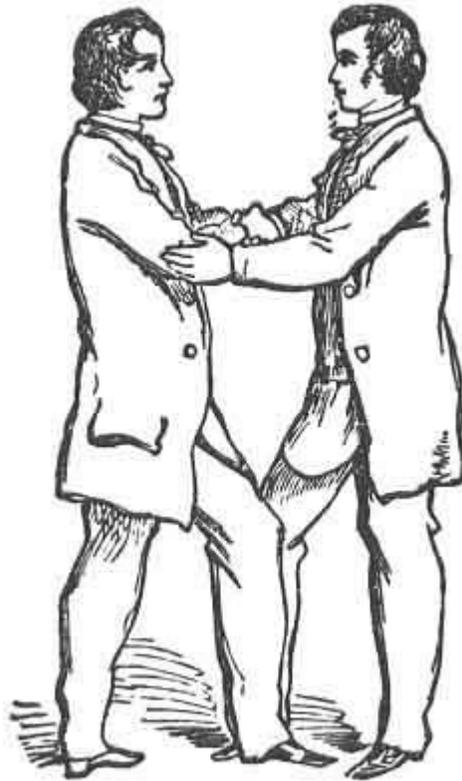


FIG. 27. PAST MASTER'S GRIP.

*Past Master's Grip*

They first take each other by the Master Mason's grip (see Fig. 17, p. 120), and, putting the insides of their feet together, the Master whispers **GIBLEM** in the ear of the candidate. At that moment, they slip their right hands so as to catch each other just above the wrist of the left arm, and raise their left hands, catching each other's right elbow, the Master saying, and the candidate repeating (in union with these motions), "*From a grip to a span, from a span to a grip,*" afterward (almost at the same instant) letting the left hand slip up the right arm to the back of each other, the Master saying, "A TwoFold cord is strong," and the candidate (prompted) replying. "A ThreeFold cord is not easily broken." (See Fig. 27.)

- The Holy Writings, that great light in Masonry, will guide you to all truth; it will direct your path to the temple of happiness and point out to you the whole duty of man.
- The Square teaches to regulate our actions by rule and line, and to harmonize our conduct by the principles of morality and virtue.
- The Compasses teach to limit our desires in every station; thus rising to eminence by merit, we may live respected and die regretted.
- The Rule directs that we should punctually observe our duty, press forward in the path of virtue, and neither inclining to the right nor to the left, in all our actions have eternity in view.
- The Line teaches the criterion of moral rectitude; to avoid dissimulation in conversation and action, and to direct our steps to the path that leads to immortality.
- The Book of Constitutions you are to search at all times; cause it to be read in your Lodge, that none may pretend ignorance of the excellent precepts it enjoins.
- the By-laws of your Lodge, which you are to see carefully and punctually executed. I will also present you with the Mallet; it is an emblem of power. One stroke of the mallet calls to order, and calls up the Junior and Senior Deacons; two strokes call up all the subordinate officers; and three, the whole Lodge.

## **DIALOGUE LECTURE ON THE FIFTH, OR PAST MASTER'S DEGREE**

*Question.* Are you a Past Master?

*Answer.* I have the honor so to be.

Q. How gained you this distinguished honor?

A. By having been regularly elected and duly installed to preside over and govern a Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons. Previous to my installation, I was caused to kneel at the altar in due form and take upon myself a solemn oath or obligation to keep and conceal the secrets belonging to the chair.

Q. What is that due form?

A. Kneeling upon both knees, both hands covering the Holy Bible, square and compasses, my body erect; in which due form I took upon myself the solemn oath or obligation of a Past Master.

Q. Have you that obligation?

A. I have.

Q. Will you give it?

A. I will, with your assistance.

Q. Have you a sign belonging to the Chair?

A. I have several.

Q. Show me a sign? (Give sign, thumb to mouth.)

Q. What is that called?

A. The duegard.

Q. To what, does it allude?

A. To the penalty of my obligation that I would sooner have my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth than divulge any of the secrets belonging to the chair unlawfully.

Q. Show me another sign? (Give sign, drop your hand in from mouth in a circular manner down over your breast to your right side.)

Q. What is that called?

A. The sign.

Q. To what does it allude?

A. To the additional portion of the penalty of my obligation, that I would sooner suffer the severest inflictions of all my former penalties, than divulge any of the secrets belonging to the chair unlawfully.

Q. Have you a grip belonging to the chair?

A. I have.

Q.. Communicate it to a brother. (Give the Past Master's grip. See the grip.)

Q. Has it a name?

A. It has.

Q. Give it. (Give the word. See word of Past Master.)

Q. What does it signify?

A. Stone squarer.

Q. What were you presented with?

A. The jewel of my office--which is a square, and it was hoped I would prepare a square stone in the Temple of Masonry.

Q. What were you next presented with?

A. The three great lights in Masonry, the Holy Bible, square and compasses. Within that sacred volume I would find all that was necessary for my counsel and guidance, these three great lights I was always to see in proper position when the lodge was open. If in the E. A. degree, that both points of the compasses are beneath the square; if in the F. C. degree, one point is elevated above the square; if in the Master's degree, both points are elevated above the square.

Q. What were you next presented with?

A. The charter or warrant, which would empower me to do all regular Masonic work.

Q. What were you next presented with?

A. The constitution, which I was carefully to search, and see that it was not infringed.

Q. What were you next presented with?

A. The By-laws, which I was to carefully search and see that they were strictly enforced.

Q. What were you next presented with?

A. The records, which I was to see carefully kept, that nothing improper be transmitted to paper, and have a general supervision over the duties of the secretary.

Q. What were you next presented with?

A. I, as Master should be covered; 1 while the rest of the brethren remained uncovered.

Q. What were you next presented with?

A. Last, but not least, I was presented with the gavel, which I was informed was an emblem of power, one blow of which would call the Lodge to order; and in opening and closing, the deacons would arise; two blows would call up the rest of the subordinate officers, on three blows, the whole Lodge; one blow would again seat them and call the Lodge to order.

Q. How were you then disposed of?

A. I was conducted to the chair, once so ably filled by our Grand Master Solomon, King of Israel, and it was hoped that a portion of his wisdom would rest upon and abide with me.

Q. What are the duties of the chair?

A. They are many and various.

Q. Of what do they consist?

A. In opening, instructing and closing Lodges; of initiating, crafting, and raising Masons; presiding at consecrations, dedications and installations; at the laying of corner stones of public edifices; presiding at funeral obsequies, and all other duties corresponding thereunto and connected therewith.

## **Word of a Past Master “Giblem”**

The Giblemites, or, as they are called in Scripture, the *Giblim*, were inhabitants of the city and district of Gebal, in Phoenicia, near Mount Lebanon, and were, therefore, under the dominion of the King of Tyre. The Phœnician word "*gibal*," which makes "*giblim*" in the plural, signifies a mason or stone squarer. In the Second Book of Kings, v. 17, 18, we read that "the King commanded, and they brought great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house. And Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders did hew them, and the stone squarers." which last word is, in the original, *giblim*. Gesenius says that the inhabitants of Gebal were seamen and builders, and Sir William Drummond asserts that "the Gibalim were Master Masons, who put the finishing hand to Solomon's Temple." In this sense the word is also used in the Book of Constitutions, which records that John de Spoulee, who, as one of the deputies of Edward III., assisted in rebuilding Windsor Castle, was called the "Master of the Ghiblim." The Giblim, or the Giblemites, were, therefore, stone-squarers or Master Masons