

The Square

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I was once asked “*What does the square allude to as a combination symbol of both a Mark Master and a Past Master.*”

In every Masonic Lodge lies a Holy Bible open, and upon the Bible lie the Square and Compasses. They are Lodge’s Great Lights—its Divine warrant and its chief working tools. They are symbols of **Revelation**, **Righteousness**, and **Redemption**. They teach us that by walking in the light of Truth, and obey the Law of Right, the Divine in man wins victory over the physical world.

From Masonic lectures, we learn the Holy Bible was given to the Craft to rule and govern our faith, the Square to square our actions, and the Compasses to keep our actions within bounds with all men, particularly with a brother. In the center of this group of symbols is placed the Square to square our actions—that is to say, the Moral Law.

Let us study the Square separately and within the confines of the Mark Master and Past Master’s Degrees.

The Mark Master represents a Fellowcraft and the finished work – a work that will either be used in the building of King Solomon’s Temple, or cast aside in the rubbish pile of rejection. The decision lies in the hands of the overseer of the work, and the Mark Master is admonished to do “good work”, and “mark well” his work, that he may be paid for his labor. The charge at the opening of a Lodge of Mark Masters comes from *1 Peter II*:



“Wherefore, brethren, lay aside all malice, and guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speaking. If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also as living stones be ye build up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up sacrifices acceptable to God. Brethren, this is the will of God, that with well doing ye put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God.”¹

¹ *Authorized Ritual of the Grand Chapter Royal Arch Mason of Virginia*, January 1, 2017, p. 7

The Mark Master uses a small, plain Square, unmarked with legs of equal length; a simple try-square used for testing the accuracy of right angles, trying the surface or correspondence to adjoining surfaces, and the straightness and precision of cuts on stones. The lessons of the Mark Master Degree are qualification and service and among Speculative Masons, this square has been a symbol of morality, the basic rightness which must be the test of every act and the foundation of character and society. In all rites where Masonry is true to itself, the Square is a symbol of rightness, and applied in the light of faith in God.

The Grand Lodge of England Constitution of 1723 speaks of the installed Master passing through certain "significant ceremonies." Then we find the expression of Past Master used in 1771 and implied as one who "having passed the Chair through some ceremony." Introduction of the Past Master's Degree into Capitular Masonry rests in the fact that, originally, the Royal Arch was conferred only on those who had been elected and presided over a Lodge as Master. The lesson is obedience to authority.



“What does the square allude to as a combination symbol of both a Mark Master and a Past Master.” It is that quality of character which has made “a square man” synonymous not only with a member of our Fraternity, but with uprightness, honesty and dependability.

There are those in the Craft who believe Masonry is too religious. But, it is important to note that we must keep God and the Square together. While the Square is an emblem of the virtuous moral, ethical, and spiritual conduct required of all Freemasons, it is our faith in God that provides the basis for that behavior. If society is not careful and loses its faith in God, then its foundation for moral and ethical conduct drifts from that decreed by God. When this occurs, men come to think that morality is of human invention and the moral law loses its meaning and power. It leads to a society without standards, which will become unstable and eventually fall.

Hence the importance attached to the Square of Virtue – it is a symbol of that moral law upon which human life must rest if it is to stand.



So Mote It Be!

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